



STREAMS OF CRIMSON

The Soulmonger is shattered and its pieces scattered across the peninsula of Chult. Dire forces seek those shards for their own nefarious purposes, and the Red Wizards are rumored to have found a number of them already. Can you wrest those necromantic artifacts from the hands of the dread mages? *Part One of the Broken Chains Series.*

A Four-Hour Adventure for 17th-20th Level Characters



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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to *Streams of Crimson*, a D&D Adventurers League™ adventure, part of the official D&D Adventurers League™ organized play system and the *Tomb of Annihilation*™ storyline season.

This adventure takes place inside of the lava tunnels beneath the Peaks of Flame, the trio of active volcanoes in southern Chult.

This adventure is designed for **three to seven 17th-20th level characters** and is optimized for **five characters with an average party level (APL) of 18**. Characters outside this level range cannot participate in this adventure.

ADJUSTING THIS ADVENTURE

This adventure provides suggestions in making adjustments for smaller or larger groups, characters of higher or lower levels, and characters who are otherwise a bit more powerful than the adventure is optimized for. You're not bound to these adjustments; they're here for your convenience.

To figure out whether you should consider adjusting the adventure, add up the total levels of all the characters and divide the total by the number of characters (rounding .5 or greater up; .4 or less down). This is the group's APL. To approximate the **party strength** for the adventure, consult the following table.

DETERMINING PARTY STRENGTH

Party Composition	Party Strength
3-4 characters, APL less than 17	Very Weak
3-4 characters, APL equivalent to 17	Weak
3-4 characters, APL greater than 17	Average
5 characters, APL less than 17	Weak
5 characters, APL equivalent to 17	Average
5 characters, APL greater than 17	Strong
6-7 characters, APL less than 17	Average
6-7 characters, APL equivalent to 17	Strong
6-7 characters, APL greater than 17	Very Strong

Some encounters may include a sidebar that offers suggestions for certain party strengths. If a particular recommendation is not offered or appropriate for your group, you don't have to make adjustments.

BEFORE PLAY AT THE TABLE

Before you start play, consider the following:

- Read through the adventure, taking notes of anything you'd like to highlight or remind yourself of while running the adventure, such as a way you'd like to portray an NPC or a tactic you'd like to use in a combat. Familiarize yourself with the adventure's appendices and handouts.
- Gather any resources you'd like to use to aid you in running this adventure—such as notecards, a DM screen, miniatures, and battlemaps.
- Ask the players to provide you with relevant character information, such as name, race, class, and level; passive Wisdom (Perception), and anything specified as notable by the adventure (such as backgrounds, traits, flaws, etc.).

PLAYING THE DUNGEON MASTER

You have the most important role—facilitating the enjoyment of the game for the players. You provide the narrative and bring the words on these pages to life.

To facilitate this, keep in mind the following:

You're Empowered. Make decisions about how the group interacts with the adventure; adjusting or improvising is encouraged, so long as you maintain the adventure's spirit. This doesn't allow you to implement house rules or change those of the Adventurers League; however, they should be consistent in this regard.

Challenge Your Players. Gauge the experience level of your **players** (not the characters), try to feel out (or ask) what they like in a game, and attempt to deliver the experience they're after. Everyone should have the opportunity to shine.

Keep the Adventure Moving. When the game starts to get bogged down, feel free to provide hints and clues to your players so they can attempt to solve puzzles, engage in combat, and roleplay interactions without getting too frustrated over a lack of information. This gives players "little victories" for figuring out good choices from clues. Watch for stalling—play loses momentum when this happens. At the same time, make sure that the players don't finish too early; provide them with a full play experience.

ADVENTURE PRIMER

"The most recent stories tell of heroes confronting Red Wizards of Thay and other devilry. I pray that this will be the last time such efforts are necessary, but somehow, I think not."

– *Far from the Misty Hills*, by Aedyn Graymantle

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

The yuan-ti lord Ras Nsi's followers have captured a shard of Acererak's *Soulmonger*, secreting it away to the Obsidian Sanctum, a magical dungeon beneath the Peaks of Flame. They hope to use its power to bring forth Dendar the Night Serpent. But the Red Wizards of Thay move to thwart them, seeking the dread artifact for their own ends.

However, the Thayans are not the only ones. Orcus has circumvented an ageless edict and ripped a portal into Chult, unleashing his hordes to secure the *Soulmonger*, for nothing of necromancy escapes the dominion of the Demon Prince of Undeath. Outside the Obsidian Sanctum, at the feet of the Peaks of Flame, these two formidable forces clashed. Their battle left entire swathes of the jungle as naught but scarred wastelands stripped of life, tainted by rippling magic and haunted by hungry ghosts.

The Red Wizards, no strangers to necromancy or demonology, sent the fiends howling back into the darkness. The Thayans, while weakened from their battle, pushed on to the lair beneath the Peaks. They breached the dungeon, confronted the yuan-ti in a second terrible battle. The Thayans forced the serpent folk deeper into their Sanctum.

But now the Thayans are blind as they search the complex, as set within is a Chamber of Depthless Mirrors designed to disrupt and mislead even the strongest divination magic. And while the Red Wizards have sought to contact Larloch, an archlich and supposed ally, they have been tricked by the arcane apparatus and have been communicating with something far more powerful.

In a curious symmetry of fate, as the yuan-ti have used the Depthless Mirrors to trick the Thayans, so too are they deceived. Unbeknownst to them, their actions were guided by another. Rhaugilath, who struggles under the bonds of Larloch, views the *Soulmonger* pieces as the means to finally free himself from centuries of imprisonment, but he is unable to act in an obvious fashion. Through dreams he has guided the yuan-ti to hunt and gather the deadly shards to a location warded against the prying eyes of his master's servants. But as the Red Wizards, allies of Larloch, threaten his plan, he is forced to turn to adventurers to claim the artifact.

LOCATION AND NPC SUMMARY

The following NPCs and locations feature prominently in this adventure.

Peaks of Flame. The Peaks are volcanic mountains in southern Chult. They are rumored to hold a door to the Far Realm, where Dendar the Night Serpent waits.

Obsidian Sanctum. A magical complex hidden beneath a volcano. Within are powerful arcane devices and wards.

Rashidi al-Zahar ibn Rath (RA-she-dee). An efreeti prince and magic architect who built the Obsidian Complex but was betrayed and imprisoned by the yuan-ti.

Zonaras Xans (Zo-NAR-as). A Red Wizard archmage who seeks to save his people.

ADVENTURE OVERVIEW

The adventure is broken down into three parts, as well as an appendix of **optional encounters**.

Part 1. After a dream informs the adventurers of a *Soulmonger* shard, they travel to the Peaks of Flame and enter the Obsidian Sanctum. There, they encounter Red Wizards and yuan-ti in the crumbling dungeon.

Part 2. The adventurers find the Orrery in the Room of Depthless Mirrors, which is powered by an imprisoned efreeti prince.

Part 3. The adventurers battle Thayan zulkirs and their guardians. During the battle, the Sanctum's obsidian behemoth awakens and a mighty battle ensues under the volcano.

Appendix. Optional Encounters. This contains optional encounters for this adventure.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

The adventurers are sent a *dream* from Rhaugilath, masquerading as an ally. In the dream, the lich informs them of the *Soulmonger* shard hidden in the Obsidian Sanctum under the Peaks of Flame.

Faction Assignment (Harpers). Divination magic is failing in Chult. While this has many concerned, the Harpers are particularly worried as they heavily rely on such magic. Agents need to obtain at least **two** pieces of information pertaining to what is distorting divination magic and stop it.

Faction Assignment (Zhentarim). With rumors of political turmoil in Thay, Zhentarim members are requested to pursue diplomatic relations with the Red Wizards. Zhentarim members need to make at least **two** goodwill efforts towards the Thayans.

Secret Mission (Order of the Gauntlet). The Order of the Gauntlet wishes to discover the secrets of the Obsidian Sanctum's construction so they may use such magic in their own keeps. Agents need to discover the secret of the Sanctum's architecture.

PART 1. THE OBSIDIAN SANCTUM

Estimated Duration: 1 hour, 45 minutes

STORY BEAT

In this part, the adventurers learn of the Obsidian Sanctum and are tasked with venturing to it to recover a shard of Acererak's *Soulmonger*. They learn they won't be the only ones pursuing the shard, but they are told of a way to safely contain its power. Finally, they learn there are potential allies in the Sanctum.

A. A DREAM OF THE END

Read or paraphrase the following:

Several nights past you all experienced strange visions as though you had a fever.

As you slept you dreamed, and it was of the shining cities across the world—the trade states of the Sword Coast, the alliances of the Moonsea, the pyramids of Mulhorand, and more exotic locations, their lights glittering in the night. One by one, they went dark, city after city until all the world faded. Then a black serpent of impossible size wrapped itself around Faerûn and began to squeeze, and squeeze. The image vanished, leaving you standing above your sleeping bodies.

A frantic voice spoke to you. "Please, I have little time. The yuan-ti have secreted away a shard of the *Soulmonger* to an ancient stronghold beneath the Peaks of Flame known as the Obsidian Sanctum. They seek to use it in a ritual to unleash a terrible entity upon the world, destroying it so they may reshape it."

THE VOICE

The speaker is Rhaugilath, the archlich. He is well disguised beneath layers of spells, such as *mind blank*, and other magic to enhance his duplicity.

The voice seems to fade with every heartbeat, but it provides the following information:

- "You are the few who I have seen capable of stopping this ritual. I have seen others hunting for the shard, hunters in red. They are close to obtaining it."
- This Sanctum lies hidden under powerful wards to prevent divination magic of the highest caliber. To pierce it has cost me dearly. Contact your allies. They will be able to help you where I cannot.
- The complex is anchored in the Border Ethereal. The ability to interact with this plane may aid you.
- The architect of the magical complex waits imprisoned within. Freeing him may gain you a powerful ally.

- "Let me impart to you the location of this magical Sanctum." Images of fiery mountains come to you. Between two volcanos is a narrow ravine and a hidden obsidian door.
- "My scrying, while hampered, has revealed the sigil sequence of a teleportation circle used by red-robed wizards to attack the stronghold."
- "I am sorry I can do no more. Searching for the *Soulmonger* shards has poisoned me with their vile magic and piercing the powerful anti-divination field has drained me further. I can only wish you luck."

Read the following after the speaker finishes:

After you awoke, you found that several of your allies were contacted in a similar fashion and were awaiting you. They set about deducing the nature of the speaker and these claims. While the speaker was never identified, the information he provided was authenticated by spies and scouts.

The adventurers' factions and allies provide the following information and reconnaissance:

- Divination magic is proving problematic and unreliable, just as the voice warned. Some incredible power is disrupting divination spells of the highest order, and this has many of your allies worried. Through mundane means, agents hidden in Thay confirmed that the yuan-ti have hidden a shard in a stronghold near the Peaks of Flame.
- The Red Wizards themselves have already mobilized to take it. An operative also reports that the Red Wizards possess an **opal amulet** capable of safely draining and storing the shards.
- But disquiet grows in their ranks, which might be exploited, and allies found among their numbers.
- The yuan-ti stronghold's location has been obtained by field operatives. It is called the Obsidian Sanctum.
- Scouts have further confirmed the location of the teleportation circle near the Peaks and found that the stolen sigil sequence works. They stand ready to deliver their strongest strike team—you—to the location to prevent this ritual and stop the *Soulmonger* shard from falling into the hands of those who would continue to abuse it.
- The scouts near the teleportation circle had to retreat because of the Red Wizard activity in the area. Their last report spoke about fiends moving through the region towards the Peaks.

TRICKS OF THE TRADE

What are the Factions Doing? Considering not all the factions give a mission for this adventure, you may want to have the factions that don't offer missions be the ones that provide the spying and reconnaissance information to make them feel involved, at your discretion.

B. THE OBSIDIAN SANCTUM

The Obsidian Sanctum was created long ago by an efreeti prince and his azer architects.

Short rests are permitted within the Sanctum, but the volcanic and magical effects interrupt a long rest.

Wards and runes empower the glossy stone of the Sanctum, hiding it and protecting it against the volcanic heat and tremors of the Peaks.

GENERAL FEATURES

The Obsidian Sanctum has the following general features:

Terrain. The magical forces coursing through the obsidian are almost palpable. All the Sanctum is glossy, reflective obsidian. Anyone with the Stonecunning trait or proficiency with mason's tools recognizes the obsidian as having been magically created.

Inscriptions. All the writing on their walls, tablets, and artifacts is in Common and Abyssal.

Light. The runes within the walls shed light that is magnified by the sleek obsidian—the area is well lit.

Smells and Sounds. In the undamaged sections of the Sanctum, the air is fresh and cool. In the damaged sections, or where there are bodies, the air reeks of baked rock or blood.

The Sanctum Wards. The Sanctum is under the effects of a *forbiddance* spell; however, the corruption caused by the shard's presence is causing it to fail. Corrupted sections of the Sanctum aren't protected by the ward and are prone to Obsidian Sanctum Effects (see below).

An entry at the beginning of each area's description describes whether the wards are intact or corrupted by the *Soulmonger*—rendering it vulnerable to Obsidian Sanctum Effects. Every half-hour of in-game time, roll a 1d12 and consult the Obsidian Sanctum Effects table below.

Alternatively, a DM may choose when an effect occurs. Each effect is limited to the immediate area of the adventurers. Pick a 20-foot radius circle centered on the most adventurers. Any effect that requires a saving throw has a DC of 17.

Planar Travel. Sections where the *forbiddance* effect has been damaged or corrupted should be viable for navigating through adjacent planes to circumvent obstacles and spy on or surprise enemies. However, each adjacent plane contains its own hazards.

The adventurers may freely foray into either the **Border Ethereal** or the **Shadowfell**. Several clues and rewards exist for those that think to do so.

Orrery. An arcane device, the Orrery in The Chamber of Depthless Mirrors (see **Area M**) manipulates divination magic cast within or at anyone or anything in Sanctum. Such spells

have either no effect or a misleading one. Deactivating it restores the use of divination magic.

Dendar Talismans. Being attuned to a *Dendar talisman*, a black serpent coiled about a blue sphere, grants the wearer the ability to use *teleport*, *plane shift*, and cast divination spells within the Sanctum. The talismans also let the attuned creature see the Ethereal Plane and he or she may spend an action to shift into the Ethereal or back. Attuning to a talisman takes a minute. A talisman's magic fades once the Orrery is deactivated.

OBSIDIAN SANCTUM EFFECTS

The Sanctum is suffused with elemental magic from the ancient volcanos and fire spirits who have formed Chult. The volcanos, however, are responding violently to the presence of the *Soulmonger*. These effects cannot be counterspelled. Areas are a 20-foot radius circle centered on the most adventurers.

OBSIDIAN SANCTUM EFFECTS

1d12	Effect (DC 17)
1-2	The acrid stench of sulfur issues from a crack. <i>Stinking cloud</i> affects the area.
3-4	A burst of heat flares from a fissure. Everyone in the area is struck by <i>burning hands</i> .
5-6	Geysers of flame and lava erupt from the cracked floor. <i>Fire storm</i> affects the area.
6-8	Your ears pop and ring, and a subtle pressure fills the area. The runes across the smooth obsidian dim. A 7th level <i>dispel magic</i> affects the area.
9	Caustic fumes pour into the area, clawing at your throat and eyes. <i>Cloudkill</i> affects the area.
10	An aurora shines through the area. The energy strengthens your mind and will. Every spellcaster in the area regains five total levels of spell slots (e.g., one level 5 spell, three level 1 and one level 2 spells, etc.).
11	A slight vibration whispers through, creating a weight against your skin and mind. You feel yourself being closed off to a connection you once had. Each creature within the chamber or hall unattunes from a random magic item.
12	An understanding of the Weave's threads settles into your mind. Attuning items requires only a minute. This can also, at the DM's discretion, undo the Unstable Resonance above. This effect lasts an hour.

THE SHADOWFELL

The Shadowfell, also called the Plane of Shadow, is a dimension of black, gray, and white. The Shadowfell overlaps the Material Plane. Aside from the colorless landscape, it appears like the Material Plane. Landmarks are recognizable, but they are twisted and distorted reflections of what exists on the Material.

Complications. The presence of the *Soulmonger* has caused negative energy to gather in the Shadowfell. Creatures in the Shadowfell are surrounded by clinging blackness (treat as a 5th level *darkness* spell). Spells that would dispel the *darkness* instead reduce it to dim light.

Additionally, adventurers that start their turn within the Shadowfell must succeed on a DC 18 Constitution saving throw or take 16 (3d10) environmental necrotic damage. The creature's hit point maximum is reduced by an amount equal to the necrotic damage taken. The reduction lasts until the target finishes a long rest or leaves the Shadowfell. If the *darkness* is dispelled, the necrotic damage ceases.

THE BORDER ETHEREAL

From the Border Ethereal, a traveler can see into whatever plane it overlaps, but that plane appears muted and indistinct, its colors blurring into each other. Ethereal denizens watch the Material Plane as though peering through distorted and frosted glass; as a result of this distortion, they can't see anything further than 30 feet into the other plane. Conversely, the Ethereal Plane is usually invisible to those on the overlapped planes, except with the aid of magic.

Complications: The Border Ethereal subsection for each area is marked with either Calm or Turbulent to indicate the status of the Ethereal realm at that location. Calm areas are safe without additional environmental dangers.

Turbulent areas have the following effect: The distorted fabric of the Weave has spilled into the Ethereal Plane. After every minute characters spend in the Ethereal Plane, they must succeed on a DC 15 Intelligence saving throw or be shunted into the nearest unoccupied space on the Material Plane, taking 14 (4d6) environmental force damage.

CROSS PLANAR INTERACTION

Normally, creatures in the Border Ethereal or Shadowfell can't attack creatures on the overlapped plane, and vice versa. A traveler on the Ethereal Plane or Shadowfell is invisible and utterly silent to someone on the overlapped plane, and solid objects on the overlapped plane don't hamper the movement of a creature in the Border Ethereal only. The exceptions are certain magical effects (including anything made of magical force) and living beings. Usually only the Border Ethereal allows creatures to see adjacent planes. However, being attuned to a *Dendar talisman* allows creatures to view any adjacent plane and spend an action to shift between them.

STORY AWARDS INVOLVING THE RED WIZARDS

Adventurers with story awards making them foes of the Thayans have disadvantage on Charisma checks while those with story awards making them friends have advantage on Charisma checks.

