

RETURN TO THE TEMPLE OF ELEMENTAL EVIL

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INTRODUCTION

*The night grows whole again . . . The shadows rest,
Gathered beneath a greater shadow's wings.*

—Clark Ashton Smith, “The Eldritch Dark”

One of the best, most fondly remembered DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® adventures is *The Temple of Elemental Evil*. In 1979, *The Village of Hommlet* was published and was wildly popular: Tens of thousands of playing groups got to know the people of Hommlet and explored the ruined moathouse that lay nearby. They were soon hungry for more, for the moathouse was merely a foreshadowing of a much greater challenge: the Temple of Elemental Evil. Finally, in 1985, to gamers’ delight, the adventure module T1–4 *The Temple of Elemental Evil* was released, incorporating the original *Village of Hommlet* adventure and detailing the entire, massive temple that everyone had clamored for.

Now evil stirs once again, and a new band of adventurers must rise to the challenge. They must discover the secret power behind the original temple and overcome it before its plans come to fruition and unleash evil and destruction unlike anything seen before.

Return to the Temple of Elemental Evil builds upon the adventures in the original *Village of Hommlet* and *Temple of Elemental Evil*, as well as G3 *Hall of the Fire Giant King*, and WG4 *The Forgotten Temple of Tharizdun*. Enjoy.

PREPARATION

You, the Dungeon Master (DM), need a copy of the *Player’s Handbook*, the *DUNGEON MASTER’S Guide*, and the *Monster Manual* to use this adventure.

Text that appears in shaded boxes is player information, which you may read aloud or paraphrase when appropriate. Sidebars contain important information for you, including special rules or instructions. Monster and nonplayer character (NPC) statistics are provided with each encounter in abbreviated form, but common monsters list the *Monster Manual* page reference (or the *DUNGEON MASTER’S Guide* page reference for common NPCs). Full statistics for special monsters and significant NPCs appear in Appendix 3 (see below for more information).

Encounter Levels

Return to the Temple of Elemental Evil is an adventure suitable for a party of 4th-level player characters (PCs), although characters as low as 3rd level should be able to handle the early encounters. (They will need to rest more often, though, and face a serious risk of death.) By the time they finish the adventure, the characters are likely to be 14th level.

Individual encounters possess an overall rating called the Encounter Level (EL), if appropriate, which sums up the Challenge Ratings (CR) of the individual encounter elements. The EL helps you gauge how difficult or easy any given encounter will be for your players.

RUNNING THE ADVENTURE

An adventure this size is challenging to run. To do it properly, you have to master the material. That means not only being familiar with the encounter area that the PCs are currently in, but in those around it as well. In organized complexes

such as those detailed here, very often creatures and NPCs move around. Play the foes as intelligently as possible—grand challenges are always more memorable than adventures that are pushovers.

NPCs and Monsters

Three types of NPCs and monsters are included in this adventure. The first are noncombatants. These are people with no game statistics or references other than to a class and level. In dangerous areas, noncombatants are marked as such.

The second type is the typical sort of NPCs or monsters. Their statistics include page references for the *Monster Manual* or the *DUNGEON MASTER’S Guide*, and they conform exactly to those books. You can equip NPCs with the standard gear assigned them in Chapter 2: Characters in the *DUNGEON MASTER’S Guide* (pages 47–58), or customize them as desired, but do not introduce treasure other than what is already presented in the adventure.

Sometimes, typical opponents are altered slightly, either because they have equipment not mentioned in the *Monster Manual* or because they have been advanced. In this case, all the work has been done for you. If a creature’s Strength has been improved, for example, you don’t have to worry about figuring out new attack and damage bonuses—the creature’s statistics already includes those modifications.

The third type is specific NPCs and monsters. Complete statistics for these individuals are presented in Appendix 3, and the text refers you to that appendix.

Difficulty

Encounter Levels reflect what level four average PCs should be to handle the encounter without undue difficulty. You’ll have to decide how this ranking stacks against your specific party, but encounters of the same EL should always be the same challenge. For example, if your group of PCs usually handles encounters of one EL above their level without a problem, then that should be true of most other such encounters as well. Of course, you can always tinker with an encounter, adding more creatures or taking some away, changing levels of NPCs, or adding equipment as you see fit.

