



XEN'DRIK EXPEDITIONS

The Darkest Heart

Cabal of Shadows Faction Scenario #9

An Adventure for 9th-Level Characters

(Scaled for 7th-11th Levels of Play)

CABAL OF SHADOWS[™] Faction SCENARIO 9 for the XEN'DRIK EXPEDITIONS[™] Campaign

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Tales of a massively large dragonshard draw the attention the Cabal and you have been dispatched to retrieve it from the ruins of a giant's mountain tomb to bring it back in time to cement a new alliance with unexpected allies. A Xen'Drik Expeditions Faction adventure for the Cabal of Shadows, optimized for 9th-level characters.

Based on the original DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® rules created by E. Gary Gygax and Dave Arneson and the new DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game designed by Jonathan Tweet, Monte Cook, Skip Williams, Rich Baker, and Peter Adkison.

Sources: Complete Warrior [Andy Collins, David Noonan, Ed Stark]; Magic Item Compendium [Andy Collins, Eytan Bernstein, Frank Brunner, Owen K.C. Stephens, John Sneed]; Player's Handbook II [David Noonan]; Secrets of Xen'drik [Keith Baker, Jason Buhlmann, Amber Scott]

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Adventure Background

The “Darkest Heart” is the name of a large Eberron dragonshard. It is found in the tomb-shrine of K’naga-oliana, a giant wizardess who lived and died over 30,000 years ago. K’naga-oliana used the Eberron dragonshard to prevent a manifest zone from opening to the Plane of Shadows. She protected the Eberron dragonshard during her entire life and even in her death by building her tomb around it. The giants who knew her paid their respects to her, honoring her devotion and enshrining her tomb. When the giants’ civilization was destroyed, her tomb-shrine became just another relic of the past.

The Cabal of Shadows learned of K’naga-oliana’s tomb-shrine from an explorer and was intrigued by the possibility of it containing a large Eberron dragonshard. Of course, each member of the Council desires it for their own purposes as well as other information.

Adventure Synopsis

Adventure Start: The PCs attend a meeting where they receive their assignment to retrieve the “Darkest Heart” from the tomb-shrine of K’naga-oliana. After the meeting, the different Obscura of the Cabal of Shadows receive their secondary orders.

Part One: The PCs journey to the tomb-shrine and on the way there they are attacked by scorpions and monstrous scorpions.

Part Two: The PCs arrive at the tomb-shrine complex, now mostly in ruins, and explore it. During the exploration they are attacked by hill giants and dire wolves.

Part Three: The PCs explore the tomb-shrine and discover the “Darkest Heart” is a large Eberron Dragonshard. Taking the Eberron Dragonshard causes Eberron to become coterminous with Mabar the Plane of Endless Night at their location. Shadows emerge and attack the PCs.

Part Four: The PCs return to Stormreach and meet with the Council of the Obscured. There they learn they must hand over the “Darkest Heart” to the Oslen Terth of the Arclight Battalion. The meeting site is compromised and they have to deal with the people sent to take it.

Ending the Adventure: The adventure concludes and the PCs receive their rewards.

Troubleshooting

Adventure Secret: There are two places in which an adventure secret might be revealed during this adventure. Should any of the PCs use a card or ability to unlock an adventure secret, they may gain some suggestion that while the Darkest Heart is not trapped, it is holding back some tide of darkness that is dangerous. This might come in the form of an old map or prophetic revelation (as appropriate for the ability or card). Another option is for the card or ability to warn the PCs that their meeting site in Part Four has been compromised.

Content Warning: As members of an evil faction, Cabal of Shadows adventures often deal with mature themes such as violence or depravity. It is the DM’s job to keep the sensibilities of the players in mind when running any adventure and adjust accordingly. Always remember that everyone should be having fun and not made to feel uncomfortable.

Obscura: Some members of the Cabal of Shadows also belong to Obscura, sub-factions within the Cabal. The Obscura often have secret missions for their members, and this time is no different. Ask each player to hand you a note listing his or her Obscura, if any. All players should hand in a note, even if they are not a member of any Obscura in order to keep suspicions evenly spread throughout the party. Return the correct player handout to each player so they understand the details of their secret mission. This should be done immediately following the **Adventure Start** but before **Part One**.

Adventure Start

The tedium of the moment is broken by a spider dropping from an overhead beam on a slender gossamer thread. The fragrance of drying herbs permeates the warm air of the dimly lit shed. Earlier this day your message drop held a missive directing you to attend a meeting tonight in this place. There are others here, likely directed here by a similar missive, waiting for someone or perhaps something else to arrive.

The players should introduce their characters at this time.

Slipping through the doorway is a leather clad woman with a bracer of daggers across her torso and a bag slung over her shoulder. She quickly glances around the shed, studying your appearance before saying,

"The Council of the Obscured has deigned to give you an opportunity. You are to recover the Darkest Heart from K'naga-oliana's tomb-shrine."

The PCs may have a few questions:

- **Who are you?** *"I am the mouth of the council and from them I give you these words." The woman smirks, "This means I am not giving you my name." (The woman refuses to give her name to the PCs. If it is somehow extracted, her name is Jalsazin and she is an agent of the Council. She resides in Stormreach working as a weaver.)*
- **Who is the Council?** *The woman gives you a hard look, before replying, "The Council of the Obscured, the four who lead the Cabal of Shadows of which you are a member."*
- **What is the Darkest Heart?** *"The Council has not informed me or you what the 'Darkest Heart' is or what it looks like. All that is known it is in K'naga-oliana's tomb-shrine."*
- **Who is/was K'naga-oliana?** *"K'naga-oliana was a respected and revered giant wizardess who lived over 30,000 years ago. After her death, she was entombed with 'Darkest Heart'."*
- **Where is K'naga-oliana's tomb-shrine?** *"The tomb-shrine is located in the Titan's Teeth, a mountain range. A ship will carry you down the coast and land you west of the Titan's Teeth. From there you travel east through the jungle to the mountains. Once there at the mountains, you must make your way up the mountain to the tomb-shrine."*
- **What can you tell us about the Titan's Teeth?** *The woman shrugs, "The Council provided no other information about this mountain range other than this is where the tomb-shrine is located."*
- **Do you have any help for us?** *The woman smiles, "Of course the Council has help for you." She slips the bag off her shoulder. "The magic item in this bag shall help provide you food and water for your journey. Now do any of you have 'the map'?" (The bag contains a field provisions box [MIC 160]).*
- **What kind of map?** *The woman produces a tattered piece of parchment and holds it forth. It seems smudged and unreadable. "A map like this. If you concentrate on the map, it shows the area surrounding you, even things that are hidden." (She is referring to Wondrous Map from the player rewards card Xen'drik Expeditions Promo 3.)*
- **We do not have the map. Can we have yours?** *The woman nods, "The Council has foreseen that none of you possess such a thing and deemed it necessary to bring one of these for you." The woman holds out the map to you. (She gives the map to PC asking the question.)*
- **How will this map help us?** *The woman smiles knowingly, "The map has hidden powers that I can unlock for you. It shall show you the way to the tomb-shrine and help you return." (See below for more information.)*
- **When do we leave?** *"You are to leave at first light tomorrow. A ship called 'Raven's Eyes' awaits and Captain Jereksalm is expecting you. If you have any other equipment you need, you better get it before you leave. (If any PC investigates the ship and captain, a DC 15 Gather Information check reveals both the ship and the captain are regulars who visit Stormreach. They are known for carrying cargo to and from outposts that lie along the coast. A DC 25 Gather Information check reveals the ship and the captain are suspected smugglers, but have never been caught.)*
- **What do we do when we return?** *"Stay hidden. You will be contacted when you return and a meeting arranged to turn over the 'Darkest Heart'."*

Field Provisions Box

Price: 2,000 gp

Caster Level: 5th

Aura: Faint; (DC 17) conjuration

Activation: Standard (command)

Weight: 1 lb.

This well-crafted wooden box is carved with runes denoting abundance.

When activated, a *field provisions box* produces a full-day's sustenance (food and water) for up to fifteen humans or five horses. A *field provisions box* functions once per day.

Source: *Magic Item Compendium 160*

Wondrous Map

If any player has the Wondrous Map (Xen'drik Expeditions Promo 3) in their PC's card stack, the woman unlocks a hidden power. If no player has the Wondrous Map, the woman provides one to a single PC, likely the one who asks for her map.

The map not only shows the way to K'naga-oliana's tomb-shrine, it also possesses a way for the PCs to return. By concentrating on the map for five minutes, the bearer can designate a sanctuary similar to what is described for the spell *word of recall* (PH 303). The bearer then can use the map to teleport up to eight medium-sized creatures to this destination as described by the spell *teleport* (PH 292).

The woman suggests you use this to return to Stormreach after retrieving the "Darkest Heart".

Obscura Orders

Before the PCs depart, the Obscura to whom the PC belongs contacts them with an additional set of orders. Please see Handout #1. The summarized orders are:

- **Children of Xoriat:** Retrieve any knowledge concerning the Caldyn Fragments or the Prophecy from K'naga-oliana's tomb-shrine.
- **Defiance:** Retrieve any grave remains of K'naga-oliana.
- **Instruments of Change:** Retrieve any ceremonial items used in venerating K'naga-oliana.
- **Mourners of Yore:** There are no additional orders. Recover the Darkest Heart and exchange it for Charlan.
- **No Obscura:** There are no additional orders. Recover the Darkest Heart and exchange it for Charlan.

Part One: Journey

The PCs have traveled uneventfully full down the coast and from there have made their way through the jungle to the mountains.

A cool mountain breeze sends a zephyr running along the wide rock strewn trail. For the previous eleven days the map has directed your journey along a myriad of winding and twisting trails through the verdant and vibrant jungle, encountering no difficulties. Now for the past day the map has had you on an ancient switchback with the only life being vines and creepers that cling tenaciously to the mountain's face and herds of sure-footed goats that scramble along narrow ledges. In the distance dark clouds, with flashes of lightning dancing among them, have gathered along the horizon and are ominously approaching.

The PCs are on a switchback, ascending one of the peaks that compose the Titan's Teeth. The trail is approximately 20 ft. wide (though it narrows in some places) and the grade poses no hindrance to movement (i.e., no double move for going up).

A DC 15 Survival or Knowledge (nature) check indicates a thunderstorm is approaching and seeking shelter is a good idea. Thunderstorms are often accompanied by lightning and being exposed on the switchback is dangerous.

Gusts of wind lash and tear at you as the storm front reaches the mountain. Ahead, at the juncture where the switchback doglegs back, stands a stone edifice. The edifice stands twenty feet high and is twice that for its length and breadth. A flash of lightning illuminates the entrance, a simple open doorway wide enough for a giant to walk through. The lightning's accompanying crack of thunder is heard and it reverberates off the mountainside.

Switchback Attack (EL 11)

Inquire if the PCs wish to continue their way up the mountain or seek shelter in the edifice. Regardless, the PCs are attacked. At this point you should draw the map and have the PCs place their miniatures on it.

A black carapace covered large-sized creature that is supported on eight segmented legs emerges from the edifice. Surmounted on the body is a dark-skinned elf's torso, its arms wielding silvered blades, and dancing overhead is a long tail ending in a barb dripping with vile-looking substance. On the switchback trail overhead, similar creatures appear, but no dark-skinned elf torso rises from their body. These creatures begin to climb down the side of the mountain towards you.

A successful Knowledge (dungeoneering) check reveals the following for the DC met and lower about the scorrow:

- **DC 17:** Scorrow are not drow at all but a race unto themselves, though they clearly have some connection to dark elves. This result reveals all aberration traits.
- **DC 22:** Scorrow are deadly two-weapon fighters and can weaken prey with their poisonous stings. A band of scorrow use boomerangs to soften up foes before finishing them off.