C. OUTSIDE THE SANCTUM

STORY BEAT

In this part, the adventurers delve into the Obsidian Sanctum. They meet the friendly Thayans and learn of events in the

Sanctum. These allies can provide important information and magical aid.

The adventurers also learn of the significance of the **Dendar talismans**.

Wards. Intact

You step through the glittering air above the glowing teleportation circle. The world warps and stretches and a feeling of weightlessness engulfs you. Time seems to ebb. Suddenly, the Peaks of Flame tower before you as walls of jagged rock. A thick column of smoke pours from the top, lightning dances through it. Ash falls from a blackened sky.

At the base of the barren mountain is an equally barren plane, stripped of vegetation and life. All around are signs of a magical battle. Craters and fissures scar the area and the torn forms of golems rest in heaps of twisted iron, broken stone, and smashed clay.

There are reeking piles of dust and sludge dotting the battlefield.

This is where the Red Wizards were ambushed by the minions of Orcus. A successful DC 17 Intelligence (Arcana) check reveals that the sludge piles are the remains of scores of defeated fiends.

While blood is present, there aren't any bodies—Thayan or otherwise. Instead, tracks lead down into the ravine toward the entrance of the Sanctum, hidden at the bottom of a deep ravine between two volcanic mountains. The Red Wizards collapsed part of it to form a ramp leading to the hidden gates of the Sanctum.

As the adventurers reach the ravine, read or paraphrase the following:

Just as the dream revealed to you, the entrance to the Obsidian Sanctum rests below, tucked away at the bottom of a narrow ravine between two smoldering mountains. It appears as though part of the ravine has been recently collapsed, forming a ramp towards the Sanctum's entrance.

The gates of the Sanctum—once disguised to resemble the surrounding stone—are blasted and broken.

As the adventurers reach the bottom of the ravine:

The huge antechamber is constructed of perfectly polished obsidian, seamless and uniform as though formed from a single piece. Light sources reflect brightly across the glossy surface.

Gathered here are a dozen red-robed humans, sitting or lying with bandaged heads, arms, and legs. Three uninjured humans in red are making rounds, administering salves and bandages. Eight heavily damaged constructs are being tended to by two arguing wizards.

Corpses lie to either side of the chamber: to the east are neatly arranged bodies draped in red, and to the west are serpentine humanoids thrown into a pile.

This entry chamber is a circular room 300-feet wide and 150-feet tall.

There are seventeen Thayans here: twelve badly wounded red wizards of Thay (all easily identifiable as such due to their ritual tattoos, which designate rank, specialization, family, and religious affiliations), two Thayans administering first aid, and two struggling to repair the damaged golems. They are all overseen by Zonaras Xans.

Characters investigating the area that succeed on a DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check detect several *glyphs of warding (wall of force)* placed around the gathering as a safeguard.

If the adventurers reveal themselves in a non-threatening manner, or agree to a peaceful talk, read the following:

The wizards seem startled to see you. A few try to stand, but wince from the effort. A tall man with a shaven head and intricate tattoos sets his staff down and approaches you with his hands held up in a placating gesture. His eyes go wide as he sees your weapons. "I recognize adventurers when I see them, and successful ones at that. I presume your goal is the same as ours, although for different reasons, certainly. We have no wish for violence or bloodshed, gods know we've seen enough today. Perhaps we can peacefully parley. I am not foolish or naive enough to waste your time with an attempt to persuade you from your course, but please understand I am in a difficult position. I am, however, willing to trade valuable information for magical healing for my people."

One of the damaged golems attempts to activate but falls forward onto its face. The Red Wizard repairing it sighs.

If the adventurers attack, the glyphs activate—surrounding the wounded in *walls of force*. **Zonaras Xans** (a lawful neutral human **archmage**) beseeches the adventurers for peaceful resolution. He's honest and concerned for his people, but also bitter and angry with the Red Wizard leadership. If combat looks unavoidable, Zonaras opens a portal, moving most of the wounded to a safer location (he wears a *Dendar talisman* allowing him to use such magic).

AIDING THE RED WIZARDS

Zonaras has no issues with the adventurers eliminating the zulkirs who abandoned him; it'd herald an easy promotion for him.

There are twelve seriously wounded Thayans. Any degree of healing stabilizes them. He won't beg, but Zonaras' resources are running thin. For each spell, potion, or healer's kit usage the adventurers provide, Zonaras reciprocates with one of the following. Also, adventurers who succeed on a DC 18 Charisma (Deception, Intimidation, or Persuasion) check gain information. This is a good opportunity to provide inspiration for good roleplaying.

In exchange for their aid, he provides the following information:

- "The zulkirs and their contingents left us for dead, pressing on and taking most of our supplies."
- "The group within is led by Vallrath Sakar (the zulkir of evocation) and Akhara Nihil (the zulkir of conjuration). Each has their own retinue of knights and golems. There are also about two dozen men-at-arms and a dozen stone golems led by archmagi."
- "Divination magic is acting strangely. Even basic spells such as *detect magic* provides unusual results. I presume it involves the ward within the walls of the Sanctum. The complex is also protected by *forbiddance*."

RED WIZARDS AND THE SOULMONGER

If asked about the *Soulmonger* shard, he may respond with the following:

- "The zulkirs are united behind Szass Tam. Our Grand Patriarch has commanded us to capture the *Soulmonger* or destroy it if capture is impossible. I think Tam fears what such a device could do if modified to target a lich's phylactery."
- "I believe Akhara Nihil, the zulkir of conjuration, carries an object designed to contain the *Soulmonger's* power. I saw the two zulkirs discussing who could be trusted to carry an **opal amulet** until the time came to use it."
- "The last I heard from the zulkirs, they had come across the dormitories of the yuan-ti and were slaughtering them there."

RED WIZARDS AND THE OBSIDIAN SANCTUM

If asked about the yuan-ti, the Obsidian Sanctum, or the battle outside, Zonaras responds with the following:

- "This place is very old with powerful magic woven into the very stone. A few of my fellows have noticed instabilities in the energy flowing through."

Something is going on deeper inside, something dramatic enough to damage the wards—a feat unmatched by centuries of volcanic eruptions.”

- “The Sanctum itself appears wrought of powerful elemental magic, the kind I’ve only read about performed during the construction of the City of Brass. I wonder if there is a connection. I wish I had more time to study this place.”
- “As we prepared to breach the glyphs protecting the gates, we were beset by a horde of fiends and undead. If we weren’t already prepared for battle, we wouldn’t have fared as well as we did.”
- “It would appear the soul-stealing quality of the *Soulmonger* has not gone unnoticed by the princes of the Abyss, and the presence of devourers dispels all doubt as to whom opposes us: Orcus. The Demon Prince of Undeath no doubt casts his gaze upon us.”
- “Several yuan-ti purebloods infiltrated our society, stealing our arcane research. Several captured spies led us in the direction of this complex. Locating it once we arrived in Chult was difficult. The wards hiding it truly are impressive.”

If asked how the Red Wizards arrived to Chult or found the Sanctum considering it is cloaked from detection, he may respond with the following:

- “One of our longtime Chult agents was able to track a pureblood bringing rare spell components to the area of the Obsidian Sanctum. From there we were able to deduce the location.”
- “An agent of ours placed a magical beacon close to the Peaks as possible without the Sanctum’s *forbiddance* disrupting teleportation.”

THE RED WIZARDS ASKS FOR HELP

Zonaras asks the adventurers for help:

- “If you come across any wounded, help them and send them back here. Those not part of a zulkir’s personal retinue are here because they had to be. Some won’t be easy to talk with, but please try.”
- Those with the zulkirs are fanatics. They can’t be negotiated with. But show this to those who aren’t—it may help.” Zonaras hands the nearest character a bronze emblem with the symbol of a circle of seven stars. When shown to Thayans not around the zulkirs, it grants advantage to Charisma (Persuasion) checks.

If the adventurers heal all the wounded or raise any of the Thayans from death, Zonaras adds:

- “I wish I could do more for you in return, but at least let me tell of you what you might face. The zulkirs’ tattoos feed on magic, bolstering their

own. They are accompanied by Thayan knights—highly trained bodyguards bound to the zulkirs. The knights emit an aura that protects those around them. If you find yourself pitted against them, separate the wizards from their protectors. And be wary, the men-at-arms are vicious in melee. And by the gods, don’t let them find out I told you this. I feel safe doing so because of how this place distorts divination magic, so Tam can’t find out that way.”

- Zonaras hands the adventurers two *Dendar talismans* (see Treasure, below). “These magical amulets—as best as I can deduce—are bound to the Sanctum. They allow you to peer into and interact with the Ethereal plane. I’m not sure what this means, but I suspect it allows one to move unhindered by traps or other obstacles, or possibly gain access to areas or objects the yuan-ti wish to keep hidden.” A successful DC 25 Intelligence (Arcana) check reveals the properties and functions of the talismans, to allow teleportation, divination magic, and planar movement within the Sanctum as well as the ability to perceive and interact with the Ethereal Plane.

Investigating the dead beneath the red shrouds shows Thayan casualties. They are under the effects of *gentle repose*.

Investigating the yuan-ti reveals bodies in various states of hybridization, mostly broodguard and abominations. A DC 24 Intelligence (Investigation) check finds one *Dendar talisman*.

FACTION ASSIGNMENT: ZHENTARIM

Assisting Zonaras and the wounded Thayans counts as one of the needed two progression events for this mission.

THE FINAL WARNING

If the adventurers were friendly with the Red Wizards, Zonaras warns them to ward themselves against heat and volcanic gases. When scouting, his familiar saw breaches.

If the adventurers kill the wounded Thayans, they earn no experience. If the adventurers attack first but stop and proceed peacefully when Zonaras beseeches them and the adventurers have not killed anyone, or they *raise dead* those who they killed, award full experience for the encounter.

TRICKS OF THE TRADE

The Adventurer’s Fame. The Thayans in the chamber have heard of the adventurers’ deeds and exploits. They speak honestly and with respect. A few sheepishly inquire about the adventurers’ heroics.

Observing the Thayans. These low-ranking wizards are tired and drained from the intense fighting. They appear to be of little threat and are trying to tend to their wounded and emergency golem repairs (which aren't going well). They have dwindling medical supplies.

XP Award

If they treat peacefully with the Thayans, award each character 5,000 XP.

Treasure

If they heal all of the Thayans or raise any of them from death, Zonaras gives the party two *Dendar talismans* worth 1,000 gp each. A third *Dendar talisman* is found on the dead yuan-ti.

D. INTO THE SANCTUM

Wards. Intact

You enter a dark hallway, spacious and arched. The glossy obsidian of the passage is flawlessly smooth and spotless, reflecting light dazzlingly. It appears to be carved and polished beyond mere mundane means.

The hall appears to stretch north hundreds of feet to a set of double doors. They are open.

The arched hall is 15-feet tall and 10-feet wide. The passage stretches for 300 feet and then comes to a four-way junction.

E. THE DORMITORY JUNCTION

Wards. Intact

The double doors are blasted open. This junction is a cross section with doorways directly to the south, where you came from, the west, the east, and the north. All the doors are either smashed or knocked from their frames. The north is the continuation of the long hall from the south while the east and west lead to massive circular chambers.

Yuan-ti bodies are strewn across the floor, blasted and blistered by powerful spells. Two Thayan stone golems lie toppled in the center of the junction, heads and arms cleanly sheared off by an incredibly sharp blade.

Also among the remnants of the battlefield are smashed, multi-armed statues of obsidian snake creatures. Each arm ends in an obsidian blade.

The ringing of metal on metal and screams echo from the eastern chamber. All is silent from the western chamber but for the faint running of water and crackling of fire.

This area is where two halls intersect. The ground is littered with a dozen yuan-ti bodies—mostly those of broodguards and malisons.

A successful DC 20 Intelligence (Arcana) check identifies the smashed statues as three destroyed obsidian golems that resembled six-armed snake-women with the heads of vipers. Each of their six arms ends with a keen-edged blade. Inspecting the Thayan golems reveals that something supernaturally sharp sheared the golems apart.

Treasure

Characters searching the yuan-ti corpses recover 2,000 gp worth of ornate jewelry.

F. THE EAST DORMITORY

Wards. Intact

You enter into an immense hemispherical room, hundreds of feet across with a five-tiered ziggurat carved of green stone rising high from the floor. Smoke pours from its doors and burning tents and bloodied bodies surround the structure.

A group of humans are clashing with yuan-ti who are retreating up the ziggurat's stairs.

Some of the humans wear red robes and are protected by a semi-circle of men-at-arms, while two stone constructs trudge up the stairs after the fleeing yuan-ti.

All the snake folk present resemble serpents with muscular arms and six heads.

If either force has noticed you, neither seem to care for the moment as they are focused on the foes before them.

The stairs descending from where you stand are wet with blood and littered with yuan-ti bodies and corpses wearing red.

The adventurers enter the 600-foot wide chamber on a 60-foot wide landing from which a 15-foot wide staircase descends a further 150 feet to the ziggurat.

The Thayan force is led by two **archmagi**, along with four **warlords** and two **stone golem guardians** attuned to the archmagi.

ADJUSTING THE FIGHT (THAYAN FORCES)

Here are recommendations for adjusting this combat encounter. These are not cumulative.

- **Very Weak:** Stone golem guardians' and warlord's hit points are each reduced to 100.
- **Weak:** Warlords hit points are reduced to 100.
- **Strong:** Add an **archmage** and a **stone golem guardian**.
- **Very Strong:** Add an **archmage**, a **stone golem guardian**, and a **warlord**.

The yuan-ti force is comprised of five **anathemas**.

ADJUSTING THE FIGHT (YUAN-TI FORCES)

Here are recommendations for adjusting this combat encounter. These are not cumulative.

- **Very Weak:** Remove two **anathemas**.
- **Weak:** Remove an **anathema**.
- **Strong:** Add an **anathema**.
- **Very Strong:** Add two **anathemas**.

Once the living quarters of prominent yuan-ti, the ziggurat has five, 20-foot levels. The interior has collapsed and is filled with burning rubble. There is a great sandpit for snakes to bathe in and a pond filled with running water fed by a waterfall that crashes from a specialized type of *decanter of endless water* powered by the Sanctum (removing or stoppering the decanter destroys it). The chamber holds many comforts: clean water, fresh air, waste disposal, a magical larder, and other luxuries.

VIEWING THE CHAMBER FROM OTHER PLANES

Status. *Calm, no save required.*

Across the walls and domed ceiling are carvings that can only be seen from the Ethereal Plane or Shadowfell, or with the ability to perceive either plane. They are words and images of praise to Dendar. There is also an ornate chest located at the bottom of the ziggurat holding a *scroll of regeneration* as well as 7,000 gp worth of religious objects.

OBSERVING THE BATTLE

The yuan-ti and Thayans try to eliminate each other before attempting to murder these new intruders.

The Thayans have the upper hand and defeat the yuan-ti in only a few minutes (DM's discretion), but not without severe losses. If the adventurers let the battle play out, the yuan-ti are killed and the Thayans suffer heavy losses—halving their numbers. The Thayans cast *haste* on the remaining troops before attacking the adventurers but cast *dominate person* if a more advantageous opportunity presents itself. The adventurers may attempt diplomacy at any time.

INTERACTING WITH THE THAYANS OR YUAN-TI

The Thayans are arrogant fanatics and terrified of Szass Tam while the yuan-ti are insane zealots dedicated to Dendar. Parleying with the warring groups should be possible but difficult. It is possible to force a tentative peace between the two groups and convince the Thayans to join Zonaras and the yuan-ti to flee. Both forces know that the fate of the *Soulmonger* shard is now out of their hands and this skirmish won't influence it.

Negotiating a cease fire requires a successful DC 27 Charisma (Deception, Intimidation, or Persuasion) check—again awarding inspiration for

good roleplaying. Afterwards, the adventurers may question either group with a DC 23 Charisma (Persuasion, Deception, or Intimidation) check. Both groups are hesitant to reveal information, but they also don't want to die.

WHAT THE THAYANS KNOW

Interrogating or questioning the Thayans may provide the following information:

- The main Thayan force continued, chasing the yuan-ti towards the heart of the Sanctum.
- The zulkirs and knights are still alive.
- Vallrath Sakar, the zulkir of evocation, and Akhara Nihil, the zulkir of conjuration, lead the war host.
- Information the adventurers missed while speaking with Zonaras may be available here.

WHAT THE YUAN-TI KNOW

Interrogating or questioning the yuan-ti may provide the following information:

- The yuan-ti lords have moved deeper in to guard the artifact from the red-robed invaders.
- "The presence of the blessed artifact is causing problems to the Sanctum. The powerful entropic aura of the shard is eating away at the protective wards, causing the volcanic pressures and heat to crack open the walls and spill in with devastating results. This is a small price to pay as the age of the true people dominating the world is nigh."

If asked about the Obsidian Sanctum, the field of anti-divination, the *forbiddance* spell, the following can be learned (the adventurers have a second opportunity to learn the following information in **The Obsidian Archive** later on):

- The yuan-ti admit the Obsidian Sanctum was built with the minor aid of an efreeti prince from the City of Brass. His name is Rashidi al-Zahar ibn Rath, a lord of elemental magic who sells his magical services to mortals. The yuan-ti purchased his assistance in crafting the Sanctum by aiding in imprisoning his rival. A suit of armor was chosen as an insult to the imprisoned efreeti sultana as she would be forced to protect mortals, who she disdains.
- The Sanctum was to serve as both a secret vault and base used by the yuan-ti and Rashidi's allies. However, the yuan-ti did not want to share.
- As the Sanctum neared its completion, the yuan-ti turned on Rashidi, sealing him within an arcane battery to fuel a device that protects the Sanctum. Both the *forbiddance* spell and the field misguiding divination magic are controlled by this device.

- If the efreeti prince is freed, the device will power down. Also, turning the device off frees Rashidi. In either case, the foolish efreeti will seek vengeance.
- The magical item the yuan-ti were supposed to be stewards of was a suit of armor holding the bound spirit of his chief rival. The suit of armor was placed within the room, near enough to Rashidi to taunt him (the yuan-ti laughs, seeming to find this hilarious).
- The yuan-ti priests carry *Dendar talismans*, which permits them access to certain sections of the Sanctum.

A DC 25 Intelligence (Arcana or Religion) check reveals that Rashidi al-Zahar ibn Rath was an efreeti lord who indirectly sided with the azer after the building of the City of Brass.

He was eventually found out by a rival and, imprisoned for 1001 years (see **Roleplaying Rashidi** in **Area M**).