Experience Points

Of course, no one can predict the order in which a party encounters the challenges. If a group of 13th-level characters faces eight ogres each having four levels of warrior (making them each CR 5), no experience point award is listed in Table 7–1 in the *DUNGEON MASTER’S Guide*. In this case, extrapolate the results downward—take the lowest CR that gives an award and divide by 1.5 to get the appropriate award for the next lower award.

As a variant rule, you are encouraged to award experience points for prisoners freed and returned safely home. The XP award should be equal to that for defeating the prisoner in an encounter (with a minimum of 100 XP). Never use this to award an unduly high amount: Freeing an 18th-level NPC held prisoner by a group of orcs, for example, is not a situation worthy of such a reward.

PREVIOUS PLAY IN THE TEMPLE

This adventure assumes that the adventurers who assaulted the Temple fifteen years ago undertook certain actions,

among them the destruction of the original Temple of Elemental Evil. If events went differently in your campaign from what is described here, you can do one of two things.

1. Alter the adventure to fit your campaign history.
2. Assume that after your PCs did what they did at the original temple, and NPC adventurers came and wrought the changes described here. For example, if the party did not collapse the temple by destroying the *Orb of Golden Death*, assume that NPCs did so between then and now. Likewise, if NPCs from the original adventure died in the course of your campaign but are portrayed as still alive in this adventure, assume that *raise dead* or *resurrection* spells brought them back.

Players Familiar with the Original Adventure

Players knowing about the original *Temple of Elemental Evil* is not a problem. Perhaps the characters are privy to information about the place through a family member or friend, or simply studied it in recent books on the subject. Knowledge of the previous adventure is nice, but it is neither necessary nor unduly advantageous to play this adventure.

NPCs from the Original Adventure

Fifteen years have passed in the campaign world since the defeat of the Temple of Elemental Evil, but some of the villains (and heroes) from the first adventure are still active. Although each is found in a different portion of the adventure, some of the returning NPCs include: Catoness Ydey, Elmo, Falrinth, Hedrack, Lareth the Beautiful, Prince Thrommel, Senshock, Smigmal Redhand, Spugnor, and Zert.

If these names are unfamiliar to you, don't worry—they will not long remain so. If you recognize them, you'll soon find that even though this adventure is brand-new, you'll feel right at home.

SIZE AND SCOPE

To call *Return to the Temple of Elemental Evil* an adventure is an understatement. It's really a campaign unto itself. Characters beginning with little experience should reach quite advanced levels by the end. Expect it to take many sessions—most likely months and months of play—to complete, and even then only if your group plays every week.

Buying Equipment

Although the adventure details two different communities, at some point the characters likely will want to purchase equipment, particularly magic items, that they cannot find in either Hommlet or Rastor. The city of Verbobonc lies about thirty miles northwest of Hommlet (see map 2). Treat this as a large city with a gold piece limit of 40,000 (see page 137 in the *DUNGEON MASTER'S Guide*). Verbobonc can offer the characters virtually anything that they want to buy or have made with the treasure that they gain in the adventure.

Since Verbobonc is not detailed here, it may be a good idea to handle trips to the city quickly and without much wasted adventure time. That is up to you and the players.

Side Adventures

During the course of play, the PCs are likely to want to do something not covered in the adventure. Plenty of opportunities

exist for side adventures, either spun off from events that occur in the scenario or based on something entirely different, placed by you for a change of pace. Monitor the party level when doing this. If, through side adventures, the party gains significant experience or even an entire level, some of the encounters may be too easy when they come back to the main plot. Don't worry too much about this—the system is self-correcting (since they gain less XP for encounters below their level, they advance a little more slowly and soon end up at the appropriate level).

THARIZDUN/ THE DARK GOD/ THE ELDER ELEMENTAL EYE

The deity Tharizdun is a being of pure destructive force, of cold, conclusive obliteration and utterly evil nihilism. So terrible is he that in eons past, all the other deities banded together against him. But even their combined might was insufficient to destroy him, and they were forced merely to banish him to a special prison plane.

