Heart of Ubtao

You reach a large clearing in the jungle. Above you a massive chunk of earth and rock torn from the earth drifts over the swampy forest, over a hundred feet above the ground. A petrified tree towers above the stone, with its stone roots protruding from the bottom. Between the shape of the rock and the branching of the tree’s limbs, it creates the impression of a gigantic stone heart hanging in the sky. The impression is only made more gruesome by the red liquid dripping from the roots.

You see a cave mouth in the side of the slowly rotating “heart,” and a staircase winding from the cave up to the flattened top where the petrified tree stands. The staircase definitely isn’t natural; it was carved with tools into the rock.

Show handout!

Give the PCs a chance to try and figure out what to do. After a while:

You spot what appears to be a blonde elven woman emerging from the cave mouth, wearing robes. She calls down to you all… [do any of you speak Elvish?]

[Elvish speakers]: She says “Hail travelers, Who might you be?”

Valindra will switch to Common if anyone thinks to ask her to.

If the PCs ask either of their guides the guides will explain that this is the Heart of Ubato, said to be the petrified heart of the lost god. Some make pilgrimages to the Heart if they can reach it, to pray for Ubtao’s return.

As far as they know, no one lives here.

**Who are you exactly? Or What are you doing here?**

“My name is Valindra Shadowmantle. I’m a scholarly wizard based out of Thay, working on research here in this godsforsaken jungle.

**Reseach?**

“There’s a lot of undead in Chult, and in case you haven’t realized, there’s a recent problem. A death curse. We believe in originated here in Chult.”

**Who are you with?**

[Initiate attack]

**Earthmote? Heart of Ubato?**

We found this earthmote in the middle of the jungle during our treks. I figure if I have to be here may as well at least be well away from any of the jungle’s dangers.

**At some point during the conversation, the Steel Predator will attack!**

Vorn suddenly gives off a loud blaring alarm as the jungle to the south erupts in a smoky residue. A metallic beast materializes into the clearing, its body covered in gleaming back metal plates. Bladed saws extend out of its spine from its head down to its tail. Its eye-less head consists of only a large jaw with jagged metal teeth like shrapnel. It lets out a terrifying scream [Stunning Roar].

Roll for Initiative!

Vorn will not be stunned?? Valindra will also roll initiative. On her turn she will cast Arcane Gate. It will take her entire turn every round to maintain the portal.

A glowing circle appears on the ground, with a shimmering window hovering above it. It shows the petrified tree from atop the Heart of Ubtao. “Quickly, I’ve opened a gateway!” Valindra shouts down at you.

Vorn will keep the predator busy while everyone gets through the portal (that’s the plan anyway…). He can pick people up and hurl them on his turn or try and grapple the beast to keep it focused on him.

**If Mannix still has detect magic on: (note that it requires concentration)**

Mannix your detect magic reveals that this entire floating rock is protected by a faintly shimmering shield of protective magic.

Manix your detect magic reveals an illusion spell present on Valindra.

**Inside the Heart:**

The cave is musty and dimly lit by daylight filtering down through the hollow, petrified tree trunk 20 feet above. A pool of dirty rainwater occupies the central 20 feet of the floor, between natural pillars formed by the roots of the petrified tree. Three tall bookcases stand against the wall to the right of the cave entrance. A desk and several wooden crates stand against the left-hand wall. Opposite the entrance are two wooden doors. Between them, a large empty iron cage.

The unmistakable smell of rotting flesh fills your nostrils and see you several zombies acting decidedly un-zombielike. One of them is wearing an apron and appears to be dusting a bookshelf. Another is armed with a broom and sweeping out leaves and dust. Many are simply standing still staring straight ahead.

“I’m not exactly used to entertaining visitors, but for such an intriguing group I’ll make an exception.” She faces you all pointedly. “Now, who exactly are you to warrant such a creature being sent after you?”

**Zombies!?**

“It’s exceptionally hard to find good help this far from civilization. The dead are everywhere, however. Might as well put them to good use.”

**Cage?**

“A safe place to store the dead. They can be a bit finicky.”

**Red Wizards?**

“Yes I work for...the Thayan government on a research grant. They provide me with everything I need. In exchange, I give them quick and easy access to Chult.”

How?

“I keep a teleportation circle here. They frequently send their wizards through the portal and then I can send them down so they’re on their way. Presumably they could come back here, but, well, none of them have come back yet.”

**Zagmira?**

“Do you have a description of her? I’m a bit bad with names.”

“Oh yes, she definitely came through here, with several other red wizards and bodyguards. It was not long after this death curse began. I believe they headed south in search of the source.”

**Death Curse, Soul Monger, etc.**

**“**I believe I know what’s causing all this. A powerful necromantic device called a soul monger. I’ve seen them used before but never on such a global scale. Truly remarkable. I should very much like to get my hands on such a device. For study of course. And you know, to divert global catastrophe. Have you any leads on where it might be located?”

**If the PCs are truthful with her (Omu), then:**

Her eyes light up like flickering flames. She snaps her fingers and a zombie shuffles only at surrpising speed, handing her a book. She flips through it and finds an entry. “Yes, Omu. Dangerous place, dark history, deep in the jungle, hard to find. Harder to get inside, I heard the Yuan-ti built a lair underneath it and claim this area. I wonder if they’re behind this? Surely not, the yuan-ti don’t have advanced magical capability. Maybe they found it? Activated it by accident?

“Unfortunately the jungle to the south is absolutely choked with the dead. Remnants of Ras Nsi’s army if I remember my history correctly. You lot seem formidable but that may be a deadly journey. Have you any other means of travel?”

**Acererak?**

At that name her eyebrows arch up but she quickly conceals her surprise. “That is quite the name. And yet….this does have his fingerprints all over it. If the arch-lich is truly behind all this, we’ve got our work cut out for us.”

**If the PCs attempt to bargain with her:**

She laughs. “Mercenaries eh? The world is literally dying all around you but you want a payout? How delightfully pathetic. I have a few things you may be interesed in. Like this,” she snaps her fingers over and a zombie places a jar on the desk, filled with several floating eyeballs.”

Remotely Seeing Eye (requires attunement): Once attuned and placed in a missing eye socket the eye functions like a normal eye. As an action you can remove the eye. Once the eye is removed, you can use an action to switch between seeing out of that eye, or your other eye, as if by the Clairvoyance spell (using sight only). The removed eye must be within 1 mile to be able to switch to its vision, and it cannot move on its own.

**If the PCs dodge or evade her answers:**

Her eyes narrow a bit and she frowns. “No, I think you know something. And I think it would be wise to share it with me. We could pool our resources, work together on this.”

**If they still won’t confide in her:**

Her eyes blaze with fire and she begins mumbling something under her breath. You realize too late that she’s casting a spell.

Valindra casts Dominate Monster on whomever she thinks will be the most forthcoming/leader of the group (probably Mannix). She will then force Mannix to reveal everything they know.

**If the PCs take any hostile actions:**

She growls and her eyes become blue flames as her face begins to shimmer, occasionally showing the skeletal face underneath. “You’ve made a dangerous enemy here today.” Before you react she swirls her hands and in a puff of smoke she’s gone. The zombies, even the inanimate ones, spring to life and shuffle toward you menancingly, and you hear noises coming from this door.”

The girllaon zombies will burst through the door in round 1.

**Loot:**

The party will only get loot if they opt to fight Valindra (minus the eye, which she’ll give to Mannix).

Return to Port Nyanzaru

Potion of Healing - 50gp

Potion of Greater Healing 250gp