FACTION ASSIGNMENT: ZHENTARIM

Intimidating, tricking, or persuading the Thayans to stand down and fall back to the entrance chamber counts as one of the needed two progression events for this mission.

TREASURE

The Thayans carry a total of 5,500 gp worth of spell components and 4,500 gp worth of mundane arms and armor. The yuan-ti carry a total of 5,000 gp of gem-studded jewelry. There are religious relics worth 10,000 gp and three *Dendar talismans* worth 1,000 gp each within the ziggurat. Lastly, characters searching the Ethereal plane in this area find a chest containing 7,000 gp.

ROLEPLAY OPPORTUNITY

Interacting with the Fighting Forces. The yuan-ti are a highly intelligent and pragmatic race, not borne to grudges or anger. The Thayan leaders are genius wizards who value personal safety and power. Neither side wishes to die but both currently see no alternative but battle. The yuan-ti are overly confident in their victory so see it as amusing to reveal information to those who will soon die.

G. THE WEST DORMITORY AND GARDENS

Wards. Intact

You enter a great hemispherical room hundreds of feet across. The chamber is filled with scores of trampled gardens and smoldering huts. It appears this was a small, in-door farming village, but no longer. The room is a shattered mess. Bodies of yuan-ti and red-uniformed men-at-arms litter the floor and stairs and smoke billows from the many burning structures.

A waterfall streams from the center of the domed ceiling to splash into an artificial pond along the western curve of the chamber.

This chamber is 600-feet wide and 300-feet tall. The adventurers enter from a wide ledge with a staircase that descends 150 feet into the room.

This was the living quarters of the lower classes of the yuan-ti, mostly purebloods and malisons, who oversaw food production. Before the chamber was devastated, it was as vibrant and flourishing as a jungle, with an underground orchard and many vegetable gardens magically enhanced to yield massive crops. Now, though, the place is a smoldering battlefield.

The waterfall feeding the pond and gardens pours from a specialized type of *decanter of endless water* powered by the Sanctum (removing or stoppering this decanter destroys it).

VIEWING THE CHAMBER FROM OTHER PLANES

Status. *Calm, no save required.*

There are images and words across the walls and ceiling. They are praises to Dendar as well as yuan-ti family trees of purebloods.

Part of the writing reveals the locations of shrines and offerings from individual families. The adventurers can use the information to locate a hidden chest holding 5,000 gp.

TREASURE

Characters searching the garden chamber that also succeed on a DC 24 Intelligence (Investigation) check find 10,000 gp worth of jewelry and gem-studded relics, as well as a *potion of flying*. Lastly, characters searching the Ethereal plane in this area find a chest containing 5,000 gp.

H. THE BROKEN HALLS

Wards. Corrupted: *forbiddance* gone, divinations blocked, Obsidian Sanctum Effects occur

A terrible heat begins to flood the passage, washing towards you like an open oven. Ahead, sparks flash against the obsidian, appearing so much like a distant lightning storm. As you move ahead, cracks appear in the walls.

Where the glossy walls have been ruptured, energy spits from the surface as whatever magic flowing through the stone bleeds out.

An intense heat like a blast furnace pours from the wounds in the stone, causing the air to blur and waver. An acrid, burning smell emits from the fractures.

Farther down the passage can be seen the angry red of heated stone along with the dancing sparks, which have become more violent, bolts zapping from wall to wall.

This hallway is 300-feet long and leads to another hemispherical chamber.

Characters proficient in Survival realize that the temperature is dangerously hot, and the air is tainted with poisonous, volcanic gases.

Characters proficient in Arcana identify the bursts of sparks and light leaking from the walls as strands of the Weave moving and working in unpredictable ways—causing arcane energy to wax and wane from moment to moment. A DC successful 22 Intelligence (Arcana) check reveals that the powerful magic has been damaged by powerful forces of decay.

With the enchantments weakened by the presence of the *Soulmonger* shard, the volcanic heat and pressure is starting to split open the walls.

As the adventurers reach the half-way point of the 300-foot passage, read the following:

The sweltering heat becomes blistering. Unprotected skin begins to char, and metal armor becomes unbearably hot. The air vibrates and reeks of charred rock and choking gasses. The polished walls crackle with energy around fissures of molten rock, as if struggling to close the red wounds.

There are also the smoldering remains of a golem and several dead yuan-ti, cooking in the heat. The smell is dreadful.

At least two Obsidian Sanctum Effects (roll randomly or choose) occurs as the adventurers move through the tunnel. Shifting to the Shadowfell or Ethereal Plane protects from this danger and allows passage further in, but there are hazards in each plane (see the **General Features** section).

VIEWING THE CHAMBER FROM OTHER PLANES

Status. *Turbulent, every minute requires a DC 15 Intelligence save or be ejected to the Material Plane, taking 14 (4d6) force damage.*

Viewing the passage shows the uncontrolled magical energy and bleeding runes as they are slowly unwoven by the presence of the *Soulmonger*. A DC 24 Intelligence (Arcana) check indicates magical damage of a necromantic nature to the whole complex.

I. THE GREAT RIFT

Wards. Corrupted, *forbiddance* gone, divinations blocked, Obsidian Sanctum Effects occur more frequently

STORY BEAT

During this part, the adventurers see the ever-increasing damage brought to the world by the *Soulmonger* shard. They explore the rooms to obtain valuable information and treasure. And they deal with the fissure.

An immense fissure has split this room. The magic of the Sanctum prevented the destruction of the chamber and preserved the treasures within despite the place being bisected.

The contents of each half are still present, knocked over and spilled but unharmed. To continue deeper into the Sanctum, the adventurers must navigate the fissure and cross through each half of the sundered chamber, see **Crossing the Fissure and the Lava** below.

The great fissure is enclosed save for a few cracks in the roof that lead to long shafts to the surface. It is 1,100-feet long, 150-feet deep, and 200-feet across. The bottom of the fissure is covered by a pool of lava.

Once the adventurers reach the end of the 300 feet passage, read the following:

As you make your way through the damaged passage, the sweltering heat eases and the reek of charred rock fades. Orange light creeps down the hallway towards you, stretching eerily across the glossy surface. You can see the end ahead as it opens into another chamber. But as you near, you see the edifice is split in half by a vast fissure boiling with lava.

A powerful wind whistle through the space, an updraft from the pools of lava 50 feet below. It tugs at your clothes and hair. The fissure is immense, hundreds of feet long, dozens of feet wide. It reaches 100 feet above you and 50 feet below to the glowing pools of lava that seethe across the floor.

You can see the other half of this chamber across the fissure. There are statues, urns, and shelves. It appears the powerful magic of the Sanctum kept the pieces intact even as this mighty geological event sundered the structure.

This half of the circular room, the one you stand in, has been neatly cracked by the fissure. Despite the damage and thick covering of volcanic dust, the chamber seems stable. There is a large altar standing against the curve of the western wall.

The hemi-spherical chamber is 150-feet wide and 150-high at its highest point. A detailed onyx statue of a great serpent coiled around a planet made from a polished sphere of lapis lazuli with malachite continents and islands rests on the altar.

Anyone proficient with History knows the planet is Toril while a successful DC 15 Intelligence (Religion) check reveals the snake to be Dendar, the Night Serpent.

VIEWING THE CHAMBER FROM OTHER PLANES

Status. *Turbulent, every minute requires a DC 15 Intelligence save or be ejected to the Material Plane, taking 14 (4d6) force damage.*

Adventurers see that the lava is cool and solidified on adjacent planes and can be crossed safely. There are no Obsidian Sanctum events on adjacent planes.

TREASURE

The statue is heavy (weighing 500 lbs.) but is worth 10,000 gp. Bundles of rare incense have been placed around the altar, worth a total of 2,000 gp. There is also a scroll tube containing a *scroll of resurrection*.

CROSSING THE FISSURE AND THE LAVA

The crossing is 200-feet wide and the pool of lava flooding the fissure is 10-feet deep. Two Obsidian Sanctum Effects occur as the adventurers cross the fissure (descriptions may need to be amended to fit the location as there is no floor).

Flying or teleporting across the lava is the most obvious choice, but clever thinking can be used here. Characters succeeding at a DC 25 Strength (Athletics) check may be able to hoist huge chunks of stone to create a bridge, while others succeeding on a DC 25 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check may be able to dash across the lava fast enough to avoid damage. Clever characters might even use cold spells to cool the lava enough to safely cross small sections at a time.

LAVA

Direct contact with lava does 44 (8d10) fire damage per turn and counts as quicksand, a DC 10 + 2 for each foot sunk Strength (Athletics) check to escape. An adventurer sinks one foot per turn, two if he or she struggles. A DC 27 Strength (Athletics) check is needed to "swim" through it, failure causes the adventurer to sink. Being within 5 feet of lava does 22 (4d10) fire damage.

Lava counts as water for the purposes of spells or abilities that allow *water walking* or *water breathing*.

J. THE SERPENT SHRINE AND ARCHIVE: NORTH HALF OF THE CHAMBER

Wards. *Corrupted, forbiddance gone, divinations blocked, Obsidian Sanctum Effects occur*

This is the other half of the sundered eastern chamber and it directly across the fissure from its twin. As the adventurers enter, read or paraphrase the following:

This broken chamber is the north half of the room across the fissure. The floor is coated in a thick layer of ash. The walls contain dozens of alcoves holding polished obsidian tablets.

In the western curve of the chamber are nine greenstone slabs, five of which hold elaborate sarcophagi with ornate urns atop them. Each is decorated with distinct images and glyphs. One of the urns is shattered and defiled and the sarcophagi is open and empty.

At the center of the room is a heavy quartz table scattered with ink bottles and rolled scrolls.

To the north are a set of double doors. They are open and lead to a long hallway. The stone of this passage is undamaged and the air cool and fresh.

The circular chamber is 150-feet wide and 150-tall.

Characters proficient in Religion realize that the sarcophagi and urns belong to yuan-ti heroes, and each boasts of the accomplishments of a yuan-ti champion. Examples include:

- Zalhu-Zalha, serpent knight of Dendar, slayer of elves, wielder of the blessed *bloodmoon blade* and inheritor of the sun-scaled crown.
- Sisshava, grand matron and high priestess, mother of legions, she who destroys cities with her great plagues.
- Shokosh, peerless assassin and taker of lives, grandmaster of the shadow arts who works Dendar's will across the Sword Coast.
- Talhallianhex, the Saurian-Tor of Delselar, Autarch of the Walking Ziggurat, great summoner and artificer who forges many wonders and weapons for the true people.

The fifth is shattered and empty, fragments have most of their images and words scraped away. One word is easily recognizable in Abyssal—"Traitor."

The word "traitor" is repeatedly written over the name "Ishzara." The broken urn is empty. Harpers or anyone proficient in History recognizes the name. Ishzara is a yuan-ti pureblood who forsook her kind and joined the Harpers.

A successful DC 20 Intelligence (Arcana) check reveals the purpose of the sarcophagi and urns. They're tied to a specific yuan-ti, magically raising them from death. Each urn holds the components required.

TRAP: THE SARCOPHAGI AND URNS

Simple trap (level 17–20, dangerous threat)

The sarcophagi and urns are protected by dark magic.

Trigger. Any non-yuan-ti disturbing one of the sarcophagi or urns (except Ishzara's broken urn) triggers a *harm* spell.

Effect. The disturber is targeted by a *harm* spell (DC 16).

Countermeasures. A *dispel magic* (DC 16) removes the trap as does shattering the urns from a distance. Shattering an urn destroys 2000 gp of treasure.

The sarcophagi are filled with magically preserved blood.

Each of the five urns contains a gem-studded ivory statue of a yuan-ti, along with valuable spell components for various spells. A successful DC 20 Intelligence (Arcana) check identifies these as components for spells such as *clone*, *contingency*, *resurrection*, *scrying*, and *locate creature* among others.

VIEWING THE CHAMBER FROM OTHER PLANES

Status. *Turbulent, every minute requires a DC 15 Intelligence save or be ejected to the Material Plane, taking 14 (4d6) force damage.*

The chamber has a hidden chest only accessible from the Ethereal Plane containing five diamonds each worth 1,000 gp and rare ink worth 5,000 gp. Written on the walls in glowing ink are the plans to summon Dendar the Night Serpent to Toril using this Obsidian Complex. Key to this plan is an artifact capable of influencing souls. Also, written on the walls in glowing ink are the plans for the construction of the Orrery. This counts as obtaining information for the Divination Magic, **Faction Assignment (Harpers)**.

THE SHELVES AND TABLETS

The shelves carved into the walls are alcoves holding obsidian tablets. The tablets record the construction of the Obsidian Sanctum and the history of the yuan-ti, including prophecies of their return to domination. At the center of the room is a quartz table holding a collection of maps, and jars of rare inks worth 2,000 gp.

An adventurer examining the tablet may attempt a DC 22 Intelligence (Arcana) check (being attuned to a *Dendar talisman* grants advantage on this check) to identify a form of psychic technology akin to Qualith (the "written" language of the mind flayers), but cruder and more dangerous in form.

TRAP: THE PSYCHIC TABLETS

Simple trap (level 17–20, dangerous threat)

The yuan-ti obsidian tablets harbor guarded knowledge.

Trigger: Any non-yuan-ti "reading" a tablet must make a DC 18 Intelligence save (being attuned to a *Dendar talisman* provides advantage).

Effect: Failure results in 42 (12d6) psychic damage as images, impressions, and emotions bombard the mind. On a successful save, the tablet is mastered, and the information contained within floats gently into the mind. The save is only made once to interact with all the tablets.

Countermeasure: A *dispel magic* (DC 16) removes the trap as does shattering the tablet. Shattering the tablet destroys the information within.

The obsidian tablets reveal the following:

- The Sanctum was built using elemental magic with the aid of a efreeti prince from the City of Brass. His name is mentioned as Rashidi al-Zahar ibn Rath. The yuan-ti purchased his assisting in crafting the Sanctum by aiding him in imprisoning a rival in a suit of armor. Then, they sealed Rashidi within a great machine.
- The tablets cover any information the yuan-ti might have given in the **East Dormitory**.
- The whole of the Sanctum is crafted in the shape of a magical sigil. An especially large room called the Chamber of Depthless Mirrors is mentioned. Within is a device that controls divination magic, the shape of the complex assists with this.
- During the time of their ancient empire, the yuan-ti record a war with a race of squid-faced creatures aboard flying, tentacled ships. It mentions that these creatures were one of the greatest threats faced by the yuan-ti during the height of their power. They even go so far as to imply they protected humanity from enslavement. This is an odd claim by the yuan-ti who are, themselves, a race of slavers.
- Dendar the Night Serpent is mentioned often, by many names: Eater of the World, Spawn of the First Nightmare, Devourer of Foul Visions, and Harbinger of the End.

These tablets would be worth a fair amount to any curious scholar, possibly as much as 6,000 gp.

FACTION ASSIGNMENT: HARPERS

Written on the walls in glowing ink that can only be seen from the Ethereal Plane or Shadowfell, or with the ability to perceive either plane, are the plans for the construction of the Orrery. Finding this counts as one of the two needed progression events for this mission.

TREASURE

Components and treasure worth 40,000 gp total, and an additional 10,000 gp worth of treasure hidden in the Ethereal Plane.

K. THE NORTH OBSIDIAN PASSAGE (THE EXIT FROM THE FISSURE)

Wards. Intact.

This is the continuation of the hallway you entered the fissure from. The passage is unusually cool and quiet after the roar of wind and lava. The walls and floor appear undamaged and stretch several hundred feet ahead, coming to a massive double door glowing with sigils.

The environmental protections and wards are intact here, filtering out the toxic gases and volcanic heat.

PART 2. THE INNER SANCTUM

Estimated Duration: 75 minutes

Wards. Intact, *forbiddance* present, divinations blocked, no Obsidian Sanctum Effects

STORY BEAT

In this part, the adventurers deal with the Orrery while avoiding its defenses. They meet the architect of the Sanctum who magically aids the adventurers, gifts them the *efreeti chain*, and provides information, including progression for **faction assignments (Harpers)** and the **secret mission (Order of the Gauntlet)**.

M. THE ORRERY AND THE CHAMBER OF DEPTHESS MIRRORS

Within this chamber is an arcane Orrery, a massive clockwork machine depicting orbiting planets and moons around a glowing sun. It provides several functions, the first and foremost is the ability to cloak the Obsidian Sanctum in a field that diverts, distorts, or destroys divination magic. Another function of the Orrery is to forecast auspicious moments, such as when Dendar the Night Serpent would be able to invade Faerûn.

Read or paraphrase the following when the adventurers enter the room:

A massive clockwork machine fills the entire space overhead, hanging hundreds of feet down from the ceiling and spreading hundreds of feet out.

Giant orbs resembling the cosmos of Toril silently orbit a brilliant sun. They are connected by elegant metal beams to the domed roof. Flashes of lightning jump between the spokes. All along the walls are enormous gears, chains, and other components slowly spinning or swinging.

Towards the eastern section of the chamber are a pile of yuan-ti corpses. On the other side of the chamber from where you entered is a 50-foot archway holding sealed doors of red obsidian.

Every surface of this chamber is flawlessly mirrored, infinitely reflecting the room's contents.

The chamber is 600 feet wide and 300 feet tall, and the machine fills most of the ceiling space.

THE ORRERY GUARDIANS (OBSIDIAN GOLEMS)

Four **obsidian golems** activate to defend the chamber. The golems are created in the shape of six-armed women with snake-like features, each with the sigil of Dendar engraved in their foreheads.

One of the Red Wizards in Part 3 currently is currently attuned to the hidden control panel and

has commanded the golems attack any creature who enters this chamber, including other Red Wizards.

ADJUSTING THE FIGHT

Here are recommendations for adjusting this combat encounter. These are not cumulative.

- **Very Weak:** Remove two **obsidian golems**.
- **Weak:** Remove an **obsidian golem**.
- **Strong:** Add an **obsidian golem**.
- **Very Strong:** Add two **obsidian golems**.

SECRET MISSION (ORDER OF THE GAUNTLET)

If the characters are pursuing the Order of the Gauntlet secret mission, add two **obsidian golems**.

THE CHAMBER OF THE ORRERY

Characters inspecting the yuan-ti bodies determine that they fell holding a defensive line—almost as if they were protecting something, yet there is nothing present to protect (this is a hint of where the **control console** is on the Border Ethereal).

The red obsidian doors do not open until the Orrery is disabled or turned off.