- **DC 27:** Some scarrow are born with scorpion claws instead of hands, but this makes them no less efficient in combat. However, though all scarrow are predatory, not all are impulsive killers. Adventurers who meet scarrow without getting killed outright might have a chance of convincing the creature that they are worthy of being allowed to live.

A successful Knowledge (nature) check reveals the following for the DC met and lower about the large monstrous scorpions:

- **DC 15:** They are large-sized monstrous scorpions. Since they are mindless vermin, they are not affected by mind-affecting effects (charms, compulsions, phantasms, patterns, and morale effects).
- **DC 20:** They can grab you with their powerful claws and crush you. In addition, their stinger is poisonous and it can kill you.
- **DC 25:** The creature can see in the dark and can even sense while you are hiding nearby.

Foes: The scarrow and their scorpion pets prowl this windy hillside looking for an easy meal. Due to the oncoming thunderstorm, ranged attacks suffer a -2 penalty due to strong wind effects (*DMG* 95).

Large Monstrous Scorpion (4): hp 32 each; *MM* 287.

Scarrow (3): hp 75 each; Combat Statistics.

Tactics: The large monstrous scorpions climb down from the upper switchback 25 ft. above the PCs (DC 15; Climb +8) and they can reach the lower switchback on a double move (speed 50 ft.). The lone scarrow that emerges from the edifice tries to draw the PCs to it, giving the scorpions a chance to slip in amongst their ranks. The two remaining scorpions are hiding on the upper switchback above. They wait until the scorpions start climbing down before appearing overhead and throwing their Xen'drik boomerangs at the PCs (-2 on ranged attacks due to the strong wind effect). Using the trail, these two scarrow move down from the upper switchback to the lower switchback, throwing their Xen'drik boomerangs as they do so. Each scarrow marks a single PC and attacks them exclusively if they can.

Development: Once the PCs defeat the scarrow and their scorpions they can take refuge in the edifice. The edifice protects from the thunderstorm and serves as a place for them to recover from the battle. The thunderstorm lasts for one hour before moving on. Assuming the PCs continue their ascent, go to Part 2.

If the PCs manage to capture any of the scarrow and are capable of interrogating them, they can learn that the scarrow live here preying on the occasional drow hunting party or lone giant. The party was simply a target of opportunity.

Treasure: Other than the drow long-knives and Xen'drik boomerangs, the scarrow have no treasure.

Scarrow CR 7

Usually CE large aberration

Init +7; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; tremorsense 60 ft.; Listen +9, Spot +9

Languages Common, Drow, Giant

AC 21, touch 12, flat-footed 18; (-1 size, +3 Dex, +9 natural)

hp 75 (10 HD)

SR 21

Fort +6, **Ref** +6, **Will** +8

Speed 50 ft. (10 squares)

Melee drow long knife +12/+7 (1d8+5/19-20) OR

sting +12 (1d6+2 plus poison) OR

drow long knife +10/+5 (1d8+5/19-20) and drow long knife +10 (1d8+5/19-20) and sting +12 (1d6+2 plus poison)

Ranged Xen'drik boomerang +9 (1d8+5)

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft.

Base Atk +3; **Grp** +4

Atk Options poison (DC 18, 1d6 Con/1d6 Con), favored enemy animals +2, favored enemy giants +2, favored enemy magical beasts +2

Abilities Str 21, Dex 16, Con 16, Int 13, Wis 13, Cha 12

SQ scorpion empathy +11

Feats Improved Initiative, Track, Two-Weapon Fighting, Weapon Focus (drow long knife), Weapon Focus (sting)

Skills Hide +11, Jump +13, Listen +9, Move Silently +15, Spot +9, Survival +12

Possessions 2 drow long knives, 6 Xen'drik boomerangs

Favored Enemies (Ex) A scorpion has animals, giants, and magical beasts as favored enemies, each at a +2 bonus. See ranger class feature, *PH 47*.
Scorpion Empathy (Ex) A scorpion can improve the attitude of scorpions. This ability functions just like the druid's empathy class feature (*PH 37*), using the scorpion's Hit Dice in place of druid levels.

Hook "To hunt is my life."

Scaling the Encounter

7th-Level & 8th-Level Characters: Remove 1 scorpion.

10th-Level & 11th-Level Characters: Add 2 scorpion.

Bridging the Gap

Ahead the switchback trail is broken by a plunging gap some twenty feet wide. On both sides of the gap, the trail is covered in scattered boulders, rock and stony debris. The rock face above the gap is littered with numerous nooks and crannies while below is at least a five-hundred foot drop.

The PCs must cross a gap of 20 feet. This can be accomplished through magical (e.g., flying or teleporting) or mundane (e.g., climbing or jumping) means.

- **Jumping (*PH 77*):** Due to the scattered boulders, rocks and stony debris no long jump can be attempted unless 20 ft. or more is cleared to create the running start. It is a DC 20 Jump check for a long jump or a DC 40 Jump check for a standing jump.
- **Climbing (*PH 69*):** Due to the adequate footholds and handholds on the rock face, a DC 15 Climb check is needed each round to cross the gap.
- **Adjudicate the use of rope, pitons and other equipment to add circumstance bonuses.**
- **If magical means is used to cross the gap, determine where the PC lands on the other side of the gap. This may cause the section to collapse. See below for more information.**

If a medium-sized or larger PC makes it across the gap and places their full weight within 10 ft. of the gap on the other side, the 10 ft. nearest the gap gives way and collapses. If this 10 ft. section is examined or inspected before anyone crosses the gap, a DC 15 Spot check followed by a DC 15 Knowledge (nature) reveals the section is dangerously weak and can give way if sufficient weight (such as a medium-sized or larger creature) is placed on it.

The PC causing the collapse must make a DC 15 Reflex save to catch hold of the rock face or they fall 500 feet taking 20d6 damage. If there is a collapse, this adds another 10 feet to the gap. Increase the Jump DC above.

Development: If the PCs forced through way through the storm rather than waiting it out and attempt to cross during the storm, apply a –4 circumstance penalty to skill tracks due to the extreme weather.

