CORE2-1

Killing the Messenger

A Dungeons & Dragons® *Living Forgotten Realms* Adventure

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An ancient drow city, long thought dead, has begun to stir and a battalion of Zhentarim soldiers marches to support it. Can you discover who is behind this unlikely partnership? A Living Forgotten Realms espionage adventure set in the Underdark for characters levels 11-14. Sequel to *QUES1-1 Black Cloaks and Bitter Rivalries*.

Based on the original Dungeons & Dragons® rules created by E. Gary Gygax and Dave Arneson and the new Dungeons & Dragons game designed by Andy Collins, Rob Heinsoo, and James Wyatt.

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Official D&D Play

Most likely you ordered this adventure as part of an event, or you received it from your organizer. To play this adventure and receive rewards for it, you must schedule it as an event. This event could be as elaborate as a big convention, or as simple as a group of friends meeting at the DM's house.

To schedule a game for public play, you must be enrolled in the Wizards Play Network. Information on enrolling in the program can be found at www.wizards.com/wpn. If you are scheduling the game for private play, you do not need to be enrolled in the Wizards Play Network. The person who schedules the event, called the organizer, is in charge of making sure the event is scheduled before play, runs smoothly on the date scheduled, and gets reported back to Wizards in a timely manner. The person who runs the game is called the table Dungeon Master (or usually just DM). Sometimes (and almost all the time in the cases of home events) the organizer is also the table DM. You don't have to be enrolled in the Wizards Play Network to DM this adventure if you are not the organizer.

By scheduling and reporting this adventure you accomplish a couple of things. First, it is an official game, tracked under your play history. Second, DMs gain rewards for scheduled play if they are members of the DM Rewards program. DMing this adventure is worth one (1) point.

To learn more about event scheduling and DM Rewards, visit the D&D Events website at www.wizards.com/dnd and click on "Events."

Preparing for Play

In order to play this adventure, you'll need copies of the following D&D 4th Edition rulebooks: *Player's Handbook*, *Dungeon Master's Guide*, and the *Monster Manual*. Any other rules referenced in this adventure will be noted in the **New Rules Items** section at the end of the adventure.

Throughout this adventure, text in bold italics provides player information for you to paraphrase or read aloud when appropriate. Information on nonplayer characters (NPCs) and monsters appear in abbreviated form in the adventure text.

Along with this adventure, you'll find a session tracking sheet. If you're playing this adventure as part of an officially scheduled event, complete and turn in this sheet to your organizer directly after play.

Reading Monster Stat Blocks

Most of the information should be easy to understand, as it mirrors the information presented in the *Monster Manual*. Attacks may have a letter next to them designating the type: M for melee, R for ranged, C for close, and A for area. A lower-case letter (used only in some melee and ranged attacks) denotes that the attack can be used as a basic attack.

Important DM Information

As the DM of the session, you have the most important role in facilitating the enjoyment of the game for the players. You take the words on these pages and make them come alive. The outcome of a fun game session often creates stories that live well beyond the play at the table. Always follow this golden rule when you DM for a group:

Make decisions and adjudications that enhance the fun of the adventure when possible.

To reinforce this golden rule, keep in mind the following:

- **You are empowered to make adjustments to the adventure and make decisions about how the group interacts with the world of this adventure.** This is especially important and applicable outside of combat encounters, but feel free to use the "scaling the encounter" advice (usually for adjusting to different-sized groups) to adjust combat encounters for groups that are having too easy or too hard of a time in an adventure.
- **Don't make the adventure too easy or too difficult for a group.** Never being challenged makes for a boring game, and being overwhelmed makes for a frustrating game. Gauge the experience of the players (not the characters) with the game, try to feel out (or ask) what they like in a game, and attempt to give each of them the experience they're after when they play D&D. Give everyone a "chance to shine."
- **Be mindful of pacing, and keep the game session moving along appropriately.** Watch for stalling, as play loses momentum when this happens. At the same time, make sure that the players don't finish the adventure too early; provide them with a full play experience. *Living Forgotten Realms* adventures are designed to be

played within 3.5 - 4 hours; try to be very aware of running long or short. Adjust the pacing accordingly.

- **Give the players appropriate hints so they can make informed choices about how to interact with their environment.** Players should always know when enemies are affected by conditions and are bloodied. They should be given clues about how to interact with their surroundings so they can tackle skill challenges, combats, and puzzles without getting too frustrated over lack of information. This helps to encourage immersion in the adventure and gives players "little victories" for figuring out a good choice from a clue.

In short, being the DM for a *Living Forgotten Realms* adventure isn't about following the adventure's text word-for-word; it's about creating a fun, challenging game environment for the players. Chapters 1 and 2 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide* are filled with good information about being a DM for a D&D game.

Appropriate Character Levels

This adventure is designed for player characters (PCs) levels 11 - 14. Characters that fall outside of the level range may not participate in the adventure. Make certain to check the levels of the PCs before beginning play to ensure that they are the proper level.

Each adventure has a low-level version and a high-level version. The low level is meant for a group whose levels, on average, fall in the lower levels of the adventure's level spread. The high level is meant for a group whose levels, on average, fall in the higher levels of the adventure's level spread.

A group may decide to play the high level when their levels are more suited to the low level if everyone in the group agrees to do so; however, some of the rewards may not be available to them. Conversely, a group may decide to play the low level when their levels are more suited to the high level if everyone in the group agrees; however, some of the rewards may be less than what they'd ideally want from the adventure.

Reading the Numbers: Each encounter has a level and sometimes other values (such as XP or skill check DCs) listed with two numbers divided by a slash. The number before the slash is always the value for the low-level version of the adventure; the number after the slash is the value for the high-level version of the adventure.

Failing to Defeat an Encounter

If a group fails to defeat an encounter - that is, if they have to flee from a combat because it's too tough or they reach the predetermined number of failures in a skill challenge before reaching success - they are only awarded half experience points (round down) for the encounter. If they manage to tackle the encounter later and defeat it, award them the other half of the experience points for the encounter.

Character Death

If a PC dies during the course of the adventure, the player of that character and the rest of the group have two options, provided that they have access to the Raise Dead ritual (either a PC has it and can use it or the characters return to civilization), they have access to the body, and it is possible to return the dead PC to life.

- **Pay the component cost for the ritual.** If the group chooses this option, the cost should be divided evenly among the group (500 gp for heroic tier, 5,000 gp for paragon tier, and 50,000 gp for epic tier). Using a source outside the group to cast the ritual costs 20% more than the component cost. Total cost when using an outside source is 600 gp for heroic tier, 6,000 gp for paragon tier, and 60,000 gp for epic tier. A PC that dies and chooses this method of return gains full (or half, if the party was defeated) experience points from the encounter in which the character died, but no experience points for any encounters that were missed while the character was dead. If there are encounters remaining, the PC continues to earn experience as normal, and receives a normal cut of the rewards at the end of the adventure.
- **Invoke the Death Charity clause.** If the group cannot afford to pay for the ritual (or doesn't desire to do so), the PC can choose to return to life at the end of the adventure. Doing so forfeits all rewards (including treasure and story rewards) earned for the adventure except experience points gained prior to the character's death (the character receives the experience point award for the encounter in which they died). The PC cannot participate in the same adventure a second time.

Milestones

No matter if the characters succeed or fail in an encounter, they reach a milestone if it is the second

encounter they've had since the start of the adventure or their last extended rest. **Encounters that do not give out experience points do not count for purposes of reaching a milestone.** Make certain to mention this information to the players when applicable, as it gives each PC another action point and affects how some magic item powers are used.

Lasting Effects

Sometimes a PC suffers a lasting effect that isn't easily resolved before the end of the adventure. The two most common lasting effects are the death penalty and diseases.

Death Penalty: When a character dies and is brought back to life by the Raise Dead ritual, that character suffers a -1 penalty to all attack rolls, skill checks, saving throws, and ability checks until they have reached three milestones. The player should simply record the adventure where the character died on their adventure log, and then keep a running tally of milestones reached. Once the PC has reached the third milestone since coming back to life, they no longer suffer the penalty.

Diseases: Diseases take hold of a character and last until they are cured or they reach their final state. Normally, a PC makes an Endurance check after each extended rest to see if the disease improves, worsens, or maintains its current condition. At the end of the adventure, any character suffering from a disease must resolve the disease to either its cure or final state, using the necessary number of extended rests to do so. Other characters adventuring with the PC may decide to aid the afflicted character during this time. If a disease reaches its final state and the PC can get a Cure Disease ritual cast (and pay the appropriate costs), they may do so.

Other Lasting Effects: Other effects that last beyond the scope of the adventure should be resolved at the DM's discretion. Any effects that last for a specific period of time (that end after a certain number of days or a certain number of extended rests) should be resolved at the end of the adventure in which the effect was obtained (unless otherwise specified). Effects that use some sort of adventuring benchmark of unknown duration (such as milestones) should be recorded on the character's logsheet and tracked across adventures.

Adventure Background

This adventure is the sequel to *QUES1-1 Black Cloaks and Bitter Rivalries*. Throughout the adventure, separate entries are written in some sections based on whether or not at least one PC has played that adventure.

In the past, the adventurers were hired by Yazeth Cobb, an Elturgardan merchant and priest of Amaunator, to investigate the Zhentarim's increase in recruitment. The adventurers infiltrated the Zhentarim and discovered that they had made a contract with the drow of Sshamath, a city in the Underdark south of Darkhold and several miles deep. The contract included the services of 500 Zhents, supplies, and slaves.

Sshamath was well known before the Spellplague as the City of Dark Weavings, a cosmopolitan place ruled by a Conclave of wizards rather than the clergy of Lolth. The Dark Weavings Bazaar drew people of widely ranging races and backgrounds to purchase and sell all manner of items, especially those magical in nature. Any race capable of wizardry was given a modicum of respect and freedom, and the city was protected from the wrath of Lolth-worshipping drow by numerous magical wards, wizards, and the absence of the Faezress, a magic Underdark environment that most drow depended on for combat.

Since the Spellplague, however, the city went silent, and many thought it destroyed. While the city suffered greatly from the disaster, it was not destroyed, and a significant portion of their population survived. The Conclave, bereft of magic but not wisdom, kept their people hidden while seeking power once again, whether through pacts with dark entities, the new forms of wizardry, spellscars, or other means.

The Conclave has adapted; its members now include wizards, warlocks, sorcerers, swordmages, artficers, and spellscarred. The Conclave is currently controlled by the School of Darkness, a faction of dark-pact warlocks led by Nurissa Vyllshan, though several rival factions exist. The Conclave seeks for Sshamath to once again become a center of trade and regain the power it formerly held. However, the Lolth-worshipping drow of the Northdark have been purging drow not loyal to Lolth since the end of Lolth's silence.

Nurissa Vyllshan believes after some time trading and building up the city's power, Sshamath will again be able to protect itself. In the meantime, however, the city needs significant military and magical protection, as well as large quantities of supplies and slaves.

Sshamath has sought out Netheril for an alliance, and the Netherese see a valuable opportunity. Sshamath needs protection against Menzoberranzan and Ched Nasad, and the Netherese see a potential long-term ally against Elturgard and Cormyr, which block Netherese expansion on the surface. Ambassador Tolgruss is now negotiating the final details of the treaty with members of the Conclave, and should it go off without a hitch, the surface will be in grave danger of a two-pronged invasion from above and below...

DM's Introduction

This adventure is intended to provide the players with a thrilling, espionage experience that adapts to their choices and playing preferences. You are highly encouraged to adapt the adventure to fit the needs of the table. The adventure is relatively complicated, so it is suggested that you allot yourself more time to prepare than most adventures.

At the start of the adventure, the PCs meet with the spymaster for the High Observer of Elturgard and two clergymen of the clergy of Amaunator. The characters are asked to follow Zhentarim mercenaries to Sshamath, gather information on the city, and report back by a sending stone for more information and potentially new tasks.

The PCs either infiltrate the Zhentarim forces and march with the Zhents through Varalla's Passage to Sshamath, or follow behind the mercenaries, avoiding both their attention and becoming lost in the winding tunnels of the Underdark.

Upon entering Sshamath, they find the city bustling with activity. They have some time to gather information in the Dark Weavings Bazaar, and eventually meet up with Izztyrr Mae'urden, an agent of the Bregan D'aerthe mercenary group who has also been hired to disrupt Sshamath's goals. He provides the PCs with information vital to the success of their mission. After gaining a good appraisal of the situation, the PCs contact the Elturgardans. At which point they are ordered to disrupt the alliance by any means necessary.

The PCs choose two of the following options to sabotage the alliance:

- Through guile, rumormongering, blackmail, forged documents, or various other methods, the PCs destabilize Sshamathan politics and ensure that rival factions of the city oppose the plan to ally with Netheril.
- The PCs destroy a large warehouse that holds resources vital to Sshamath after defeating its guards.
- The PCs sow enough dissent within the Zhentarim ranks that they revolt or abandon their contract with Sshamath.
- The PCs defeat slavers at The Cage and liberate a large number of Sshamath's slaves.

Izztyrr informs the PCs of Ambassador Tolgruss's whereabouts and the PCs assassinate him via subtlety or alternatively, via open combat. The PCs escape the city, rife with chaos following the assassination. Depending on the sabotage options they chose, the PCs fight their way out of the city, skillfully navigate their way out of the city, or escape unopposed. Upon reaching the surface, the PCs meet up again with the Elturgardans, report in, and are rewarded for their hard work.

Due to the complexity of encounter progression, there is an encounter flowchart in Appendix 2 that you can use during play to assist you.

Group Skill Checks

This adventure frequently calls for "group skill checks" during skill challenges. If a skill is listed as a group skill check, each PC must attempt the check, and the PCs succeed if their net result consists of more successes than failures. If there is an equal amount of successes as failures, the PCs fail the group check. Any PC that beats the DC by 10 or more can remove an ally's failure in a group skill check.

Player's Introduction

Before play begins, ask if any of the players have played *QUES1-1 Black Cloaks and Bitter Rivalries* or *SPEC1-2 Zhent's Ancient Shadows*. PCs that have the story award **SPEC03 A Promise Fulfilled** may receive additional aid from the clergy of Amaunator. The story award **QUES01 Zhentarim Infiltrator** makes both the Elturgardans more congenial and Encounters 2A and 5C more difficult (should the PCs choose those encounters). **QUES02 Zhentarim Agent** earns scolding from the Elturgardans but may make Encounters 2A and 5C easier.

If any of the PCs played *QUES1-1 Black Cloaks and Bitter Rivalries*, you may wish to summarize the events of that adventure (at least those which relate to this adventure) in order to refresh their memories:

- The PCs signed up as Zhent mercenaries and attempted to infiltrate Darkhold
- They discovered a deal between the drow of Sshamath and the Zhentarim
- The Zhentarim received a massive influx of gold in exchange for the services of five hundred mercenaries, a large amount of supplies, and a number of slaves

Also, ask players who completed *QUES1-1* whether or not they abducted the ettin or the unicorn horn was delivered to the Cult of the Dragon. If the answer to these is yes, treat the PCs as if they earned **QUES02** even if they succeeded in their infiltration. This is to their detriment at some points of the adventure and their benefit in others. When the players are ready, read the following:

You receive a mental communication from a man dressed in the ceremonial robes of a priest of Amaunator. "Greetings, hero, this is Yazeth Cobb. Your

skills are needed. Please depart immediately for the Companion's Light in Elturel. Be fast and discreet. May Amaunator's blessings be upon you."

Ask the PCs if they heed Yazeth's call. If they do not, the adventure is over before it began. If they do, they have arrived in Elturel on the following day. Continue with the following:

The Companion, also known as Amaunator's Gift, dominates the sky above Elturel; it is an additional sun miles above the city which provides constant daylight and protection from the undead. The true sun is cresting the horizon as you approach the inn and numerous farmers and craftsmen already travel the roads. The Companion's Light Inn is bustling despite the early hour, and seems to be nearly overrun by a number of paladins, clerics, and soldiers sworn to service to the High Observer.

When the PCs enter the inn, they are greeted by Commander Larathorn who informs them to wait for their briefing. PCs who played *SPEC1-2* remember Commander Larathorn as the military commander at the Battle of Zhentil Keep.

This is a good time for the PCs to make introductions. They have a few minutes to share drinks and war stories with each other and Commander Larathorn before their briefing. After a few minutes, a guard signals for the PCs to enter a private dining room. Proceed to Encounter 1.

Encounter 1: Mission Briefing

Setup

Important NPCs:
Yazeth Cobb
Inquisitor Tellar (Perception +15, Insight +15)
High Morninglord Orman (Insight +16)

The PCs meet up with three Elturgardans who wish to hire them to infiltrate Sshamath. They explain the problem, ask for their assistance, present them with options and information, and answer their questions.

Inquisitor Tellar: Tellar is a male human spymaster working for the High Observer of Torm, the ruler of Elturgard. He treats the PCs with respect unless they act inappropriately and attempts to guide them towards success through the adventure.

High Morninglord Orman: Orman is a high priest of Amaunator in Elturgard with hundreds of clergymen under his command. The presence of such a high ranking cleric should impart the importance of the mission given to the PCs. Orman is a zealous but wise priest whose faith is bolstered by the actions of heroics like those displayed by the PCs in the past.

Yazeth Cobb: Yazeth is an Elturgardan merchant and priest of Amaunator who may have hired the PCs for help in past adventures. Yazeth's presence in this meeting is merely in an advisory capacity; he defers to Tellar and Orman on all matters.

The thick wooden door closes behind you as you enter the private dining room. Three figures sit at the head of a large table that dominates the room.

Yazeth Cobb is dressed in his finest today; gold and white silks embroidered with sun images and a medal engraved with a golden sunburst. "Hello adventurers. I have the pleasure of introducing High Morninglord Orman and Inquisitor Tellar."

High Morninglord Orman is middle-aged with short blonde hair, piercing green eyes, and the ceremonial robes and scepter of a high priest of Amaunator. "Greetings, heroes, may Amaunator's blessings be upon you."

Inquisitor Tellar is heavily muscled and scarred. He views you appraisingly from his stout wooden chair. "I hope you are all as good as your reputations."

The Elturgardans allow the PCs ask a few questions. Tellar may explain that he handles intelligence for the High Observer, and Orman may accede that the PCs reputations or prior work for Yazeth are their reasons for being selected for this dangerous mission.

If any of the PCs played *QUES1-1*, read the following:

Inquisitor Tellar throws a folder onto the table. "After your work at Darkhold, we've been keeping close tabs on the Zhentarim and waiting for signs of their rendezvous with the Sshamathan drow."

If none of the PCs have played *QUES1-1*, read the following instead:

Inquisitor Tellar throws a folder onto the table. "A few months ago, we received reports that the Zhentarim, a mercenary group with a sordid past and a strong bent towards evil, had made a contract with the drow of Sshamath, an Underdark city about thirty miles south of Darkhold and several miles down. Sshamath is to receive five hundred Zhent mercenaries in addition to a large amount of supplies and a number of slaves."

Pause for a moment before continuing with the following:

"An Underdark city hiring mercenaries from the surface is quite unusual. Our fear is that Sshamath needs the Zhentarim for military action on the surface, which could mean raids or perhaps invasion. Considering their location just below Elturgard, we must assume that the drow of Sshamath threaten Elturgard. Please take a moment to look over this dossier."

Give Player Handout 1 and Player Handout 2 to the players. Tellar knows nothing about the specific locations on the map. He offers the PCs a moment to read the briefing and ask questions before continuing.

"I'd like your group to follow the Zhentarim to Sshamath, investigate the situation there, and report back to us for further instructions."

High Morninglord Orman pulls a glowing stone from a pouch and places it on the table. "This is a sending stone. Its sister-stone is in my possession. When you are ready to report in, grasp it and speak the words, 'I long for the light.' That will activate the stones and allow for two way conversation between us. I have a priest upstairs who has prepared a Linked Portal ritual to take you to a prepared site near the Zhentarim rendezvous point."

Tellar speaks again, "Before you reach the Zhentarim rendezvous point, you will have to decide whether you wish to try to infiltrate them - we have some uniforms prepared if you want them - or merely follow in their footsteps unnoticed."

Remember to ask which PC takes the sending stone. Below is some additional information that the Elturgardans provide for the PCs:

- High Morninglord Orman can provide some consumables to PCs with **SPEC03**. If the PC does not use the item in the course of the mission, he or she is expected to return it afterwards. See the treasure section of this encounter for details.
- Elturgardan paladins captured a team of Zhents taking slaves on the border. The Zhents were captured, interrogated, and imprisoned in a room on the second floor of the inn. While the Zhents are not available for questioning, their orders were retrieved. Clever PCs may take a copy of these orders for use in forgery or to masquerade as these Zhents later in the adventure. The PCs may also make note of the appearances of the captured Zhents and their Jack's name, Galvon, in order to disguise themselves. At the DM's discretion, Tellar may suggest to the PCs that they can disguise themselves as Galvon's gauntlet or forge orders based on theirs. Further information on this is included in the appropriate encounters later in the adventure. If the PCs ask for the orders, give them Player Handout 3.
- Tellar offers 500/1000 gold pieces per PC for success of the mission. If the PCs ask for money up front, he offers 250/500 now and the rest upon successful completion.

Tellar advises the PCs to start their information gathering in the Dark Weavings Bazaar once they get to the city. When the PCs are ready, read the following:

A priest of Amaunator waits in a second floor room of the inn. He begins the Linked Portal ritual and several minutes later, a shining door showing the side of a shrub-covered hill spirals open. Beyond, another priest beckons for you to step through.

Once the PCs step through, they find themselves in a covered area about a mile from the rendezvous point.

Ending the Encounter

Before moving on, make sure the PCs understand their mission. The players likely have a difficult time in the adventure if they do not fully understand their task.

If the PCs choose to pose as Zhentarim and move with the 500 mercenaries, continue to Encounter 2A. If the PCs choose to follow in their footsteps, continue to Encounter 2B.

Experience Points

The PCs do not earn any XP for this encounter, and it does not count towards a milestone.

Treasure

PCs that requested partial payment up front receive 250/500 gold pieces each, half of their payment for success. PCs with **SPEC03** are offered their choice of one of the following items (or groups of items) for use in the adventure:

- *Potion of vitality* (level 15, PHB)
- Ritual scroll of Linked Portal (PHB)
- 5 ritual scrolls of Seek Rumor (See New Rules section)
- Disguise kit (see New Rules Section), a climber's kit (PHB), and ten sunrods (PHB)

The clergy asks that they give back any unused items upon their return.

Encounter 2A: Long March Into Darkness

Skill Challenge Level 12/14, Complexity 1 (700/1000 XP)

Setup

Unlike the Zhentarim of old, the Zhentarim are not as organized as a national military. Nearly one hundred gauntlets (units) have gathered near the entrance of Varalla's Passage. While the Black Cloaks have rosters, some that were taking slaves in the area were slain or captured, and an extra Gauntlet should attract little notice from the officers if the PCs are discreet.