Even so, separated from the Material Plane and stricken from all official histories of existence, Tharizdun still influences the life of the occasional mortal. His cult is small but fanatically devoted. Coming to them in mysterious and mind-wrenching dreams, the deity imparts his dark will to his followers. The goal of Tharizdun's clerics is to channel enough power to their dread master so that he can free himself from his prison. This, of course, will spell the utter end of the world, and so this faith appeals only to the completely insane.

Two schemes to accomplish this grand task have dominated the activities of the cult. First, they seek to recover lost shines and artifacts devoted to their deity. In reestablishing his places of worship and wielding the dark devices consecrated in his name, they increase Tharizdun's power. Second, following advice gained in soul-bending divinations and dream communications, they have established another church. This new religion, simply called Elemental Evil (but often referring to a deity called the Elder Elemental Eye), channels the reverence and power of unknowing worshippers directly to the Dark God.

The Elder Elemental Eye is actually an aspect of dread Tharizdun. Clerics of the Elder Elemental Eye are his clerics, although sometimes they do not realize it. For example, drow clerics introduced to the religion of Elemental Evil (see below) did not know that they truly served Tharizdun. Even the clerics of the original Temple of Elemental Evil did not refer to the Elder Elemental Eye. They believed that they revered only the evil aspect of the elements themselves (or the demon Zuggtmoy; see below).

The symbol of the Elder Elemental Eye is a downward-pointing black triangle with an inverted yellow Y within it so that the tips of the figure meet the middle of each side of the triangle.

The cult also uses the much more overt symbol of a golden flaming eye. For years, people have wrongly assumed that this was the symbol of Zuggtmoy, but with good reason. While Tharizdun was imprisoned far away, he used powerful demon lords such as Zuggtmoy, Lolth, and Demogorgon as conduits to transfer power to his clerics. In some instances, the demon did not even know what was happening, while in

others it believed itself to be the object of reverence by the worshiper in question. In days past, when Lareth the Beautiful commanded the moathouse (the outpost for the Temple of Elemental Evil), both Zuggtmoy and Lolth believed him to be their priest—when really he served none other than the Elder Elemental Eye (and Tharizdun).

Clerics of the Elder Elemental Eye often choose one element to revere (see Appendix 2: The Worship of Tharizdun). Separating into four factions results in much competition among the cult's ranks. Yet they see this rivalry—which sometimes results in open conflict—as good, since it promotes strength.

The Elder Elemental Eye is obscure. A successful Knowledge (religion) check (DC 17) is needed to identify the symbol, with another such check (DC 20) to ascertain any details. Tharizdun or the Dark God are names that are fairly well known, but they are so feared that details are always mysterious. With a successful Knowledge (religion) check (DC 18) someone can recognize his symbol, the *obex*—an upside-down, two-step pyramid—or other trappings, such as the purple and black colors, squirming tentacles theme, great and abiding cold, and force-related effects. Another successful check (DC 23) is needed to ascertain any details.

For information on the game mechanics of the religion (new domains, new spells, and a new prestige class), see Appendix 2.

Evil Elementals

Many of the elementals and elemental creatures in this adventure are described as being evil, despite their “always neutral” alignment listings in the *Monster Manual*. A small, isolated number of the inhabitants of the Elemental Planes are indeed evil and ruled over by the Elemental Princes of Evil, monstrosously powerful beings in their own right. These evil elementals are just like normal versions of their type, except for alignment and their subservience to the Princes and their sire, the Elder Elemental Eye (Tharizdun).

If an elemental or elemental being (any creature with the Elemental type) is summoned or called by a cleric of the Elder Elemental Eye, that creature is always of the evil sort. If such a being is summoned or called by anyone else in areas controlled by the cult, a chance exists that it is an evil creature. While this is not significant in the case of summoning (because the spell does not allow for the summoned creature to act independently), it makes calling elemental creatures dangerous. Evil elementals called by spells such as *planar ally* never work against the forces of the Elder Elemental Eye (or Tharizdun), and may even attempt to trick the caster and lure her into a trap or work with her enemies in some way.

The chance for a summoned or called elemental or elemental being to be evil depends on its location as follows.

Normal	0%
Moathouse	10%
Crater Ridge Mines	20%
Outer Fane	50%
Inner Fane	70%
Temple of Elemental Evil	90%
Elemental Node	100%

Even if a nonevil elemental or elemental creature is summoned and then brought into these areas, a chance exists (equal to one-half the chances listed above) that the being will be immediately converted to evil.