Part Two: Arrival

The last leg of the switchback ends on a plateau that sprawls out before you. In the distance, perhaps a mile away, stands a colossal statue atop a massive structure. Surrounding this structure on three sides is a forest while the fourth side nearest you has a wide stream of rushing water. There are other pieces of architecture near the structure but from this distance no details can be determined.

The map shows this to be the location of K'naga-oliana's tomb-shrine. Assuming the PCs approach closer to the structure, continue:

Having approached closer, further details of this location are now evident: a raised stone platform surrounded by pillars and a colonnade of crumbling and toppled statues. The colossal statue of a giant warrior has also suffered from the rigors of time and weather. Its head now lays part on the ground and part on the structure itself while an arm that once held an immense sword lies shattered on the other side. A set of crumbling stairs, obviously made for a giant's stride, rise up to the yawning entrance which leads into darkness beyond.

The PCs have an opportunity to explore the area surrounding the tomb-shrine before they enter it.

Forest

The forest is the campsite of the hill giants and dire wolves (see #2 below) which consists of a fire pit with sleeping furs surrounding it. Other small mammals and birds make their home in the forest, but nothing that poses a threat the PCs.

Stream

If the PCs examine the stream, they find minnows and crayfish living in it, neither of which poses a threat to the PCs. If the stream is followed, the PCs can find the source of the stream and where it leaves the plateau. The stream is fed from runoffs higher in the mountains and in turn it feeds the lower parts of the mountains.

1. Raised Stone Platform

The elements and time have not been kind to the raised stone platform and the pillars that surround it. The stone platform has splintered and fractured in many places while the runic script that once covered the pillars has but all but eroded away. In the middle of the stone platform a large cracked pool lies, empty save for an accumulation of dirt and leaves.

This stone platform once held a reflecting pool in which the pillars themselves could be seen. The runic script held inspirational passages to those who came to pay their respects to K'naga-oliana.

The runic script is in Giant and what little remains make it difficult to decipher what it is saying. Not only that, but it is backwards as it was meant to be read while looking into the reflecting pool. If a PC is able to read the script and make a successful DC 30 Decipher Script check, they receive Handout #2. If a PC is able to decipher runic script or make a copy of it, they fulfill the mission requirements for the Children of Xoriat.

2. Stream (EL 11)

A stone paved path leads to the bank of the wide stream that rushes past. Here the path ends as a section of it dives underwater, but on the other side of the wide stream it begins again. The crystal clear water shows no dangers lurk beneath, but the depth is well over human man's head.

If the PCs decide swim across the stream, they must make a successful DC 10 Swim check.

Foes: Once the PCs decide to cross the stream, draw the map and have the PCs set their miniatures on it. The PCs start on the other side of the stream from the structure and have to cross it to get to it. As they are crossing the stream, the hill giants and their dire wolves emerge from the forest and attack.

Dire Wolf (4): hp 45 each; *Monster Manual* 65.

Hill Giant (3): hp 102 each; *Monster Manual* 123.

Tactics: The hill giants advance, throwing rocks (they have four each) at any PC who made it across the stream. The dire wolves move forward and gang up on a single PC.

Development: The PCs may track the hill giants back into the forest where they discover their campsite. The campsite has nothing of value.

Scaling the Encounter

7th-Level & 8th-Level Characters: Remove 1 hill giant.

10th-Level & 11th-Level Characters: Add 2 hill giants.

3. Shattered Sword (EL 3)

Lying amidst the debris and rubble are the pieces of the giant statue's shattered sword. A stone hand still holds the sword's hilt while a distance away the blade's tip is lies partially buried in the earth.

The statue was once animated to salute those who came to pay homage to K'naga-aliana. Now only the sword tip remains magical.

Foes: If a PC investigates the sword blade's tip, it animates and attacks the investigating PC.

Animated Object, Large (1): hp 52; hardness 8; *Monster Manual* 14.

4. Colonnade

The two lines of stone statues stand, acting as ancient if uncaring sentinels. The features of their faces are worn smooth and the once proud promenade is now a jumble of uneven flagstones that jut out of the ground in awkward angles. On the base of each of these statues runic script is inscribed. Several small birds flit by and land on one of the statues.

The small birds are harmless and if threatened, they fly away into the forest. If any PC walks in between the line of statues on the promenade:

One of the stone statues flickers as an image of giant appears, overlaying the statue itself. The image bows and begins to speak, but no words are immediately heard. In the midst of its soundless diatribe, it regains its voice.

If anyone understands Giant (the language) give them Handout #3.

5. Giant Head (EL 3)

The colossus' head lies amidst debris and rubble, its noble appearance marred by cracks and chips from where it struck the stone structure. Its eye sockets are empty, but the pry marks and gouges around them indicate they once held eyes in the past. Several small insects crawl over the head, mindlessly searching each crack and crevice.

If a PC investigates the colossus' head, they discover a hollow cavity inside. Further investigation provokes the swarm of flying insects (treat as a locust swarm) that resides inside the head.

Foes:

Swarm, Locust (1): hp 21; *Monster Manual* 239.

Tactics: The swarm attacks the PC that provokes them in the first round. After that, it attacks the nearest group of PCs and pursues any who flee.

Development: Further investigation inside the head reveals it is the swarm's nest with dead insect hulls and eggs.

6. Stairs

The stairs ascend upward to the opening that leads inside the tomb-shrine. Parts of the stairs tilt precariously while others are perfectly level. The steps themselves are composed of stone and once held an inscribed geometric pattern that is all but obliterated.

The stairs are made for large-sized creatures. Creatures of that size category or within one size category of large can use these stairs normally. Other creatures treat them as steep stairs (*DMG* 63).

If any PC inspects the stairs, a DC 10 Knowledge (architecture and engineering) reveals that the stairs are weakened by natural causes and collapses at the mid-point if too much weight is placed on them. If the PC is successful in determining this, a Disable Device check cannot negate this effect. Full scale reconstruction is needed.