QUES01 complicates matters for PCs in this skill challenge. While the Zhentarim have not advertised to their low-ranking members that spies infiltrated them, most of the mid-ranking officers and all of the high-ranking officers are aware of the PC "traitors." Clever PCs can still avoid the notice of such officers. You may warn undisguised PCs with such a story award that must perform additional skill checks in the challenge to avoid the attention of the officers.

QUES02 can be a significant boon to PCs in this encounter. Zhentarim who are unaware of the PCs' infiltration have likely heard of the PCs' work in subduing an ettin or defeating the fey while guarding the caravan. This reputation provides a +2 circumstance bonus on social skill checks in this scene, at the DM's discretion.

In either case, successfully disguised characters obviously do not receive modifiers based on their reputations. You may also grant PCs with bonuses to certain skill checks with the Zhentarim to represent their intimate knowledge of the organization.

After stepping through the portal, you are greeted by another priest of Amaunator. He informs you that the Zhentarim rendezvous point is less than one mile south of your location.

The priest at the portal instructs the PCs that he waits for their return. He allows the PCs to study the portal markings if they ask.

Skill Challenge: Marching in Wolves' Clothing

Goal: This skill challenge represents the PCs' attempt to pose as Zhents and march with the other mercenaries bound for Sshamath.
Complexity: 1 (4 successes before a variable number of failures; see below)
Primary Skills: Varies by scene
Other Skills: Varies by scene
Victory: The PCs gain entry to Sshamath and fail to attract Zhentarim or Sshamathan attention.
Defeat: See below.

If the PCs are unsure of what to do in some of the encounters, allow them DC 17/18 Insight checks to identify a good course of action. Be careful to do so only if the PCs need help. The players shouldn't feel as though you're leading them by the nose.

Scene 1 – Preparations

Before the PCs move towards the Zhents, ask them if there are any special preparations they'd like to make. Any disguises, forgeries, or other preparatory actions still count towards the skill challenge.

Arcana DC 18/19 (no success; 1 maximum)

The clever use of the Amanuensis ritual can greatly assist the creation of forged orders by selectively copying text. A successful use of the ritual grants a +4 bonus to a Bluff check made to create a forgery if the PCs have Galvon's orders.

Bluff DC 18/19 - Disguises (1 success; 1 maximum, group check)

The PCs disguise themselves before the rendezvous. If the PCs attempt to disguise themselves as Jack Galvon and his group, add 2 to the DC.

Bluff DC 22/23 - Forgery (1 success; 1 maximum)

The PCs forge Zhent orders if they have a sample, either from Galvon's orders or from memory of receiving orders from infiltrating the Zhentarim in *QUES1-1*. Forging orders off of memory adds 2 to the DC. If the PCs make unusual or suspicious orders, increase the DC at your discretion. Extreme cases, such as orders for the Zhent forces to abandon the mission, cause the check to automatically fail, and the first Zhent to read them recognizes them as an obvious fake.

Insight DC 18/19 (no success, 1 per check)

A PC assists another PC's disguise attempt. Failure indicates bad advice to the forger, instead applying a -2 penalty to the check.

History DC 18/19 (no success, 1 per check)

Through advice based on knowledge of military history and prior experience with official documents, a character grants a +2 bonus to another PC's attempt at forgery with a successful check.

Scene 2 – Meeting the Scouts

Hundreds of Zhentarim crest a hill ahead. Suddenly, a voice calls out from the trees, "Identify yourselves!" Nearly a dozen Zhent scouts, some wearing holy symbols of Bane, come out from behind cover with weapons at the ready.

If the PCs have failed their attempts to disguise themselves, their failure becomes apparent here. If they have forged orders, their success or failure also becomes apparent here. This scene ends after the PCs have acquired a total of 2 successes up to this point in the skill challenge (this amount includes successes garnered in scene 1). The PCs are asked to present their orders, but a well-placed lie along the lines of "you know why we're here" should suffice; the Zhentarim are not expecting trouble.

Bluff DC 18/19 (1 success, 2 maximum, group check)

The PCs provide a credible lie to get past the scouts.

Diplomacy DC 18/19 (no success, 1 per check)

Well placed arguments or even a joke may be able to help the PCs lie to the scouts, granting a +2 bonus to Bluff checks.

Intimidate DC 22/23 (no success, 1 per check)

The PCs intimidate the scouts into questioning their challenge, gaining a +2 bonus to Bluff checks.

Religion DC 18/19 (no success, 1 time only)

The PCs notice the scouts' holy symbols of Bane and recite some Banite blessings to earn acceptance, gaining a +2 bonus to Bluff checks.

Scene 3 – Falling in Line

The PCs are directed to the Zhent camp. They choose to report in to one of the leaders or simply attempt to avoid attention. Only one success is required in this scene.

You are not the only group arriving. Dozens of gauntlets arrive from all directions. Most seem to be immediately reporting in to a corps commander. Many mill around nervously as they wait.

Bluff or Diplomacy DC 22/23 (1 success, 1 maximum)

A PC reports in to a corps commander and asks for new orders. Undisguised characters with **QUES01** automatically fail this check and thus the skill challenge. Proceed immediately to the Discovered! section at the end of the skill challenge.

Bluff DC 18/19 (1 success, 1 maximum, group check)

The PCs act as if they are exactly where they are supposed to be and avoid notice.

Perception DC 18/19 (1 success, 1 maximum)

The PC notices an isolated area of camp where they can avoid attention until they head out.

Shortly after you arrive, orders resound throughout the camp. "Fall in and head out!" The area quickly thunders with the sound of five hundred mercenaries marching and a number of wagons being pulled by slaves.

Scene 4 – Varalla's Passage

This scene covers the bulk of the journey through the Underdark; a forced march through over ten miles of dangerous and unfamiliar terrain. PCs resist the effects of exhaustion and avoid the attention of Zhent officers that travel up and down the lines, motivating the troops into action with threats and whippings.

The journey through Varalla's Passage is long and arduous, consisting of twisting tunnels, dank caves, and deep shafts. The Zhent officers drive the troops for speed, heedless of their safety. At one point, while descending down a spiraling passage, the sound of a screaming soldier falling to his death resonates throughout the tunnels. An officer laughs and shouts to move faster.

Endurance DC 18/19 (0 successes)

Each PC must succeed at this check or lose a healing surge from the long march. Failure by more than five draws attention from Zhent officers who whip the PC into line, causing the loss of another surge.

Heal DC 18/19 (0 successes; 2 attempts per player maximum)

A PC helps stave off exhaustion in another PC with the quick application of first aid. Success grants an ally

+2 to the check; failure draws the attention of the officers, in which case both healer and patient are whipped back into line and lose a healing surge. The Zhentarim do not approve of helping the weak.

If any PCs with **QUES01** are not disguised, they must avoid the attention of the higher-ranking officers:

Bluff DC 18/19 (0 successes)

A PC diverts attention from his or her appearance, such as casually looking away, beating another Zhent for being slow, or pointing out some fault of another soldier.

Perception DC 18/19 (0 successes)

An alert PC gives a warning when the officer is about to approach, granting +2 to Bluff or Stealth attempts to avoid the officer's attention.

Stealth DC 18/19 (0 successes)

The PC simply hides behind other marching Zhents.

Scene 5 – Arrival at Sshamath

After hours of marching through Varalla's Passage, the Zhentarim column finally reaches Sshamath. Black stone gates, forty feet tall and carved with ancient arcane sigils stand open, admitting hundreds of Zhentarim into the city. Dozens of drow guards stand sentry, as the Zhents pass by, unimpressed by their precision.

The huge cavern of Sshamath opens before you. Hundreds of red lights dot the darkness of the cavern like red stars in the distance. Some of the Zhents pause to look around, but then quickly arrange themselves according to their corps and gauntlets. Officers move from group to group asking questions and issuing orders. You have an opportunity to break off from the Zhents.

The PCs take this opportunity to withdraw from the main force. Only one successful individual or group check is required, depending on the skill used to slip out as the Zhentarim are distracted by their new surroundings.

Bluff DC 18/19 (1 success; 1 maximum; group check)

The PCs lie about orders to a local officer about reporting in to a different area of the city.

Dungeoneering DC 22/23 (1 success; 1 maximum)

A PC notices some speleothem (cave formation) that the group can hide in until the Zhents pass onwards.

Stealth DC 18/19 (1 success; 1 maximum, group check)

The PCs slip off into the darkness.

Ending the Encounter

After dealing with the consequences of success or failure, proceed to Encounter 3.

Success: The PCs have entered Sshamath and slipped away from the Zhentarim towards the Dark Weavings Bazaar. They have an opportunity to change their clothing and take a short rest.

Failure: If the PCs fail a major check in front of a non-officer Zhent, they have a short amount of time to try and cover their failure. A DC 27/28 Intimidate may scare a Zhent into submission (they do have an army backing them, after all), or bribery along the order of 1,000 gold pieces and a DC 22/23 Bluff or Diplomacy should be able to cover their tracks in most situations. If they fail to intimidate or bribe such individuals, they have been discovered (see below).

If PCs fail any of the major checks in the presence of an officer, they have been discovered.

Discovered!

If the PCs are discovered, they are in the midst of an enemy army ordered to capture them. Each PC loses three healing surges during their desperate escape. Begin running the analogous portion of Encounter 2B as the PCs are now forced to following the Zhents from a distance.

Experience Points

Successful completion of this encounter grants each character 140/200 experience points each.

Treasure

There is no treasure in this encounter.

Encounter 2B: Following in Zhent Footsteps

Skill Challenge Level 12/14, Complexity 1 (700/1000 XP)

Setup

The following skill challenge represents the PCs following the Zhents. The PCs strike a balance between keeping close enough to the Zhents to avoid getting lost and not getting close enough to attract the attention of Zhent scouts who could potentially draw several hundred mercenaries into combat with them.

The priest informs you that you have about fifteen minutes before the Zhents are scheduled to depart.

Skill Challenge: Shadowing Zhents

Goal: The PCs avoid notice while following the Zhentarim through Varalla's passage.
Complexity: 1 (4 successes before 3 failures)
Primary Skills: varies by Scene
Other Skills: varies by Scene
Victory: The PCs gain entry to Sshamath, and can begin investigating the situation there.
Defeat: See Ending the Encounter.

Scene 1 – Preparations

Ask the players if they wish to perform any special preparations before attempting to follow the Zhents. The PCs do not garner any successes in this scene.

PCs can also take this opportunity to provide themselves with a backup plan through preparation; see Scene 1 of Encounter 2A for details if they choose to disguise themselves or forge orders.

Dungeoneering, Nature or Stealth DC 18/19 (no success)

Using dirt, charcoal, and other dark material, a PC camouflages his allies, granting a +2 circumstance bonus to Stealth checks made above ground (Nature) in the Underdark (Dungeoneeering).

Scene 2 – Timing the Chase

The PCs gauge how much time to wait before following, or continue close on their heels stealthily. PCs need only one successful primary check for this scene.

Even at this long distance, you can hear the several hundred Zhentarim marching into the Underdark. After several minutes, the sound passes.

History DC 22/23 (0 successes)

Through knowledge of military tactics and history, a PC determines that rear scouts for a force this size might stay a quarter mile back in the Underdark. This grants +2 to the primary skill check.

Nature DC 18/19 (1 success; 1 maximum)

The PCs wait a relatively long time and track the Zhentarim while they are above ground. This check would be considerably easier if the Zhents were not making some attempts to cover their tracks.

Perception DC 22/23 (1 success; 1 maximum, no penalty for failure)

The PC's notice the scouts leaving while remaining beyond the edge of their senses. This helps the PCs gauge the right time to depart.

Stealth DC 18/19 (1 success; 1 maximum, group check)

The PCs keep close to the Zhentarim while avoiding detection.

Scene 3 – Tunnel Vision

This scene represents the journey through Varalla's Passage. The PCs keep up with the Zhent column's journey over miles of treacherous, labyrinthine tunnels while simultaneously staying close enough to avoid getting lost but not getting so close as to draw the attention of the rear guard. Two successes are required in this scene.

The entrance to Varalla's Passage is merely a small cave opening in the side of a small, grassy hill. The tunnels within split off in several directions that each lead into darkness.

Arcana DC 22/23 (1 success; 1 maximum)

A PC particularly attuned to magic notices that the Zhentarim are using some kind of magical item that removes sign of their passage. The PC follows the residual magic of the item through the passage.

Dungeoneering DC 18/19 (1 success; 2 maximum)

The PCs track the Zhentarim column, despite the Zhents' attempts at covering their tracks.

Dungeoneering/History DC 22/23 (0 successes)

Though Varalla's Passage is a secret, it does intersect with some other tunnels and landmarks that knowledgeable PCs may use to assist their journey. This grants +2 to primary skill check.

Perception DC 22/23 (1 success; 2 maximum)

The PCs follow the column by sound and scent. Alternatively, a PC can attempt a Perception check at the same DC to find the trail of the Zhents if someone fails at a Dungeoneering check to track. Doing so negates the failure.

Stealth DC 18/19 (1 success; 2 maximum; group check)

The group keeps close on the heels of the Zhentarim.

Scene 4 – Fighting Fatigue

The PCs keep up with the Zhents' aggressive pace through the passage.

You pursue the Zhentarim for hours through winding tunnels, expansive caverns filled with strange fungi, and down spiraling shafts into darkness. Keeping up with them is utterly exhausting.

Dungeoneering DC 18/19 (trained only; 0 successes)

A PC finds some Fastcap, a mushroom that functions as a mild stimulant. Gathering and consuming Fastcap grants a boost of energy in the form of +2 to Endurance checks made to fight exhaustion. Fastcap becomes useless after the end of the adventure.

Endurance DC 18/19 (0 successes; each player must make the check)

Each PC must succeed at this check or lose a healing surge from exhaustion. Such failures do not count towards the overall success of the skill challenge.

Heal DC 22/23 (0 successes; 1 attempt per PC)

Before making Endurance checks, each PC may attempt to aid himself or a fellow PC with the use of first aid, but doing so is difficult at this pace. Failure results in a -2 penalty to the Endurance checks of all PCs due to the increased pace necessary to catch back up. Penalties for multiple failures are not cumulative.

Scene 5 – At the Gates

The PCs finally arrive at the gates of Sshamath, which are partially closed and guarded by over a dozen drow. They convince the guards to grant entry. One success is required to complete the skill challenge.

Black stone gates, forty feet tall and carved with ancient arcane sigils stand partially open, guarded by a team of over a dozen drow. "More new arrivals?" asks a drow guard captain.

Bluff DC 18/19 (1 success; 1 maximum, group check)

The PCs invent a credible lie for gaining entry into the city. Alternatively the PCs pose as more Zhentarim arriving for duty (grant +4 if they are in uniform).

Diplomacy DC 22/23 (1 success; 1 maximum)

The PCs make a reasonable argument for entry, cooperating with the guards' efforts while avoiding direct lies. Grant +2 if the PC is a drow.

History DC 22/23 (1 success; 1 maximum)

A PC lauds the history of the City of Dark Weavings as an attraction for spellcasters or magic seekers and ties this into an argument for entry.

Ending the Encounter

After dealing with the consequences of success or failure, proceed to Encounter 3.

Read the following:

The great cavern of Sshamath opens before you into darkness. Hundreds of red lights dot the darkness like red stars in the distance. The sounds of haggling, laughing, and clinking of metal ahead are signs of none other than the Dark Weavings Bazaar.

Success: The PCs enter Sshamath.

Failure: If the PCs fail due to being too close to the Zhentarim, they may pretend to be Zhents, late for the rendezvous. In this case, switch to the analogous section of Encounter 2A. If the PCs lose the column, they can eventually find their way to the city after several run-ins with monsters and perilously exhausting additional travel. In this case, each PC loses three healing surges.

Experience Points

Upon successful completion of this skill challenge, each PC receives 140/200 experience points.

Treasure

There is no treasure in this encounter.

Encounter 3: Dark Weavings Bazaar

Setup

Important NPCs:
Izztyrr Mae'urden (Insight +14, Perception +14, Bluff +18)

The PCs enter the Dark Weavings Bazaar and collect information on the goings on in Sshamath. Eventually, they meet up with Izztyrr Mae'urden, a Bregan D'aerthe mercenary in the city. Izztyrr was hired by Menzoberranyr Lolthites to investigate rumors within Sshamath and disrupt the plans of the Conclave. The situation makes him an ideal ally for the PCs. Izztyrr has been alerted to the PCs' arrival by his contacts on the surface and within the Zhentarim.

Unlike most Underdark cities, "surfacers" are traditionally welcomed in Sshamath. Before the Spellplague, adventurers were common in the city. Most citizens of the city view adventurers in Sshamath as an omen of prosperity on the horizon, and as long as PCs play to their expectations they should not attract too much attention.

The Dark Weavings Bazaar retains some of its former glory; a number of shops, taverns, and storehouses are built into stalagmites, and numerous tents dot the area. Much of the area lies in ruins, and slaves under the brutal direction of drow taskmasters are reconstructing some of it. In the distance, a ruined tower burns with blue fire.

Dozens of merchants, customers, and vagabonds are scattered throughout; mostly drow, but also some duergar, svirfneblin, goblins, orcs, ogres, and even the occasional human. Vendors greet you cordially, offering lodging, magical items, or obscure antiques for sale.

The PCs have the opportunity to shop if they'd like. They may purchase any item or ritual scroll they would normally be able to purchase in between adventures.

Asking Around

It is not particularly difficult for paragon PCs to gather information nor is there a significant chance of failure, assuming the PCs avoid foolish behavior. The most obvious and direct manner for the PCs to gather information is to ask around using Streetwise. The Seek Rumor ritual can also be used to emulate this, scrolls of which are available in the bazaar if the PCs do not already have access.

However numerous alternative methods exist for PCs to gather information. You are encouraged to adapt this encounter to the PCs. Such possibilities include but are not limited to:

- Extended roleplay/discussion with NPCs (social skills).
- Observation of discussions with city guards or Conclave members (Stealth, Perception).
- Purchasing or trading for information with an information broker (social skills, bribery).
- Impressing a member of one of the city's arcane guilds (Arcana, History, Diplomacy).
- Performing in the street and speaking to passersby in between performances (Athletics, Acrobatics, Thievery, Diplomacy).

Try to find opportunities for each PC to contribute to the scene's progression. Information that the PCs can gather is organized by Streetwise check DCs, which are merely suggestions, as are the information sources.

If the PCs are having trouble or the players seem bored, move on to the meeting with Izztyrr, who has virtually all the information listed below and more. Remember, the PCs should be able to learn all of this information through effort alone.

- **DC 10** (from a duergar merchant) "Ah, adventurers. Good to see you. Are you looking for work? I'm thinking about starting up an antiquities acquisition company. Do you have any experience going to a variety of locations and retrieving items?"
- **DC 12** (from a drow craftsman) "I hear five hundred Zhents marched into the city today, led by a drow Black Cloak named Nadrelon Fre'iv. I wonder, what's the highest offer he's received so far to perform a coup against the School of Darkness?"
- **DC 14** (from a drow armorer) "They've tried to keep it quiet, but some ambassador from Netheril is in the city, negotiating a trade deal with the Conclave. I'll make a killing selling my drowmesh armor to Netheril."
- **DC 15** (from a gnoll mercenary) "There's good work in the city, but I think the Conclave has made their move too soon. I'm not going to fight against the Lolthites with just the city watch and some fool Zhents. Humans are only good for eating."

- **DC 18** (from a spellscarred drow female) "The Conclave's actions are foolish. An alliance with Netheril is not what we need; they are traitors to Mystra's memory and everything Sshamath stands for. I'll voice my objections at the Stonestave's Conclave meeting later tonight."
- **DC 19** (from a city watch member) "I have no desire to attack the surface, especially working with some Zhent fools. Still, Captain Nym hasn't lost a battle since before the year of Blue Fire, so I'm sure we'll be victorious."
- **DC 20** (from a drow female) "Blessed vengeance will be ours! Once the great temple of Shar is built - they're negotiating its details now amongst other things with this Ambassador Tolgruss- we'll convert this city, and eventually destroy Menzoberranzan, Ched Nasad, and all the rest!"
- **DC 21** (from a drunken Conclave wizard) "Netheril's magics will help rebuild our wards. Soon we'll have proper defenses again. Killing surfacers is a small price to pay. Who are you again?"
- **DC 22** (from a drow mercenary) "Hm, there's some mercenary looking for you, I think. His name is Izztyrr and he's staying at the Great Elixir."
- **DC 26** (from a drow barmaid) "I hear Nurissa Vyllshan and Ambassador Tolgruss drank late in the night last night. Supposedly they're getting along *very well*.
- **DC 30** (from a cloaked figure) "Rumor has it that there's a Bregan D'aerthe mercenary in the city. I bet he's here to stop the alliance."

At some point, the PCs meet up with Izztyrr, either at the Great Elixir or on the streets of Sshamath.

Izztyrr Mae'urden

Izztyrr is an intelligent and charismatic drow with few prejudices. He does whatever it takes to complete his mission, but is truthful with the PCs since he believes it to be the best method of ensuring their cooperation. Izztyrr may even develop a friendship with the PCs.

Once the PCs attract Izztyrr's attention, he approaches them and asks to meet him in his room at the Great Elixir, a tavern and inn in the Bazaar.

A lithe drow wearing black drowmesh armor approaches you. A large crossbow is slung over his back, and numerous daggers are sheathed at his waist. Palms open, he greets you. "Excuse me, honored mercenaries, but we have business to discuss. My name is Izztyrr Mae'urden, and I believe we may be of use to one another."

Izztyrr does not admit his business in the open, but merely asks the PCs to speak with him privately. He may whisper to the PCs that he knows who they are and why they are here.

If necessary, he offers the PCs 100 gp for their time. If the PCs still refuse, he implies that unless they hear him out, he'll call the city watch. This is actually true; he could make some gains in trust with members of the city by turning in spies. He would prefer to work with agents from the surface though, and bears no real ill will towards the PCs.

Following Izztyrr into the Great Elixir, a cozy inn carved into a large stalagmite, familiar scents and the sounds of laughter hit you like a wave. A sign on the wall purports 'ALL DRINKS AVAILABLE - FROM ABOVE OR BELOW' with a smaller sign below it, 'WE ARE OUT OF SEMBIAN BITTERDARK - OUR APOLOGIES.'