VIEWING THE CHAMBER FROM OTHER PLANES

Status: *Calm, no save required.*

There is a control panel in the Border Ethereal. A successful DC 22 Dexterity check made with a set of thieves' tools or a successful DC 22 Intelligence (Arcana) check (being attuned to a *Dendar talisman* grants advantage) deactivates the Orrery, shuts down the golems, or frees Rashidi.

The Orrery and the strange reflective surfaces of the walls and floor radiant intense magical energy.

A successful DC 22 Intelligence (Arcana) check reveals the true nature of the chamber—the Orrery draws divination spells and powers into the mirrors, which are depthless to such magic. Once caught within, they can be bent, warped, or lost, depending on the what the controller of the Orrery desires. The chamber can focus on any part of Chult.

The controller can also opt to enhance their own divination magic by spending a minute attuning to the control panel with a successful DC 22 Intelligence (Arcana) check (having read the tablets in the **Obsidian Archive** or being attuned to a *Dendar talisman* grants advantage to this check). Having done so, the Orrery powers down but not before bolstering the adventurer's divination spells. Spells of such school cast by the adventurer for the next 24 hours count as being under the effects of heightened, distant, and extended metamagic.

There is also a chest containing magical components for repairing the Orrery in case of damage (see Treasure).

TRICKS OF THE TRADE

The golems have disadvantage on attacks against creatures attuned to a *Dendar talisman*.

Golems have disadvantage on attacks and Dexterity-based saves and checks while balancing on the Orrery or gears. The giant-size gears and chains along the walls and ceiling may be ridden to gain height or used as perches to fire down. A DC 14 Dexterity (Acrobatics) or Strength (Athletics) check is required every turn (this isn't considered an action) to remain balanced. Failure indicates a potentially long fall.

LEGENDARY TRAP: THE ORRERY

Complex trap (level 17–20, deadly threat)

The Orrery room is a 600-foot-wide, 300-foot-tall hemisphere. The Orrery acts on initiative counts 20, 15, 10, and 5. These events occur until the Orrery is nullified. Individual parts may be targeted to shut off that power.

Each part has AC 15, 200 hit points, and is immune to poison and psychic damage. AC and hit points may be increased or decreased to suit party strength.

All powers may be targeted by *dispel magic* or *counterspell*, or otherwise negated by spells or abilities. A single *dispel* or *counterspell* stops that specific effect on all the golems for that round (e.g., using *counterspell* on the *heal* effect stops all golems from being healed for that round). Anyone proficient in Arcana realizes this.

Trigger: Entering the chamber, touching the Orrery, or damaging the golems.

Effect:

- **Golem Teleportation (Initiative 20).** An outer planet pulses with purple light and each golem teleports as if it had cast *dimension door* on itself, moving next to an adventurer.
- **Lunar Light (Initiative 15).** The Tears of Selûne pulse with multicolored light. The Orrery casts *faerie fire* on the closest adventurer (DC 14).
- **Orrery's Wrath (Initiative 10).** Electricity dances among the Orrery's spokes and a shower of sparks sprays the room. The Orrery casts *lightning bolt* (3rd level, DC 14) targeting the closest non-construct creature not attuned to a *Dendar talisman*.
- **Making Whole (Initiative 5).** The Toril planetary sphere glows brightly with emerald and sapphire. The Orrery casts *heal* on each obsidian golem. The spell effect has a 300-foot range and effects constructs.

Countermeasure: A DC 25 Intelligence (Arcana or Investigation) check deduces that the power source is the sun, located in the center of the device.

Shattering the sun powers the device down and frees Rashidi. It does not stop the golems (only the control panel can do that) but cancels the Orrery abilities. The sun sphere has AC 15 and 250 hit points. It is immune to fire, psychic, and poison damage. Access to the **control panel** on the Border Ethereal followed by the necessary successful checks also shuts the Orrery down.

SHUTTING OFF OR DESTROYING THE ORRERY

There is no obvious off switch for the device as it was never intended to cease functioning, but a

hidden one was constructed to shut the Orrery down when repairs or modifications were needed.

The *Soulmonger* has weakened Rashidi's prison, and he can weave flames into short messages near the sun, asking for assistance and telling the adventurers how to deactivate the Orrery.

Shutting down or destroying the Orrery allows divination magic to be cast within the Sanctum again by others not attuned to the control panel. It also renders the *Dendar talismans* non-magical.

THE TRAPPED EFREETI PRINCE

Rashidi al-Zahar ibn Rath is trapped in the sun of the Orrery, where the device draws from his elemental power.

Read or paraphrase the following when the Orrery is shutdown or destroyed:

A metallic grinding noise vibrates the whole room, shrieking and twisting as the apparatus shudders and stops. The mirrors then dim, seeming less reflective.

Above you the once bright sun fades to an icy sphere with a burning ember at its heart. A moment later the sphere begins to steam, drip, and melt. A sound of cracking ice fills the chamber then a pillar of fire stretches to the ceiling, blackening the metal, but quickly dies down to reveal a tall humanoid with red skin covered in tattoos that shimmer and dance like oil across water. He wears a set of chain armor studded with crimson gems.

The figure drifts down to stand before you and bows.

Rashidi is quite ecstatic to be freed and profusely thankful. However, he is polite and not prone to effusive shows of emotion. Rashidi can explain or answer a few questions:

- "My name is Prince Rashidi al-Zahar ibn Rath, seventeenth son of Rathiman the Wise, who is the Sultan of the Obsidian Mountains and Ruby Palace, Suzerain of the Sparkling Desert, and high vizier of the City of Brass, may his reign remain ceaseless and ever burning."
- Rashidi is a lord of elemental magic and rune craft who sells his magical services and arcane training to mortals. He assisted the yuan-ti with crafting the Sanctum after they aided him in ambushing and imprisoning a rival in an object. A suit of armor was chosen as an insult to the imprisoned efreeti sultana as she would be forced to indirectly protect mortals, who she disdains.
- Rashidi gifts his armor (*efreeti chain*) to the adventurers. Once its recipient is chosen, Rashidi assists the character in donning it—instantly attuning the wearer to the armor in the process.

- The Sanctum was to serve as both a secret vault and base used by the yuan-ti and Rashidi's allies.
- As the Sanctum neared its completion, the yuan-ti turned on Rashidi, capturing him and sealing him within his own device where he was used as an arcane battery. This device, the Orrery, controlled a field misguiding divination magic. The field could be focused on any region in the world.
- Rashidi can't assist with the fight with the Thayans or yuan-ti for the *Soulmonger* shard. He must tend to the Obsidian Sanctum, or it will collapse on everyone due to the effects of the *Soulmonger's* proximity. He must tend to emergency repairs.

Rashidi can cast *mass cure wounds* and *cure wounds* (6th level) once each.

ROLEPLAYING RASHIDI AL-ZAHAR IBN RATH

Rashidi is a merchant of arcane knowledge, selling and trading across the planes. He is overly polite but pragmatic with an appreciation for clever humor. He sided with the azer and was punished for it by a sultana who trapped him within an object where he was forced to grant wishes to mortals. During this time, he came to respect mortals for their tenacity and potential, and he beget a fire genasi bloodline known as the line of Rathiman.

After winning his freedom, he went about plotting his revenge. With the help of the yuan-ti, he was able to ambush and capture the sultana in a suit of magical armor. In return for their assistance, he constructed the Obsidian Sanctum. However, as it neared its completion, the yuan-ti betrayed and imprisoned him. There he waits still.

Quote: "You mortals hold the potential to burn as bright as any fire, however brief and bright your flame."

FACTION SECRET MISSION AND ASSIGNMENT

If asked by the Orrery or the Sanctum, Rashidi provides detailed information on both. This, combined with destroying the obsidian golems, achieves success for the **Secret Mission (Order of the Gauntlet)** and **Faction Assignment (Harpers)**. Some adventurers may not realize that they can simply ask Rashidi about the place, so prompt them by having Rashidi ask if there is information that would be helpful to them.

TRICKS OF THE TRADE

Interacting with the Efreeti Prince. Rashidi is patient and understanding. He has seen gods die at the hands of mortals who they underestimated, so he carries a prudent respect for them and enjoys interacting with adventurers and scholars. He is thousands of years old and incredibly knowledgeable as one with regular access to the City of Brass and Sigil would be.

TREASURE

There is a chest hidden on the Ethereal Plane with 10,000 gp worth of magical parts. Rashidi also gifts the characters with his suit of *efreeti chain*. The

wearer can instantly attune to the armor only if Rashidi assists the character in donning it.

PART 3. THE GRAND SHRINE

Estimated Duration: 60 minutes

Wards. Corrupted, *forbiddance* gone, Obsidian Sanctum Effects occur very frequently (DM's discretion)

STORY BEAT

In this part, the adventurers must stop the zulkirs from obtaining the *Soulmonger* shard and teleporting away. During the final encounter, the Sanctum wards fail and the complex begins to crumble. An ancient guardian awakens to thwart both the Red Wizards and adventurers.

N. DENDAR'S SHRINE

Read the following when the adventurers enter the final room where the *Soulmonger* shard is kept:

You pass through a doorway to stand in a chamber that is truly enormous, a hemisphere stretching hundreds of feet. At the center is a five-level ziggurat of red stone. A statue of a colossal serpent wraps around each level to rise above the uppermost floor where it looks down at the stairs, its mouth open.

Upon a glowing dais on the top level is the Soulmonger shard, set before the gaping maw of the statue. The entropic force pouring from the shard is palpable. It fills the whole of the immense chamber with a nauseating sensation.

The last of the yuan-ti defenders are dead, their bodies strewn around the base of the ziggurat. At the base of the stairs is a squad of Thayan wizards and knights, along with a pair of stone golems.

Deep cracks mar the domed ceiling and walls, and lava oozes from the wounds as magical energy sparks around it. Large blocks have fallen throughout the chamber. And other sections look ready to collapse.

The adventurers enter onto a 60-foot wide landing from which a 15-foot wide staircase descends into a 600-foot wide, 300-foot high chamber. A towering ziggurat rises at the center. It has five levels and each level is 20 feet tall. There are four **Thayan knights** here, along with two **Red Wizard zulkirs**, and two **stone golem guardians**. Additionally, the dormant **Obsidian Behemoth** waits.

The fallen blocks may grant full or partial cover or be thrown or otherwise interacted with. The ceiling may also be targeted above enemies to cause a collapse (DM's discretion, see **Battlefield Complications**).

The entropic force spilling from the *Soulmonger* shard is palpable here, crumbling the walls, slowing the very heartbeats of living creatures. Any creature

within the grand shrine not resistant or immune to necrotic damage becomes vulnerable to necrotic damage (creatures maintain their necrotic immunity or resistance).

THE ZIGGURAT

A single staircase facing the entrance to the chamber ascends to the top the structure where the *Soulmonger* shard waits before the gaping maw of the snake.

VIEWING THE CHAMBER FROM OTHER PLANES

Status: *Turbulent, every minute requires a DC 15 Intelligence save or be ejected to the Material Plane, taking 14 (4d6) force damage.*

This chamber reveals words of praise to Dendar and pronouncements of its dread arrival to Toril. Part of the writing reveals that the massive serpent in the room is imbued with Dendar's will. This grants advantage on Initiative checks when the **Obsidian Behemoth** animates.

Also shown in the Ethereal is where the collapses will occur, or how to cause them. Adventurers seeing this and relaying the information to their companions make it so allies automatically dodge the damage in the Crumbling Ceiling event. They also automatically critically hit the ceiling to cause collapses.

The zulkirs may also use this against the adventurers, DM's discretion.

Read once the Red Wizards notice the adventurers, which happens automatically once the adventurers enter the chamber unless precautions are taken, such as stealth (the Thayan archmagi have *true seeing* cast on themselves, so can perceive both the Border Ethereal and invisible creatures):

"Of course," one of the Red Wizard's sighs. "Why wouldn't adventurers show up now? Sorry to spoil your heroics but the yuan-ti are dead, their serpent lords defeated. You can leave. We did your work for you." The Red Wizard studies you for a second, "Wait. I know who you are."

The two zulkirs leading the Red Wizards are Vallrath Sakar (**zulkir** of evocation), and Akhara Nihil (**zulkir** of conjuration). Akhara carries an **opal amulet** capable of drawing and containing the power of the *Soulmonger*. Each zulkir has 5,000 gp of spell components.

Have the Thayan zulkirs mention some of the exploits of the adventurers. At such high levels, the adventurers would have accomplished significant deeds, defeated mighty foes, and recovered renowned treasures. Their exploits are things of legend.

PARLEYING WITH THE ZULKIRS

The Red Wizards will feign diplomacy, asking for a cease fire, to delay the adventurers as the Red Wizards warband moves into a tactically superior position. A DC 22 Wisdom (Insight) check reveals this. The Red Wizards will answer a few questions to buy themselves time:

- If asked why they are here, they say the yuan-ti posed a threat and were trying to summon Dendar, the Eater of Worlds. Also, a number of yuan-ti purebloods had infiltrated Thayan society and the Red Wizards wanted to know what secrets were leaked to them and how many spies they had in Thay (this is actually true).
- They work for Szass Tam, the Grand Patriarch of Thay. The Council of Eight Zulkirs are beholden to him.
- If asked about the wizards at the entrance, the archmagi pretend concern and ask if they are well.
- If asked about the *Soulmonger*, the archmagi feigns little interest, asking “what could a broken thing be worth? And why are adventurers interested in something like that?”

Working under the dangerous and mad Szass Tam has made many of the zulkirs accustomed to acts of sycophancy. The Thayans attempt to flatter the heroes, talking of their deeds and feats. Again, this is merely to buy time for more spells or moving into a tactical position to exploit the adventurers party makeup. If they notice ranged adventurers, they move into full or partial cover. Likewise, if they notice casters, they spread out to avoid area effecting spells, but each archmage stays within 60 feet of at least two Thayan knights. If flattery fails, threats are tried. It works well on their slaves and apprentices.

Red Wizards, especially archmagi, are incredibly arrogant and narcissistic beings. However, the adventurers are not beings to be trifled with lightly, and the archmagi, with their Intelligence of 20, understand that they need every edge in this battle. After all, how many foes have fallen before these adventurers?

RED WIZARD TACTICS

The Thayan zulkirs are mindful of the protections they gain by staying within 60 feet of their knights and will only move away under extreme conditions. The Thayan knights, too, will do their best to stay within 60 feet of their masters.

The Thayans try to use the ziggurat’s narrow stairs to their advantage, summoning barriers and walls, bottlenecking the adventurers, using area of effect spells, knocking the adventurers down, etc.

The Thayan force should fight to the bitter end. Facing Szass Tam with failure would provoke a fate far worse than death.

ADJUSTING THE FIGHT

Here are recommendations for adjusting this combat encounter. These are not cumulative.

- **Very Weak:** Remove two **Thayan knights**.
- **Weak:** Replace a **Thayan knight** with a **stone golem guardian**.
- **Strong:** Add two **Thayan knights**.
- **Very Strong:** Add two **Thayan knights** and a **Red Wizard zulkir**.

BATTLEFIELD COMPLICATIONS

In addition to the Obsidian Sanctum Events (which can also affect the Thayans and Obsidian Behemoth), the walls and ceilings of the chamber are weakening.

Sections of the walls or ceiling can be also collapsed from an attack. Each 10-foot cubic section has AC 19, 100 hit points, and is immune to poison and psychic damage.

This countdown should start once the adventurers enter the chamber but use whatever is most dramatic or most appropriate for the party’s composition (DM’s discretion).

ROUND 2. CRUMBLING CEILING

At the end of the **second** round, the following occurs:

A quake thunders through the chamber, causing chunks to break and fall from the walls and ceiling. The rocks smash into the floor with an ear-splitting crack and a cloud of dust.

Each adventurer must succeed on a DC 16 Dexterity save or takes 35 (10d6) bludgeoning damage and be knocked prone. These chunks can be used as islands when the chamber floods with lava on round 8.

ROUND 4. THE BEHEMOTH AWAKENS

At the end of the **fourth** round, or if the **obsidian behemoth** is targeted by an attack, the following occurs:

The great chamber rumbles a second time, and then before your eyes the statue of the serpent coiled hundreds of feet around the ziggurat begins to shift, then move. Its eyes flare to life with terrible light and it turns its head to look upon you with hate.

The **obsidian behemoth** awakens to guard the *Soulmonger* shard—attacking the closest target, Thayan or adventurer. The shard can't be drained by the adventurers or Thayans until the behemoth is defeated.

ROUND 8. THE CHAMBER FLOODS

At the end of the **eighth** round, the following occurs:

A section of a wall splits open and a gout of lava bursts forth. Molten rock begins to flood the chamber.

A foot of lava accumulates on the chamber floor at the end of every round after the eighth. Direct contact does 44 (8d10) fire damage. The safest ground is the ziggurat, which is held by the Red Wizards. However, clever adventurers can clog or plug the leaks, stopping the lava, with spells or debris, DM's discretion. There are 1d6 leaks and allow reasonable strategies to temporarily plug one or more leaks for a few rounds.

ADJUSTING THE FIGHT

Here are recommendations for adjusting this combat encounter. These are not cumulative.

- **Very Weak:** The **obsidian behemoth** has 375 hit points.
- **Weak:** The **obsidian behemoth** has 450 hit points.
- **Strong:** The **obsidian behemoth** has 525 hit points.
- **Very Strong:** The **obsidian behemoth** has 600 hit points.

ROUND 12. FLIGHT OF THE ZULKIRS

If any of the zulkirs remain alive, at the end of the **twelfth** round read the following:

A zulkir reaches the top of the ziggurat and the *Soulmonger* shard and begins an incantation. The air around the archmage warps and flashes.

If the zulkir takes no damage from the characters for an entire round, the zulkir captures the shard's energy in the **opal amulet** and casts *teleport*.

If the zulkirs obtain the shard, the adventurers receive **In the Hands of the Enemy Story Award**. The rest of the adventurer proceeds as written.

THE SOULMONGER SHARD

Creatures who starts their turn within 10 feet of the shard must succeed a DC 18 Constitution save or take 22 (4d10) necrotic damage (remember the vulnerability to necrotic damage caused by the presence of the foul thing) and find their maximum hit points reduced by an amount equal to the necrotic damage taken. This reduction lasts until the

creature finishes a long rest. Creatures whose hit points are reduced to 0 in this manner have their souls devoured and can't be returned to life except via *true resurrection* or *wish*.

Protection from evil and good and similar spells may grant advantage on saving throws against this damage.

The shard is magically set in place and can't be removed without *dispel magic* (DC 19), *knock*, a *chime of opening*, or similar effect.