- For small-sized or smaller creatures, they can ascend the stairs safely if they keep a distance of 5 ft. between them.
- For medium-sized creatures, they can ascend the stairs safely if they keep a distance of 10 ft. between them.
- For large-sized or larger creatures, they can ascend the stairs safely if they keep a distance of 15 ft. between them.

If the stairs collapse, it deals 2d6 points of damage plus another 2d6 for falling damage. Creatures within 5 ft. of where the stairs collapse (mid-point, can attempt a DC 20 Reflex save or a DC 20 Tumble or Jump check to leap to safety. If they fail, they suffer the damage listed above.

7. Colossus

Standing atop the massive stone structure, the majority of the colossus still stands, defiant against the rigors of time and the elements. The remnants of the statue depict a heavily muscled giant warrior, garbed in a kilt with a thick belt encircling his waist and a rectangular belt buckle covering the upper and lower abdomen.

If detect magic is used on the colossus, it does radiate magic (DC 21, moderate abjuration; DC 21 moderate enchantment; DC 22 strong enchantment). A DC 15 Knowledge (arcana) reveals it to be a construct and a DC 25 Knowledge (arcana) identifies it as a greater stone golem.

The greater stone golem does not activate regardless what the PCs do at this time.

Part Three: K'naga-oliana's Tomb-Shrine

The ceiling is 20 ft. high in all rooms and passages. It is unlit, unless otherwise stated. Have the players determine a marching order. To open any of the doors requires a DC 25 Strength check due to their size and lack of maintenance.

8. Entry Chamber (EL 7)

The entrance passage floor is composed of large slabs of granite with the ceiling and walls covered in painted, though faded, intricate geometric designs. Halfway down the passage are two alcoves, one on each side. In each alcove stands a statue of a female giant garbed in flowing robes holding an orb in one hand and a rod in the other.

When a creature reaches the point between the two statues, the cloudy tentacles (see below) trap activates.

Black rubbery tentacles spring up from the floor flailing and questing around for someone to capture. A heartbeat later a foul smelling cloud fills the air, rapidly filling the passageway.

Cloudy Tentacles Trap (CR 7)

Description: The trap activates when a creature reaches the point between the statues without performing the proper ceremonial motions. One statue in the alcove casts the spell *evard's black tentacles* first while the second statue casts the spell *stinking cloud*. Both spells are centered at a point between the two statues. This point can be either on the floor, a ceiling or a wall. Place wherever it is most advantageous.

If a PC is grappled and nauseated, they cannot escape from a grapple because they are limited to a single move action and to escape you need a standard action to do so.

The trap resets in one minute.

Search DC 17; **Type** magical

Trigger *true seeing*; **Init** +3

Effect *evard's black tentacles* (grapple +15/1d6+4; CL7); *stinking cloud* (DC 16 Fort; CL7)

Duration 10 rounds

Destruction AC 17, hardness 8, 17 hp (each statue)

Disarm Disable Device DC 24 for *evard's black tentacles*; Disable Device DC 23 for *stinking cloud*

Dispelling DC 18 (per statue)

Once the PCs deal with the encounter trap, they may continue without incident to the end of the passageway. There the passageway forms a T-intersection, with a door on either side. To open these doors require a DC 25 Strength check. Assume the PCs leave the doors open unless they say otherwise.

9. Shrine

The walls of the chamber are a bas-relief of a jungle landscape, complete with trees, vines and birds. In the middle of this chamber stand four stone pillars made to appear as there is a large serpent wrapped around each of them. Above the serpent's gaping, fanged maw are two large eyes. The passage leading out of this chamber is almost completely blocked by debris.

This chamber was used for important individuals who came to pay their respect to K'naga-oliana.

A DC 16 Knowledge (arcana) identifies the serpent-shaped pillars as dream serpents, an exotic creature found in the jungles of Xen'drik'.

If a PC investigates the pillars, a DC 20 Search check finds a secret compartment inside each of the serpents' gaping, fanged maws. The pillars' secret compartments contain:

- A fiery red orb of red quartz
- A large-sized clear quartz dagger
- A silver wand
- A blue quartz rod

These ceremonial items were used in a ritual by the important individuals when paying their respects to K'naga-oliana. If these items are recovered, it fulfils the mission for the Instruments of Change.

10. Gathering Hall

This chamber contains a large dais, partially obscured by debris from a collapse of the ceiling and walls. The collapse ruined part of the mural covering the wall leaving only few details and likely knocked over the large tarnished brazier, now lying on its side with a sprinkling of dirt covered pebbles near it. The passage leading out of this chamber is also partly blocked by debris.

This chamber was used for gatherings of those who came to pay their respect to K'naga-oliana. Those officiating stood on the raised dais and spoke to the congregation.

The collapse occurred when the head of the giant statue came off and struck the structure below. If anyone inspects the chamber, a DC 20 Knowledge (architecture and engineering) or a DC 20 Craft (stonemasonry) reveals that trying to clear any debris through normal means can cause a further collapse. If anyone clears any of the debris, another collapse occurs.

If a collapse occurs, there is a 15-foot bury zone and a 10-foot slide zone from a point determined by the judge. PCs in the bury zone take 8d6 points of damage or half that amount if they make a DC 15 Reflex save. They are subsequently buried. PCs in the slide zone take 3d6 points of damage or no damage if they make a DC 15 Reflex save. PCs that fail their Reflex save in the slide zone are buried. If a PC makes a DC 25 Strength check they can free themselves. PCs take 1d6 points of non-lethal damage per minute while buried. If a PC falls unconscious, they must make a DC 15 Constitution check. If it fails, they take 1d6 points of lethal damage per minute until they are freed or they die. See DMG 66 for more information on cave-ins and collapses.

If a PC investigates the brazier, they discover it is silver. Once cleaned, the brazier is worth 500 gp. The dirt covered pebbles are semi-precious stones and is worth another 500 gp. Another brazier with semi-precious stones can be found covered by the debris from the collapse.