Once upstairs, Izztyrr explains the situation to PCs that don't understand, and advises them about sabotaging the plans of the School of Darkness and Netheril. Relate the following information to PCs through conversation:

- Izztyrr is a member of the Bregan D'aerthe mercenary company. He has been hired to make sure Sshamath and Netheril do not form an alliance. He points out that this makes him a natural ally of the PCs, and that they would do much better if they worked together.
- When asked who is responsible for his current contract, Izztyrr replies, ***"That of course is confidential."*** If the PCs bribe Izztyrr with no less than 1,000 gp, he gladly tells them his contract is with some of the leading noble houses of Menzoberranzan. PCs may be able to loosen his lips through other means.
- If Izztyrr is asked how he knew of the PCs, he tells the PC that his organization has contacts "even in the brightest of places."

PCs that succeed at a DC 20 History check know that the Bregan D'aerthe mercenary company is one of the most renowned and powerful mercenary companies in the Underdark. It is led by Jarlaxle Ban'rae and consists primarily of drow males. The company is known as a wild card in drow politics, often deciding victory between warring noble houses and switching sides

frequently to the highest bidder. The organization is known to have contacts and members ranging far across Faerûn's surface and Underdark.

If necessary, Izztyrr summarizes the situation in Sshamath and how it relates to the surface:

- Sshamath's citizens have been hiding and rebuilding over the past century.
- Sshamath wishes to become a center of trade again, but is for the most part not willing to convert to the worship of Lolth.
- The city must be able to protect itself from Menzoberranzan, Ched Nasad, and other drow cities who seek to subjugate or exterminate drow that do not worship Lolth.
- Nurissa Vyllshan, the leader of the School of Darkness, a political faction consisting primarily of dark pact warlocks, is leading the Conclave towards forming an alliance with Netheril.
- Sshamath is to receive protection against the drow and other forces of the Underdark as well as lucrative trade deals. In exchange, Netheril is to receive Sshamath's military assistance in future attacks against the surface (specifically Elturgard and Cormyr). Numerous other minor conditions and stipulations are under negotiation.
- Nurissa Vyllshan and Ambassador Tolgruss Korvem of Netheril likely sign the treaty tonight or tomorrow unless drastic action is taken.

The PCs may choose to ask about Izztyrr's plan is to stop the alliance now, or to contact the Elturgardans. If they choose to contact the Elturgardans, proceed to Encounter 4, and return to this encounter once finished. Otherwise, Izztyrr continues to advise them:

If you wish to disrupt the Conclave's plans, you'll have to convince Netheril to back out; Sshamath is too committed and exposed. To do so, you could damage their trust and more importantly, make Sshamath appear to be a poor asset by damaging the city's capabilities, prompting a coup, or even embarrassing the Conclave. As a final insult to Netheril, Ambassador Tolgruss must be assassinated. My sources say he has much sway with Prince Clariburnus Tanthul of Shade.

Izztyrr advises the PCs to do **two** of the following:

- Fan the flames of political dissent, delaying the treaty or prompting a coup (Encounter 5A). Izztyrr mentions that the Conclave is gathering informally at the Stonestave, the city's seat of government, and that the PCs could try to convince Nurissa Vyllshan's political opponents to cause problems or vote against the treaty. This is unlikely to involve combat.
- Destroy a large number of supplies brought into the city by the Zhentarim (Encounter 5B). Izztyrr provides the location of a warehouse near the Darkfire Pillars that holds numerous critical supplies. Combat is likely necessary.
- Cause the Zhentarim to revolt or desert (Encounter 5C). Izztyrr provides the location of the Zhentarim camp in the Darkwoods. The PCs should be subtle in their approach.
- Free the slaves brought by the Zhentarim (Encounter 5D). Izztyrr tells the PCs that the slaves brought by the Zhentarim are being held at the Cage. The Cage is guarded and things will certainly get physical.

Izztyrr also agrees to find more information about the whereabouts of Ambassador Tolgruss by the time they have completed two of the sabotage options listed above.

Izztyrr informs the PCs that after they have sabotaged the city and assassinated the ambassador, they have to escape the city either through Varalla's Passage or via teleportation magic. Teleportation magic is blocked in the city limits by a functioning pre-Spellplague ward, but the PCs could attempt a Linked Portal ritual right outside of the city.

Ending the Encounter

Remind the PCs that they are to report in to the Elturgardans after discovering Sshamath's plans if they do not remember to do so on their own.

If the PCs are concerned with how to smuggle slaves out of the city, Izztyrr volunteers to masquerade as a slave taskmaster and bring them outside the city limits to Varalla's Passage so that they can pick them up on their way out of the city.

Experience Points

The PCs do not earn any XP for this encounter, and it does not count towards a milestone.

Treasure

The PCs may be able to coerce 100 gp each out of Izztyrr to listen to what he has to say.

Encounter 4: Reporting In

Setup

Important NPCs: see Encounter 1

The PCs should obviously use a secluded area to converse with the Elturgardans. Izztyrr offers his room in the Great Elixir should they ask. Once the PCs activate the stone, read the following:

As you hold the sending stone and intone the words, "I long for the light," the stone glows softly and High Morninglord Orman's voice responds, "The light of Amaunator shines even in the darkest of places."

Inquisitor Tellar's voice quickly adds, "Report in. What have you discovered?"

Allow the PCs to summarize what they've discovered. The most important aspects that they need to mention include:

- The city is rebuilding and restarting trade but fearful of Lolthite drow attack.
- A faction of dark pact warlocks is leading the Conclave to allying with Netheril.
- Supposedly the treaty entails that Netheril protects the city from other drow and Sshamath supports the Netherese against the surface amongst other probable stipulations
- The treaty is not yet signed, but a Netherese ambassador is in the city negotiating the details and it is likely signed soon without intervention
- A Bregan D'aerthe mercenary is offering assistance in preventing the alliance.

Once the PCs finish their report, read Tellar's response:

"***A Netherese ambassador? In Sshamath? This is far worse than I feared. You have little time. You must do whatever you can to stop this alliance from occurring! Kill the ambassador before anything is signed. Do whatever is necessary to make either Netheril or Sshamath withdraw. Even with Cormyr assisting us, a two-pronged attack by Netheril coupled with Sshamathan drow and Zhent mercenaries coming from the deeps could spell doom for Elturgard and Cormyr, and without us, Faerûn will surely fall under Netheril's shadow."***

Ending the Encounter

If the PCs are having problems with their report, you can have them make a DC 15 Insight or History checks to discern what information they've gained is relevant. Alternatively, you can just hand-wave the PC's report and merely say that the PCs summarize what they've learned. The important aspect of the encounter is that the PCs receive orders from Elturgard to sabotage the alliance and assassinate Ambassador Tolgruss.

If the PCs have not yet received advice from Izztyrr on how to sabotage the alliance, return to Encounter 3. Otherwise, ask the PCs which sabotage encounter they wish to attempt first, and proceed to that encounter.

Experience Points

The PCs do not earn any XP for this encounter, and it does not count towards a milestone.

Treasure

This encounter yields no treasure.

Encounter 5A: Sabotage by Intrigue

Skill Challenge Level 12/14, Complexity 3 (2100/3000 XP)

Setup

Important NPCs:
Guldor Zau'viir, leader of the School of Wizardry
Molbelphyr Ilmtar, leader of the School of Blue Fire
Zarylene Oussate, leader of School of Lolth

The PCs travel to the Stonestave, the seat of government of Sshamath and meeting place of the Conclave. By stirring up political opposition to the treaty with Netheril, the PCs help stop it from happening.

The School of Darkness currently dictates the Conclave's actions. They have several rival factions. These rival factions currently support the treaty with Netheril; in this encounter, the PCs try to convince them otherwise. These rival factions are:

- **The School of Wizardry** - These drow wizards look down upon their rivals for their actions in turning to other power sources. They most resemble the old Conclave, and wish to have the city run in the traditional fashion. Guldor Zau'viir leads the faction.
- **The School of Blue Fire** -These spellscarred and radical drow view their powers as Mystra's last gift to them; many still worship her or have membership in the Order of Blue Fire. This group opposes Netheril ideologically but finds no reasonable alternative to the treaty. Molbelphyr Ilmtar leads the faction.
- **The School of Lolth** - This group pushes for the city's forced conversion to Lolth and is currently the weakest major faction in the city. This also makes them the most desperate and eager to try new things. Zarylene Oussate leads the faction.

The Stonestave, a large stalactite hanging from the cavern roof shaped like a wizard's staff, is bustling with activity. Drow nobles, mercenaries, petitioners, and guards fill the halls of the city's seat of government.

Skill Challenge: Dark Politics

Goal: The PCs remove enough political support for the treaty with Netheril to delay it long enough to fail.
Complexity: 3 (8 successes before 3 failures)
Primary Skills: Diplomacy, Intimidate, Bluff
Other Skills: History, Religion, Insight
Victory: The PCs ensure that the Conclave does not sign the treaty.
Defeat: The PCs fail to remove political support for the treaty.

It is possible that the PCs are more comfortable with politics than the players; you may wish to guide them with the use of their skill checks more than normal. Alternatively, the PCs may not wish to have reasoning or arguments dictated to them; stress the role-playing aspects more and instead have them garner more successes with social skills.

Scene 1 – Entering the Stonestave

The PCs get past the guards to speak with the nobles within. While the guards have no specific instructions to stop anyone from entering, they are not quick to allow surfacers into the Stonestave.

Bribes grant a +1 bonus per 100 gp given to a maximum of +5.

The grand entryway into the Stonestave is guarded by a half dozen drow guards, who stop your entry.

Story Award Use (1 automatic success, 1 maximum)

PCs presenting **CORE02 Shade Coin** or a similar coin earned through other adventures can pass themselves off as servants of the Netherese and gain entry without the need of a skill check.

Bluff DC 18/19 (1 success, 1 maximum)

The PCs provide a reasonable lie to gain entry into the Stonestave.

Diplomacy DC 18/19 (1 success, 1 maximum)

The PCs politely ask the guards for entry with a reasonable cause. Failure represents the PCs irritating the guards, and further checks to influence them receive a -2 penalty.

History DC 22/23 (0 successes)

Knowledge of the history of the Conclave's protocols can grant a +2 bonus to Intimidate or Bluff checks to convince the guards to grant entry.

Insight DC 18/19 (0 successes)

A PC can discern the characteristics and mood of the guards as being bored, irritable, and greedy. This grants PCs a +2 to Diplomacy or Bluff checks when

dealing with the guards; suggest that the PCs be respectful and brief.

Intimidate DC 27/28 (1 success, 1 maximum)

The PCs convince the guards to let them in via intimidation and scare tactics. This is extraordinarily difficult because the guards can call for help.

Scene 2 – Who's Who?

In this scene, the PCs appraise the political situation, identify the important leaders, or otherwise gain a rough idea of what's going on at the Conclave. One success allows the PCs to move on to the next scene.

After one success, summarize the information on the three major factions present, and inform them that they can speak to the faction leaders.

Dozens of small groups of well-dressed drow converse in hushed tones in the informal meeting hall of the Conclave.

History DC 22/23 (1 success, 1 maximum)

The PC extrapolates who is who by trappings, family heirlooms, or even facial characteristics.

Insight DC 18/19 (1 success, 1 maximum)

The PC watches the drow interact with one another to learn of the alliances between them.

Religion DC 18/19 (1 success, 1 maximum)

A PC notes a lone drow wearing a holy symbol of Corellon. The drow, Kesym Tilothel, is a priest of Corellon hoping to convert drow of the city. Kesym knows the faction leaders and can tell PCs about their reputations.

Streetwise DC 18/19 (1 success, 1 maximum)

A PC discreetly asks around to find out where the faction leaders are and how to gain an audience with them.

Scene 3 – Wheeling and Dealing

The PCs convince two of the three groups other than those loyal to Nurissa Vyllshan to withdraw their support from the treaty.

This scene is separated by factions. In each instance, there are skills that can offer PCs information that can help them persuade the faction leader. These idea-spawning skills do grant a success, but only once that idea is successfully "sold" to the faction leader. Reward PCs, who come up with ideas on their own. Three successes are required in this scene.

The School of Wizardry

As you approach Guldor Zau'viir, you note his age worn features, his ebon wizard robes, and his unfriendly gaze. "Surfacers approaching me… Here of all places? This is surely going to be interesting. What do you want and why should I not incinerate you for bothering me?"

Guldor Zau'viir: Male drow wizard.

Personality: Guldor is conservative, cautious, and patriotic. He feels shamed by the wizards' loss of political power in the city, and is thus prone to flattery. He dislikes the Netherese as potential threats to drow arcane supremacy and absolutely detests Lolth worshippers. Guldor respects wizards above all others and bonds more with non-drow wizards than drow non-wizards. He does not worship any deity since Azuth perished, but respects followers of Oghma.

Goals: Guldor wishes to restore Sshamath to its former glory and the city's wizards to complete control over the Conclave.

Arcana DC 18/19 (1 success; 1 maximum)

The PC impresses Guldor with arcane knowledge, gaining a +2 bonus to social checks with Guldor.

Bluff or Diplomacy DC 18/19 (1 success, 4 maximum)

The PC convinces Guldor to oppose the treaty with honeyed words or lies.

History or Religion DC 22/23 (1 success; 1 maximum)

The PC makes a point about the impacts of a mass conversion to Shar.

Intimidate DC 22/23 (1 success, 1 maximum)

Offering threats of surface retribution for the treaty may be effective.

The School of Blue Fire

Molbelphyr Ilmtar stands before you, a young and arrogant drow with a bright blue spellscar encircling his neck. He strums a lute and looks thoughtfully into the distance. "Well met, mercenaries," he says without meeting your eyes.

Molbelphyr Ilmtar: Male drow spellscarred bard.

Personality: Molbelphyr is whimsical and arrogant. He believes himself to be a devout servant of Mystra in her current form of the continuing spellplague. He is a lover of beauty and the surface, and is especially fond of female surface elves, with whom he can be quite

flirtatious. He respects people like himself: outgoing hedonists and liberals.

Goals: Molbelphyr considers himself a missionary of the blue fire, and encourages others to seek out judgment from Mystra in the plaguelands. Molbelphyr wishes to reform the city towards peaceable relations with the surface and an alliance with the Order of Blue Fire.

Spellscar note: A PC with a spellscar receives a +2 bonus on all social skill checks with Molbelphyr.

Bluff or Diplomacy DC 18/19 (1 success, 3 maximum)

The PC convinces Molbelphyr to oppose the treaty with honeyed words, reasonable lies or promises of aid from the surface in the fight against the Lolthites.

Insight DC 18/19 (1 success, 1 maximum)

Short discussion with Molbelphyr reveals his loyalty to the Order of Blue Fire.

Intimidate DC 22/23 (1 success, 1 maximum)

Threats of the impacts of a Netherese occupation of Sshamath scare Molbelphyr into cooperation.

Religion DC 22/23 (1 success, 2 maximum)

A student of religion notes that the bard is playing an old hymn to Mystra called Weaving Strings. Mentioning the name of the song and complimenting its beauty grants a +2 bonus to further social skill checks with Molbelphyr throughout the scene.

The School of Lolth

Matron Mother Zarylene Oussate stands before you proudly despite her faction's standing in the city. She wears a scourge at her side and the holy symbol of Lolth upon her chainmail armor. "Do not meet my eyes, scum. I do, however, give you permission to speak to me."

Matron Mother Zarylene Oussate: Female drow cleric of Lolth.

Personality: Zarylene is spiteful and cautious to the point of being a coward. She attempts to act arrogant, intimidating, and commanding, but frequently fails to do so when reminded of her station. She is currently out of favor with Lolth, clings to the shred of hope that Lolth someday return her clerical power. Zarylene looks down on drow males, and severely dislikes surfacers, especially elves and eladrin, but she is pragmatic enough to look for opportunity when it presents itself.

Goals: Zarylene wishes to convert the city to the worship of Lolth and have House Oussate become the leading power in the city. She hopes to one day destroy the Stonestave and all members of the Conclave who do not bow before Lolth.

Bluff DC 18/19 (1 success, 2 maximum)

The PC convinces Zarylene to oppose the treaty with honeyed words, exaggerations or false statements can convince Zarylene to oppose the alliance.

Insight DC 22/23 (1 success, 1 maximum)

Deductive PCs can figure out that Zarylene's position is weakened by the alliance with Netheril, or that she is actually quite cowardly.

Intimidate DC 18/19 (1 success, 1 maximum)

Threats upon Zarylene's life are effective; Zarylene knows that she has little personal protection.

Ending the Encounter

If this was the PCs second sabotage encounter, Izztyrr Mae'urden meets up with the PCs to make sure that they proceed with the assassination of Ambassador Tolgruss. He reminds the PCs that they have two options: the subtle approach or the more direct approach. If the PCs choose the subtle approach, proceed to Encounter 6A. If the PCs choose the direct approach, proceed to Encounter 6B.

If this was the PCs' first sabotage encounter, proceed to the sabotage encounter of their choice.

Success: The PCs have removed political support for the treaty, buying the opposition time to provide an alternative or perform a coup.

Failure: If the PCs fail, they are kicked out of the Stonestave by the guards and cannot re-enter until after the talks have concluded.

Experience Points

For succeeding at the skill challenge, each PC receives 420/600 experience points.

Treasure

For their assistance, the faction leader fondest of the PCs awards them with *gloves of dimensional repulsion* and 350/500 gp each in an attempt to bribe them for future assistance.

Encounter 5B: Supply Destruction

Encounter Level 12/14 (3500/5000 XP)

Setup

This encounter includes the following creatures and traps at the low tier:
G'eldighaun (level 12) (G)
2 brutal swarm (level 12) (L) (Lolth's brutal swarm)
1 Sshamath drider battlemage (level 12) (M)

This encounter includes the following creatures and traps at the high tier:
G'eldighaun (level 14) (G)
2 brutal swarm (level 14) (L) (Lolth's Brutal Swarm)
1 Sshamath drider battlemage (level 14) (M)

A large number of supplies are being stored in a warehouse near the Darkfire pillars (see Appendix 1).

The warehouse holding the supplies is a large building constructed out of an immense stalagmite. Stairs leading up to large double doors mark the only visible entrance.

When the PCs enter the warehouse, the driders attack. Throughout the encounter, be mindful of the locations of PCs without darkvision in reference to light sources present.

Thick stone pillars support the ceiling. Webs permeate the warehouse and two large storage areas near the back hold crates and barrels. "Kill the intruders," hisses a sibilant female voice as gruesome, spider-like abominations emerge from the shadows.

Features of the Area

Illumination: The warehouse has no illumination.

Crates: Crate tiles are blocking terrain. PCs may jump onto crates with a DC 15 Athletics check.

Storage Areas: The two square sections represent storage areas. They are 10 feet (2 squares) lower than the main floor. The stairs that lead to and from the storage areas are difficult terrain.

Webbing: The webbing is a hazard and it is considered difficult terrain. Any PC that enters a square containing webbing is subjected to an attack; +15/+17 vs. Reflex; target is restrained until escape. PCs may use DC 26/27 Acrobatics or Athletics to free themselves.

Pillars: The pillars are blocking terrain.

Ceiling: The ceiling of the warehouse is 20 feet above the main floor.

Tactics

G'eldighaun attacks the easiest target, preferring to attack with combat advantage whenever possible. She uses *serpentine dodge* and *attacks on the run* to position herself advantageously.

The swarms uses straightforward tactics, positioning themselves adjacent to as many PCs as possible and using *venom burst* whenever available. They avoid creating bottlenecks in the doorway if possible. The battlemage uses its powers from a distance, using forced movement powers to force PCs until the webbing or adjacent to the swarm. Both driders use *spider climb* to walk along the ceiling for better positioning.

Scaling the Encounter

Make the following adjustments to the combat based on the number of PCs present.

Four PCs: Remove one brutal swarm.

Six PCs: Add another brutal swarm.

Ending the Encounter

The PCs find explosive chemicals amongst the supplies that they can use to destroy the warehouse.

If this was the PCs second sabotage encounter, Izztyrr Mae'urden meets up with the PCs to make sure that they proceed with the assassination of Ambassador Tolgruss. He reminds the PCs that they have two options: the subtle approach or the more direct approach. If the PCs choose the subtle approach, proceed to Encounter 6A. If the PCs choose the direct approach, proceed to Encounter 6B.

If this was the PCs' first sabotage encounter, proceed to the sabotage encounter of their choice.

Experience Points

The characters receive 700/1000 experience points each for defeating the driders and swarms.

Treasure

The PCs can find a *darkspiral rod* +3 amongst the supplies

Encounter 5B: Supply Destruction Statistics (Low Level)

Sshamath Drider Battlemage (level 12) Level 12 Controller
Large fey humanoid (spider) XP 700

Initiative +11 Senses Perception +16; darkvision
HP 126; Bloodied 63
AC 26; Fortitude 27, Reflex 26, Will 28
Speed 6; climb 8 (spider climb)

m Longspear (standard; at-will) ✦ Weapon
Reach 2; +17 vs. AC; 2d10 + 3 damage, and the target slides 3 squares.

A Acid Vortex (standard; at-will) ✦ Acid
Area burst 1 within 20; +16 vs. Fortitude; 2d6 + 5 acid damage, and the target slides 3 squares.

C Piercing Shriek (standard; at-will) ✦ Fear
Close burst 10; targets enemies; +16 vs. Will; the target is pushed 2 squares and slowed until the end of the battlemage's next turn. Allies in the burst immediately shift 3 squares.

A Razor Webs (standard; recharge 5-6)
Area burst 2 within 20; +16 vs. Reflex; 3d6 + 5 damage and the target is immobilized (save ends). Until the end of the encounter, the area becomes difficult terrain for creatures smaller than Large size.

C Poison Blast (standard; encounter) ✦ Poison
Close blast 5; targets enemies only; +16 vs. Fortitude; 4d10 + 5 poison damage, and the target is pushed 2 squares and knocked prone. *Miss:* Half damage and push 1 square.

R Darkfire (minor; encounter)
Ranged 10; +15 vs. Reflex; until the end of the battlemage's next turn, the target grants combat advantage to all attackers and cannot benefit from invisibility or concealment.

Alignment Evil Languages Common, Elven
Skills Arcana +15, Nature +16, Religion +15
Str 13 (+7) Dex 20 (+11) Wis 20 (+11)
Con 22 (+12) Int 19 (+10) Cha 24 (+13)
Equipment longspear, leather armor

Note: Frost Giant Windkeeper from *Revenge of the Giants* reflavored as a drider.

Lolth's Brutal Swarm (level 12) Level 12 Soldier
Large natural animate (spider, swarm) XP 700

Initiative +16 Senses Perception +10; blindsight 10
Swarm Attack aura 1; Lolth's brutal swarm makes a basic attack as a free action against each enemy that begins its turn in the aura. In addition, an enemy that enters or starts its turn in the aura is immobilized (save ends) by strands of clinging webs.
HP 122; Bloodied 61
AC 28; Fortitude 24, Reflex 27, Will 23
Resist half damage from melee and ranged attacks; Vulnerable 10 against close and area attacks
Speed 6, climb 6 (spider climb)

m Swarm of Fangs (standard; at-will) ✦ Poison
+17 vs. Reflex; 2d8 + 5 damage, and ongoing 10 poison damage (save ends).