When the zulkir's **opal amulet** is used on the *Soulmonger* (takes one action and requires a DC 18 Intelligence check), the item glows brightly and draws the power of the *Soulmonger* into it. When this happens, the shard is deactivated, and the necrotic aura is dispelled.

Once the Thayan forces and Obsidian Behemoth are defeated and the *Soulmonger* shard obtained, read the following:

You drain the *Soulmonger* shard, sealing its power. It no longer pulses with a sick glow. You no longer feel its malignant magic pulling at your life-force, that cold and nauseating sensation twisting your gut.

The chamber continues to shake, pieces of jagged obsidian falling from the ceiling to splash in the lava below, which continues to seethe and rise.

Give the adventurers a chance to make their way out of the crumbling chamber. If they encounter too much difficulty, have Rashidi appear in a burst of flames atop the stairs. He shouts a word of command and the lava slows, dims, and then cools. The chamber stills.

Read the following:

As you reach the stairs and make your way out of the lava-filled room, you find the efreeti lord Rashidi waiting for you. He bows politely. "I am sad to see my work undone, but such is the burden of the immortal. I would be untruthful if I said I do not crave to test the power of that artifact for myself, but death surrounds it, undoing those who seek to exploit it. Many powerful entities pursue it also and I think it prudent not to make myself an enemy of them, or of you." He bows again. "I am going to bury this Obsidian Sanctum in lava, let it sit until I find the time to repair it.

"It would appear I was correct to choose you as the new guardians of the armor. I hope it serves you well. Call upon my court when you need my assistance or if you find yourself visiting the City of Brass."

If he hasn't already, the efreeti Prince Rashidi al-Zahar ibn Rath bestows the suit of *efreeti chain* upon the adventurers, and thanks them for their assistance.

Each adventurer who assists in recovering the zulkir's opal pendant and capturing the *Soulmonger's* energy earns **The Opal Pendant Story Award**.

TRICKS OF THE TRADE

Shaping the Battlefield. Adventurers should be able to collapse sections of the walls or ceiling to create cover as they approach the Thayans. Alternatively, either group can collapse parts on the other (see Battlefield Complications).

Obsidian Behemoth. The Obsidian Behemoth regenerates from fire damage and will swim into the lava when the chamber floods (see Battlefield Complications).

Make Peace Not War. While the default encounter with the zulkirs is a fight to the death, if a DM wishes, he or she may allow cooperation to battle the behemoth, possibly having the Red Wizards forfeit this particular shard (there are more) to the adventurers this day. If this occurs, remove the Thayan knights and golems (the DM may describe them as being eaten by the behemoth for dramatic effect) and double the hit points of the behemoth for the party's current strength (see **Adjusting the Fight**) to compensate for the zulkirs' aid. In this case, award experience as if the zulkirs and retinue were defeated by the players.

TREASURE

Each of the two zulkirs carry spell components worth 5,000 gp.

REWARDS

Make sure players note their rewards on their adventure log sheets. Give your name and DCI number (if applicable) so players can record who ran the session.

EXPERIENCE (Min/Max: 20,250/27,000 EA.)

Total up all combat experience earned for defeated foes and divide by the number of characters present in the combat. For non-combat experience, the rewards are listed per character.

COMBAT AWARDS

Name of Foe	XP Per Foe
Archmage	8,400
Golem Guardian	5,900
Greater Devourer	10,000
Obsidian Behemoth	15,000
Obsidian Golem	5,900
Red Wizard Zulkir	8,400
Thayan Knight	3,900
Warlord	8,400
Yuan-ti Anathema	8,400

NON-COMBAT AWARDS

Task or Accomplishment	XP Per Character
Aiding the wounded Thayans	5,000

TREASURE

The characters receive the following treasure, divided up amongst the party. Treasure is divided as evenly as possible. Gold piece values listed for sellable gear are calculated at their selling price, not their purchase price.

TREASURE AWARDS

Item Name	GP Value
C. Outside the Sanctum	3,000
E. Dormitory treasure	2,000
F. Thayan treasure	10,000
F. Yuan-ti treasure	18,000
F. Ethereal chest	7,000
G. Jewelry and relics	15,000
I. Heavy statue and reagents	12,000
J. Treasure and components	40,000
J. Ethereally hidden treasure	10,000
M. Ethereally hidden treasure	10,000
N. Zulkir spell components	10,000

Consumable magic items should be divided up however the group sees fit. If more than one character is interested in a specific consumable

magic item, the DM can determine who gets it randomly should the group be unable to decide.

Permanent magic items are divided according to a system detailed in the *D&D Adventurers League Dungeon Master's Guide*.

EFREETI CHAIN

Armor (chain mail), legendary (requires attunement)

While wearing this armor, you gain a +3 bonus to AC, you are immune to fire damage, and you can understand and speak Primordial. In addition, you can stand on and walk across molten rock as if it were solid ground.

This item can be found in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*. See **Player Handout 3** for more details.

POTION OF FLYING

Potion, very rare

This item can be found in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

SCROLL OF REGENERATE

Scroll, very rare

This item can be found in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

SCROLL OF RESURRECTION

Scroll, very rare

This item can be found in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

STORY AWARDS

During the course of this adventure, the characters may earn the following story award:

The Opal Pendant. You captured part of the *Soulmonger's* energy within a magic opal pendant taken from a Thayan zulkir. At some point in the future, you and your allies will need to deal with this nefarious device permanently. This story award is found in **Player Handout 1**.

In the Hands of the Enemy. You failed to recover the opal pendant from the Thayan zulkirs and lost the *Soulmonger* fragment. At some point in the future, you and your allies will need to deal with the *Soulmonger* permanently. Since you don't possess the opal pendant, you'll face a greater struggle. This story award is found in **Player Handout 2**.

PLAYER REWARDS

For completing the adventure, each character receives downtime and renown as described in the *D&D Adventurers League Dungeon Master's Guide* (ALDMG). In addition, they may receive additional renown as follows:

Members of the Zhentarim that made two goodwill efforts towards the Red Wizards earn **one additional renown point**.

Members of the Harpers that obtained two items or pieces of information pertaining to the Orrery, and then turned it off or stopped it, earn **one additional renown point**.

Members of the Order of the Gauntlet (rank 2 or higher) that defeat the Orrery guardians and learn the secrets of the Sanctum's architecture earn **one additional renown point and completion of a secret mission**.

DM REWARDS

In exchange for running this adventure, you earn DM Rewards as described in the *D&D Adventurers League Dungeon Master's Guide* (ALDMG).

APPENDIX. DRAMATIS PERSONAE

The following NPCs and locations are featured prominently in this adventure:

Peaks of Flame. The Peaks are volcanic mountains in southern Chult. They are rumored to hold a door to the Far Realm, where Dendar the Night Serpent waits.

Obsidian Sanctum. A magical complex hidden beneath a volcano. Within are powerful arcane devices and wards.

Zonaras Xans (Zo-NAR-as). A Red Wizard archmage who seeks to save his people.

Akhara Nihil (ah-CAR-ah NEE-hill). Red Wizard, archmage, and zulkir of conjuration. Sent along with Vallrath Sakar to retrieve the *Soulmonger* shard.

Vallrath Sakar (VALL-wrath SAH-car). Red Wizard, archmage, and zulkir of evocation. Sent with Akhara Nihil to retrieve the *Soulmonger* shard.

Rashidi al-Zahar ibn Rath (RA-she-dee). An efreeti prince and magical architect who built the Obsidian Complex but was betrayed and imprisoned by the yuan-ti.

APPENDIX. MONSTER/NPC STATISTICS

ARCHMAGE

Medium humanoid (any race), any alignment

Armor Class 12 (15 with mage armor)

Hit Points 99 (18d8 + 18)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	14(+2)	12 (+1)	20 (+5)	15 (+2)	16 (+3)

Saving Throws Int +9, Wis +6

Skills Arcana +13, History +13

Senses passive Perception 12

Languages Common, Draconic, Elvish, Abyssal, Celestial, Infernal

Challenge 12 (8,400 XP)

Magic Resistance. The archmage has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Spellcasting. The archmage is an 18th-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 17, +9 to hit with spell attacks). The archmage can cast *disguise self* and *invisibility* at will and has the following wizard spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *fire bolt*, *light*, *mage hand*, *prestidigitation*, *shocking grasp*
1st level (4 slots): *detect magic*, *shield*, *mage armor**, *magic missile*
2nd level (3 slots): *blindness/deafness*, *mirror image*, *misty step*
3rd level (3 slots): *counterspell*, *haste*, *lightning bolt*
4th level (3 slots): *banishment*, *fire shield*, *ice storm*
5th level (3 slots): *cone of cold*, *dominate person*, *wall of force*
6th level (1 slot): *chain lightning*
7th level (1 slot): *teleport*
8th level (1 slot): *mind blank**
9th level (1 slot): *meteor swarm*

*The archmage casts *mind blank* and *mage armor* spells on itself before combat

ACTIONS

Dagger. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d4 + 2) piercing damage.

MALAGORS, GREATER DEVOURER (DEVOURER)

Large fiend (demon), chaotic evil

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)

Hit Points 255 (17d10 + 85)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (−5)	12 (+1)	20 (+5)	13 (+1)	10 (+0)	16 (+3)

Damage Resistances cold, fire, lightning

Damage Immunities poison; immune to bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks that aren't silver

Condition Immunities poisoned

Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 11

Languages Abyssal, Common, telepathy 120 ft.

Challenge 13 (10,000 XP)

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The devourer makes two claw attacks and can use either *Imprison Soul* or *Soul Rend*.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +10 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 12 (2d6 + 5) slashing damage plus 36 (maximum) (6d6) necrotic damage.

Imprison Soul. The devourer chooses a living humanoid with 0 hit points that it can see within 30 feet of it. That creature is teleported inside the devourer's ribcage and imprisoned there. A creature imprisoned in this manner has disadvantage on death saving throws. If it dies while imprisoned, the devourer regains 25 hit points, immediately recharges *Soul Rend*, and gains an additional action on its next turn. Additionally, at the start of its next turn, the devourer regurgitates the slain creature as a bonus action, and the creature becomes an undead. If the victim had 2 or fewer Hit Dice, it becomes a zombie. If it had 3 to 5 Hit Dice, it becomes a ghoul. Otherwise, it becomes a wight. A devourer can imprison only one creature at a time.

Soul Rend (Recharge 4-6). The devourer creates a vortex of life-draining energy in a 20-foot radius centered on itself. Each humanoid in that area must make a DC 18 Constitution saving throw, taking 80 (maximum) (8d10) necrotic damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. Increase the damage by 10 for each living humanoid with 0 hit points in that area.

Obsidian Behemoth

Gargantuan construct, unaligned

Armor Class 20 (natural armor)

Hit Points 420 (20d20 + 200)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
30 (+10)	11 (+0)	30 (+10)	3 (−4)	11 (+0)	1 (−5)

Damage Immunities fire, poison, psychic; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks that aren't adamantite

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned

Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages Understands Abyssal but can't speak

Challenge 16 (15,000 XP)

Fire Absorption. Whenever the obsidian behemoth is subjected to fire damage, it takes no damage and instead regains a number of hit points equal to the fire damage dealt.

Immutable Form. The obsidian behemoth is immune to any spell or effect that would alter its form.

Legendary Resistance (3/Day). If the obsidian behemoth fails a saving throw, it can choose to succeed instead.

Magic Resistance. The obsidian behemoth has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Magic Weapons. The obsidian behemoth's weapon attacks are magical.

Actions

Multiattack. The obsidian behemoth makes three slam attacks. It also makes one bite or uses Poison Breath each turn.

Bite. Melee Weapon Attack: +15 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. Hit: 26 (3d10 + 10) piercing damage. If the against a Large or smaller creature, it must make a DC 19 Dexterity save or be swallowed. While swallowed, the creature is blinded and restrained, it has total cover against attacks and other effects outside the obsidian behemoth, and it takes 56 (16d6) acid damage at the start of each of the obsidian behemoth's turns. If the obsidian behemoth takes 60 damage or more on a single turn from a creature inside it, the obsidian behemoth must succeed on a DC 20 Constitution saving throw at the end of that turn or regurgitate all swallowed creatures, which fall prone in a space within 10 feet of the obsidian behemoth. If the obsidian behemoth dies, a swallowed creature is no longer

restrained by it and can escape from the corpse by using 30 feet of movement, exiting prone.

Slam. Melee Weapon Attack: +15 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. Hit: 23 (3d8 + 10) bludgeoning damage.

Poison Breath (Recharge 4-6). The obsidian behemoth exhales poisonous gas in a 15-foot cone. Each creature in that area must make a DC 19 Constitution saving throw, taking 45 (10d8) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Legendary Actions

The obsidian behemoth can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. The obsidian behemoth regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

- **Attack.** The obsidian behemoth makes one slam attack.
- **Move.** The obsidian behemoth moves up to half its speed.
- **Chomp (Costs 2 Actions).** The obsidian behemoth makes one bite attack.

Obsidian Golem

Large construct, unaligned

Armor Class 17 (natural armor)

Hit Points 255 (17d10 + 85)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
22 (+6)	9 (–1)	20 (+5)	3 (–4)	11 (+0)	1 (–5)

Damage Immunities poison, psychic; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks that aren't adamantine

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned

Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages understands Abyssal but can't speak

Challenge 10 (5,900 XP)

Immutable Form. The golem is immune to any spell or effect that would alter its form.

Magic Resistance. The golem has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Magic Weapons. The golem's weapon attacks are magical.

Actions

Multiattack. The golem makes two slashing attacks.

Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +10 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 19 (3d10 + 6) slashing damage.

Slow (Recharge 5–6). The golem targets one or more creatures it can see within 10 feet of it. Each target must make a DC 17 Wisdom saving throw against this magic. On a failed save, a target can't use reactions, its speed is halved, and it can't make more than one attack on its turn. In addition, the target can take either an action or a bonus action on its turn, not both. These effects last for 1 minute. A target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.

RED WIZARD ZULKIR

Medium humanoid (any race), any alignment

Armor Class 12 (15 with mage armor)

Hit Points 99 (18d8 + 18)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	20 (+5)	15 (+2)	16 (+3)

Saving Throws Int +9, Wis +6

Skills Arcana +13, History +13

Senses passive Perception 12

Languages Common, Draconic, Elvish, Abyssal, Celestial, Infernal

Challenge 12 (8,400 XP)

Magic Resistance. The zulkir has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Legendary Resistance (3/Day). If a zulkir fail a saving throw, they can choose to succeed instead.

Spell Secrets. When a zulkir cast a spell with a spell slot that deals acid, cold, fire, force, lightning, necrotic, radiant, or thunder damage, the zulkir can substitute that damage type with one other type from that list.

Spellcasting. The zulkir is an 18th-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 17, +9 to hit with spell attacks). The zulkir can cast *disguise self* and *invisibility* at will and has the following wizard spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *fire bolt*, *light*, *mage hand*, *prestidigitation*, *shocking grasp*

1st level (4 slots): *detect magic*, *shield*, *mage armor**, *magic missile*

2nd level (3 slots): *blindness/deafness*, *mirror image*, *misty step*

3rd level (3 slots): *counterspell*, *fireball*, *lightning bolt*

4th level (3 slots): *banishment*, *fire shield*, *ice storm*

5th level (3 slots): *cone of cold*, *dominate person*, *wall of force*

6th level (1 slot): *true seeing**

7th level (1 slot): *teleport*

8th level (1 slot): *mind blank**

9th level (1 slot): *meteor swarm*

*The zulkir casts *mage armor*, *true seeing*, and *mind blank* on itself before combat

Tattoos of Absorption. A Red Wizard zulkir can use a reaction to absorb a spell that is targeting only the zulkir and not with an area of effect. The absorbed spell's effect is canceled, and the spell's energy—not the spell itself—is stored in the zulkir's magical tattoos.

The energy has the same level as the spell when it was cast. The magical tattoos store up to 20 levels of energy. Once the magical tattoos absorb 20 levels of energy, they can't absorb more. If the zulkir is targeted by a spell that the magical tattoos can't store, the magical tattoos have no effect on that spell.

ACTIONS

Dagger. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d4 + 2) piercing damage.

LEGENDARY ACTIONS

The Red Wizard zulkir can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. The Red Wizard zulkir regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

- **Cantrip (Costs 1 Action).** The zulkir casts a cantrip.
- **First-level spell (Costs 1 Action).** The zulkir casts a first-level spell.
- **Second-level spell (Costs 2 Actions).** The zulkir casts a second-level spell.
- **Third-level spell (Costs 3 Actions).** The zulkir casts a third-level spell.

STONE GOLEM GUARDIAN

Large construct, unaligned

Armor Class 17 (natural armor)

Hit Points 178 (17d10 + 85)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
22(+6)	9 (−1)	20 (+5)	3 (−4)	11 (+0)	1 (−5)

Damage Immunities poison, psychic; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks that aren't adamantine

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned

Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages understands Abyssal but can't speak

Challenge 10 (5,900 XP)

Golem Binding. The golem guardian is magically bound to the Red Wizard that created it. As long as the golem guardian and its wizard are on the same plane of existence, the Red Wizard can telepathically call the guardian to travel to it, and the guardian knows the distance and direction to the wizard.

Golem Shield. When a creature makes an attack against the golem guardian's Red Wizard, as a reaction the golem guardian grants a +2 bonus to the wizard's AC if the golem guardian is within 5 feet of the wizard.

Immutable Form. The golem is immune to any spell or effect that would alter its form.

Magic Resistance. The golem has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Magic Weapons. The golem's weapon attacks are magical.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The golem makes two slam attacks.

Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +10 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 19 (3d8 + 6) bludgeoning damage.

Slow (Recharge 5–6). The golem targets one or more creatures it can see within 10 feet of it. Each target must make a DC 17 Wisdom saving throw against this magic. On a failed save, a target can't use reactions, its speed is halved, and it can't make more than one attack on its turn. In addition, the target can take either an action or a bonus action on its turn, not both. These effects last for 1 minute. A target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.

THAYAN KNIGHT

Medium humanoid (any race), any non-good alignment

Armor Class 18 (plate)

Hit Points 153 (18d8 + 72)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	11 (+0)	18 (+4)	11 (+0)	14 (+2)	15 (+2)

Saving Throws Wis +5, Cha +5

Skills Athletics +7, Deception +5, Intimidation +5

Senses passive Perception 12

Languages any one language (usually Common)

Challenge 8 (3,900 XP)

Aura of Warding. Ancient magic lies so heavily upon the Thayan knights that their aura forms an eldritch ward. A Thayan knight and friendly creatures within 10 feet of the knight have resistance to damage from spells.