11. Burial Chamber (EL 12)

The entire chamber is covered in smooth white marble that reflects the brilliant light from golden lamps affixed to the walls. Overhead is a magnificent fresco of a raven-haired giantess gazing serenely down. Displayed prominently against the far wall on a dais is an upright sarcophagus whose lid is carved in a bas-relief of a female giant.

What looks like a throne on the map is the sarcophagus wherein lies K'naga-oliana's remains and the "Darkest Heart".

The sarcophagus is not locked or trapped, but it is sealed airtight. If the PCs unseal the sarcophagus and open it:

With the lid of the sarcophagus removed, the contents of the sarcophagus are revealed: a 12-foot tall figure garbed in a dirty grey burial shroud with a black crystalline object the size of a cask at her feet. The figure slowly begins to move forward before crashing to the ground. It explodes in a mix of dust and bone fragments scattering them across the chamber. The black crystalline object momentarily emits a pulse of red light.

Gathering K'naga-oliana's remains fulfills the mission for the Defiance.

The black crystalline object is the "Darkest Heart". Retrieving the "Darkest Heart" fulfills the overall Cabal of Shadows mission. A successful DC 15 Knowledge (arcana) check reveals it is a large Eberron Dragonshard. They are usually found buried in the shallow soil of the world, encased in geode-like stone eggs. They are used to power magic items, artifacts and constructs, or to enhance the abilities of a dragonmark.

The dragonshard is not trapped and can easily be removed from its setting in the sarcophagus. Once the PCs remove the dragonshard:

The "Darkest Heart" pulses rhythmically with a scarlet light that sends thin veins of red throughout the crystal. A vibration runs through the chamber's floor and the white marble begins to fracture sending shards of stone crashing into the ground. As the white marble falls, it is replaced by an insubstantial ebony mist. Formless masses of the black tear themselves from mist and hungry baleful crimson eyes appear in them.

Foes: A co-terminal point is occurring with Mabar and allowing shadows to pass into this world, all eager to feast on the PCs.

Greater Shadow (2): hp 58 each; MM 221.

Shadow (6): hp 19 each; MM 221.

Tactics: The shadows burst from a now insubstantial wall and they attack the nearest PC, preferably the one with the "Darkest Heart". The greater shadows use their Spring Attack to attack the other PCs, trying to weaken them.

Development: If any PC is turned into a spawn, they rise up and attack the remaining PCs.

Scaling the Encounter

7th-Level & 8th-Level Characters: Remove 1 greater shadow.

10th-Level & 11th-Level Characters: Add 2 greater shadows.

Evil Released

Once the shadows and greater shadows are defeated, continue:

A freezing cold wind roars through the chamber as much of the floor and ceiling are consumed by the black insubstantial mist. Countless crimson eyes leer hungrily into the chamber as a heaving mass of shadow ripples and tears forming into a twenty foot tall humanoid giant of pure darkness. The dark figure eyes all in the chamber with a fierce and unrestrained hunger.

This is an EL 16 encounter and it is not intended that the PCs fight the nightwalker rather the intention is to convince them it is time to leave, if not flee. Roll for initiative as normal, but on its turn the nightwalker delays giving all PCs the opportunity to flee. If any PC attacks the nightwalker, then they have made an unwise decision and they shall suffer the consequences for their actions.

Nightwalker (1): hp 178; MM 196.

Tactics: Regardless of the initiative rolled, on its turn the nightwalker delays giving all the PCs an opportunity to flee. The nightwalker does not pursue any fleeing PCs outside of the monument. If any PC attacks the nightwalker, the creature takes its turn, moves to within 30 ft. of the offending PC using their Evil Gaze, casts *unholy blight* (quicken) and followed by a *finger of death* on them.

Development: If the PCs defeat the nightwalker, continue to send in another until the PCs flee. Play up the cold wind, the growing insubstantial black mist and the countless crimson eyes that leer hungrily at them. Likely the PCs exit the monument and use the Wondrous Map to teleport them back to Stormreach:

- If the PCs return to Stormreach with the “Darkest Heart”, go to **Part 4**.
- If the PCs return to Stormreach without the “Darkest Heart”, go to **Ending the Adventure**.

Part Four: The Deal

Returning to Stormreach with the “Darkest Heart”, it is not long until you are contacted to attend a meeting and turn over the object. At the meeting, all four Obscura leaders are present as is the woman who contacted you originally. The woman smiles, “Another opportunity has arisen for us. It is an alliance with another group. For the price of the object you retrieved they shall join us.” The four leaders remain silent as they watch and listen to the proceedings.

The PCs may have a few questions:

- **Who is this group?** “They are the Arclight Battalion of the Blackwheel Company.”
- **Do we have to give them the “Darkest Heart”?** We have information that Arclight is in possession of the child oracle Charlan that we have search for since before the pirate’s attack on Stormreach. You are to perform the exchange and retrieve the girl.
- **When and where does the handover take place?** “The handover takes place sundown outside of town. Take this map that details the location.”

Once the PCs are finished asking questions, the woman sends them on their way. The PCs may make any necessary precautions throughout the day. PCs that participated in CSH-07 – *Whispers Behind the Door* recognize Charlan as the orphan girl they were unsuccessful in retrieving at the beginning of that event because she had already been abducted by the time the PCs arrived. PCs that have played CSH-08 *Racing Midnight* recognize the Arclight Battalion and Mark’s Man Oslan Terth as allies they may have made while infiltrating the pirate armada.

Hand It Over (EL 11)

The sun casts it last rays of light across the land before slipping beneath the horizon. Three heavily armored and armed figures approach coming directly to you.

If the three guards are not stopped, they approach to within 20 ft. of a PC and stop there.

Stopping a short distance away, one of the figures speaks. “We are here for the ‘Darkest Heart’. Give it to us and we both can be on our way.”

If the PCs turn it over the three figures take it and leave. Of course the three guards know nothing about the exchange or the deal, and do their best to cover if asked for the girl, claiming that she is restrained nearby and they will tell the PCs where after they have the Darkest Heart. They are lying.