C Venom Burst (standard; recharge 5-6) ✦ Poison
Close burst 3; each enemy in burst; +17 vs. Fortitude; 3d10 + 4 poison damage, and the target is weakened (save ends).

Alignment Chaotic Evil Languages –
Str 19 (+10) Dex 26 (+14) Wis 18 (+10)
Con 18 (+10) Int 2 (+2) Cha 9 (+5)

G'eldighaun, Drider Ranger (level 12) Level 12 Elite Skirmisher
Large fey humanoid (spider) XP 1,400

Initiative +14 Senses Perception +13; darkvision
HP 222; Bloodied 111
AC 26; Fortitude 24, Reflex 25, Will 23
Saving Throws +2
Speed 6; climb 8 (spider climb)
Action Points 1

m Warblade (standard; at-will) ✦ Poison, Weapon
+17 vs. AC; 1d10 + 6 damage, and G'eldighaun makes a secondary attack. *Secondary Attack:* +15 vs. Fortitude; see drow poison for the effect.

M Twin Strike (standard; at-will)
G'eldighaun makes two warblade attacks.

M Disruptive Strike (immediate interrupt, when G'eldighaun or an ally is targeted by an attack; encounter)
G'eldighaun makes a warblade attack against the attacking creature. If the attack hits, the target takes a -7 penalty to the triggering attack roll.

M Attacks on the Run (standard; daily)
G'eldighaun moves her speed and makes two attacks at any point during that movement; +17 vs. AC; 3d10 + 6 damage, and G'eldighaun makes a secondary attack. *Secondary Attack:* +15 vs. Fortitude; see drow poison for the effect.

Serpentine Dodge (move, when within 2 squares of at least two enemies; recharges when first bloodied)
G'eldighaun shifts 5 squares and gains a power bonus to all defenses equal to the number of enemies she was adjacent to at any time during the shift.

C Cloud of Darkness (minor; encounter)
Close burst 1; this power creates a zone of darkness that remains in place until the end of the G'eldighaun's next turn. The zone blocks line of sight for all creatures except G'eldighaun. Any creature entirely within the area (except G'eldighaun) is blinded.

Combat Advantage
G'eldighaun deals an extra 3d8 damage on melee and ranged attacks against any target she has combat advantage against.

Hunter's Quarry
Once per turn as a minor action, G'eldighaun can designate the enemy nearest to her that she can see as her quarry. Once per round when she hits the target with an attack, she can deal an extra 2d8 damage against it.

Drow Poison ✦ Poison
A creature hit by a weapon coated in drow poison takes a –2 penalty to attack rolls (save ends). *First Failed Saving Throw:* The target is also weakened (save ends). *Second Failed Saving Throw:* The target falls unconscious until the end of the encounter.

Alignment Evil Languages Common, Elven
Skills Dungeoneering +15, Intimidate +12, Stealth +15
Str 16 (+9) Dex 19 (+10) Wis 18 (+10)
Con 20 (+11) Int 13 (+7) Cha 12 (+7)
Equipment 2 drow poisoned warblades, leather armor

Note: Drow Warblade (slightly modified) from *Revenge of the Giants* with Ranger PC template. Allowed *serpentine dodge* to recharge when bloodied rather then using a second utility power for simplicity.

Encounter 5B: Supply Destruction Statistics (High Level)

Sshamath Drider Battlemage(level 14) Level 14 Controller
Large fey humanoid (spider) XP 1000

Initiative +12 Senses Perception +17; darkvision
HP 142; Bloodied 71
AC 28; Fortitude 29, Reflex 28, Will 30
Speed 6; climb 8 (spider climb)

m Longspear (standard; at-will) ✦ Weapon
Reach 2; +19 vs. AC; 2d10 + 5 damage, and the target slides 3 squares.

A Acid Vortex (standard; at-will) ✦ Acid
Area burst 1 within 20; +18 vs. Fortitude; 2d6 + 7 acid damage, and the target slides 3 squares.

C Piercing Shriek (standard; at-will) ✦ Fear
Close burst 10; targets enemies; +18 vs. Will; the target is pushed 2 squares and slowed until the end of the battlemage's next turn. Allies in the burst immediately shift 3 squares.

A Razor Webs (standard; recharge 5-6)
Area burst 2 within 20; +18 vs. Reflex; 3d6 + 7 damage and the target is immobilized (save ends). Until the end of the encounter, the area becomes difficult terrain for creatures smaller than Large size.

C Poison Blast (standard; encounter) ✦ Poison
Close blast 5; targets enemies only; +18 vs. Fortitude; 4d10 + 7 poison damage, and the target is pushed 2 squares and knocked prone. *Miss:* Half damage and push 1 square.

R Darkfire (minor; encounter)
Ranged 10; +17 vs. Reflex; until the end of the battlemage's next turn, the target grants combat advantage to all attackers and cannot benefit from invisibility or concealment.

Alignment Evil Languages Common, Elven
Skills Arcana +16, Nature +17, Religion +16
Str 13 (+8) Dex 21 (+12) Wis 21 (+12)
Con 22 (+13) Int 19 (+11) Cha 24 (+14)
Equipment longspear, leather armor

Note: Frost Giant Windkeeper from *Revenge of the Giants* reflavored as a drider.

Lolth's Brutal Swarm (level 14) Level 14 Soldier
Large natural animate (spider, swarm) XP 700

Initiative +17 Senses Perception +11; blindsight 10
Swarm Attack aura 1; Lolth's brutal swarm makes a basic attack as a free action against each enemy that begins its turn in the aura. In addition, an enemy that enters or starts its turn in the aura is immobilized (save ends) by strands of clinging webs.
HP 138; Bloodied 69
AC 30; Fortitude 26, Reflex 29, Will 25
Resist half damage from melee and ranged attacks; Vulnerable 10 against close and area attacks
Speed 6, climb 6 (spider climb)

m Swarm of Fangs (standard; at-will) ✦ Poison
+19 vs. Reflex; 2d8 + 6 damage, and ongoing 10 poison damage (save ends).

C Venom Burst (standard; recharge 5-6) ✦ Poison
Close burst 3; each enemy in burst; +19 vs. Fortitude; 3d10 + 5 poison damage, and the target is weakened (save ends).

Alignment Chaotic Evil Languages –
Str 20 (+12) Dex 26 (+15) Wis 19 (+11)
Con 18 (+11) Int 2 (+3) Cha 9 (+6)

G'eldighaun, Drider Ranger (level 14) Level 14 Elite Skirmisher
Large fey humanoid (spider) XP 2000

Initiative +15 Senses Perception +14; darkvision
HP 250; Bloodied 125
AC 28; Fortitude 26, Reflex 27, Will 25
Saving Throws +2
Speed 6; climb 8 (spider climb)
Action Points 1

m Warblade (standard; at-will) ✦ Poison, Weapon
+19 vs. AC; 1d10 + 7 damage, and G'eldighaun makes a secondary attack. *Secondary Attack:* +17 vs. Fortitude; see drow poison for the effect.

M Twin Strike (standard; at-will)
G'eldighaun makes two warblade attacks.

M Disruptive Strike (immediate interrupt, when G'eldighaun or an ally is targeted by an attack; encounter)
G'eldighaun makes a warblade attack against the attacking creature. If the attack hits, the target takes a -7 penalty to the triggering attack roll.

M Attacks on the Run (standard; daily)
G'eldighaun moves her speed and makes two attacks at any point during that movement; +19 vs. AC; 3d10 + 7 damage, and G'eldighaun makes a secondary attack. *Secondary Attack:* +17 vs. Fortitude; see drow poison for the effect.

Serpentine Dodge (move, when within 2 squares of at least two enemies; recharges when first bloodied)
G'eldighaun shifts 5 squares and gains a power bonus to all defenses equal to the number of enemies she was adjacent to at any time during the shift.

C Cloud of Darkness (minor; encounter)
Close burst 1; this power creates a zone of darkness that remains in place until the end of the G'eldighaun's next turn. The zone blocks line of sight for all creatures except G'eldighaun. Any creature entirely within the area (except G'eldighaun) is blinded.

Combat Advantage
G'eldighaun deals an extra 3d8 damage on melee and ranged attacks against any target she has combat advantage against.

Hunter's Quarry
Once per turn as a minor action, G'eldighaun can designate the enemy nearest to her that she can see as her quarry. Once per round when she hits the target with an attack, she can deal an extra 2d8 damage against it.

Drow Poison ✦ Poison
A creature hit by a weapon coated in drow poison takes a –2 penalty to attack rolls (save ends). *First Failed Saving Throw:* The target is also weakened (save ends). *Second Failed Saving Throw:* The target falls unconscious until the end of the encounter.

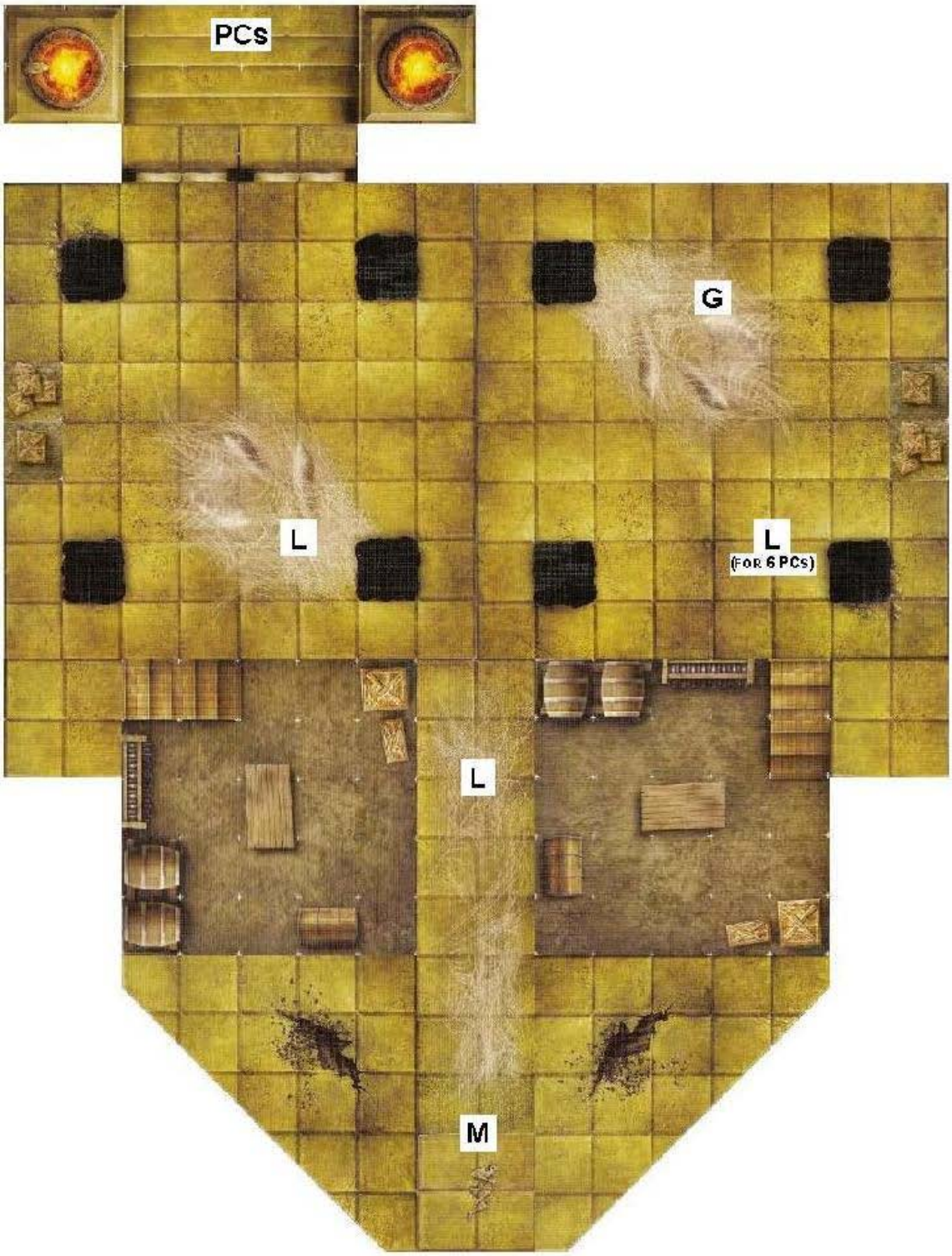
Alignment Evil Languages Common, Elven
Skills Dungeoneering +16, Intimidate +13, Stealth +16
Str 17 (+10) Dex 19 (+11) Wis 19 (+11)
Con 20 (+12) Int 13 (+8) Cha 12 (+8)
Equipment 2 drow poisoned warblades, leather armor

Note: Drow Warblade (slightly modified) from *Revenge of the Giants* with Ranger PC template. Allowed *serpentine dodge* to recharge when bloodied rather then using a second utility power for simplicity.

Encounter 5B: Supply Destruction Map

Tile Sets Needed

Dire Tombs x2, Streets of Shadow x2



Encounter 5C: Stirring up the Zhentarim

Skill Challenge Level 12/14, Complexity 3 (2100/3000 XP)

Setup

Important NPCs:
Jesym Drein, Insight +11/13

In this skill challenge, the PCs attempt to cause the Zhentarim to riot or break their contract and return to the surface. The Zhents are camped in the Darkwoods, a petrified forest of stalactites and stalagmites in the southeastern area of the city.

As in Encounter 2A, whether or not the PCs have **QUES01**, **QUES02**, or are disguised can affect the encounter. If they have **QUES01**, the PCs need to avoid the attention of the higher ranking officers; these skills are listed in the skill challenge description, and the PCs must succeed at one or more checks in order to complete the skill challenge. If the PCs have **QUES02**, they can take advantage of their reputation to gain a +2 bonus on social skill checks. You may warn PCs with **QUES01** that entering the camp undisguised may warrant additional skill checks that do not count towards completion of the skill challenge.

Normally the Zhentarim, like most mercenaries, understand that breaking contracts is most inadvisable. Their current job is exceptionally abnormal, however, and the Zhents are less worried about gaining a bad reputation in the Underdark than on the surface. Furthermore, the Zhentarim detest Netheril and do not wish to assist them in any way. Additionally, a majority of the troops are extremely uncomfortable in the Underdark and wish to return to the surface if they can do so unpunished.

The most important Zhent in the camp that the PCs can influence is Jesym Drein. Jesym is the captain of the Outriders sent with the Zhents. They are one of the larger groups present since one of the primary reasons why the Zhents were hired was for scouts acclimated to the surface. PCs may have had prior experience with Jesym in *QUES1-1*.

The Zhentarim are camped in the Darkwoods, a petrified forest thick with natural columns, stalactites, and stalagmites. Grouped by gauntlets, they huddle around fires eating, relaxing, and resting.

The PCs can enter the area without a problem if they are in Zhent uniform. Otherwise, they must avoid the notice of the guards (DC 20 Stealth, no success towards the challenge) or lie their way past them (DC 20 Bluff, no success towards the skill challenge).

Skill Challenge: Rabble Rousing

Goal: The PCs attempt to incite a riot or mass desertion amongst the Zhentarim.
Complexity: 3 (8 successes before 3 failures)
Primary Skills: Bluff, Diplomacy, Streetwise
Other Skills: Athletics, Dungeoneering, Stealth, Perception
Victory: The PCs convince a significant number of Zhents to desert or revolt, causing chaos in the city and removing resources from Sshamath's military.
Defeat: The PCs are driven from the camp by angry soldiers.

This skill challenge has one primary scene (Scene 1) and two optional scenes. The PCs must generate at least two successes in the primary scene, but can generate successes in any manner they wish.

Scene 1 – Sowing Discord

This scene represents dealing with the Zhents in general rather than in specific circumstances. Feel free to create a number of small conversations and subgroups of Zhents. Many of the social skill checks in this scene are group skill checks; this is necessary for PCs to cause enough discord among 500 Zhents in a short period of time.

Bluff DC 18/19 (1 success; no maximum, group check)

Exaggerations of the dangers of the Underdark, the imminent threat of Lolthite attack, rumors about sacrifice to dark masters, or other stories incite Zhents to desert or riot.

Diplomacy DC 18/19 (1 success; no maximum, group skill check)

PCs convince the Zhents that they'll be fighting for Netherese aims, fodder for Sshamathan expansion, fighting demons summoned by Lolthites, or likened to slave-soldiers sold off to drow with no expectation of ever returning to the surface.

Dungeoneering DC 18/19 (0 successes)

By reminding the Zhents of the dangers, pitfalls, and other unpleasant aspects of working in the Underdark, the PCs help convince them to desert or riot, granting a +2 to the next social skill check.

History DC 18/19 (0 successes)

PCs remind the Zhentarim of the bad blood in the past between the Zhentarim and the Netherese (the Netherese destroyed Zhentil Keep among other things) to help incite them, granting a +2 to social skill checks until the end of the encounter. PCs that completed *QUES1-1* automatically succeed at the check due to their intimate knowledge of the Zhentarim.

Insight DC 18/19 (1 success; 1 maximum)

PCs notice that a number of Zhentarim are upset that they are only receiving payment upon completion of the contract one year from now; many think this is because they are not expected to survive. Spreading rumors along these lines grants a +2 bonus to Streetwise checks.

Perception DC 18/19 (0 successes)

If the PCs have **QUES01** and are not disguised, they notice officers before being noticed and avoid them. This use of Perception does not garner a success.

Also, the PCs may eavesdrop on talking Zhents and overhear grumblings about the presence of Bane worshippers in the camp. This may help in Scene 3.

Stealth DC 18/19 (0 successes, group skill check)

If the PCs have **QUES01** and are not disguised, they sneak around from gauntlet to gauntlet and avoid the attention of the officers.

Streetwise DC 18/19 (1 success; no maximum, group skill check)

PCs help spread knowledge of the alliance with Netheril or other information through the camp quickly and effectively. A group success also alerts the PCs that Jesym Drein is one of the more influential officers in camp, and that they may wish to go speak to her.

Scene 2 – Jesym Drein

Run this scene if the PCs approach Jesym. If they can convince her to help sow discord, they go a long way towards causing chaos in the camp. The PCs need to garner 4 successes to convince Jesym. These successes only count towards completion of the challenge if all 4 are obtained.

Unlike many other high-ranking Zhents, Jesym is not particularly loyal to the organization. As long as the PCs don't fail the skill challenge, she overlooks just about anything, even if she knows that they are spies. She is merely interested in what is good for her.

Jesym Drein: Female halfling ranger.

Personality: Jesym is ambitious, even by Zhentarim standards, and her paradigm is completely centered on how people and situations can help her attain her goals. Unburdened by a belief structure, she can be open-minded as long as she is convinced that it is in her self-interest.

Goals: Jesym hopes to one day split off from the Zhentarim and form her own mercenary company, bringing other Zhents loyal and subservient to her along. She hopes to leave the Underdark as quickly as possible, since she sees the current assignment as a dead-end for her career and possibly her life.

As you approach the Captain of the Outrider's tent, two disgruntled Zhents step out, rattled. A female halfling in hide armor follows. "What could you possibly want?" she says, clearly in a foul mood.

Examples of arguments that can convince Jesym to cause a revolt or desertion:

- A revolt or mass desertion would make the Black Cloak in charge, the drow Nadrelon Fre'iv, look like a failure, and he may be recalled. The Tolaks may wish to appoint a new Black Cloak…
- If Jesym left with a large enough number of scouts, it's unlikely they would be caught and could escape to the surface. As long as she moved far enough away from Darkhold, she could likely start her own mercenary company elsewhere in Faerûn, especially far off lands like Returned Abeir.
- The contract for the job only offers payment at the end of the contract's fulfillment of one year. Perhaps the Tolaks do not intend to pay anyone, and instead have the drow finish off the survivors of the battles to save money.
- If the School of Darkness falls, the contract ends early and everyone can go home and collect their earnings. Revolting can help this along.
- The Bregan D'aerthe surely side with the Lolthites, and they have a much fiercer reputation than the Zhentarim, especially in Underdark combat. It is unlikely that the Zhentarim do well in combat against them.

Bluff DC 22/23 (1 success; 4 maximum)

Appropriate lies can go a long way towards convincing Jesym, but is difficult as she's mistrusting.

Diplomacy DC 18/19 (1 success; 4 maximum)

Openly asking Jesym to cause problems can work.

Insight DC 18/19 (0 successes)

A PC notes that Jesym is extremely ambitious, but displeased and disheartened with her current contract; she believes it is a dead-end. Using an argument to build on these ambitions grants a +2 to Diplomacy or Bluff checks with Jesym. You may also allow Insight checks to offer potential arguments to the PCs.

Intimidate DC 22/23 (1 success; 2 maximum)

Fear can motivate Jesym, though not completely.

Streetwise DC 18/19 (1 success; 1 maximum)

Advice on where to go and how to avoid the Zhentarim if she deserts helps convince Jesym.

When the PCs garner 4 successes with Jesym, she agrees to either revolt or desert. Count those successes towards completion of the skill challenge.

Scene 3 – Religious Turmoil

A number of Bane worshippers are present in the camp. Run this scene if the PCs intend to cause infighting between the Cyric and Bane worshippers. This scene can net up to three successes.

Bluff DC 22/23 (1 success; 2 maximum, group skill check)

Spreading lies about the opposing group can help incite a riot.

Diplomacy DC 22/23 (1 success; 2 maximum)

The Zhents are far from Darkhold, and with less oversight from officers, they know a few murders or even a large scale purge may go unpunished, at least for now.

Religion DC 18/19 (1 success; 3 maximum; group check)

The group proselytizes to the Cyric worshippers to purge the Banites from the company. Due to time restrictions, all the PCs must contribute in order to stir up the Zhents quickly enough.

Streetwise DC 18/19 (1 success; 2 maximum, group skill check)

Rumor mongering about the presence of Banites quickly spreads dissent.

When the PCs complete this scene, describe a number of fights breaking out between Cyric and Bane worshippers. Count the total successes the PCs have garnered in the scene towards the skill challenge.

Ending the Encounter

If this was the PCs second sabotage encounter, Izztyrr Mae'urden meets up with the PCs to make sure that they proceed with the assassination of Ambassador Tolgruss. He reminds the PCs that they have two options: the subtle approach or the more direct approach. If the PCs choose the subtle approach, proceed to Encounter 6A. If the PCs choose the direct approach, proceed to Encounter 6B.

If this was the PCs' first sabotage encounter, proceed to the sabotage encounter of their choice.