HISTORY

The history of this area is important—the inhabitants can't help but dwell on the past even though the present is happy and prosperous. The events surrounding the erstwhile Temple of Elemental Evil are too dire to forget.

History as the Locals Know It

Twenty-five years ago, the forces of evil and darkness gathered north and east of Hommlet and constructed a huge temple. This was a bastion for their armies of gnolls, bugbears, ogres, trolls, and giants—not to mention the evil human masters of the place and the demons and other foul creatures that served them. From this awful place, the malevolent denizens unleashed earthquakes, storms, fires, and floods upon the countryside. Monsters were drawn to the area like steel to a lodestone. The Temple of Elemental Evil took three years to complete, but even in that short time, the forces of good knew that they could not abide such a place. The lands of Furyondy and Veluna rallied their forces and sacked the temple twenty-two years ago in a battle called Emridy Meadows (named for the site of the largest confrontation). Most of the evil forces were destroyed or driven off. The temple itself was greatly damaged, but the underground levels were extensive and dangerous even for these heroic folk. So the Temple of Elemental Evil was sealed with great magic, imprisoning a powerful demon within its confines.

Nine years later, bandits began troubling the area around Hommlet. Evil humanoids and strangely garbed priests were seen on the road. Within the following year, it became clear that the Temple of Elemental Evil was rising again. This time, the folk of Hommlet and the surrounding area coordinated and fostered attacks by bands of adventurers against the ruined but still-occupied temple. Eventually, the evil was once again overthrown, and this time the temple's dangerous lower levels were destroyed. Since then, the territory has prospered in the peace that has settled in, apparently for a long stay. Common wisdom has it that no more adventures can be had in Hommlet.

True History

Many years ago, the worshipers of Tharizdun conceived a bizarre plan to promote and reinvigorate the power of their religion. Their agents, as insidious as they were insane, infiltrated the ranks of other evil religions. They even managed to worm their way into the ranks of the Lolth-worshipping drow. Once their agents were in place, they began a campaign of lies, misdirection, and manipulation. Among the drow, they formed a new religion, turning a small but powerful contingent of dark elves against their spider goddess and toward the Elder Elemental Eye. These renegade drow attempted to expand their area of influence to the surface by controlling many tribes of giants and inciting them to attack the communities around them, but this plan was ultimately foiled.

Zuggtmoy

Meanwhile, the clerics of Tharizdun were having much more success among the ranks of those serving Zuggtmoy (ironically, an enemy and competitor of Lolth). Not surprisingly, being the patron of fungi and mold, this demon had few worshipers among the surface-dwelling peoples. Tharizdun's infiltrators among her clerical servants convinced her that a religion based on Elemental Evil would have more appeal than one dealing with her own mushrooms and slime. Zuggtmoy appreciated the wisdom of this

advice—each of the four elements would draw a different group of worshipers, and the elements' competitive nature would hone the skills and power of the cult quickly.

So successful were these efforts that the infiltrators decided the Zuggtmoy-backed religion of Elemental Evil could also help recover some of the ancient shrines to Tharizdun, created by time-lost followers of the Dark God when it was still possible for them to operate in the open. The greatest of these places of power was located in the Kron Hills, buried deep under the earth for centuries. A few whispered suggestions later, the forces of Elemental Evil began erecting a grand temple directly over this ancient location of dark power. Zuggtmoy could sense the power in the area, but instead of being suspicious, she believed she could tap into and exploit it. She did not realize its real nature, nor that she in fact would be the conduit through which that power would once again be unleashed upon the world.

Enter Iuz

Much to the surprise of the forces of Tharizdun, the evil demigod Iuz became involved in creating the Temple of Elemental Evil. Attracted by its growing power, the Old One sought it as a way to defeat or weaken his enemies in Veluna and Furyondy. Iuz was even more easily manipulated than Zuggtmoy, it turned out, and soon he was devoting a great deal of his own power and influence to the project.