Creatures: If the PCs question the three figures excessively or refuse to hand it over, the guards attack the PCs.

Guards (3): hp 92; Combat Statistics.

Tactics: The guards attack using their greatswords trying to full attack with them. If the guards are charged they use their Hold the Line to take an attack of opportunity, if they can. The guards automatically use their *mindarmor* each round to gain the +5 bonus to Will saves to resist mind-affecting spells and abilities as they and spellcasters know this is their weakness.

Development: If the PCs defeat the guards and question them, they learn they have been compromised by spies from the Dragonmarked Houses internal to the Blackwheel Company that are worried about the rogue nature of the Arclight Battalion. Someone within one of the Dragonmarked Houses, the guards do not know who, ordered them here to obtain the "Darkest Heart" before the Oslan Terth does.

Guard (CR 8)

Male human fighter 8

CN Medium humanoid (human)

Init +3; **Senses** Listen +3, Spot +3

Languages Common

AC 20, touch 11, flat-footed 19

(+1 Dex, +9 armor)

hp 92 (8 HD)

Fort +11, **Ref** +6, **Will** +8 (+13 with *mindarmor* activated)

Speed 20 ft. in full plate (4 squares), base movement 30 ft.

Melee +1 *greatsword* +17 (2d6+12/17-20) OR

armor spikes +13 (1d6+5) OR

spiked gauntlet +13 (1d4+5) OR

+1 *greatsword* +17/+12 (2d6+12/17-20)

Ranged dagger +9(1d4+5/19-20/x2)

Space 5 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft.

Base Atk +8; **Grp** +13

Atk Options Hold the Line, Power Attack

Combat Gear flask of alchemist fire, *potion of cure serious wounds*, vial of acid

Abilities Str 21, Dex 17, Con 18, Int 8, Wis 16, Cha 10

Feats Combat Reflexes, Hold the Line, Improved Toughness, Improved Critical (*greatsword*), Iron Will, Melee Weapon Mastery (slashing), Power Attack, Weapon Focus (*greatsword*), Weapon Specialization (*greatsword*)

Skills Intimidate +11, Profession (soldier) +4

Possessions combat gear plus armor spikes, club, dagger, everburning torch, +1 *mindarmor full plate*, +1 *greatsword*, sap, spiked gauntlet, *vest of resistance* +1

Power-up suite (already calculated in): *bear's endurance*, *bull's strength*, *cat's grace*, *owl's wisdom* (spells cast by 10th level caster)

HOLD THE LINE [GENERAL]

You are trained in defensive techniques against charging opponents.

Prerequisites: Combat Reflexes, base attack bonus +2.

Benefit: You may make an attack of opportunity against a charging opponent who enters an area you threaten. Your attack of opportunity happens immediately before the charge attack is resolved.

Normal: You only get an attack of opportunity against a character that exits a square you threaten.

Source: *Complete Warrior* 100.

MINDARMOR

Price: +3,000 gp

Property: Armor or shield

Caster Level: 5th

Aura: Faint; (DC 17) enchantment

Activation: Immediate (mental)

Constructed of seamless and tightly bound layers, this item steadies your thoughts when worn.

When activated, a suit of armor or a shield that has this property grants you a +5 bonus on Will saves to resist mind-affecting spells and abilities until the start of your next turn.

The mindarmor property functions three times per day.

Source: *Magic Item Compendium* 13

Scaling the Encounter

7th-Level & 8th-Level Characters: Remove 1 guard.

10th-Level & 11th-Level Characters: Add 2 guards.

The Real Deal

With your attackers defeated, a voice rings out, “What has happened here?” The voice comes from one of four figures who are approaching. “I am Oslan Terth and I am here for the ‘Darkest Heart’.” Four men and a nervous looking female child approach through the foliage.

Following the attack or another resolution, Oslan Terth arrives for the “Darkest Heart”. Those that have played *CSH-08 Racing Midnight* recognize him.

The PCs may question him about his motives:

- **Why are you allying with the Cabal of Shadows?** *“My reasons are simple: orders and money. My commanders told me to make this exchange and they pay well.”*
- **What do you know about the setup?** *“Nothing, though I would be interested to know anything you can pry out of them or their corpses.”*

Creatures: If the PCs attack Oslan Terth, he uses a contingent *teleport* to escape with Charlan. The three remaining guards perform a fighting withdrawal.

Guards (3): hp 92; Combat Statistics (see above).

Scaling the Encounter

7th-Level & 8th-Level Characters: Remove 1 guard.

10th-Level & 11th-Level Characters: Add 2 guards.

Ending the Adventure

If the PCs arrive at another conclusion than what is presented, it is up to the judge to determine the appropriate ending.

Success

Read this if the PCs successfully handed over the “Darkest Heart”:

With the “Darkest Heart” handed over to Oslan Terth, you return to the Hand of Stalwart Reverie. The smiling woman is there once again to speak with you. “You have done well and our masters are pleased. You will be well rewarded and the future of the Cabal is assured. I will take the girl upstairs now where I’m sure she will be richly received.”

PCs who receive this Conclusion receive the story object **EXCS30 Eyes of Darkness** and the event treasure.

Failure

Read this if the PCs failed to hand over the “Darkest Heart”:

With the meet with Oslan Terth not going quite as planned, you return to the Hand of Stalwart Reverie. The smiling woman is there once again to speak with you but she is no longer smiling. “You have not done as expected and our masters are less than pleased. The girl was to have assured the future of the Cabal and we need this alliance. I have done all I can draw attention away from you, but I would suggest you lay low for awhile.”

PCs who receive this Conclusion do not receive the story object **EXCS30 Eyes of Darkness** but do gain the event treasure.

Resolving Obscura Secret Missions

Any PC that completes the secret mission given to them by their Obscura at the beginning of the adventure should receive the **Obscura Reward #17** story object. Here is a summary of what must be done to receive this reward.