Success: The camp begins to devolve into chaos, with some men gathering to discuss leaving, others trying to steal supplies before heading to Varalla's Passage, and others vowing to kill the drow for "tricking them into helping the Netherese."

Failure: The PCs are beaten and must flee the camp, losing two healing surges each.

Experience Points

For successful completion of the skill challenge, each PC receives 420/600 experience points.

Treasure

During their departure, the PCs note a crate overturned in a tussle with a *mnemonic staff* +3 and 350/500 gp in it. There is a note for the quartermaster that the staff is meant to bribe the city's wizards for assistance.

Encounter 5D: Liberating Slaves

Encounter Level 12/14 (3500/5000 XP)

Setup

This encounter includes the following creatures and traps at the low tier:
1 balhannoth (level 12) (B)
1 clay golem (level 12) (G)
1 drow arcanist (level 12) (A)

This encounter includes the following creatures and traps at the high tier:
1 balhannoth (level 14) (B)
1 clay golem (level 14) (G)
1 drow arcanist (level 14) (A)

A number of slaves (including the new arrivals from the surface) are being held at the Cage. The Cage is a low ceilinged enclave in the western section of the city. In the past, it was run by The Breeder's Guild, a group of wizards who specialized in capturing, training, and selling monsters and beasts. The magically controlled lightning walls still function, and they are currently being used as slave pens. As the adventurers enter the area, read:

A twenty foot wide entry way leads into the Cage, where dozens of slaves huddle together in groups behind crackling walls of blue electricity. Between the holding areas, a large creature made of clay stands before you and a robed drow in robes wielding a wand stands on a ledge behind it.

"The new arrivals are not for sale," he announces, "unless you've got a matron's ransom on you."

The PCs' only chance of freeing the saves is to pay the drow arcanist (the slave keeper) an exorbitant amount of money. Feel free to role-play with the PCs for a brief while. Unless the PCs are truly willing to cough up a significant amount of gp, combat is inevitable.

Features of the Area

Illumination: The area is dimly illuminated by the lightning walls.

Lightning Walls: The lightning walls are designed to keep slaves in. Any living creature that enters a lightning wall square or starts its turn in or adjacent to one takes 10 lightning damage and is slowed until the end of its next turn. A creature is only subject to this damage once per turn. Since the walls are designed to knock creatures out rather than kill them, an unconscious creature is immune to the walls' effects. Lightning wall squares are considered difficult terrain and hindering terrain for purposes of forced movement (creatures are allowed saving throws to fall prone rather than enter).

Slaves: The crowd tiles represent huddled slaves and are considered difficult terrain. The slaves plead for release, and if they get the opportunity they attack the balhannoth or arcanist(s), though are too afraid of the golem to attack it. The balhannoth or arcanist take 10 damage for entering a crowd square or starting its turn in or adjacent to one. The smaller crowds have 20 hit points and the larger crowds have 50; every 5 points of damage represents the death of a slave.

Glyphs: Each glyph controls the section of lightning wall directly in front of it. Characters can deactivate a section of the lightning wall by deactivating its associated glyph – a complexity 1 skill challenge; Arcana or Thievery DC 22/23. Failure results in the destruction of the glyph, leaving the wall forever active.

Ledge: The ledge in the back of the chamber is 15 feet (3 squares) high. PCs may climb the ledge with a DC 20 Athletics check.

Ceiling: The ceiling of the chamber is 20 feet (4 squares) above the main floor.

Tactics

The balhannoth begins combat invisible (DC 29/31 Perception to detect its presence) until it receives the signal from the arcanist. Once it begins fighting, the balhannoth uses *reality shift* to position itself and uses *whipping tentacles* to attempt to drive PCs towards the lightning walls. These attacks are preceded by *invisibility* if it cannot gain combat advantage against all of its targets; otherwise it uses *invisibility* afterwards for defensive purposes.

The clay golem surges forward, using *clay smash* against any target in its path. The golem is primarily designed to protect the arcanist and does so as much as possible. The arcanist fights from the ledge, using ranged and area attacks against the PC to the best of his ability.

Scaling the Encounter

Make the following adjustments to the combat based on the number of PCs present.

Four PCs: Lower the levels of all participants by 1. This lowers all attacks and defenses by 1, the

balhannoth's hit points by 12, the clay golem's by 20, and the arcanist's by 12.

Six PCs: Add another drow arcanist.

Ending the Encounter

After defeating the drow arcanist and his pets, the PCs can free the slaves. Sethkin, the red wizard, is amongst the slaves and offers to reward the PCs for safely freeing him from the city. The PCs can find a place to hide the slaves somewhere in the ruins of the old schools of magic while they complete their mission.

If this was the PCs second sabotage encounter, Izztyrr Mae'urden meets up with the PCs to make sure that they proceed with the assassination of Ambassador Tolgruss. He reminds the PCs that they have two options: the subtle approach or the more direct approach. If the PCs choose the subtle approach, proceed to Encounter 6A. If the PCs choose the direct approach, proceed to Encounter 6B.

If this was the PCs' first sabotage encounter, proceed to the sabotage encounter of their choice.

Experience Points

The PCs gain 700/1000 experience points each for defeating the arcanist and his guardians.

Treasure

Sethkin is a practitioner of the ancient Thayan tradition of magical tattooing. He promises the PCs a magic tattoo as a reward upon his successful return to the surface (see Encounter 8 for more details).

Encounter 5D: Liberating Slaves Statistics (Low Level)

Balhannoth (level 12) — **Level 12 Elite Lurker**
Large aberrant magical beast (blind) — XP 1400

Initiative +18 Senses Perception +16; blindsight
HP 204; Bloodied 102
AC 26; Fortitude 26, Reflex 25, Will 23
Saving Throws +2
Speed 6; climb 4 (spider climb)
Action Points 1

m Tentacle (standard; at-will)
Reach 3; +17 vs. AC; 1d8 + 8 damage.

C Whipping Tentacles (standard; at-will)
Close burst 3; targets enemies; +17 vs. AC; 1d8 + 8 damage, and the target slides to any other square within the burst.

Invisibility (minor; at-will) ✦ Illusion
The balhannoth can turn invisible until the end of its next turn. It turns visible if it takes a standard action.

Reality Shift (move; at-will)
The balhannoth can teleport 10 squares. Enemies adjacent to the balhannoth before it teleports are dazed until the end of its next turn. The balhannoth automatically gains combat advantage against creatures it teleports adjacent to.

Combat Advantage
The balhannoth deals an extra 2d8 damage against any target it has combat advantage against.

Alignment Chaotic Evil Languages Deep Speech
Skills Stealth +19
Str 29 (+15) Dex 27 (+14) Wis 20 (+11)
Con 24 (+13) Int 3 (+2) Cha 8 (+5)

Clay Golem (level 12) — **Level 12 Elite Brute**
Large natural animate (construct) — XP 1400

Initiative +7 Senses Perception +9; darkvision
HP 306; Bloodied 153
AC 24; Fortitude 28, Reflex 22, Will 24
Immune disease, poison, sleep
Saving Throws +2
Speed 6
Action Points 1

m Slam (standard; at-will)
Reach 2; +16 vs. AC; 3d8 + 6 damage and the target cannot regain hit points (save ends).

M Clay Smash (standard; at-will)
The clay golem makes two slam attacks, each against a different target.

M Berserk Attack (immediate reaction; when the clay golem is damaged by an attack while bloodied; at-will)
The clay golem makes a slam attack against a creature adjacent to it.

Unstoppable (move; encounter)
The clay golem moves 8 squares and can move through enemies' spaces. Opportunity attacks against the golem triggered by this movement take a -10 penalty to damage rolls.

Hasty Reaction
A clay golem rolls initiative twice, taking the higher of the two results

Alignment Unaligned Languages —
Str 25 (+13) Dex 13 (+7) Wis 17 (+9)
Con 23 (+12) Int 2 (+2) Cha 2 (+2)

Drow Arcanist (level 12) — **Level 12 Controller**
Medium fey humanoid (drow) — XP 700

Initiative +10 Senses Perception +11; darkvision
HP 114; Bloodied 57
AC 26; Fortitude 21, Reflex 24, Will 26
Speed 6

m Dagger (standard; at-will) ✦ Poison, Weapon
+17 vs. AC; 1d4 + 7 damage, and the drow arcanist makes a secondary attack against the same target. *Secondary Attack:* +16 vs. Fortitude; see drow poison for the effect.

R Shadow Missile (standard; at-will) ✦ Necrotic
Ranged 10; +16 vs. Reflex; 1d8 + 5 necrotic damage, and the target is slowed (save ends).

R Darkfire (minor; encounter)
Ranged 10; +16 vs. Reflex; until the end of the drow arcanist's next turn, the target grants combat advantage to all attacks, and the target cannot benefit from concealment or invisibility.

A Shadow Fire (standard; recharge 6) ✦ Fire
Area burst 2 within 20; +16 vs. Reflex; 5d6 + 5 fire damage, and the target is immobilized (save ends).

Drow Poison ✦ Poison
A creature hit by a weapon coated in drow poison takes a –2 penalty to attack rolls (save ends). *First Failed Saving Throw:* The target is also weakened (save ends). *Second Failed Saving Throw:* The target falls unconscious until the end of the encounter.

Alignment Evil Languages Common, Elven
Skills Arcana +14, Nature +16, Religion +14
Str 10 (+6) Dex 13 (+7) Wis 20 (+11)
Con 10 (+6) Int 16 (+9) Cha 18 (+10)
Equipment drow poisoned dagger*, leather armor

Encounter 5D: Liberating Slaves Statistics (High Level)

Balhannoth (level 14) — **Level 14 Elite Lurker**
Large aberrant magical beast (blind) — XP 2000

Initiative +21 Senses Perception +17; blindsight
HP 230; Bloodied 115
AC 28; Fortitude 28, Reflex 27, Will 25
Saving Throws +2
Speed 6; climb 4 (spider climb)
Action Points 1

m Tentacle (standard; at-will)
Reach 3; +19 vs. AC; 1d8 + 9 damage.

C Whipping Tentacles (standard; at-will)
Close burst 3; targets enemies; +19 vs. AC; 1d8 + 9 damage, and the target slides to any other square within the burst.

Invisibility (minor; at-will) ✦ Illusion
The balhannoth can turn invisible until the end of its next turn. It turns visible if it takes a standard action.

Reality Shift (move; at-will)
The balhannoth can teleport 10 squares. Enemies adjacent to the balhannoth before it teleports are dazed until the end of its next turn. The balhannoth automatically gains combat advantage against creatures it teleports adjacent to.

Combat Advantage
The balhannoth deals an extra 2d8 damage against any target it has combat advantage against.

Alignment Chaotic Evil Languages Deep Speech
Skills Stealth +22
Str 30 (+17) Dex 28 (+16) Wis 21 (+12)
Con 25 (+14) Int 4 (+4) Cha 9 (+6)

Clay Golem (level 14) — **Level 14 Elite Brute**
Large natural animate (construct) — XP 2000

Initiative +9 Senses Perception +11; darkvision
HP 348; Bloodied 174
AC 26; Fortitude 30, Reflex 24, Will 26
Immune disease, poison, sleep
Saving Throws +2
Speed 6
Action Points 1

m Slam (standard; at-will)
Reach 2; +18 vs. AC; 3d8 + 7 damage and the target cannot regain hit points (save ends).

M Clay Smash (standard; at-will)
The clay golem makes two slam attacks, each against a different target.

M Berserk Attack (immediate reaction; when the clay golem is damaged by an attack while bloodied; at-will)
The clay golem makes a slam attack against a creature adjacent to it.

Unstoppable (move; encounter)
The clay golem moves 8 squares and can move through enemies' spaces. Opportunity attacks against the golem triggered by this movement take a -10 penalty to damage rolls.

Hasty Reaction
A clay golem rolls initiative twice, taking the higher of the two results.

Alignment Unaligned Languages —
Str 26 (+15) Dex 14 (+9) Wis 18 (+11)
Con 24 (+14) Int 3 (+3) Cha 3 (+3)

Drow Arcanist (level 14) — **Level 14 Controller**
Medium fey humanoid (drow) — XP 1000

Initiative +12 Senses Perception +12; darkvision
HP 130; Bloodied 65
AC 28; Fortitude 23, Reflex 25, Will 28
Speed 6

m Dagger (standard; at-will) ✦ Poison, Weapon
+19 vs. AC; 1d4 + 8 damage, and the drow arcanist makes a secondary attack against the same target. *Secondary Attack:* +18 vs. Fortitude; see drow poison for the effect.

R Shadow Missile (standard; at-will) ✦ Necrotic
Ranged 10; +18 vs. Reflex; 1d8 + 6 necrotic damage, and the target is slowed (save ends).

R Darkfire (minor; encounter)
Ranged 10; +18 vs. Reflex; until the end of the drow arcanist's next turn, the target grants combat advantage to all attacks, and the target cannot benefit from concealment or invisibility.

A Shadow Fire (standard; recharge 6) ✦ Fire
Area burst 2 within 20; +18 vs. Reflex; 5d6 + 6 fire damage, and the target is immobilized (save ends).

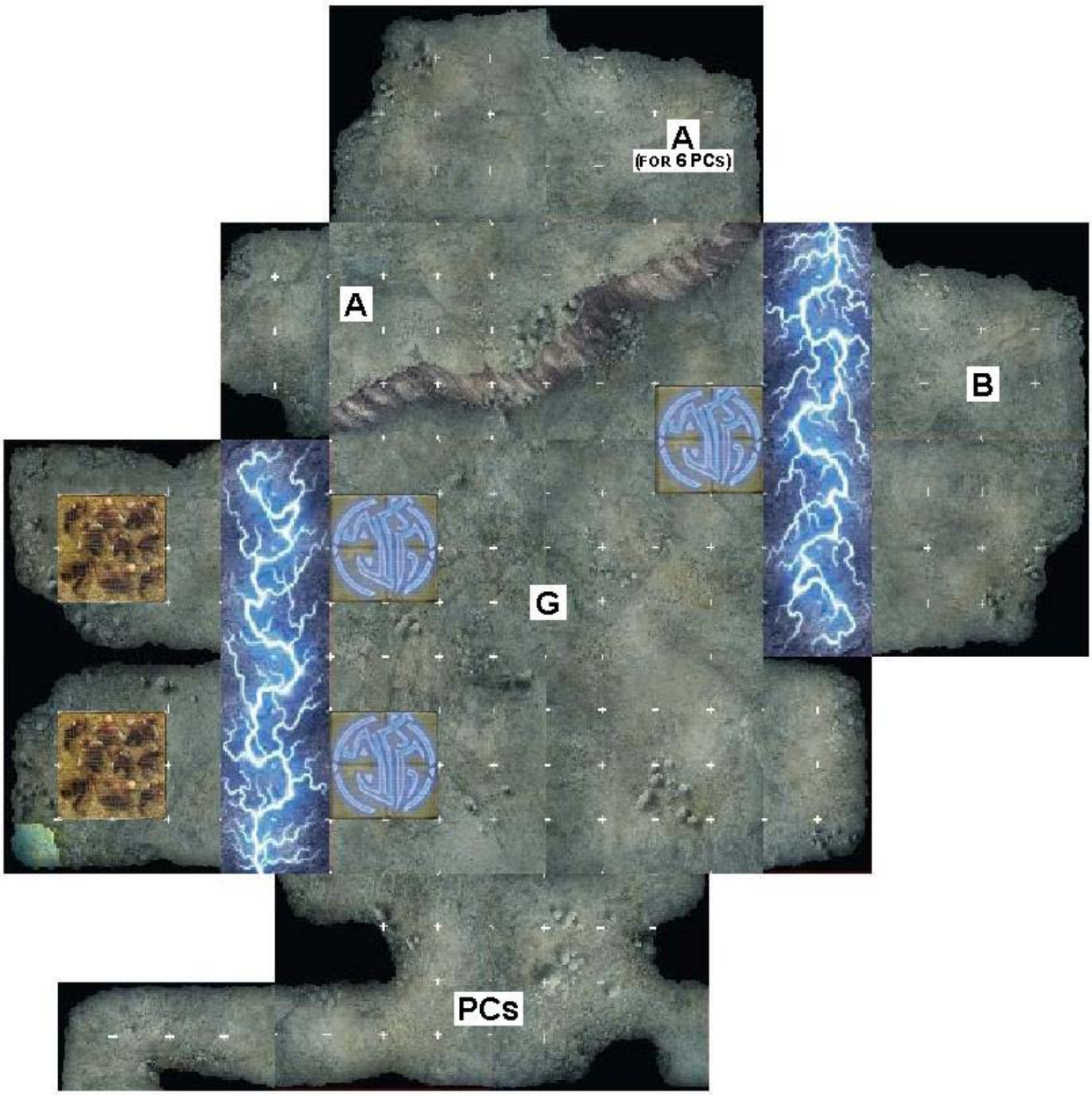
Drow Poison ✦ Poison
A creature hit by a weapon coated in drow poison takes a –2 penalty to attack rolls (save ends). *First Failed Saving Throw:* The target is also weakened (save ends). *Second Failed Saving Throw:* The target falls unconscious until the end of the encounter.

Alignment Evil Languages Common, Elven
Skills Arcana +15, Nature +17, Religion +15
Str 10 (+7) Dex 14 (+9) Wis 20 (+12)
Con 10 (+7) Int 17 (+10) Cha 18 (+11)
Equipment drow poisoned dagger*, leather armor

Encounter 5D: Liberating Slaves Map

Tile Sets Needed

Caverns of the Underdark x2, Arcane Corridors x2, Halls of the Giant Kings x2, Streets of Shadow x2



Encounter 6A: The Hit

Skill Challenge Level 12/14, Complexity 5 (3500/5000 XP)

Setup

Important NPCs:
Ambassador Tolgruss Korvem (Perception +13, Insight +13)
Zixzzuthzikyriin Xvixaithnick (Perception +9, Insight +9)

In this encounter, the PCs devise and execute a plan to assassinate Tolgruss, the Netherese ambassador, in order to shatter any remaining hopes of an alliance between the drow of Sshamath and Netheril.

There are of course a myriad of ways to assassinate an individual, and it is impossible to cover every means of doing so here. Instead, the following is one possible way for the PCs to assassinate Tolgruss, but you can use it as a guide to run alternate methods of assassination that the PCs might attempt. If the PCs wish to assassinate Tolgruss in open combat, proceed to Encounter 6B.

Assassinating a Shade is no mean feat, but Izztyrr recommends poison for this situation. "It's much more preferable to a knife in the dark; Shades can see far too well in such circumstances."

Izztyrr recommends that the PCs acquire a poison in the Dark Weavings Bazaar, but he warns them to avoid drawing attention to themselves. He advises to formulate a plan off the type of poison they acquire.

Skill Challenge: A Late Lunch

Goal: The PCs must find a way to assassinate Ambassador Tolgruss without alerting him or his guards. This example demonstrates poisoning Tolgruss.
Complexity: 5 (12 successes before 3 failures)
Primary Skills: Varies by scene
Other Skills: Varies by scene
Victory: The PCs manage to assassinate Tolgruss by poison, leaving both the drow and his guards none the wiser.
Defeat: Tolgruss catches wind of an assassination attempt and is escorted to safety.

When running the skill challenge, remember to be flexible and adapt the challenge to the PCs actions. If they are having difficulty deciding what to do next, allow them skill checks to represent their characters' thoughts on what to do next. Alternatively, Izztyrr may show up to assist them at your discretion.

Scene 1 – Finding a Poison Merchant

Assuming the PCs decide to poison Tolgruss, the first task set before them is acquiring the poison from a relatively trustworthy merchant. The obvious place to go is the Dark Weavings Bazaar.

Rather than a series of Skill rolls, encourage the PCs to participate actively by bringing the NPCs of the city to life and role-playing with the PCs.

Bluff DC 18/19 (1 success, 2 maximum)
The PCs use a convincing lie to some locals or travelers to direct them to a merchant dealing with poisons, such as needing an antidote.

Diplomacy DC 22/23 (1 success, 2 maximum)
The PCs convince some travelers or locals to direct them to a merchant dealing and convince them it is in the local's best interest to remain quiet about it.

Insight DC 18/19 (1 success, 1 maximum)
By conversing with various poison merchants, an insightful PC can eliminate some untrustworthy candidates.

Streetwise DC 18/19 (1 success, 2 maximum)
The PCs ask around with "the right sort of people."

After the PCs garner two successes, they find that an umber hulk merchant, of all things, may be just the merchant they're looking for.

Scene 2 – Don't Worry About His Name

The umber hulk merchant is truly a sight to see. Its huge, chitinous body is covered with numerous backpacks, pouches, and satchels, and it seems to be trying to avert its gaze from passersby as it advertises glues, antidotes, poisons, and other alchemical items. The smells of metal and earth pervade your nostrils as you approach. It makes a clicking noise as it introduces itself, "Hello, travelers, *click*, my name is Zixzzuthzikyriin Xvixaithnick and I would love to show you my wares."

See the appendix for more information on Zix (as we call him for short), including a pronunciation guide for his name. First, the PCs need to befriend Zix in order to be offered his best wares; this requires two successes.

Language (1 success; 1 maximum)

Speaking to Zix in his native tongue, Deep Speech, improves his mood and generates an automatic success.

Arcana DC 18/19 (trained only; 1 success(es), 1 maximum)

Characters trained in Arcana are adept at saying such incomprehensible names, and merely greeting Zix correctly makes him much more amenable to selling his best poisons to the PCs.

Bluff DC 22/23 (1 success, 2 maximum)

Offering stories of friendship with other umber hulks, sincere-seeming platitudes, and other manipulation can make Zix treat the PCs as friends rather quickly.

Diplomacy DC 18/19 (1 success, 2 maximum)

Being polite and asking about Zix's stay in Sshamath, his items for sale and how he acquired them, and other simple conversation can go a long way towards friendly relations with Zix.

Dungeoneering DC 20 (trained only; 1 success, 1 maximum)

A character knowledgeable about umber hulks knows that they have a very fast metabolism and need to eat far more frequently than most creatures. Purchasing and offering a gift of roasted rothe (basically Underdark cattle) or other significant quantity of food makes Zix more amiable.

History DC 18/19 (1 success, 1 maximum)

Characters knowledgeable about Zix's home, Nezchenzûr, can speak to him about the place. Zix's mood improves with talk of his home.

Insight DC 22/23 (0 successes)

Reading Zix is relatively difficult due to his odd mannerisms and physiology, but a particularly insightful PC can tell that Zix is sad about something and needs cheering up. A PC can grant the party a +2 to social checks with Zix by making further efforts with him more cheerful.