Tattoo Binding. The Thayan knight is magically bound to any Red Wizard zulkir within 60 feet. If the Thayan knight is within 60 feet of a Red Wizard zulkir, the Thayan knight can use his or her reaction to transfer half of any damage the zulkir takes (rounded up) to the Thayan knight. This effect lasts until the beginning of the Thayan knight's next turn, and the effect ends if the Thayan knight is unconscious, incapacitated, or slain.

Spellcasting. The Thayan knight is a 10th-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 13, +5 to hit with spell attacks). It has the following paladin spells prepared:

1st level (4 slots): *command*, *protection from evil and good*, *thunderous smite*

2nd level (3 slots): *branding smite*, *find steed*

3rd level (2 slots): *blinding smite*, *dispel magic*

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The Thayan knight makes three weapon attacks.

Glaive. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (1d10 + 4) slashing damage.

Shortbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, range 80/320 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage.

Dreadful Aspect (Recharges after a Short or Long Rest). The Thayan knight exudes magical menace. Each enemy within 30 feet of the Thayan knight must succeed on a DC 13 Wisdom saving throw or be frightened for 1 minute. If a frightened target ends its

turn more than 30 feet away from the Thayan knight, the target can repeat the saving throw, ending the effect on itself on a success.

WARLORD

Medium humanoid (any race), any alignment

Armor Class 18 (plate)

Hit Points 229 (27d8 + 108)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	16 (+3)	18 (+4)	12 (+1)	12 (+1)	18 (+4)

Saving Throws Str +8, Dex +7, Con +8

Skills Athletics +9, Intimidation +8, Perception +5, Persuasion +8

Senses passive Perception 15

Languages Common, Abyssal

Challenge 12 (8,400)

Indomitable (3/Day). The warlord can reroll a saving throw it fails. It must use the new roll.

Survivor. The warlord regains 10 hit points at the start of its turn if it has at least 1 hit point but fewer hit points than half its hit point maximum.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The warlord makes two weapon attacks.

Greatsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 12 (2d6 + 5) slashing damage.

Shortbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, range 80/320 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) piercing damage.

LEGENDARY ACTIONS

The warlord can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. The warlord regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

- **Weapon Attack.** The warlord makes a weapon attack.
- **Command Ally.** The warlord targets one ally it can see within 30 feet of it. If the target can see and hear the warlord, the target can make one weapon attack as a reaction and gains advantage on the attack roll.
- **Frighten Foe (Costs 2 Actions).** The warlord targets one enemy it can see within 30 feet of it. If the target can see and hear it, the target must succeed on a DC 16 Wisdom saving throw or be frightened until the end of warlord's next turn.

YUAN-TI ANATHEMA

Large monstrosity, neutral evil

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)

Hit Points 189 (18d12 + 72)

Speed 40 ft., climb 30 ft., swim 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
23 (+6)	13 (+1)	19 (+4)	19 (+4)	17 (+3)	20 (+5)

Skills Perception +7, Stealth +5

Damage Resistances acid, fire, lightning

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities poisoned

Senses blindsight 30 ft., darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 17

Languages Abyssal, Common, Draconic

Challenge 12 (8,400 XP)

Innate Spellcasting (Anathema Form Only). The anathema's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 17). It can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

At will: *animal friendship* (snakes only)

3/day each: *darkness*, *entangle*, *fear*, *haste*, *suggestion*, *polymorph*

1/day: *divine word*

Magic Resistance. The anathema has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Ophidiophobia Aura. Any creature of the anathema's choice, other than a snake or a yuan-ti, that starts its turn within 30 feet of the anathema and can see or hear it must succeed on a DC 17 Wisdom saving throw or become frightened of snakes and yuan-ti. A frightened target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success. If a target's saving throw is successful or the effect ends for it, the target is immune to this aura for the next 24 hours.

Shapechanger. The anathema can use its action to polymorph into a Huge giant constrictor snake, or back into its true form. Its statistics are the same in each form. Any equipment it is wearing or carrying isn't transformed.

Six Heads. The anathema has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks and on saving throws against being blinded, charmed, deafened, frightened, stunned, or knocked unconscious.

ACTIONS

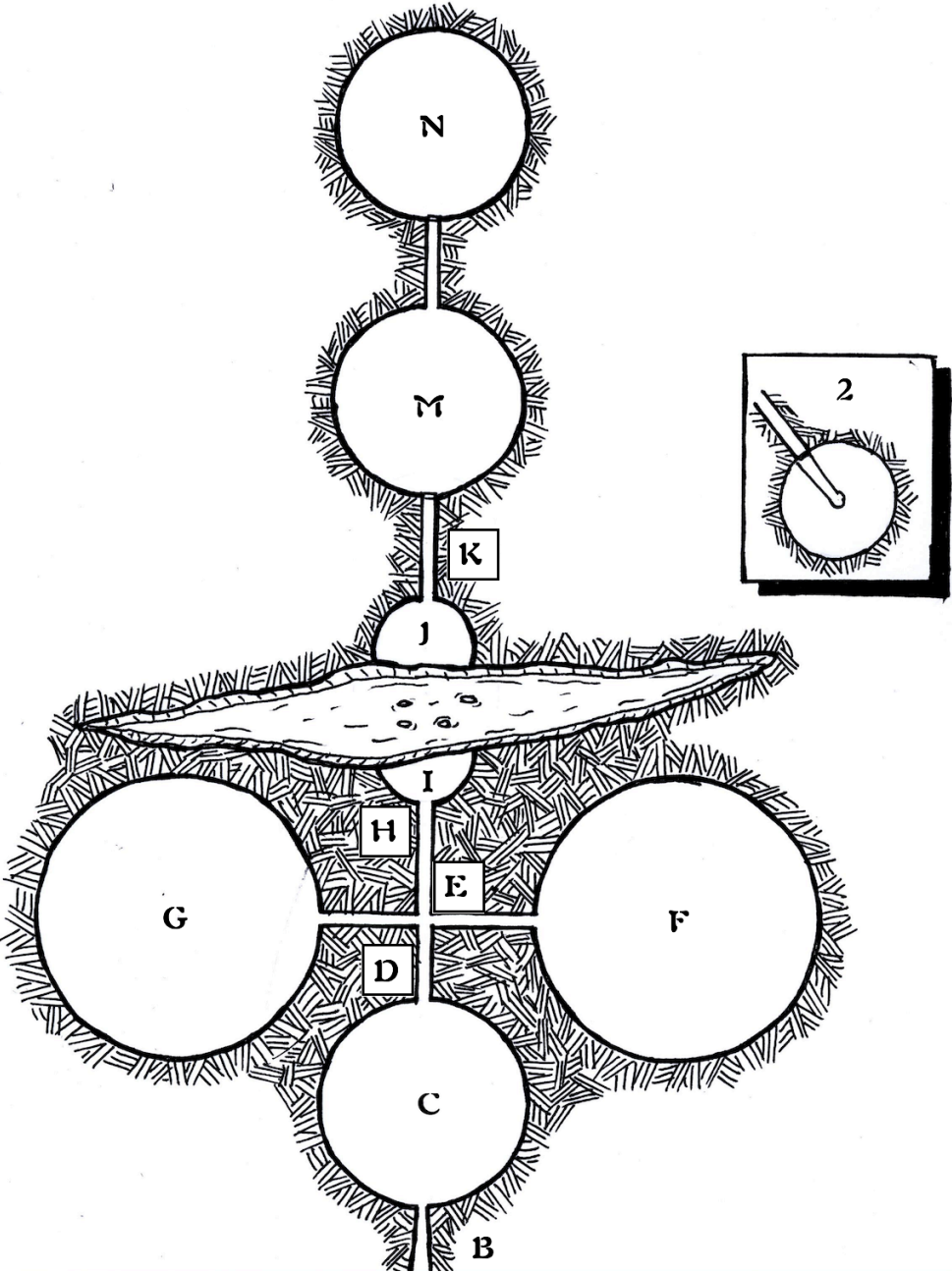
Multiattack (Anathema Form Only). The anathema makes two claw attacks, one constrict attack, and one Flurry of Bites attack.

Claw (Anathema Form Only). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +10 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 13 (2d6 + 6) slashing damage.

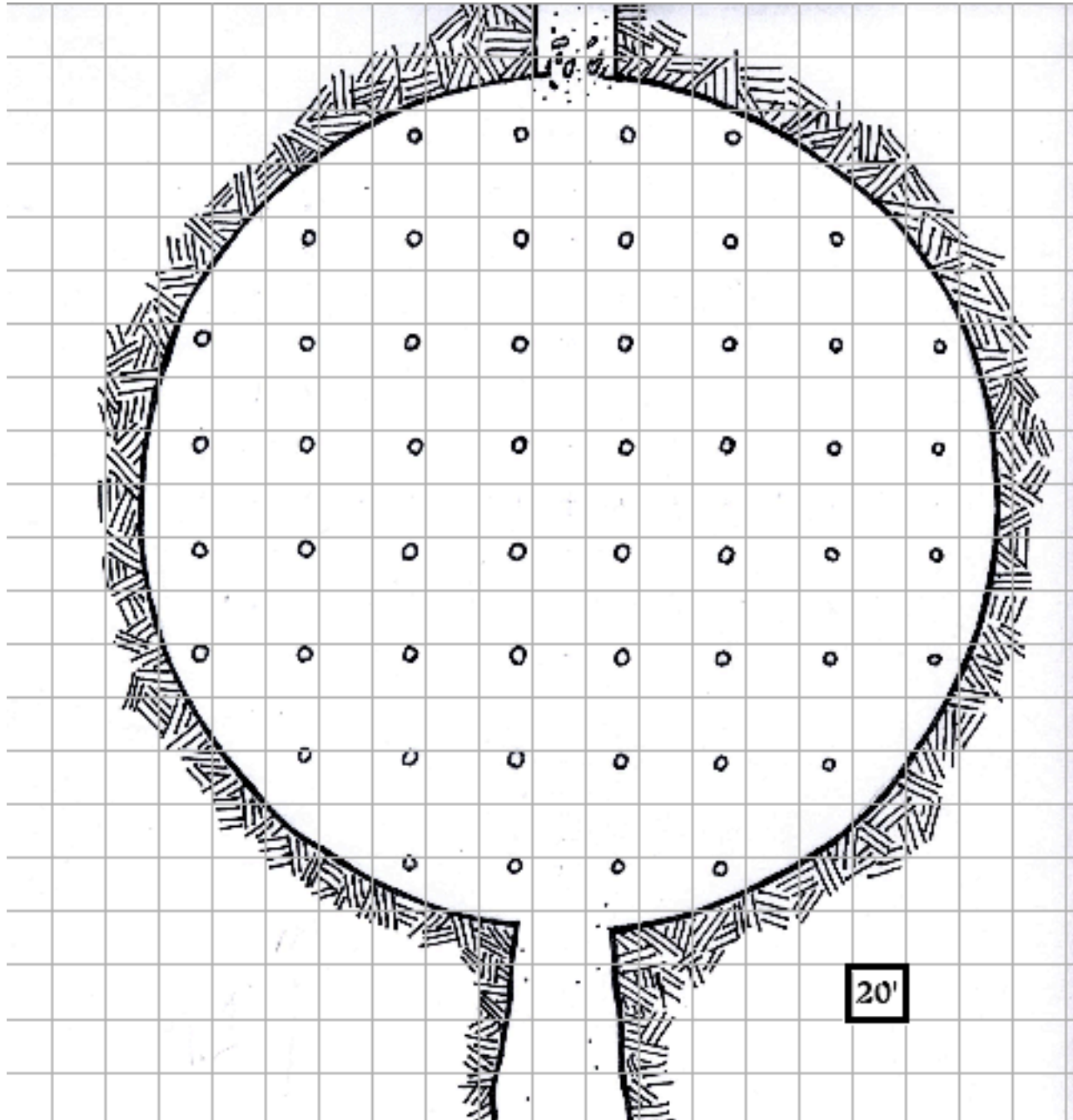
Constrict. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +10 to hit, reach 15 ft., one Large or smaller creature. *Hit:* 16 (3d6 + 6) bludgeoning damage plus 7 (2d6) acid damage, and the target is grappled (escape DC 16). Until this grapple ends, the target is restrained and takes 16 (3d6 + 6) bludgeoning damage plus 7 (2d6) acid damage at the start of each of its turns, and the anathema can't constrict another target.

Flurry of Bites. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +10 to hit, reach 10 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 27 (6d6 + 6) piercing damage plus 14 (4d6) poison damage.

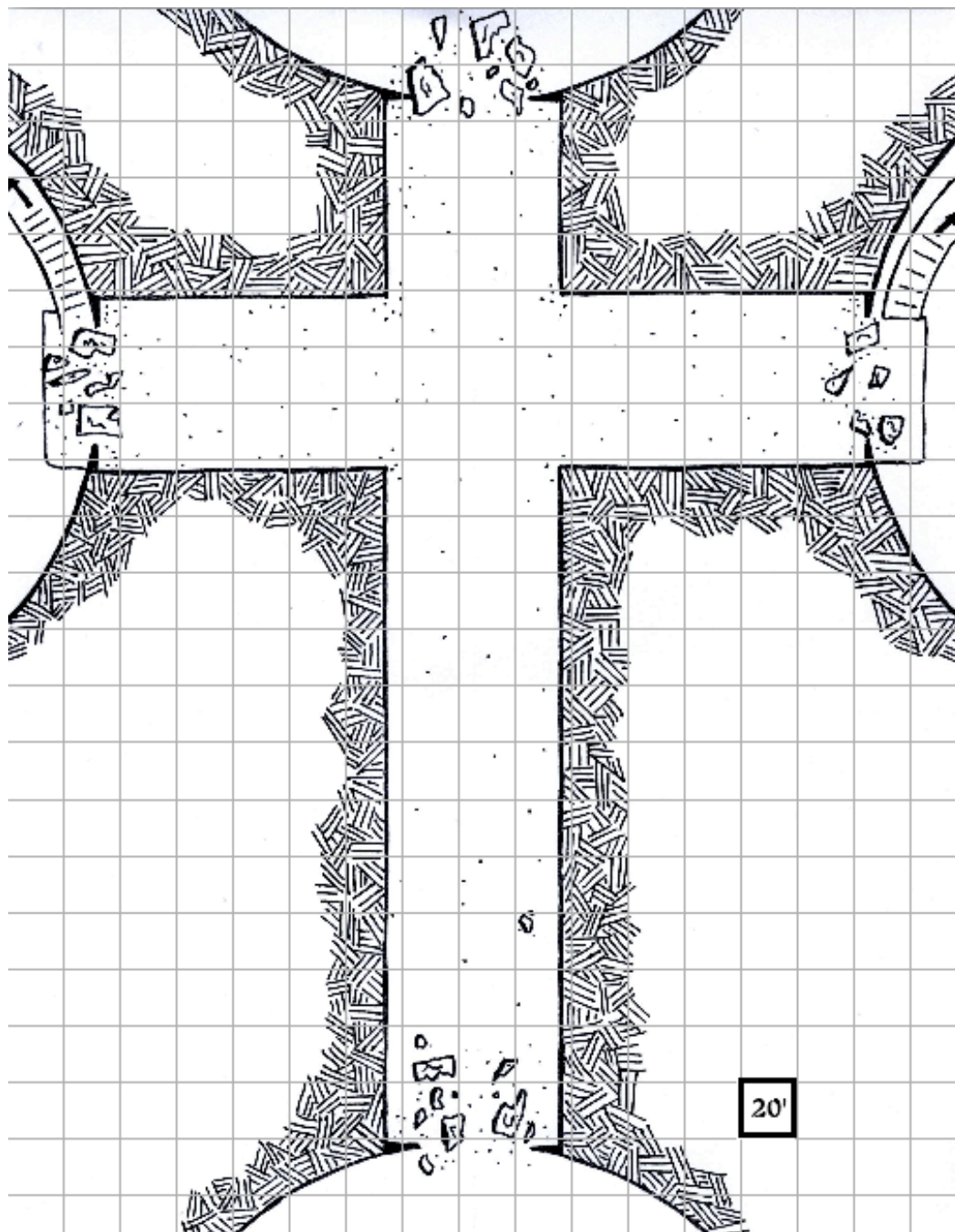
MAP. SANCTUM OVERVIEW



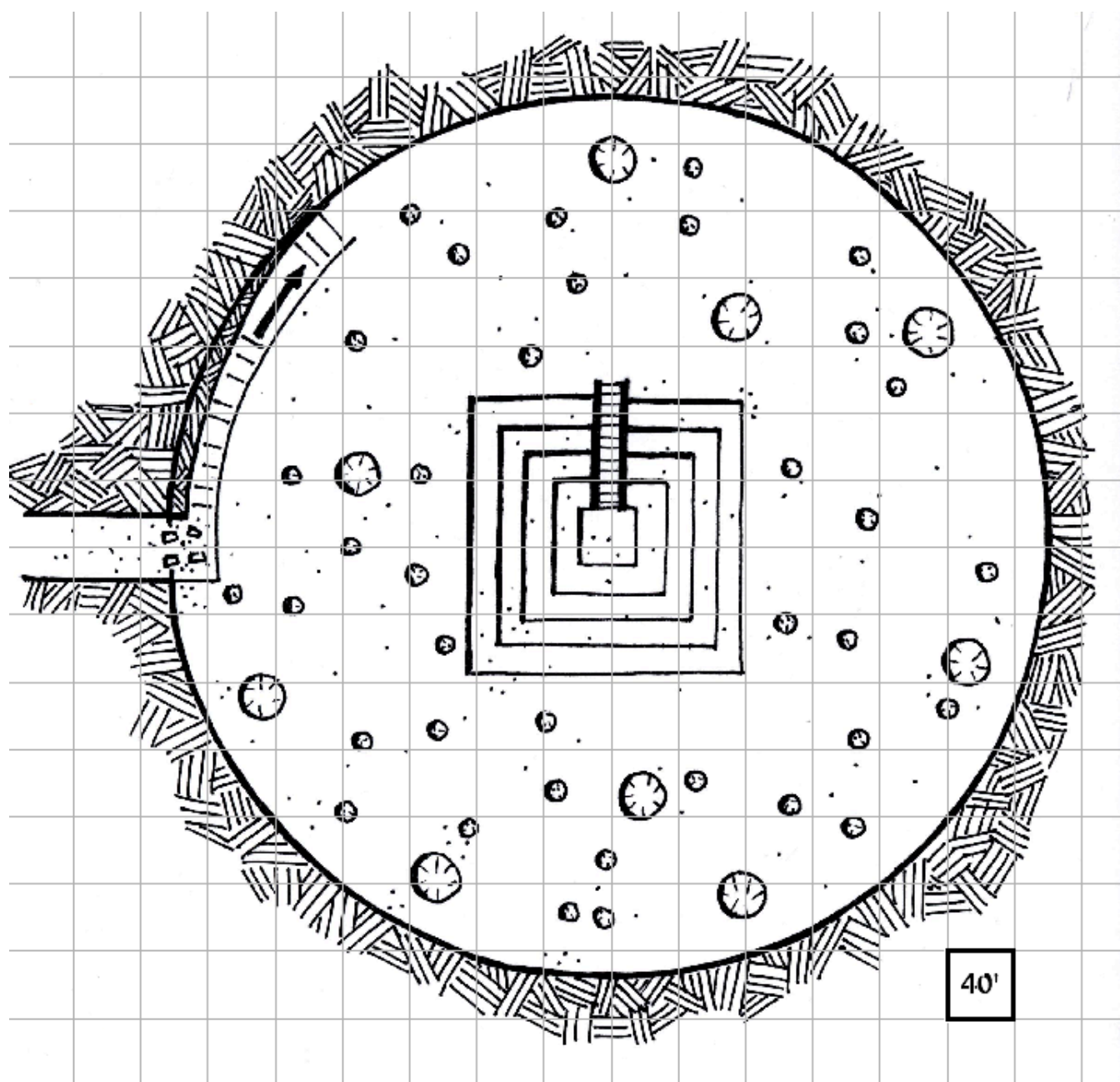
MAP. AREA C (ENTRANCE)