- *Children of Xoriat*: To succeed in their mission the PC must bring back the portion of the prophecy written the raised stone platform (Part Two, Area 1).
- *The Defiance*: In order to succeed in their assignment the PC must bring back K'naga-oliana's remains (Part Three, Area 11).
- *Instruments of Change*: The PC must bring back the hidden ceremonial items used in the veneration of K'naga-oliana (Part Three, Area 9).
- *Mourners of Yore*: The PC succeeds if the party recovers the Darkest Heart and exchanges it for Charlan.
- *No Obscura*: The PC succeeds if the party recovers the Darkest Heart and exchanges it for Charlan.

Event Treasure

If you are running *CSH-9 The Darkest Heart* as part of another event and the PCs successfully retrieve the Darkest Heart, they are able to plunder the treasures of K'naga-oliana's tomb. Have each PC record the following event treasure upon their adventure journals in addition to any story objects to be carried on their adventure journal until the results of this event are reported and their EV is updated. Each PC receives a pair of *goggles of night*, a *potion of enlarge person* and a *potion of reduce person*.

Adventure Questions

1. How did the PCs deal with the scarrow attack?
 - a. They were defeated by the crawling attack.
 - b. The party ran away to fight another day.
 - c. They squashed the bugs.
 - d. They never made it that far.
2. What happened when the giants attacked?
 - a. The giants crushed the party under their heel.
 - b. The party ran and hid.
 - c. The taller they are, the harder they fall.
 - d. They never made it that far.
3. How did the PCs deal with the cloudy tentacles trap?
 - a. It decimated them.
 - b. It left them weak, but alive.
 - c. The PCs destroyed it.
 - d. They never made it that far.
4. How did the PCs deal with the shadows?
 - a. They turned on the lights and drove them back.
 - b. They were drained of their life force and made into more shadows.
 - c. They never made it this far.
5. Did the PCs recover the "Darkest Heart"?
 - a. Yes.
 - b. No.
6. To whom did the PCs hand the "Darkest Heart"?
 - a. Oslan Terth.
 - b. The fake guards.
 - c. No one, they stole it.
 - d. No one, they never had it.
 - e. They never got this far.
7. Rate the players' role-playing (while keeping in mind limitations of convention time restrictions)?
 - a. Excellent, they should all be on the silver screen.

- b. Good, you had a fun time.
- c. Fair, someone used a funny voice.
- d. Poor, they rolled some dice and ignored chances to role-play.

Story Objects

Eyes of Darkness

Code: EXCS30

Your exposure to the Heart of Darkness and the Mabar manifest zone in K'naga-oliana's tomb have forever altered you. You gain darkvision out to a distance of 15-feet. If you already have darkvision, instead your darkvision increases by 5-feet.

Obscura Reward #17

Code: EXCS31

You have succeeded in a secret mission given to you by your Obscura. The benefit you receive depends upon the Obscura to which you belong.

Children of Xoriat: You receive training in the prophecy and gain a +2 competence bonus to Decipher Script and all Knowledge skills made concerning the Draconic Prophecy.

Defiance: You are given one of the giantess' finger bones that still resonates with her power and the taint of the Darkest Heart. The bone radiates a black light when within thirty feet of an incorporeal undead. This item has no resale value.

Instruments of Change: The items brought back give you an insight into the giants' divine magic. Once per adventure you can call upon their secrets as a swift action to Empower a divine spell of 2nd-level or lower. If you cannot cast divine spells you can use this ability upon a divine spell of 2nd-level or lower cast upon you.

Mourners of Yore: When bringing back Charlan, she whispered secrets about your possible future. You unlock *ancient knowledge*, *expose the dead*, *glimpse of eternity* and *watchful ancestors* spells (Magic of Eberron) without using expansion slots.

No Obscura: When bringing back Charlan, she whispered secrets about your possible future. You unlock the Cataclysm Mage prestige class (Explorer's Handbook) without using expansion slots. This vision also counts as the Special requirement needed to qualify for the class.

DM Map of the Colossal Monument



Player Handout #1: Obscura Orders

The DM should have each player secretly write down their PC's membership in an Obscura, if any, and then provide them with the appropriate handout. These are SECRET orders and should only be shown to players whose PCs are in the listed Obscura.

Children of Xoriat

As you prepare to leave for your journey, Sublime contacts you and says, "It is said that K'naga-oliana possessed knowledge concerning the Prophecy and the freeing of a great tide of darkness. Bring back this portion of the prophecy."

Goal: Retrieve any knowledge concerning the Draconic Prophecy from K'naga-oliana's tomb-shrine.

The Defiance

As you prepare to leave for your journey, the Voice of the Storm contacts you and says, "Bring back K'naga-oliana's remains. Her very bones are imbued with arcane energies and we have need of them."

Goal: Retrieve the grave remains of K'naga-oliana.

Instruments of Change

As you prepare to leave for your journey, the Discordant Voyage contacts you and says, "When other giants came to venerate K'naga-oliana's remains they used ceremonial items to do so. These religious ceremonies and their instruments are of great interest to us. Bring them back."

Goal: Retrieve any ceremonial items used in venerating K'naga-oliana.

Mourners of Yore

Congratulations, you have no special orders. Do as you are told and make certain this mission succeeds.

Goal: Find the Darkest Heart and exchange it for the young oracle Charlan.

No Obscura

Congratulations, you have no special orders. Do as you are told and make certain this mission succeeds.

Goal: Find the Darkest Heart and exchange it for the young oracle Charlan.

Player Handout #2: Raised Stone Platform

Give this handout to the PCs who decipher the runic script.

The day shall come when others shall sift through the ruins of my tomb to find the “Darkest Heart” and bring it to their obscured masters. This day shall herald the end of my guardianship and the darkness I halted shall be free once more. This is the prophecy as given.

Player Handout #3: Colonnade

Give this handout to the PCs who understand Giant.

...became known as the “Darkest Heart”. K’naga-oliana knew she had to use it to prevent the co-terminus from happening. She enacted a great ritual using it and at great cost to herself, she halted the co-terminus with the...