Once the PCs convince Zix to trust them, he offers *traveler's essence*, a purified form of *traveler's dust* to the PCs for 20,000 gold pieces. *Traveler's essence*, when imbibed or placed in the eye, sends the poisoned individual's soul to the Abyss where it is consumed and destroyed utterly within minutes. Unlike *traveler's dust*, it is powerful enough to overcome almost any magical protection or poison resistance.

Obviously the PCs are probably either unable or unwilling to scrounge up 20,000 gp. Zix offer to give the poison to the PCs if they can acquire his brother's corpse so that Zix may have him resurrected. Zix knows that the corpse was sold to a school in the Quillspires, an area of stalactite-towers on the roof of the cavern northwest of Z'orr'bauth. Zix avoids the school because he does not wish join his brother on the dissection table.

If the PCs have moral qualms with the use of *traveler's essence*, Zix can also offer the PCs *black lotus* poison, though he cannot guarantee that it will work quite as well. If the PCs have moral qualms with discrete assassination in general, feel free to remind them that they may engage the ambassador in direct combat instead. Transition to Encounter 6B if necessary.

Scene 3 – An Exchange

The PCs acquire Zix's brother's corpse from a school for wizards. Since the corpse is not considered particularly valuable, and can either be purchased or stolen, this scene should not pose too great a challenge. The PCs need 3 successes in this scene. The school is named the House for Aberrant Studies.

Arcana DC 18/19 (1 success, 1 maximum)

By using their knowledge of magical items, the PCs trick the magical loading mechanisms at the school to dispense the corpse to the PCs.

Bluff DC 18/19 (1 success, 2 maximum, group check)

A PC lie their way in and or out of the school claiming to be on business for the headmaster; people dropping off or picking up corpses of aberrations is commonplace there.

Stealth DC 18/19 (1 success, 2 maximum, group check)

Sneaking in or out of the building can get the job done quickly.

Thievery DC 22/23 (1 success, 1 maximum)

A PC picks the lock on the school's storage room and steals the corpse.

Once the PCs return to Zix with the corpse, he happily gives them the *traveler's essence* in exchange, thanks

them, and informs them that he's leaving the city before they use the poison, at least for a time.

Scene 4 – Entering the Stonestave

In this scene, the PCs gain access to the Stonestave. This scene is identical to Scene 1 of the skill challenge in Encounter 5A; if the players completed that challenge successfully, you can skip this scene and grant them an automatic success. If not, use the guidelines in Encounter 5A to run this scene.

Scene 5 – Making a Meal Special

In this scene, the PCs access the kitchens, avoid the attention of the staff or coerce them to help, and poison the right drink to kill the ambassador. They must accrue three successes in this scene in order to continue.

Bluff DC 18/19 (1 success, 2 maximum)

The PCs disguise themselves as servants in order to gain access to the kitchens. Once inside, Bluff can again be used to pretend to be new staff member and ask for the assistance of the other servants.

Diplomacy DC 18/19 (1 success, 2 maximum)

Bribing the servants can prove rather effective since they are grossly underpaid. 100 gp with a successful Diplomacy check can get the PCs into the kitchens quietly. An additional 150 gp with a successful Diplomacy check buys the servants' help with poisoning.

Heal DC 22/23 (1 success, 1 maximum)

A PC knowledgeable about poisons understands that putting poison in a beverage causes it to be metabolized more quickly, and reduces the chance of survival. A PC with the Alchemist feat receives a +2 bonus to this skill check.

History DC 18/19 (1 success, 1 maximum)

A PC knowledgeable about Netherese culture knows that Sembian bitterdark wine is the favored drink of the aristocracy.

Intimidate DC 18/19 (1 success, 2 maximum)

Frightening the servants into submission is relatively easy; they know they can be killed easily before help arrives. Servants in terror (2 successes) can tell the PCs that the ambassador is about to have a late lunch before taking a tour of the city, and always drinks bitterdark with every meal.

Perception DC 18/19 (1 success, 1 maximum)

A perceptive character notices multiple open bottles of Sembian bitterdark, a valuable and rare wine. On one of the bottles, a note reads, "Save for Ambassador."

Stealth DC 18/19 (1 success; 2 maximum, group check)

A PC avoids dealing with the servants by sneaking into and out of the kitchens.

Streetwise DC 18/19 (1 success; 1 maximum)

By asking around, the PC learns that Sembian bitterdark is Tolgruss' favorite drink and he has been consuming multiple bottles per day.

Thievery DC 22/23 (1 success; 1 maximum)

A disguised or stealthed PC poisons the bitterdark without any servants noticing.

Scene 6 – Ducking Out

In this scene, the PCs need to leave the premises before Tolgruss' death or the servants' mouths attract unwanted attention. Each PC must make an individual success to escape.

Acrobatics DC 18/19 (1 success, 1 maximum)

A PC uses a grappling hook to attach a rope from a window of the stalactite to another stalactite fifty feet away and balance across to safety.

Athletics DC 18/19 (1 success, 1 maximum)

A PC with 200 feet of rope can lower a rope from a window out of the stalactite and climb to the cavern floor.

Bluff DC 18/19 (1 success, 1 maximum)

The PC nonchalantly walks out of the Stonestave and avoid the attention of the guards.

Stealth DC 22/23 (1 success, 1 maximum)

A PC can sneak out of the Stonestave, using crowds as cover from the guards.

Alternatives: If the PCs have an extraordinary means of escape, such as a power that teleports 10 or more squares, *arcane gate, like a feather* or *featherfall*, they may be able to gain an automatic success through the use of such a power.

As the PCs escape, read the following:

As you hastily leave the Stonestave, cries of alarm ring out and shouts echo throughout the cavern, "the

Ambassador has been assassinated! Assassins! Call the guards!"

Ending the Encounter

If the PCs attempt to keep the *traveler's essence*, alert them that it only remains potent out of magical containment for 24 hours.

Success: The PCs have successfully assassinated Tolgruss, ensuring that no alliance occurs between Netheril and Sshamath. They must now escape the city and return to the surface. Proceed to encounter:

- 7A if PCs completed both skill challenge sabotage encounters
- 7B if PCs completed one combat sabotage encounter
- 7C if PCs completed both combat sabotage encounters

Failure: Depending on when and how the PCs fail the encounter, either proceed to Encounter 6A or Ambassador Tolgruss is whisked away to safety and the PCs must flee to the surface knowing they have failed their task.

Experience Points

For successfully completing the assassination, each PC receives 700/1000 experience points.

Treasure

Ambassador Tolgruss carries a +3 *shadowstrike kukri* that the PCs may recover as a treasure bundle if they are somehow able to loot the body. Alternatively, the PCs find a package waiting for them back in Elturel containing the kukri wrapped in leather from a "friend" (Izztyrr).

Encounter 6B: The Hit That Hits Back

Encounter Level 12/14 (3500/5000 XP)

Setup

This encounter includes the following creatures and traps at the low tier:
1 Tolgruss, shade ambassador (level 12) (A)
2 shadar-kai painbearer (level 12) (S)
1 shadar-kai gloom lord (level 12) (G)

This encounter includes the following creatures and traps at the high tier:
1 Tolgruss, shade ambassador (level 14) (A)
2 shadar-kai painbearer (level 14) (S)
1 shadar-kai gloom lord (G)

The PCs have chosen the direct approach to assassinating Tolgruss, the Netherese ambassador, in order to shatter any remaining hopes of an alliance between the drow of Sshamath and Netheril.

Izztyrr offers the following advice to the PCs:

Izztyrr shakes his head and smiles. "You have some backbone, I'll give you that. While a retinue of Sshamath city watch usually accompanies the Shade, the drow are not permitted in his personal chambers. Tolgruss' personal guards, however, never leave his side. If you expect to have any chance of killing him, you'll need to get in there while he's alone in his chambers with his guards. His chambers are on one of the topmost floors of the Stonestave, and he plans to tour the city in under one hour. Good luck."

The PCs must gain entry into the Stonestave in order to make their way to Tolgruss' personal chambers. In order to simulate some of the challenge associated with entering the Stonestave, run Scene 1 of the skill challenge in Encounter 5A. If the PCs have already gained access to the Stonestave (either by completing Encounter 5A or otherwise), then they can re-enter without a problem.

The wide circular stairwell that climbs higher and higher into the Stonestave ends at a thick wooden door. Opening the door reveals a simply yet richly furnished chamber consisting of two balconies connected by another wide circular stairwell. A number of uniformed shadar-kai guards turn to face you, surprise evident upon their faces. Some wield spiked chains as they prepare for combat.

Tolgruss, the Shade ambassador snickers from the balcony above. "Adventurers in my personal chambers? This is an insult. I speak with the voice of Prince Clariburnus of Shade himself." He unclasps his ambassadorial robe and pulls a kukri that appears to be composed entirely of shadow from the jeweled scabbard at his belt. "Do you really think you can stand up to me? So be it, fools."

Roll for initiative – combat is at this point unavoidable.

Features of the Area

Illumination: The chamber is dimly illuminated by wall sconces. Note Tolgruss' aura and its impacts on other light sources.

Stairs: The wide but shallow stone stairs are normal terrain.

Balconies: The chamber consists of two balconies, one 15 feet (3 squares) above the other. The balconies have stone railings, preventing forced movement over the edge of either. The lower balcony is 45 feet high, and the higher balcony is 60 feet high. Use this information to determine falling damage should any character fall from one of the balconies or the stairs.

Note that the rules on whether or not characters can teleport their opponents to force a precipitous fall are quite vague. This encounter is designed assuming that this is not an option; try to discourage your players from employing that tactic.

Furniture: All of the furniture in the chamber is blocking terrain. PCs can jump up onto the bed or table with a DC 15 Athletics check.

Ceiling: The ceiling of the chamber is 60 feet (12 squares) above the bottom balcony.

Tactics

Tolgruss hangs back initially, waiting for the PCs to spread out a little bit before attacking. He tries to gain the benefits of his *coalescing darkness* feature every round, utilizing his *shadow stride* ability as often as possible. He uses his superior movement abilities to move from balcony to balcony and tries to pick off the weaker or less armored PCs first, always striking with combat advantage if possible. Note that *coalescing darkness* gives him combat advantage against his foes. Tolgruss may use the following power granted to him by his weapon:

Shadowstrike Kukri (minor; daily)
Until the end of his next turn, Tolgruss' reach increases by 1 square and he gains combat advantage for all attacks.

The shadar-kai painbearers use *shadow dance* as often as possible and use *shadow boon* to allow Tolgruss to reroll any missed key attacks. If necessary, they use *shadow jaunt* to teleport from one balcony to the other. The gloom lord blasts the PCs mercilessly, combining his attacks with those of the painbearers to punish PCs already shrouded in gloom.

Scaling the Encounter

Make the following adjustments to the combat based on the number of PCs present.

Four PCs: Remove one of the shadar-kai painbearers.

Six PCs: Add another shadar-kai gloom lord.

Ending the Encounter

The PCs have successfully assassinated Tolgruss, ensuring that no alliance occurs between Netheril and Sshamath. They must now escape the city and return to the surface. Proceed to encounter:

- 7A if PCs completed both skill challenge sabotage encounters
- 7B if PCs completed one combat sabotage encounter
- 7C if PCs completed both combat sabotage encounters

Experience Points

The characters receive 700/1000 experience points each for successfully defeating Tolgruss and his guards.

Treasure

Tolgruss carries a +3 *shadowstrike kukri* that the PCs may recover as a treasure bundle.

Encounter 6B: The Hit That Hits Back Statistics (Low Level)

Shadar-Kai Painbearer (level 12) — Level 12 Skirmisher
Medium shadow humanoid — XP 700

Initiative +15 — Senses Perception +10; low-light vision
Shadow weft aura 5; each shadar-kai ally within the aura shifts 1 square as a free action after it hits with a melee attack.
HP 120; Bloodied 60
AC 26; Fortitude 24, Reflex 26, Will 24
Speed 7

m Shadow Chain (standard; at-will) ✦ Weapon
Reach 2; +17 vs. AC; 2d8 + 5 damage, and the target is shrouded in gloom (save ends).

M Shadow Dance (standard; at-will) ✦ Weapon
The shadar-kai painbearer shifts 7 squares and makes three shadow chain attacks during the move, each against a different target. The painbearer's second and third attacks deal 2d6 extra necrotic damage for each prior attack that has hit. A creature that is shrouded in gloom and is hit by an attack is blinded (save ends).

Shadow Boon (immediate reaction, when an ally within 10 squares misses with an attack; encounter)
The triggering ally rerolls the attack roll.

Shadow Jaunt (move; encounter) ✦ Teleportation
The shadar-kai inquisitor teleports 3 squares and becomes insubstantial until the start of its next turn.

Shrouded in Gloom
While shrouded in gloom, a creature takes a -2 penalty to attack rolls and gains only half the benefit of healing effects.

Alignment Evil — Languages Common
Skills Acrobatics +18, Stealth +18

Str 20 (+11)	Dex 24 (+13)	Wis 18 (+10)
Con 16 (+9)	Int 13 (+7)	Cha 10 (+6)

Equipment leather armor, spiked chain

Shadar-Kai Gloom Lord (level 12) — Level 12 Artillery
Medium shadow humanoid — XP 700

Initiative +9 — Senses Perception +7; low-light vision
HP 96; Bloodied 48
AC 24; Fortitude 23, Reflex 26, Will 24
Immune disease, poison; Resist 15 thunder
Speed 7

m Corrupting Blackfire (standard; at-will)
+17 vs. Armor Class; 2d8 + 5 fire and necrotic damage, and the target is shrouded in gloom (save ends).

r Shadowbolt (standard; at-will) ✦ Necrotic
Ranged 10; +17 vs. Reflex; 2d8 + 5 necrotic damage, and the target is shrouded in gloom (save ends).

r Shadowcage (standard; at-will) ✦ Necrotic
Ranged 10; targets a creature shrouded in gloom; +17 vs. Reflex; 3d6 + 5 necrotic damage, and the target is restrained and cannot see creatures more than 2 squares away from it (save ends both).

Shadow Jaunt (move; encounter) ✦ Teleportation
The shadar-kai inquisitor teleports 3 squares and becomes insubstantial until the start of its next turn.

Shrouded in Gloom
While shrouded in gloom, a creature takes a -2 penalty to attack rolls and gains only half the benefit of healing effects.

Alignment Evil — Languages Common
Skills Arcana +18, Stealth +16

Str 11 (+6)	Dex 16 (+9)	Wis 12 (+7)
Con 18 (+10)	Int 24 (+13)	Cha 19 (+10)

Equipment leather armor

Tolgruss (level 12) — Level 12 Elite Skirmisher
Medium shadow humanoid — XP 1,400

Initiative +17 — Senses Perception +12; darkvision
Benighted Presence aura 10; light-producing effects within the aura whose level is lower than the shade's can create only dim light.
HP 240; Bloodied 120
Regeneration 10 (If the shade takes radiant damage, its regeneration doesn't function on its next turn).
AC 30; Fortitude 26, Reflex 29, Will 26
Saving Throws +2
Speed 7
Action Points 1

m Kukri (standard; at-will) ✦ Weapon
+17 vs. AC; 1d6 + 9 damage, re-roll any die result of 1 (crit 3d6 + 15).

M Deep Gouge (standard; at-will)
+17 vs. AC; 2d6 + 9 damage, re-roll any die result of 1 (crit 3d6 + 21), and the target is dazed until the end of Tolgruss' next turn.

M Whirling Slices (standard; encounter)
Tolgruss makes three basic attacks. He can shift 1 square before or after each attack.

M Thigh Cutter (standard; recharge 4-6) ✦ Weapon
Tolgruss makes two basic melee attacks. If either hits, the target is also slowed (save ends); if both hit the same target, it is also knocked prone. Tolgruss can shift 1 square before or after each attack.

Through the Shadows (minor; encounter)
Tolgruss shifts 3 squares.

Combat Advantage
Tolgruss deals an extra 2d8 damage against any target he has combat advantage against.

Shadow Stride (move; recharge 4-6) ✦ Teleportation
A shade can teleport 20 squares but must end its move in dim light or darkness.

Coalescing Darkness
If a shade moves 3 or more squares by any means, it is cloaked with supernatural darkness, gaining total concealment until the end of its next turn.

Alignment Evil — Languages Common, Elven, Netherese
Skills Acrobatics +17, Athletics +14, Bluff +16, Insight +12, Stealth +22

Str 13 (+7)	Dex 22 (+12)	Wis 12 (+7)
Con 16 (+9)	Int 10 (+6)	Cha 20 (+11)

Equipment kukri, leather armor

Note: Captain Shil Yargo (*FRCG*) with aspects of the shade template (*FRCG*) bolted on. Halfling-related traits and powers have been removed.

Encounter 6B: The Hit That Hits Back Statistics (High Level)

Shadar-Kai Painbearer (level 14) — **Level 14 Skirmisher**
Medium shadow humanoid — XP 1000

Initiative +16 — Senses Perception +10; low-light vision
Shadow weft aura 5; each shadar-kai ally within the aura shifts 1 square as a free action after it hits with a melee attack.
HP 136; Bloodied 68
AC 28; Fortitude 26, Reflex 28, Will 26
Speed 7

m Shadow Chain (standard; at-will) ✦ Weapon
Reach 2; +19 vs. AC; 2d8 + 6 damage, and the target is shrouded in gloom (save ends).

M Shadow Dance (standard; at-will) ✦ Weapon
The shadar-kai painbearer shifts 7 squares and makes three shadow chain attacks during the move, each against a different target. The painbearer's second and third attacks deal 2d6 extra necrotic damage for each prior attack that has hit. A creature that is shrouded in gloom and is hit by an attack is blinded (save ends).

Shadow Boon (immediate reaction, when an ally within 10 squares misses with an attack; encounter)
The triggering ally rerolls the attack roll.

Shadow Jaunt (move; encounter) ✦ Teleportation
The shadar-kai inquisitor teleports 3 squares and becomes insubstantial until the start of its next turn.

Shrouded in Gloom
While shrouded in gloom, a creature takes a -2 penalty to attack rolls and gains only half the benefit of healing effects.

Alignment Evil — Languages Common
Skills Acrobatics +19, Stealth +19
Str 20 (+12) — Dex 24 (+14) — Wis 18 (+11)
Con 16 (+10) — Int 14 (+8) — Cha 11 (+7)
Equipment leather armor, spiked chain

Shadar-Kai Gloom Lord — **Level 14 Artillery**
Medium shadow humanoid — XP 1,000

Initiative +10 — Senses Perception +8; low-light vision
HP 108; Bloodied 54
AC 26; Fortitude 25, Reflex 28, Will 26
Immune disease, poison; Resist 15 thunder
Speed 7

m Corrupting Blackfire (standard; at-will)
+19 vs. Armor Class; 2d8 + 6 fire and necrotic damage, and the target is shrouded in gloom (save ends).

r Shadowbolt (standard; at-will) ✦ Necrotic
Ranged 10; +19 vs. Reflex; 2d8 + 6 necrotic damage, and the target is shrouded in gloom (save ends).

r Shadowcage (standard; at-will) ✦ Necrotic
Ranged 10; targets a creature shrouded in gloom; +19 vs. Reflex; 3d6 + 6 necrotic damage, and the target is restrained and cannot see creatures more than 2 squares away from it (save ends both).

Shadow Jaunt (move; encounter) ✦ Teleportation
The shadar-kai inquisitor teleports 3 squares and becomes insubstantial until the start of its next turn.

Shrouded in Gloom
While shrouded in gloom, a creature takes a -2 penalty to attack rolls and gains only half the benefit of healing effects.

Alignment Evil — Languages Common
Skills Arcana +19, Stealth +17
Str 12 (+8) — Dex 16 (+10) — Wis 13 (+8)
Con 18 (+11) — Int 24 (+14) — Cha 19 (+11)
Equipment leather armor

Tolgruss (level 14) — **Level 14 Elite Skirmisher**
Medium shadow humanoid — XP 2,000

Initiative +18 — Senses Perception +13; darkvision
Benighted Presence aura 10; light-producing effects within the aura whose level is lower than the shade's can create only dim light.
HP 274; Bloodied 137
Regeneration 10 (If the shade takes radiant damage, its regeneration doesn't function on its next turn).
AC 32; Fortitude 28, Reflex 31, Will 28
Saving Throws +2
Speed 7
Action Points 1

m Kukri (standard; at-will) ✦ Weapon
+19 vs. AC; 1d6 + 10 damage, re-roll any die result of 1 (crit 3d6 + 16).

M Deep Gouge (standard; at-will)
+19 vs. AC; 2d6 + 10 damage, re-roll any die result of 1 (crit 3d6 + 22), and the target is dazed until the end of Tolgruss' next turn.

M Whirling Slices (standard; encounter)
Tolgruss makes three basic attacks. He can shift 1 square before or after each attack.

M Thigh Cutter (standard; recharge 4-6) ✦ Weapon
Tolgruss makes two basic melee attacks. If either hits, the target is also slowed (save ends); if both hit the same target, it is also knocked prone. Tolgruss can shift 1 square before or after each attack.

Through the Shadows (minor; encounter)
Tolgruss shifts 3 squares.

Combat Advantage
Tolgruss deals an extra 2d8 damage against any target he has combat advantage against.

Shadow Stride (move; recharge 4-6) ✦ Teleportation
A shade can teleport 20 squares but must end its move in dim light or darkness.

Coalescing Darkness
If a shade moves 3 or more squares by any means, it is cloaked with supernatural darkness, gaining total concealment until the end of its next turn.