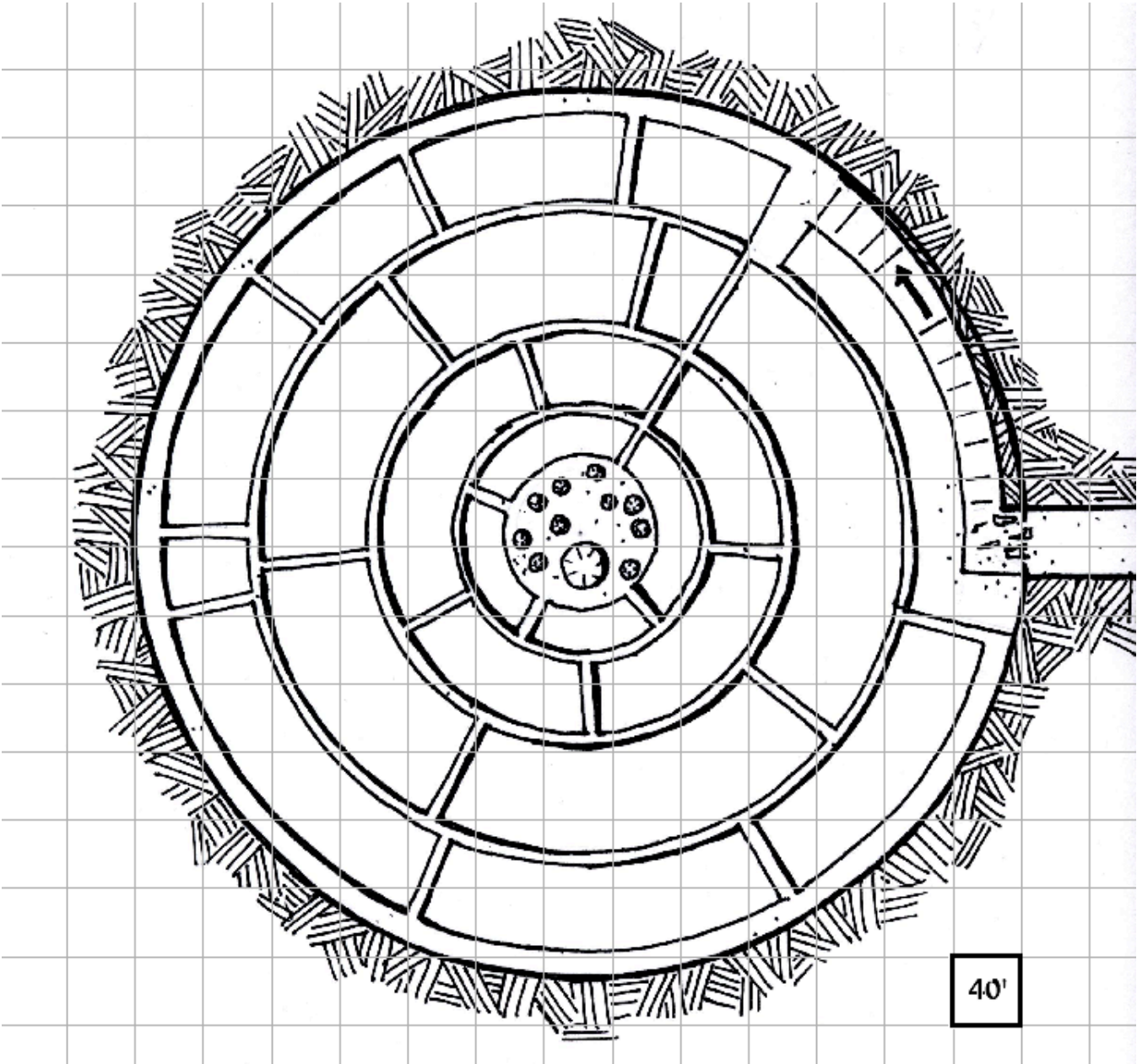
MAP. AREA E (JUNCTION)



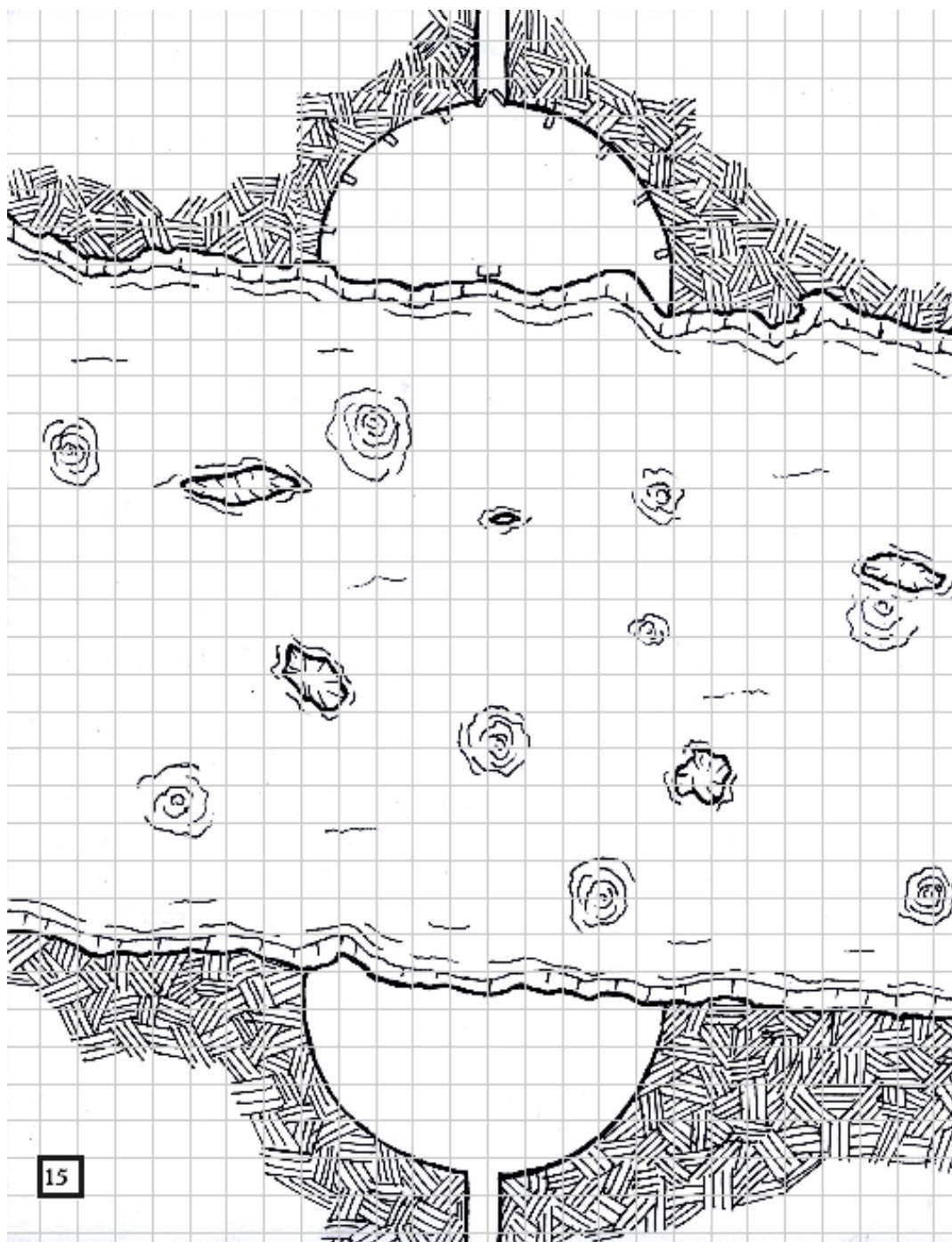
MAP. AREA F (EAST DORM)



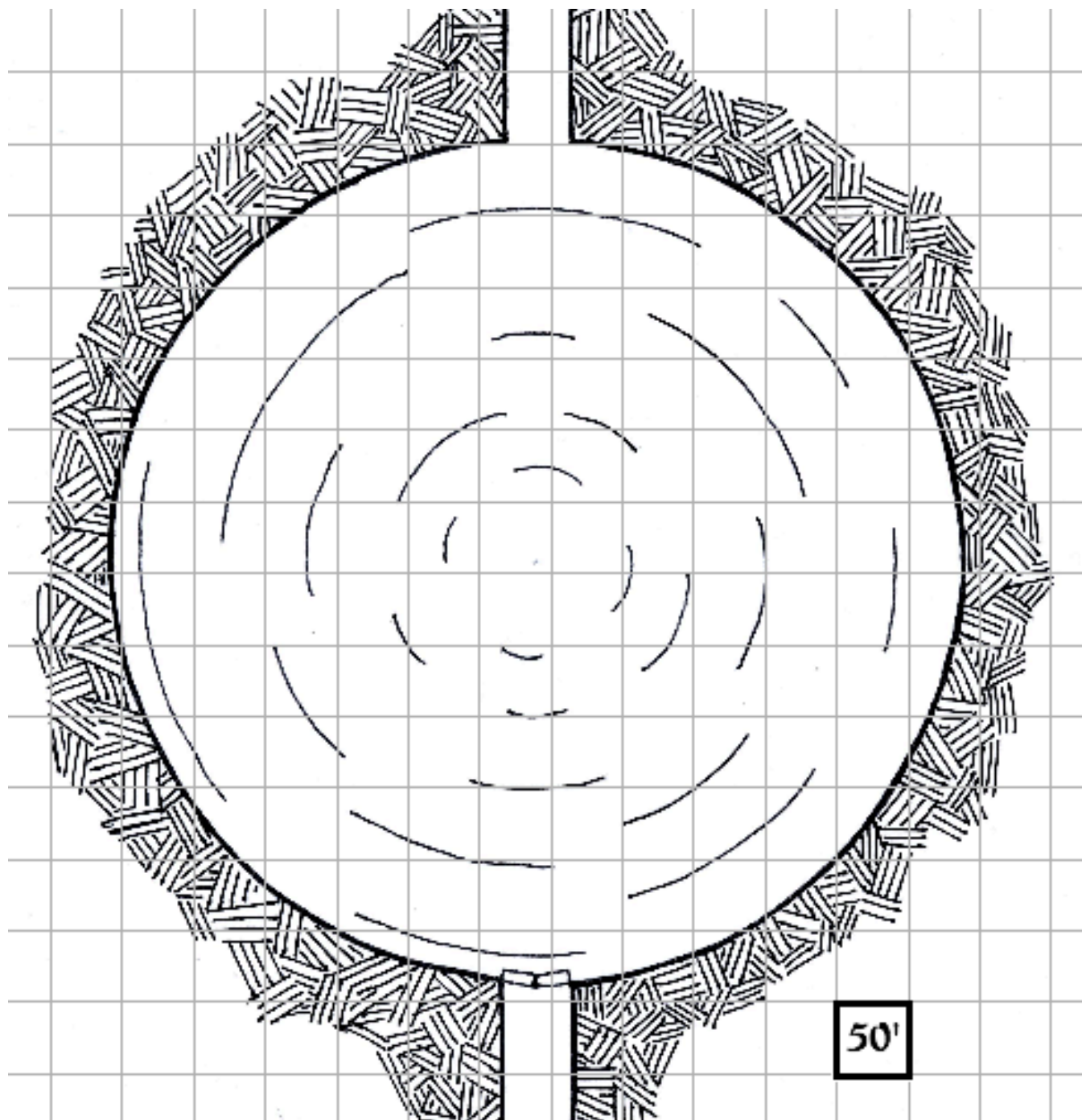
MAP. AREA G (WEST DORM)



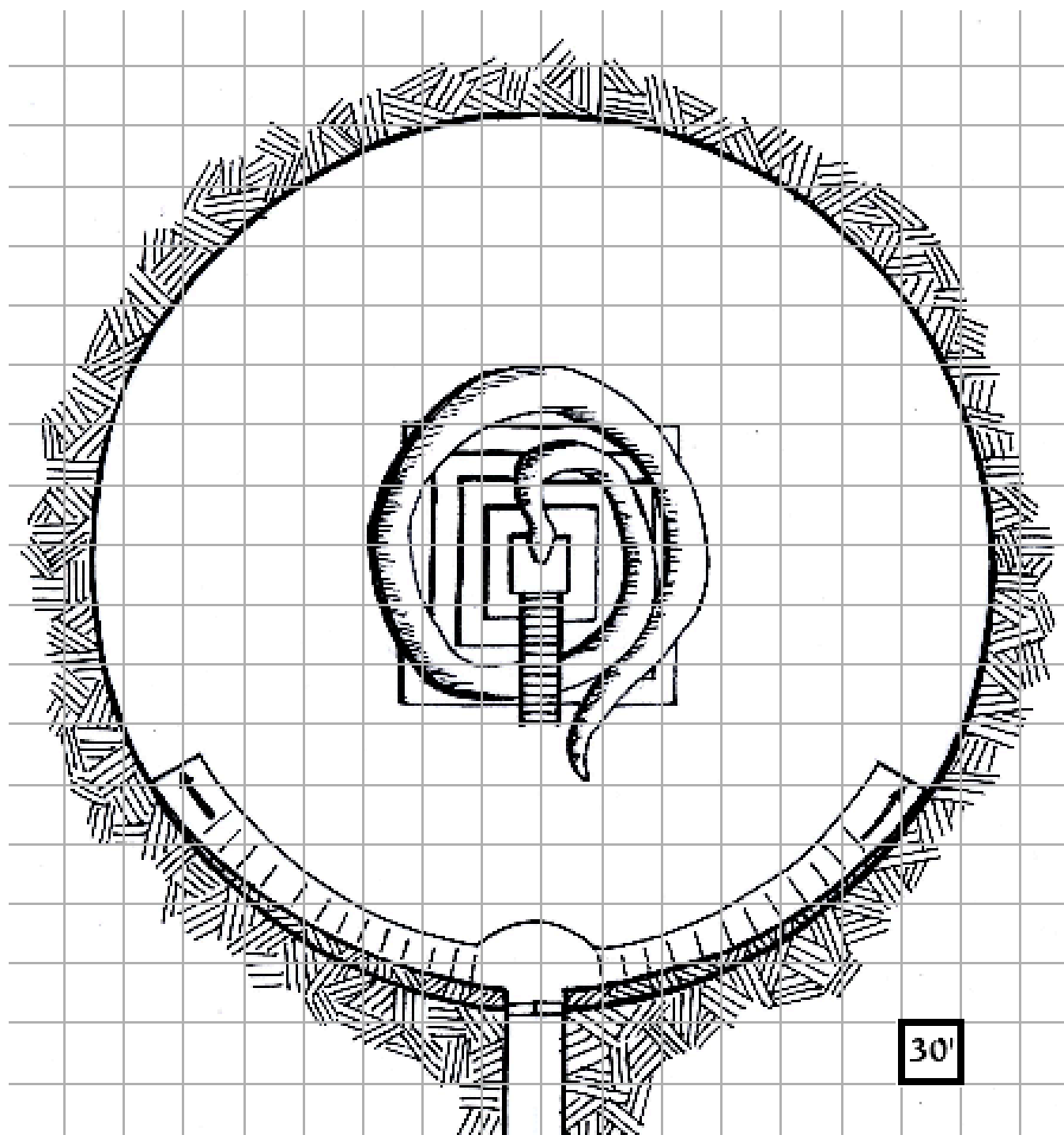
MAP. AREA I/J (FISSURE)



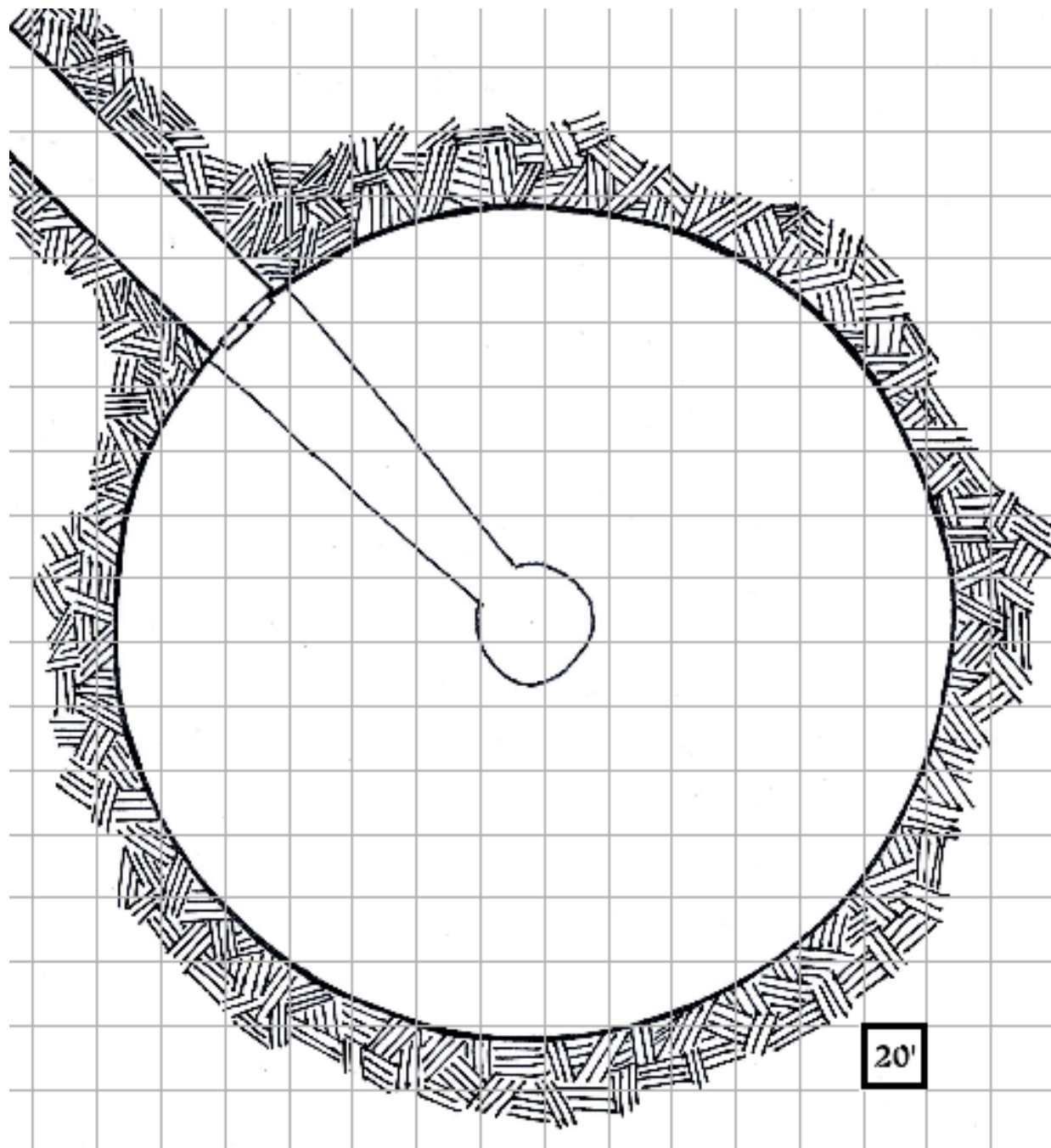
MAP. AREA M (THE ORRERY)



MAP. AREA N (GRAND SHRINE)



MAP. OPTIONAL 2 (BINDING CHAMBER)



APPENDIX. OPTIONAL ENCOUNTERS

These encounters are optional and increase play time. Each offer roleplay opportunities that impact the adventure by providing mechanical advantages.