Iuz and Zuggtmoy gathered their power and created the *Orb of Golden Death* (an artifact also known as *Yellowstone's Golden-skull*, or the *Death Orb*) to open up powerful elemental nodes. Each node was a partial plane containing an unlike body stranded in a cold, isolated region of magically created space. These nodes hovered right at the edge of the Elemental Planes, drawing forth power from them and tapping on their aspects (so there was one each of fire, water, earth, and air). Iuz and Zuggtmoy knew only that control of the nodes would give them and their temple great power. What they did not know was that creating the nodes also served the goals of the Cult of Tharizdun (see *The Course of the Adventure*, below).

The Fall of the Temple

Zuggtmoy became arrogant. With the nodes developing nicely, and her armies growing steadily, she made it clear through raids north and west that the Temple of Elemental Evil now controlled the territory. Not surprisingly, those nearby kingdoms that were suddenly threatened—the lands of Furyondy and Veluna chief among them—banded together and attacked the temple, laying siege to it. In less than two weeks, the temple was laid waste and its servants scattered. Even the moathouse to the west was sacked.

After the temple fell, a number of drow were seen in the area, searching the ruins. There were actually two factions present: Some were followers of Lolth, looking for objects of power and servants of the temple who could be co-opted by the demon queen. Lolth felt a strong connection to the entire operation, since she believed that at least some of the servants of Tharizdun were actually worshipers of hers. Her drow servants were also there to find out what had become of her rival, Zuggtmoy. The other drow were followers of the Elder Elemental Eye, all of whom searched the ruins with similar goals—salvage and information gathering.

plans to let it lie fallow for long. Zuggtmoy was imprisoned, but perhaps that was for the best—in fact, the cultists did not intend to free her.

Using their connections in the still-thriving cult of Lolth (unlike that of Zuggtmoy), the clerics of the Elder Elemental Eye influenced powerful individuals to return to the ruined temple. Lareth the Beautiful, the wizard Falrinth, Barkinar the commander, and others, not all of whom were friendly to one another, found their way into the hierarchy of the new temple. This time, its backers believed, the temple would grow quietly until it was ready to strike.

Iuz's attention was gained once again, and he once again lent his support. He sent a powerful cleric named Hedrack, who was quickly subverted into following the Elder Elemental Eye (and eventually became privy to all the secrets of the cult of Tharizdun). Converting Hedrack was important, for Iuz had commissioned his emissary to discover a way to free Zuggtmoy so that she would be in Iuz's debt thereafter—but that was not in the plans of the temple's true backers.

The Temple Falls Again

Unfortunately for them, the Temple of Elemental Evil was discovered before its forces could fully prepare. Instead of armies, parties of adventurers made quick but painful strikes against key personnel and winnowed down the number of guards. The heroic bands were given succor by the locals, who at times even lent a sword arm or a spell to bring down the evil temple.

Finally, adventurers broke the sealed doors and destroyed the wards placed upon them ten years previous, freeing Zuggtmoy. The demon immediately suspected something was going on, and for the first time, she began to understand that in the shadows were those who manipulated events and directed the forces of what she had thought of as her temple.

Zuggtmoy's liberation was short lived: The *Orb of Golden Death* was destroyed, hurtling the demon into the Abyss (actually, much of her essence was trapped by Tharizdun's clerics—see Chapter 6). The subterranean levels of the Temple of Elemental Evil collapsed, as did its access to the elemental nodes.

Today

Surely, after such utter defeat, the temple would pose no further threat to the lands of good.

Not so. In fact, in the years that have passed the insane and corrupt followers of the Dark God have moved closer to victory than ever before. A number of clerics and powerful servants in the Temple of Elemental Evil were spirited away by agents from the cult of Tharizdun to a new, hidden temple in the Lortmil Mountains.

In order to accomplish their insane goal, the Dark God's minions must recover the place of power beneath the original temple's moathouse and then reestablish the connection with the elemental nodes. No one knows about their insidious plan, or that they even exist. The success of their plan seems assured.

THE COURSE OF THE ADVENTURE

This far-reaching adventure has three distinct phases.

Part 1: Hommlet and Environs

The adventure begins in Hommlet, a small town prospering in a time of peace. The adventurers soon learn that

The Temple Rises Again

Years passed, and the cult of Tharizdun knew that the Temple of Elemental Evil was too powerful and too valuable to their