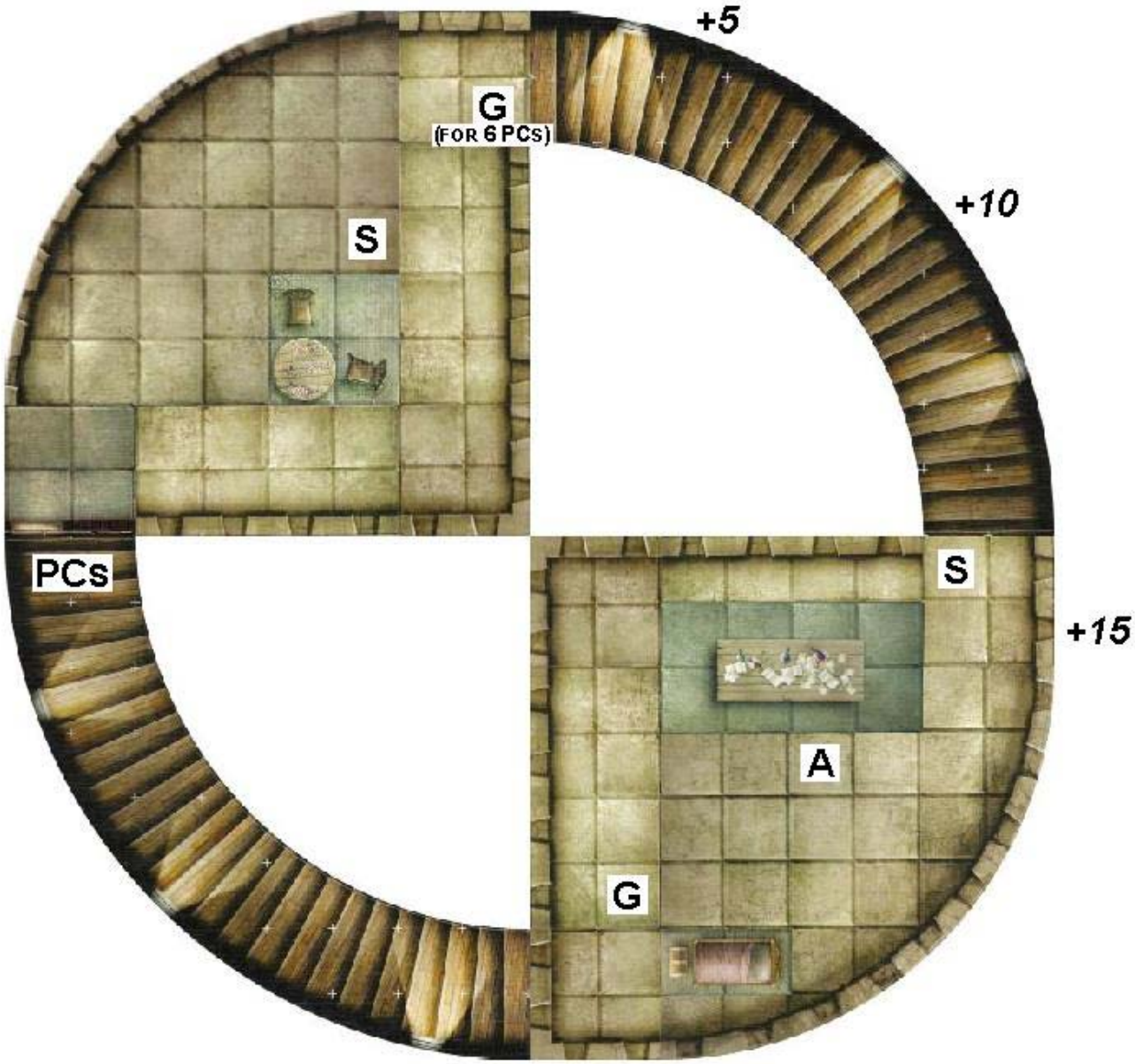
Alignment Evil — Languages Common, Elven, Netherese
Skills Acrobatics +18, Athletics +15, Bluff +17, Insight +13, Stealth +23
Str 14 (+9) — Dex 22 (+13) — Wis 12 (+8)
Con 17 (+10) — Int 10 (+7) — Cha 20 (+12)
Equipment kukri, leather armor

Note: Captain Shil Yargo (*FRCG*) with aspects of the shade template (*FRCG*) bolted on. Halfling-related traits and powers have been removed.

Encounter 6B: The Hit That Hits Back Map

Tile Sets Needed

Arcane Towers x2, Fane of the Forgotten Gods x1



Encounter 7A: Fighting Retreat

Encounter Level 12/14 (3500/5000 XP)

Setup

This encounter includes the following creatures and traps at the low tier:
1 Captain Nym Mlezzir (level 12) (N)
1 Azynn, drow illusionist (level 12) (D)
4 Sshamath drow guard (level 12) (G)
1 drow archer trap (level 12) (T)

This encounter includes the following creatures and traps at the high tier:
1 Captain Nym Mlezzir (level 14) (N)
1 Azynn, drow illusionist (level 14) (D)
4 Sshamath drow guard (level 14) (G)
1 drow archer trap (level 14) (T)

Captain Nym Mlezzir and a number of guards meet the PCs when they reach the gates. They are not about to allow saboteurs to escape so easily.

The black gates of the city stand firmly shut, flanked by sizeable gatehouses. The captain of the guard stands before you, sword drawn, surrounded by his entourage. Drow archers peer over ledges on either side of you with arrows notched.

The drow are not willing to negotiate. PCs notice thick, black chains running from the gatehouses to two massive bars on the gates. A lever located within each gatehouse raises each bar. Once the bars are raised, the gates can be pushed open with a DC 28 Athletics check.

Features of the Area

Illumination: The area is well illuminated.

Ledges: The ledges on which the drow archers (trap) stand are 10 feet (2 squares) above the ground. PCs may climb ledges with DC 20 Athletics checks.

Bridges: The bridges are unstable and PCs must move at half speed to safely cross them. Crossing a bridge at full speed requires a DC 20 Acrobatics check to avoid falling prone. Increase the DC by 5 for charging or running.

Gatehouses: Gatehouses are 15 feet (3 squares) above the ground. The top floor of each is lined with arrow slits. Creatures inside benefit from superior cover against creatures outside. The stairs in gatehouses are normal terrain. Despite the map, the top floor of each gatehouse is actually located directly above the spiral stairwell that leads up to it.

Cavern Walls: The black portions on the map represent cavern walls and are blocking terrain.

Ceiling: The cave ceiling is 60 feet (12 squares) above the main floor.

Tactics

Captain Nym keeps as many PCs marked as possible and focuses his attacks on PCs who are easily able to attack the archers and/or the illusionist. If subjected to a detrimental effect, he uses *life siphon* to transfer the effect to a minion (or archer if all minions are dead).

The illusionist begins combat hidden with *blur* active. He uses *face of death* when he can catch as many PCs as possible in its effect and otherwise uses *psychic flurry* or *mesmerizing bolts*. When attacked, he uses *wizard's escape* to teleport to a more advantageous position.

The guards try to attack with combat advantage whenever possible, but prefer to use their crossbows rather than get into close melee with a dangerous target. They keep a good distance between one another so as to avoid being caught in area effects.

Scaling the Encounter

Make the following adjustments to the combat based on the number of PCs present.

Four PCs: Reduce the levels of Nym and the illusionist by 1. This lowers attacks and defenses by 1, Nym's hit points by 16, and the illusionist's by 12.

Six PCs: Increase the levels of Nym and the illusionist by 1. This increases attacks and defenses by 1, Nym's hit points by 16, and the illusionist's by 12.

Ending the Encounter

When the PCs open the gates, they may flee the city. If the PCs have not defeated all of their opponents but manage to flee, award them full XP for defeating the encounter. Proceed to Encounter 8.

Experience Points

The characters receive 700/1000 experience points each for escaping the city.

Treasure

There is no treasure in this encounter.

Encounter 7A: Fighting Retreat Statistics (Low Level)

Captain Nym Mlezzir (level 12) — **Level 12 Elite Soldier**
Medium fey humanoid (drow) — XP 1400

Initiative +9 — Senses Perception +9; darkvision
HP 240; Bloodied 120
AC 31; Fortitude 28, Reflex 26, Will 28
Saving Throws +2
Speed 6
Action Points 1

m Bastard Sword (standard; at-will) ✦ Weapon
+19 vs. AC; 2d10 + 4 damage (crit 3d6 + 24), and the target is marked until the end of Nym's next turn.

M Slash and Stab (standard; at-will) ✦ Weapon
Nym makes two bastard sword attacks.

R Lightning Lure (standard; at-will) ✦ Implement, Lightning
Ranged 3; +17 vs. Fortitude; 2d6 + 6 lightning damage, and the target is pulled to the nearest unoccupied square adjacent to Nym.

C Threatening Sigil (standard; recharge 6) ✦ Implement, Psychic
Close burst 3; targets enemies; +17 vs. Will; 2d6 + 6 psychic damage, and the target is marked (save ends).

C Electrified Lash (standard; encounter) ✦ Implement, Lightning
Close burst 1; +17 vs. Fortitude; 4d10 + 6 lightning damage.

M Hellspike Assault (standard; daily) ✦ Weapon, Fire
+19 vs. Reflex; 2d10 + 4 fire damage (crit 3d6 + 24). *Effect:* Nym teleports adjacent to an enemy within 5 squares, and make a secondary attack against it. If Nym hit on the primary attack, he may teleport the primary target adjacent to his new location. *Secondary attack:* +19 vs. Reflex; 4d10 + 4 fire damage (crit 3d6 + 44).

Inner Darkness ✦ Necrotic
Any attack Nym makes can instead deal necrotic damage. In addition, Nym can take a -2 penalty on an attack roll to deal 4 extra necrotic damage on the attack.

C Cloud of Darkness (minor; encounter)
Close burst 1; this power creates a cloud of darkness that remains in place until the end of the Nym's next turn. The cloud blocks line of sight for all creatures except Nym. Any creature entirely within the cloud except Nym is blinded until it exits.

Health Siphon (encounter; minor) ✦ Healing
Nym regains up to 25 hit points and removes one status condition currently affecting him, and one ally within 10 squares takes the same number of damage and gains the status condition.

Shadowy Step (encounter; move) ✦ Teleportation
Nym teleports 5 squares. If he ends this move adjacent to an enemy, he gains a +2 power bonus to the next attack roll against that enemy during this turn.

Impenetrable Warding
Nym gains a +3 bonus to all defenses as long as he is wielding his bastard sword in one hand and nothing in the other hand (already included in statistics).

Swordmage Aegis (minor; at-will)
Close burst 2; targets one enemy in burst; the target is marked until Nym marks another creature with this power.

Aegis of Assault (immediate reaction, when a marked target within 10 squares hits with an attack that does not include Nym; at-will) ✦ Teleportation
Nym teleports to a square adjacent to the target and makes a bastard sword attack against the target.

Alignment Evil — Languages Common, Elven
Skills Arcana +15, History + 15, Insight +15, Intimidate +17, Stealth +8, Religion +15

Str 22 (+12)	Dex 11 (+6)	Wis 17 (+9)
Con 16 (+9)	Int 19 (+10)	Cha 19 (+10)

Equipment *+3 bastard sword*, leather armor

Note: Deva Knight-Errant (*MM2*) with Swordmage Template. Reflavored as a drow with some base powers slightly modified as appropriate.

Azynn, drow illusionist (level 12) — **Level 12 Elite Artillery**
Medium fey humanoid (drow) — XP 1400

Initiative +10 — Senses Perception +13; darkvision
HP 192; Bloodied 96
AC 24; Fortitude 21, Reflex 25, Will 25
Saving Throws +2
Speed 6
Action Points 1

m Pain Dagger (standard; at-will) ✦ Psychic, Weapon
+17 vs. AC; 1d4 + 3 damage, plus 2d8 psychic damage.

r Illusory Ambush (standard; at-will) ✦Psychic, Implement, Illusion
Ranged 10; +17 vs. Will; 2d6 + 6 psychic damage, and the target takes a -2 penalty to attack rolls until the end of the illusionist's next turn.

R Psychic Flurry (standard; at-will)
The drow illusionist makes two illusory ambush attacks.

R Mesmerizing Bolts (standard; recharge 5-6) ✦ Psychic, Implement
Ranged 10; targets one, two, or three creatures; +17 vs. Will; 2d6 + 6 psychic damage, and the target is immobilized until the end of the illusionist's next turn. If the illusionist only targets one creature with this power, he gains a +4 power bonus to the attack roll.

A Face of Death (standard; daily) ✦ Fear, Illusion, Implement
Area burst 1 within 10 squares; +15 vs. Will; the target is immobilized (save ends). *First Failed Saving Throw:* the target is helpless (save ends). *Aftereffect:* the target is slowed (save ends). *Miss:* the target is immobilized (save ends). *Aftereffect:* the target is slowed (save ends).

Face of Fear (free, when a creature hits the drow illusionist with a melee attack; at-will) ✦ Fear, Psychic
The triggering creature takes 10 psychic damage.

Wizard's Escape (immediate interrupt, when the drow illusionist is hit by a melee attack; encounter) ✦ Teleportation
The drow illusionist teleports 5 squares to a space that is not adjacent to an enemy.

Blur (minor; encounter) ✦ Illusion
The drow illusionist gains a +2 power bonus to all defenses and enemies 5 or more squares away from the illusionist cannot see him. *Sustain Minor:* The effect persists.

C Cloud of Darkness (minor; encounter)
Close burst 1; this power creates a cloud of darkness that remains in place until the end of the illusionist's next turn. The cloud blocks line of sight for all creatures except the illusionist. Any creature entirely within the cloud except the illusionist is blinded until it exits.

Alignment Evil — Languages Common, Elven
Skills Arcana +17, Dungeoneering +13, Stealth +15

Str 14 (+8)	Dex 14 (+8)	Wis 15 (+8)
Con 18 (+10)	Int 22 (+12)	Cha 12 (+7)

Equipment dagger, orb

Note: Chevesh (*Dragon 378*) reflavored as a drow with wizard powers swapped out as appropriate.

Encounter 7A: Fighting Retreat Statistics (Low Level)

Sshamath Drow Guard (level 12)	Level 12 Minion
Medium fey humanoid (drow)	XP 175

Initiative +12 Senses Perception +9; darkvision
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion
AC 26; Fortitude 24, Reflex 26, Will 23
Speed 6

m Short Sword (standard; at-will) ✦ Poison, Weapon
+17 vs. AC; 8 damage.

r Hand Crossbow (standard; at-will) ✦ Poison, Weapon
Ranged 10/20; +17 vs. AC; 7 damage.

Combat Advantage
The drow guard deals an extra 5 damage against any target it has combat advantage against.

R Darkfire (minor; encounter)
Ranged 10; +15 vs. Reflex; until the end of the drow guard's next turn, the target grants combat advantage to all attacks, and the target cannot benefit from concealment or invisibility.

Alignment Evil Languages Common, Elven

Str 19 (+10)	Dex 18 (+10)	Wis 16 (+9)
Con 14 (+8)	Int 10 (+6)	Cha 10 (+6)

Equipment chainmail, short sword, hand crossbow, 20 bolts

Note: Laughing shadow scrabbler (*Dungeon 164*) reflavored as drow.

Drow Archers	Level 12 Blaster
Trap	XP 700

Trap: Drow archers surrounding the gates fire upon the PCs in volleys of poisoned arrows.

Perception
Characters automatically perceive this trap.

Initiative: +6

Trigger
The trap rolls initiative when combat begins. Each round, on its initiative, the trap fires upon the PCs (representing all of the drow archers firing in unison). The trap will not attack an unconscious PC.

Attack
Standard Action Ranged 20
Targets: One, two, or three PCs closest to the gates
Attack: +17 vs. Reflex
Hit: 3d8 + 6 damage, and the drow archers make a secondary attack against the same target. *Secondary Attack:* +15 vs. Fortitude; the target takes a -2 penalty to attack rolls (save ends). *First Failed Saving Throw:* The target is also weakened (save ends). *Second Failed Saving Throw:* The target falls unconscious until the end of the encounter.
Miss: Half damage

Countermeasures
✦ PCs may attack the drow archers individually. Each drow archer is a minion with AC 28, all other defenses 25. The trap consists of nine drow archers. When at least three drow archers have been killed, the trap only attacks two PCs on its initiative. When at least six drow archers have been killed, the trap only attacks one PC on its initiative. When all drow archers have been killed, the trap is disabled.

Encounter 7A: Fighting Retreat Statistics (High Level)

Captain Nym Mlezzir (level 14) — **Level 14 Elite Soldier**
Medium fey humanoid (drow) — XP 2000

Initiative +11 Senses Perception +10; darkvision
HP 272; Bloodied 186
AC 33; Fortitude 30, Reflex 28, Will 30
Saving Throws +2
Speed 6
Action Points 1

m Bastard Sword (standard; at-will) ✦ Weapon
+21 vs. AC; 2d10 + 5 damage (crit 3d6 + 25), and the target is marked until the end of Nym's next turn.

M Slash and Stab (standard; at-will) ✦ Weapon
Nym makes two bastard sword attacks.

R Lightning Lure (standard; at-will) ✦ Implement, Lightning
Ranged 3; +19 vs. Fortitude; 2d6 + 7 lightning damage, and the target is pulled to the nearest unoccupied square adjacent to Nym.

C Threatening Sigil (standard; recharge 6) ✦ Implement, Psychic
Close burst 3; targets enemies; +19 vs. Will; 2d6 + 7 psychic damage, and the target is marked (save ends).

C Electrified Lash (standard; encounter) ✦ Implement, Lightning
Close burst 1; +19 vs. Fortitude; 4d10 + 7 lightning damage.

M Hellspike Assault (standard; daily) ✦ Weapon, Fire
+21 vs. Reflex; 2d10 + 5 fire damage (crit 3d6 + 25). *Effect:* Nym teleports adjacent to an enemy within 5 squares, and make a secondary attack against it. If Nym hit on the primary attack, he may teleport the primary target adjacent to his new location. *Secondary attack:* +21 vs. Reflex; 4d10 + 5 fire damage (crit 3d6 + 45).

Inner Darkness ✦ Necrotic
Any attack Nym makes can instead deal necrotic damage. In addition, Nym can take a -2 penalty on an attack roll to deal 4 extra necrotic damage on the attack.

C Cloud of Darkness (minor; encounter)
Close burst 1; this power creates a cloud of darkness that remains in place until the end of the Nym's next turn. The cloud blocks line of sight for all creatures except Nym. Any creature entirely within the cloud except Nym is blinded until it exits.

Health Siphon (encounter; minor) ✦ Healing
Nym regains up to 25 hit points and removes one status condition currently affecting him, and one ally within 10 squares takes the same number of damage and gains the status condition.

Shadowy Step (encounter; move) ✦ Teleportation
Nym teleports 5 squares. If he ends this move adjacent to an enemy, he gains a +2 power bonus to the next attack roll against that enemy during this turn.

Impenetrable Warding
Nym gains a +3 bonus to all defenses as long as he is wielding his bastard sword in one hand and nothing in the other hand (already included in statistics).

Swordmage Aegis (minor; at-will)
Close burst 2; targets one enemy in burst; the target is marked until Nym marks another creature with this power.

Aegis of Assault (immediate reaction, when a marked target within 10 squares hits with an attack that does not include Nym; at-will) ✦ Teleportation
Nym teleports to a square adjacent to the target and makes a bastard sword attack against the target.

Alignment Evil Languages Common, Elven
Skills Arcana +17, History + 17, Insight +16, Intimidate +18, Stealth +10, Religion +17
Str 22 (+13) Dex 12 (+8) Wis 17 (+10)
Con 16 (+10) Int 20 (+12) Cha 19 (+11)
Equipment *+3 bastard sword*, leather armor

Note: Deva Knight-Errant (*MM2*) with Swordmage Template. Reflavored as a drow with some base powers slightly modified as appropriate.

Azynn, drow illusionist (level 14) — **Level 14 Elite Artillery**
Medium fey humanoid (drow) — XP 2000

Initiative +11 Senses Perception +15; darkvision
HP 216; Bloodied 108
AC 26; Fortitude 23, Reflex 27, Will 27
Saving Throws +2
Speed 6
Action Points 1

m Pain Dagger (standard; at-will) ✦ Psychic, Weapon
+19 vs. AC; 1d4 + 4 damage, plus 2d8 psychic damage.

r Illusory Ambush (standard; at-will) ✦Psychic, Implement, Illusion
Ranged 10; +19 vs. Will; 2d6 + 7 psychic damage, and the target takes a -2 penalty to attack rolls until the end of the illusionist's next turn.

R Psychic Flurry (standard; at-will)
The drow illusionist makes two illusory ambush attacks.

R Mesmerizing Bolts (standard; recharge 5-6) ✦Psychic, Implement
Ranged 10; targets one, two, or three creatures; +19 vs. Will; 2d6 + 7 psychic damage, and the target is immobilized until the end of the illusionist's next turn. If the illusionist only targets one creature with this power, he gains a +4 power bonus to the attack roll.

A Face of Death (standard; daily) ✦ Fear, Illusion, Implement
Area burst 1 within 10 squares; +17 vs. Will; the target is immobilized (save ends). *First Failed Saving Throw:* the target is helpless (save ends). *Aftereffect:* the target is slowed (save ends). *Miss:* the target is immobilized (save ends). *Aftereffect:* the target is slowed (save ends).

Face of Fear (free, when a creature hits the drow illusionist with a melee attack; at-will) ✦ Fear, Psychic
The triggering creature takes 10 psychic damage.

Wizard's Escape (immediate interrupt, when the drow illusionist is hit by a melee attack; encounter) ✦ Teleportation
The drow illusionist teleports 5 squares to a space that is not adjacent to an enemy.

Blur (minor; encounter) ✦ Illusion
The drow illusionist gains a +2 power bonus to all defenses and enemies 5 or more squares away from the illusionist cannot see him. *Sustain Minor:* The effect persists.

C Cloud of Darkness (minor; encounter)
Close burst 1; this power creates a cloud of darkness that remains in place until the end of the illusionist's next turn. The cloud blocks line of sight for all creatures except the illusionist. Any creature entirely within the cloud except the illusionist is blinded until it exits.

Alignment Evil Languages Common, Elven
Skills Arcana +18, Dungeoneering +15, Stealth +16
Str 14 (+9) Dex 14 (+9) Wis 16 (+10)
Con 18 (+11) Int 23 (+13) Cha 12 (+8)
Equipment dagger, orb

Note: Chevesh (*Dragon 378*) reflavored as a drow with wizard powers swapped out as appropriate.

Encounter 7A: Fighting Retreat Statistics (High Level)

Sshamath Drow Guard (level 14)	Level 14 Minion
Medium fey humanoid (drow)	XP 250

Initiative +13 Senses Perception +10; darkvision
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion
AC 28; Fortitude 26, Reflex 28, Will 25
Speed 6

m Short Sword (standard; at-will) ✦ Poison, Weapon
+19 vs. AC; 9 damage.

r Hand Crossbow (standard; at-will) ✦ Poison, Weapon
Ranged 10/20; +19 vs. AC; 8 damage.

Combat Advantage
The drow guard deals an extra 5 damage against any target it has combat advantage against.

R Darkfire (minor; encounter)
Ranged 10; +17 vs. Reflex; until the end of the drow guard's next turn, the target grants combat advantage to all attacks, and the target cannot benefit from concealment or invisibility.

Alignment Evil Languages Common, Elven

Str 20 (+12)	Dex 19 (+11)	Wis 16 (+10)
Con 14 (+9)	Int 10 (+7)	Cha 10 (+7)

Equipment chainmail, short sword, hand crossbow, 20 bolts

Note: Laughing shadow scrabbler (*Dungeon 164*) reflavored as drow.

Drow Archers	Level 14 Blaster
Trap	XP 1000

Trap: Drow archers surrounding the gates fire upon the PCs in volleys of poisoned arrows.

Perception
Characters automatically perceive this trap.