These optional encounters don't provide any additional rewards but do provide an additional opportunity to progress a faction assignment.

1. ALLARA, THE THAYAN GHOST (OPTIONAL)

Story Beat

In this optional encounter, the adventurers meet a ghost seeking help. Her body is lost in the Shadowfell and she seeks to be returned to this world and raised from the dead before it is too late. She offers aid and information in return.

Navigating environmental dangers:

Prime Material: Obsidian Sanctum Effects occur frequently here, as frequent as every 10 minutes.

Shadowfell: Dark and lightless. Succeed on a DC 18 Constitution save or take 16 (3d10) necrotic damage per turn. This damage reduces maximum hit points. Spells such as *daylight* guard against the damage.

Estimated Duration: 20 minutes

Wards. Corrupted, *forbiddance* gone, divinations blocked, Obsidian Sanctum Effects occur more frequently (DM's discretion)

This encounter may be placed in any hallway with the appropriate modifications to the scenery: damaged walls and planar openings.

Before the adventurers have a chance to leave the passageway they are contacted by a desperate ghost.

Read the following when the event occurs:

Amid the flashes of magical energy and heat distortion, you periodically see the ghostly image of a young woman motioning desperately at you, as if pleading for help. Each appearance of her is preceded by a profound sadness and painful loneliness, the feelings squeeze at your chest and, even with the heat, a chill runs across your skin. It is clear the woman is in distress.

Obsidian Sanctum Effects occur every 10 minutes of in game time in this location.

VIEWING THE CHAMBER FROM OTHER PLANES

Status: Turbulent, every minute requires a DC 15 Intelligence save or be ejected to the Material Plane, taking 14 (4d6) force damage.

There are access points between the Shadowfell and Border Ethereal that remain open. The magical damage to the Sanctum is much more apparent in the Ethereal Plane.

In the clinging darkness of the Shadowfell lies the body of a Red Wizard who sought to examine the

damage to the Obsidian Sanctum, to assess if it was in danger of collapsing and flooding with lava. She was also discerning how the Sanctum's wards stretched to adjacent realms.

She scouted the Ethereal Plane realm and the Elemental Plane of Fire before journeying into the Shadowfell, where she encountered the terrible darkness drawn to the *Soulmonger* shard. She was ambushed by creatures but managed to battle them back before succumbing to her wounds. Now her ghost clings to her body, refusing to leave it. In the gloom, something hungry pulls at her spirit.

Anyone proficient in Perception notices that the woman is wearing Red Wizard robes and is marked by tattoos revealing her to be an abjurer. She is begging for help.

COMMUNICATING WITH ALLARA'S GHOST

A DC 15 Intelligence (Religion) check reveals this woman to be a ghost seeking help from the living. She can only speak briefly between flashing between the two planes. She asks an adventurer to let her possess the adventurer so she can speak more clearly. This isn't a trick. Adventurers may devise other methods to stabilize communication.

Her name is Allara Aliskaara (lawful neutral **ghost**). If they are able to scan her thoughts or emotions, they quickly learn she is sincere and completely terrified and desperate. Despite her dread, she is honest and forthright. She tells them the following after imploring them for rescue:

- She frantically pleads for her body to be brought back and raised from the dead. Her body is undamaged, and she has only been dead a few hours, she thinks.
- The darkness collecting in the Shadowfell was far greater than she anticipated when she shifted over. Something in it ambushed her. She was able to chase it away but succumbed to her wounds afterwards.
- She can sense something in the Shadowfell hungrily pulling at her soul.
- If they save her, she will happily assist them in any way she can. She can provide minor magical aid and information.
- She was trying to ascertain how long the wards would hold and how deep they spread to keep the Sanctum safe. If the wards touched adjacent planes, such as the Ethereal Plane realm, the Elemental Plane of Fire, and the Shadowfell, the complex could remain functional, and could even be repaired.

- Something has caused magical entropy and damage to the wards. It also called the terrible darkness in the Shadowfell.
- This same source of necromantic power has torn a hole into the Shadowfell (see **Entrance to the Shadowfell** below).

WHAT ALLARA KNOWS

If asked about the yuan-ti, the Obsidian Sanctum, or the demons, she may respond with the following. She knows quite a bit, so add what you feel is necessary:

- Allara was with the Red Wizard host when they located and moved on the yuan-ti Obsidian Sanctum. She was also present when the Red Wizard forces clashed with a demonic and undead horde also preparing to take the Sanctum.
- The Red Wizards learned that the demon princes are actively seeking to capture the *Soulmonger* shards.
- The Red Wizard host consists of several zulkir archmagi, their personal retainers, as well as war golems and Thayan knights (high-level paladins).
- The Yuan-ti defenses mostly consisted of magical traps, obsidian golems, and yuan-ti priests of some serpent god.

TRICKS OF THE TRADE

Interacting with the Thayan Ghost. Allara is frantic and frightened, horrified at her new state and the things lurking in the Shadowfell calling her soul. She is sincere and is willing to help the adventurers anyway she can if they save her.

Observing the Ghost and Damaged Hall. She phases in and out of the cracked and glowing hallway, whispering and begging for help.

SHADOWFELL ENTRANCE AND ALLARA'S BODY

In a darkened corner of the tunnel, away from the angry red glow of the fractures and the sparks of magic, is a deep black fissure. It is a portal to the Shadowfell.

A DC 15 Wisdom (Medicine) or Intelligence (Religion) check show that she had her life drained away by some undead creature, but its attacks didn't kill her. She died from physical wounds.

Anyone proficient in Religion understands that *raise dead*, *reincarnate*, or other magic can be used to bring Allara back as her body is not polluted by the necromantic energies that grant unlife. Such spells simply call her soul to her body, which is not undead.

If adventurers retrieve Allara's body from the Shadowfell, they can raise her in the Material Plane.

Once Allara is brought back (lawful neutral **archmage**), she offers to help the adventurers in what way she can, but she is too weak, and it is far too dangerous to accompany them. She can cast *fire shield* or *true seeing* for the adventurers, or other spells from the archmage spell list.

FACTION ASSIGNMENT: ZHENTARIM

Saving Allara counts as one of the needed two progression events for this mission. If the adventurers attack her or refuse to help, she vanishes and heart wrenching sobbing echoes through the hallway.

2. THE BINDING CHAMBER (OPTIONAL)

Estimated Duration: 15 minutes

Wards. Intact, *forbiddance* present, divinations blocked, no Obsidian Sanctum Effects

Story Beat

In this optional encounter, the adventurers meet an imprisoned demon seeking freedom. It has information to offer but seeks to trick the adventurers at every turn.

This encounter may be placed in any hall or chamber. Simply have the adventurers notice the open doorway.

Read the following when the adventurers come across the double doors:

Along the wall is a set of doors. They are open. Within is a gently bending hall that turns north. As you follow it, it leads to chamber grandiose in size but eerie in shape. You have entered a great sphere with a circular platform at its center connected and supported by a walkway from the hall you entered from. The platform hangs in the air like a disc with only deep, echoing blackness below.

Atop the disc lining the edge like a strange wall are daises of varying height and thickness. Atop each are runic circles. On the largest dais is a leering demon far larger than a human. It is corpse thin and covered in pallid flesh. Its ribcage is cracked open and hollow. Its leer changes to a fanged smile as it sees you and in a hideous, inhuman voice it says, "Greetings, givers of freedom. I see you have come to see the beginning of the end of this world."

The chamber is perfect circle 250-feet across and the disc platform at its center is 150-feet across and 7 feet thick with numerous columns along the edge, each a different height and thickness.

A DC 17 Intelligence (Religion) check identifies the demon as a **greater devourer**, a fiend of Orcus, the Demon Prince of Undeath. It appears trapped. Anyone proficient with Arcana or Religion can confirm this by the sigils on the daises.

If attacked, the wards binding the demon break and release the creature to strike at the adventurers.

If asked what the fiend's name is, it laughs and answers that it is Malagors the Corpse King (this, of course, isn't its true name but a demonic title. Anyone fluent in Abyssal knows that Malagors means 'Corpse King').

VIEWING THE CHAMBER FROM OTHER PLANES

Status: Clam, no save required.

Along the walls and floor are glowing glyphs that can only be seen from the Ethereal Plane or Shadowfell, or with the ability to perceive either plane. By taking 1 minute and making a DC 18 Intelligence (Arcana or Religion) check (being attuned to a *Dendar talismans* grants advantage on this check) identifies the runes as part of a powerful binding.

This check allows the runes to be activated with an action, which forces extraplanar creatures within the chamber to have disadvantage on all attacks, ability checks, and saving throws for 1 minute.

MALAGORS THE CORPSE KING

A DC 24 Intelligence (Religion) check recalls information pertaining to this high-ranking demon:

- The Corpse King was said to have been a human priest who committed countless atrocities. Orcus rewarded the priest with demonic ascension.
- The Corpse King is a terrifying entity said to have destroyed entire cities. It is infamous for slowly devouring people before their loved ones.

SPEAKING WITH THE CORPSE KING

Malagors offers information in exchange for certain things. The trades should start innocuous and cheap and slowly build to more valuable or personal offerings. Each question should require a trade, but DMs should customize it to suit their needs:

- 13 gp
- An adventurer's ideal
- A solemn word to not harm Malagors
- The full names of any of the adventurers
- 653 gp worth of spell components
- Any uncommon or higher consumable magic item
- A piece of religious treasure from the yuan-ti
- A single drop of blood—freely given.
- Freedom

MALAGORS AND POLITICS

Some information earned via bargaining includes the interesting relationship Orcus, Acererak, and others:

- "If you release me, I will assist you in slaying these wizards. They are both our foes. I can also teach you how to safely handle the *Soulmonger* shard. Its

mere presence is anathema to the living, but I can protect you from its soul eating." A DC 22 Wisdom (Insight) check reveals this to be a trick.

- If the adventures release Malagors, he offers them a vial of his blood, claiming this will protect them from the *Soulmonger* shard. Imbibing the blood causes 40 (8d10) necrotic damage. Malagors attacks once his blood is consumed. Don't trust demons.
- "Acererak, for all his power and knowledge, was blinded by his arrogance and forgot who truly devourers souls. He caused quite the uproar in the Abyss. He will have much to answer for. No soul promised to my lord goes missing without consequence. Acererak will learn this. Again."
- "While the undead raised by Acererak across the planes have pleased Orcus, the two share a tumultuous relationship as the abyssal prince believes Acererak owes fealty to him. Acererak is too powerful to bend to the demon lord's will, and Orcus can't subdue or destroy him without leaving himself exposed to his many hated rivals."
- "Acererak considers himself the mightiest of entities not reliant on worship for power. He is contemptuous of other liches, even Vecna. After all, the Lord of the Spider Throne was defeated, however briefly, by Kass. Besides, you don't hear about a hand of Acererak crawling about, causing trivial mischief."
- "Larloch himself has allied, as he has done in the past, with the Red Wizards especially with the Zulkir of Necromancy, Szass Tam, after taking control of Thay, that petty kingdom of magic."
- "My prince will thwart his adversaries, the Demogorgon and that gilded narcissist Graz'zt. When he does, he will send Kel'zull, a Hierophant of Annihilation, to claim the *Soulmonger* shard."
- "It was the snake blooded fools who sought to bind me here, seeking knowledge of my master's plans and of the forces of the Red Wizards."

THE SOULMONGER'S DISRUPTION

Malagors can also reveal the wide-reaching impact of the Soulmonger's ability to steal souls:

- As the events of the *Soulmonger* unfolded upon Toril in the jungles of Chult, the effects the device have had on the Abyss and Hells have been overlooked. These realms feed on souls, devouring the essence of mortals to give birth to the lowest forms of fiends. While both draw souls from countless worlds of the multiverse, those destined for damnation do not escape easily, and never without the attention of the dark lords, for their greed is as endless and their cruelty is ceaseless.

- One of the mortals consumed by the *Soulmonger* had a contract with Asmodeus, and so the soul belonged to him, no one else—it was his to do with as he saw fit, not for another to decide. Yet Acererak's device stole it. To the perceptions of some, the mortal escaped and proved that deals with Asmodeus can be broken. An infernal duke called into question Asmodeus's sovereignty, sparking a brief civil war. During the conflict, Asmodeus forbade the dukes from action on Toril until he could restore order and take for himself the *Soulmonger*.
- While the Abyss has ever been a realm engulfed by strife, prone to sudden shifts in power, as its chaotic nature dictates, the *Soulmonger*'s influence drew many. Seeing an opportunity, Graz'zt preemptively struck at his rivals, waylaying the Demogorgon and Orcus in hopes of weakening his old adversaries. But unfortunately for Graz'zt, the other princes were of a similar mind and launched sudden attacks of their own for the same reason.
- It was Orcus who proved the strongest and was able to send forces to Toril to hunt for the shards.
- More powers from the planes are mobilizing to capture or destroy the shards, but such beings tend to move slowly as their actions have such wide consequences and there are numerous entities waiting to exploit a rival's distraction.

THE SECRET KNOWLEDGE OF MALAGORS

To coerce or persuade the demon requires a DC 25 Charisma (Persuasion, Deception, or Intimidation) check. Clever roleplaying may grant advantage. An example is taunting it about letting itself become captured and then promising to take revenge on their mutual enemies. The demon's vengeful nature will get the better of it:

- Malagors knows secrets of the zulkirs that would be damaging to them if others learned of it (such as selling magical secrets to Mulhorand). This information can be used gain advantage on Charisma (Deception or Intimidation) and initiative checks against the zulkirs.
- The demon knows of the Room of Depthless Mirrors. It explains how to shut it off or take control to boost divination magic. It also warns that the guardians are empowered by the device. This counts as obtaining information for the Divination Magic, **Faction Assignment (Harpers)**.
- The demon knows how to safely handle the *Soulmonger* shard, which grants the adventurers resistance against necrotic damage in **Area N. The Grand Shrine**.

FACTION ASSIGNMENT: HARPER

If its price is met, or it is tricked into revealing the information, Malagors can provide details on the machine canceling divination magic. This counts as one of the two needed progression events for this mission.

TRICKS OF THE TRADE

Interacting with the Demon. Malagors the Corpse King is a powerful and duplicitous entity who seeks to sow misery. It will do everything it can for that end, even helping a few if it results in the suffering of many. Malagors seeks the *Soulmonger* shard and may attempt to pit the adventurers against the Thayans and kill anyone who remains.

PLAYER HANDOUT 1. STORY AWARD

During the course of this adventure, the characters may earn the following story award. If you are printing these out for your characters, print as many as you may need to ensure that any eligible character receives a copy:

THE OPAL PENDANT

You captured part of the *Soulmonger's* energy within a magic opal pendant taken from a Thayan zulkir.

At some point in the future, you and your allies will need to deal with this nefarious device permanently. Perhaps this will aid you when you do.

PLAYER HANDOUT 2. STORY AWARD

During the course of this adventure, the characters may earn the following story award. If you are printing these out for your characters, print as many as you may need to ensure that any eligible character receives a copy:

IN THE HANDS OF THE ENEMY

You failed to recover the opal pendant from the Thayan zulkirs and lost the *Soulmonger* fragment.

At some point in the future, you and your allies will need to deal with the *Soulmonger* permanently. Since you don't possess the opal pendant, you'll face a greater struggle.

PLAYER HANDOUT 3. MAGIC ITEM

During the course of this adventure, the characters may find the following permanent magic item:

EFREETI CHAIN

Armor (chain mail), legendary (requires attunement)

While wearing this armor, you gain a +3 bonus to AC, you are immune to fire damage, and you can understand and speak Primordial. In addition, you can stand on and walk across molten rock as if it were solid ground.

The efreeti Prince Rashidi al-Zahar ibn Rath transmogrified an efreeti sultana into this delicate suit of crimson chain mail. The wearer of this armor always feels a slight draft, and sometimes finds it hard to stay focused on a task. This item can be found in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.