Initiative: +7

Trigger
The trap rolls initiative when combat begins. Each round, on its initiative, the trap fires upon the PCs (representing all of the drow archers firing in unison). The trap will not attack an unconscious PC.

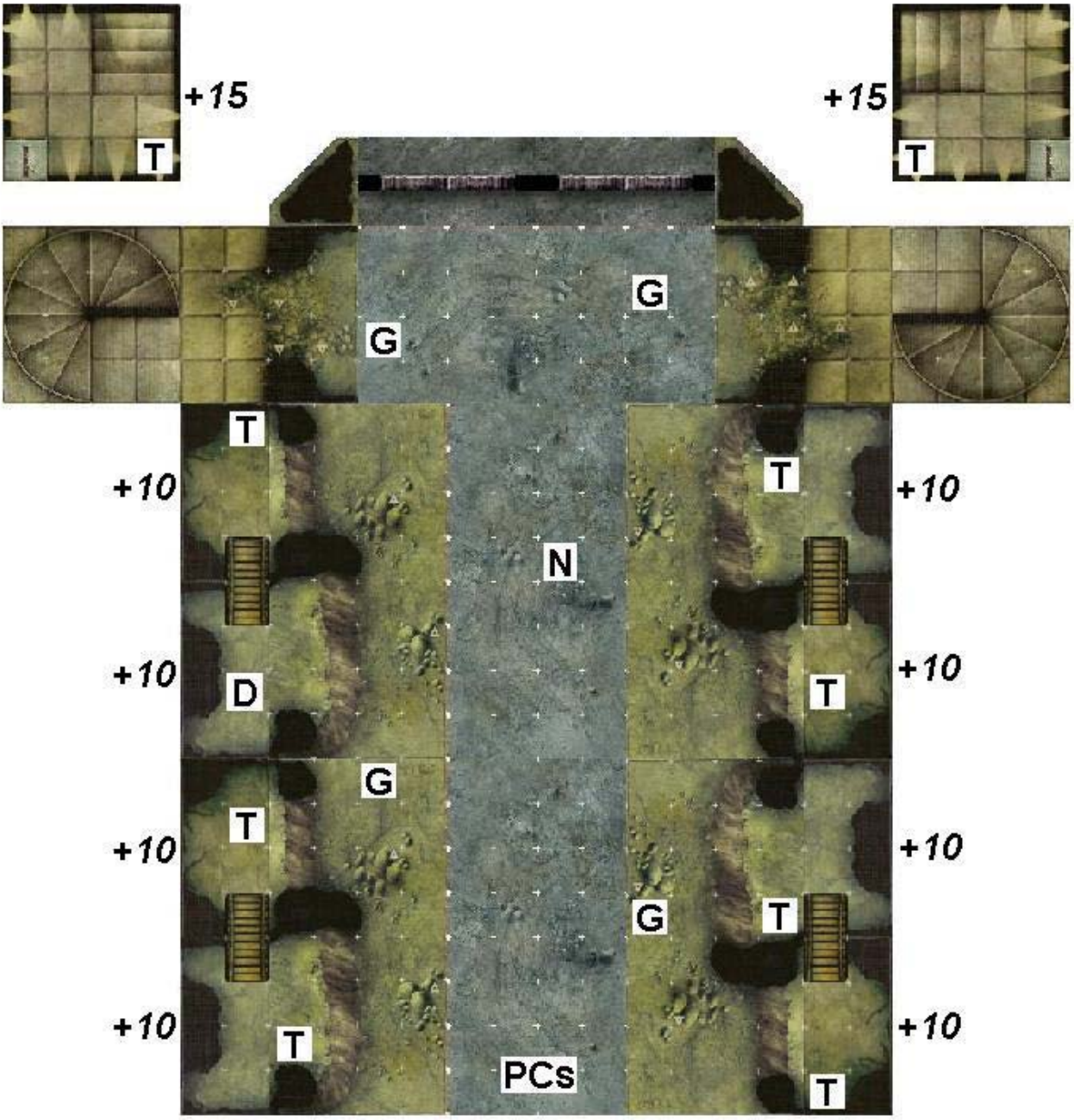
Attack
Standard Action Ranged 20
Targets: One, two, or three PCs closest to the gates
Attack: +19 vs. Reflex
Hit: 3d8 + 7 damage, and the drow archers make a secondary attack against the same target. *Secondary Attack:* +17 vs. Fortitude; the target takes a -2 penalty to attack rolls (save ends). *First Failed Saving Throw:* The target is also weakened (save ends). *Second Failed Saving Throw:* The target falls unconscious until the end of the encounter.
Miss: Half damage

Countermeasures
✦ PCs may attack the drow archers individually. Each drow archer is a minion with AC 30, all other defenses 27. The trap consists of nine drow archers. When at least three drow archers have been killed, the trap only attacks two PCs on its initiative. When at least six drow archers have been killed, the trap only attacks one PC on its initiative. When all drow archers have been killed, the trap is disabled.

Encounter 7A: Fighting Retreat Map

Tile Sets Needed

Arcane Corridors x2, Caves of Carnage x4, Caves of the Underdark x2, Halls of the Giant Kings x2



Encounter 7B: Skillful Retreat

Skill Challenge Level 12/14, Complexity 3 (2100/3000 XP)

Setup

The PCs outrun, outthink, and/or outmaneuver the pursuing guards, then continue along the arduous journey to the surface while avoiding an extended rest. If the PCs attempt to take an extended rest, they are captured by dozens of Sshamathan drow.

If the PCs choose to escape by the Linked Portal ritual outside the city, they find the ritual being scrambled by Sshamathan wizards and must use all their magical skill to prevent the ritual's disruption. If the PCs use a ritual to escape, skip ahead to the section entitled Skill Challenge: Escape by Ritual.

As you head out the gates of Sshamath towards Varalla's passage, the shouts of dozens of guards behind you drive you forward. Things will not go well for you if you are caught.

DM Note: Home Play Variation

If you are running this event at home and your players are looking for more excitement and you are not constrained for time, consider running Encounter 7A instead. Just remember that the players have likely already received the maximum XP that they can receive in the adventure and this final encounter does not grant any additional XP.

Skill Challenge: Escaping Sshamath

Goal: The PCs need to lose the pursuing Sshamathan guards to escape to the surface.
Complexity: 3 (8 successes before 3 failures)
Primary Skills: Athletics, Dungeoneering, Stealth, Thievery
Other Skills: Endurance
Victory: If the PCs succeed, they escape to the surface and can return to Elturel via the Linked Portal.
Defeat: See below.

Penalties for Failure

Failing at most primary skill checks in this challenge represent either having the drow catch up or moving slowly or in the wrong direction towards the surface. During pursuit, failures draw stray crossbow bolts or eldritch blasts from the drow, and the PC failing loses a healing surge. During the journey upwards, failures represent exhaustion or mistakes that lead to exhaustion, and the erring PC loses a healing surge. If a PC with no remaining healing surges is forced to lose a healing surge, he instead takes his healing surge value in damage. If PCs fail enough checks, they may fall unconscious and need to be carried by their allies.

Scene 1 – Shaking off Pursuit

The PCs must garner four successes in order to lose the pursuing drow.

Athletics DC 18/19 (1 success, 2 maximum)
A PC sprints ahead, leading the way into Varalla's passage, climbing obstacles to lower ropes for the party, or perform similar feats of physical prowess.

Dungeoneering DC 18/19 (1 success(es), 3 maximum)
PCs dislodges rocks to create small cave-ins to buy the PCs time to retreat, and help navigate through the winding tunnels of Varalla's passage.

Stealth DC 22/23 (trained only; 1 success, 2 maximum)
A PC highly adept in the arts of stealth finds a hiding spot for the party and lets a searching group of Sshamathans pass by.

Thievery DC 22/23 (trained only; 1 success(es), 2 maximum)
A PC sets up rudimentary traps such as trip wires, slick areas near precipices, and the like which slow their pursuers.

Scene 2 – Managing the Liberated Slaves

Run this scene only if the PCs are bringing the rescued slaves with them. PCs need to garner two successes to help the slaves along in this scene, but these do not count towards completion of the skill challenge.

The liberated slaves are tired, hungry, and afraid. Some wish to split off from you, in the hopes that your pursuers will find you instead of them. Others seem shell-shocked and barely aware of what is happening.

Diplomacy DC 18/19 (1 success, 2 maximum)
Rousing words of encouragement or simple explanations of the slaves' best hope help hearten some slaves and keep others on task.

Heal DC 18/19 (1 success, 2 maximum)

By granting basic first aid to the slaves, a PC gets them ready to continue the journey towards the surface.

Intimidate DC 18/19 (1 success, 1 maximum)

Threats on the lives of slaves speaking out about departing from the group quickly put them back in line. Further uses of Intimidate, however, are counterproductive.

Religion DC 22/23 (trained only; 1 success, 1 maximum)

A religious sermon from someone trained to offer one helps inspire the slaves to move on.

Scene 3 – The Long Journey Up

This scene represents the part of the journey to the surface after losing the pursuing drow. The PCs cannot take an extended rest in Varalla's Passage or they are caught by the drow, who are much more accustomed to Underdark travel.

Arcana DC 22/23 (trained only; 1 success, 1 maximum)

A character skilled in Arcana notices patterns in the Faezress, and uses certain portions as landmarks to help find the way to the surface.

Dungeoneering DC 18/19 (1 success, 3 maximum)

A PC discerns easier ways to continue on the way or avoid pitfalls, cave-ins, and other hazards.

Endurance DC 18/19 (0 successes, mandatory check)

Near the end of the challenge, each PC must succeed at an Endurance check or lose a healing surge from exhaustion. Note that PCs must find some way to bring unconscious PCs along by carrying them (see Endurance below), by using a Tenser's Floating Disk ritual, or some other method.

Endurance DC 22/23 (1 success, 3 maximum)

A PC takes a larger load of the burden, helping carry others PCs' belongings, taking more of the arduous work in the escape, and so on.

Heal DC 18/19 (0 successes)

Treating characters for exhaustion grants a +2 bonus to Endurance checks to avoid exhaustion. Each PC may only assist one other PC, unless he beats the check by 10 or more in which case he may assist an additional PC.

At a DC 25/27, a PC attempts more drastic treatments for exhaustion. Success returns a healing surge to the patient (once per PC only); failure denotes the healer has exhausted himself further and lost a healing surge.

Nature DC 22/23 (trained only; 1 success, 1 maximum)

This use of Nature is only available if it is the last success needed to complete the skill challenge. Once near the surface, a PC recognizes certain kinds of mushrooms that only grow on the surface or near it. Following the growth of the mushrooms helps guide the PCs to the surface.

Skill Challenge: Escape By Ritual

Goal: The PCs need to stop Sshamathan disruption of their ritual in order to escape to the surface.
Complexity: 3 (8 successes before 3 failures)
Primary Skills: Arcana, Dungeoneering, Endurance, Religion, Thievery
Other Skills: Heal, History, Perception
Victory: If the PCs succeed, they escape to the surface and can report in.
Defeat: See below.

Though you have begun the ritual outside the city limits, something appears to be wrong. Dark energies coruscate around the area where the portal should open, and an oppressive force vibrates in the air. The ritual threatens to buckle under the assault unless it is bolstered.

Athletics DC 18/19 (1 success, 2 maximum, must first succeed at a Perception check)

By knocking over and moving some of the stalagmites and rubble in the room, the PC can reduce the resonance between the PC's ritual and the Sshamathan ritual.

Arcana DC 22/23 (trained only; 1 success, 4 maximum, 2 minimum)

The energies of the ritual are being disrupted by the outside influence of the Sshamathan disruption ritual. A PC refocuses the energy of the ritual to ensure its success.

When the ritual is about to complete, the Sshamathan wizards change their strategy, attempting to keep the portal open long enough to send troops through. The PCs make another Arcana check to ensure the portal closes before Sshamathans can pursue.

Dungeoneering DC 18/19 (trained only; 1 success, 2 maximum)

While the Faezress is absent from Sshamath and its immediate surroundings, it does have some influence on the area, and PCs knowledgeable about it can use it to their advantage in scrambling the Sshamathan ritual.

Endurance DC 18/19 (1 success, 4 maximum)

A PC spends a healing surge to attempt to bolster the rituals power with his life energy. Failure spends the surge with no positive result, but does not count as a failure against the skill challenge.

Heal DC 18/19 (0 successes)

Each time a PC attempts an Endurance check, a single PC gives them medical aid, granting a +2 bonus with a successful check.

History DC 22/23 (0 Successes)

A highly knowledgeable PC recalls some mention of Sshamathan wards, and application of that knowledge grants PCs a +2 bonus to future Arcana checks. Failure grants misinformation, and a -2 to the next Arcana check.

Perception DC 18/19 (0 successes)

A perceptive PC notices that there is a resonating shadow image around the area, and that significantly changing the area where the PCs are doing the ritual will reduce the resonance. This opens up the use of the Athletics skill.

Thievery DC 18/19 (trained only; 1 success, 2 maximum)

Those trained in disabling glyphs and sigils can use basic techniques they employ in scrambling the Sshamathan ritual.

Ending the Encounter

After dealing with the consequences of success or failure, proceed to Encounter 8.

Success: The PCs make it back to the surface, meet up with the priest at the portal site, and return to the Companion's Light Inn.

Failure: The PCs get lost within the tunnels for some time and lose an additional 2 healing surges each finding their way out. If the entire party falls unconscious, the PCs are captured by Sshamathan drow and executed.

If the PCs fail to Escape by Ritual, they must attempt the Escaping Sshamath skill challenge.

Experience Points

Each PC receives 420/600 experience points for successfully completing the skill challenge.

Treasure

There is no treasure in this encounter.

Encounter 7C: An Easy Retreat

Setup

If the PCs completed both combat sabotage encounters (5B and 5D) and successfully assassinated the Netherese ambassador, they find the city watch has abandoned their post and are not pursued on their way to the surface.

If the PCs leave through Varalla's Passage, read the following:

As you approach the gates towards Varalla's Passage, you find the area unguarded. In the distance, fires light the city and the sounds of skirmishes scattered in the bazaar speak to the chaos you've created. The journey to the surface is long and arduous - far more than the journey to Sshamath. You take heart, however, at the success of your mission and the safety of the liberated slaves that follow you.

If the PCs leave via teleportation magic such as the Linked Portal ritual (after stepping out of the cavern boundaries), read the following:

As the ritual finishes, a portal opens and sunshine spills through. The liberated slaves cheer as they pass through into the light.

DM Note: Home Play Variation

If you are running this event at home and your players are looking for more excitement and you are not constrained for time, consider running Encounter 7A or even 7B instead. Just remember that the players have likely already received the maximum XP that they can receive in the adventure and this final encounter will not grant any additional XP.

Ending the Encounter

If the PCs do not wish to leave Sshamath, remind them that eventually they will be pulled into combats larger than they can handle, and that the slaves need to be escorted to the surface. Proceed to Encounter 8 when ready.

Experience Points

The PCs do not earn any XP for this encounter, and it does not count towards a milestone.

Treasure

There is no treasure in this encounter.

Encounter 8: Conclusion

Setup

In this encounter, the PCs report in to the Elturgardans and receive their rewards for their hard and dangerous work.

Returning to bright and cheerful Elturgard is a refreshing sight after the braving the depths of the Underdark. Cheers rise from the Elturgardan soldiers and bodyguards as you enter the inn.

The PCs are again brought into the private dining room to speak with Yazeth, Tellar, and Orman, who noting the PCs exhaustion, attempt to keep things brief.

Ending the Encounter

Allow the players as much time roleplaying with the Elturgardans as they wish and as time allows.

Experience Points

The PCs do not earn any XP for this encounter, and it does not count towards a milestone.

Treasure

For successful completion of the adventure, Inquisitor Tellar rewards the characters with 500/1000 gold pieces, or 250/500 gold pieces if they failed to sabotage the alliance. Also see the Rewards section below.

Concluding the Adventure

Scenario 1 – Success

If the PCs successfully completed at least one sabotage encounter and assassinated the Netherese ambassador, they have succeeded in their mission. Read the following:

After you summarize the events of your mission to the Elturgardans, Tellar speaks, "Congratulations, adventurers. Elturgard and the Western Heartlands are in your debt. I'm pleased to find that your abilities exceed your reputations." Tellar drops a sizeable bag of gold on the table in front of each of you.

Orman chimes in, "The church of Amaunator thanks you for your dutiful service to the light. We have some magical items to offer you as an additional reward."

The PCs earn the story awards **CORE38 Bregan D'aerthe Respect** and **CORE39 Elturgardan Gratitude**.

Scenario 2 – Failure

If the PCs failed to complete both sabotage encounters or failed to assassinate the Netherese ambassador, they have failed their mission. Read the following:

After you summarize the events of your mission to the Elturgardans, Tellar speaks, "It is unfortunate that you were unable to complete your mission as charged, but these were extraordinary circumstances, and I understand their scope was beyond your usual work. Thank you for your brave attempt. Perhaps the Bregan D'aerthe will finish where you left off."

Orman chimes in, "Though you were not successful, your valorous efforts still deserve some sort of reward. We will be offering you some magical items enchanted by our priests."

If the PCs failed, they earn the story award **CORE40 Bregan D'aerthe Disrespect**.

Rewards

In either scenario, if the PCs rescued the slaves, and the Red Wizard Sethkin along with them, Sethkin tells them that he is a practitioner of the ancient Thayan art of magical tattooing. He offers to scribe any magic tattoo of level 14 or lower from any legal player resource on the PCs.

In either event, if the PCs succeeded or failed, High Morninglord Orman offers them a +3 *radiant weapon* or the option of a *belt of mountain endurance* if the PCs played at high tier.

Inquisitor Tellar offers the PCs a +3 *timeless locket* if they succeeded in their mission.

Rewards Summary

At the conclusion of the adventure, the PCs earn experience points, treasure, and possibly story awards. All totals listed here are per PC. A number before the slash is the low-level value; after the slash is the high-level value.

Experience Points

Give PCs a full award for each encounter they successfully completed, and a half award if they were unsuccessful. Give no award if the characters did not play the encounter at all.

Encounter 2A: Long March Into Darkness
140 / 200 XP
Encounter 2B: Following In Zhent Footsteps
140 / 200 XP
Encounter 5A: Sabotage By Intrigue
420 / 600 XP
Encounter 5B: Supply Destruction
700 / 1000 XP
Encounter 5C: Stirring up the Zhentarim
420 / 600 XP
Encounter 5D: Liberating Slaves
700 / 1000 XP
Encounter 6A: The Hit
700 / 1000 XP
Encounter 6B: The Hit That Hits Back
700 / 1000 XP
Encounter 7A: Fighting Retreat
700 / 1000 XP
Encounter 7B: Skillful Retreat
420 / 600 XP

Total Possible Experience
2,240 / 3,200 XP
(It is possible the PCs earn more experience points, especially if you use several of the optional encounters. In that case this is the maximum experience points an individual PC can earn.)

Gold per PC
1200 / 2200 gp
(Encounter 3: 80 / 100 gp, Encounter 5A, 5B, 5C, and 5D: 350 / 600 (each) gp, Encounter 8: 500 / 1000 gp)

Treasure

Each PC receives treasure in the form of gold pieces as well as one share from a treasure bundle. The treasure bundle may give the PC more gold, a magic item, or something else of value. Each player makes one and only one selection for their character; players may choose the same treasure bundle. Mark the one-letter bundle ID on the tracking form next to any character that selects a bundle; note that it is possible (and likely) that some characters will not select a bundle for each session of play.

If characters buy or sell magic items or other gear during the adventure (or pay for services) add or subtract that amount from the total gold the PC receives at the end of the adventure. If a player selects an option that gives their character more gold, add that amount to that character's base gold award, and ensure you enter the total amount of gold gained (minus any expenditures) online. It is possible and permissible for a character who spends more gold than he or she earns to have a negative total for the adventure. PCs receive 20% of the item's market price when they sell any magic item or consumable. They receive 50% of the market price for ritual books and alchemical formulas.

If a player selects a magic weapon or suit of armor for their PC that is not specific on the type of item listed, they must select the exact item at the time they choose that bundle. For example, if a *duelist's weapon +1* is listed as a choice in a bundle, a player selects the form of the weapon amongst the choices possible for that magic item (light blades). If the player selects the item as a *+1 duelist's dagger*, the player writes that information down on the PC's adventure log and the item is forever after that specific weapon.

An asterisk next to a magic item means that it is an item that appears in the **New Rules** section.

Each PC Selects One of the Following Bundles:

Bundle A: *radiant weapon* +3* (level 15; *Adventurer's Vault*)
Found in Encounter 8

Bundle B: *belt of mountain endurance** (high-level version only) (level 18; *Dragon 365*)
Found in Encounter 8

Bundle C: *timeless locket* +3* (level 14; *Adventurer's Vault 2*)
Found in Encounter 8

Bundle D: *gloves of dimensional repulsion** (level 14; *Adventurer's Vault*)
Found in Encounter 5A

Bundle E: *darkspiral rod* +3* (level 14; *Adventurer's Vault*)
Found in Encounter 5B

Bundle F: *mnemonic staff* +3* (level 12; *Adventurer's Vault*)
Found in Encounter 5C

Bundle G: Any magic tattoo of level 14 or lower (varies; *Adventurer's Vault* 2)
Found in Encounter 8 (must have completed 5D)

Bundle H: +3 *shadowstrike kukri** (13; *Manual of the Planes*)
Found in Encounter 6A or 6B

Consumable plus Gold: If a player doesn't want to select one of the bundles listed above for their character, they can choose to add a *potion of vitality* plus 300 / 1100 gp to their rewards from this adventure. The player should write the consumable gained on their adventure log. That character (and only that character) then receives the consumable plus the listed amount of gold (if any) instead of any other treasure bundle. Consumable items obtained in this fashion do not take up found magic item slots.

More Gold: If a player doesn't want to select one of the bundles listed above for their character, they can choose to add 1300 / 2100 gp to their rewards from this adventure. That character (and only that character) receives more gold instead of any other treasure bundle.

Story Awards

Award these if the PC completes the condition for the award in the adventure. Pass out certificates to the players for their story awards.

CORE38 Bregan D'aerthe Respect
Through Izztyrr Mae'urden, word of your success in Sshamath has spread through the Bregan D'aerthe mercenary company, giving you the reputation of being crafty, logical, and dangerous. Should you encounter other Bregan D'aerthe mercenaries in the future - as ally or enemy - they offer you respect and think twice before crossing you.

CORE39 Elturgardan Gratitude
The Church of Amaunator in Elturgard and the High Observer are grateful for your service to their nation. Though word of your actions is kept to the upper echelons of the organizations, powerful individuals such as High Morninglord Orman and Inquisitor Tellar feel that they are in your debt. This begins a major quest.

CORE40 Bregan D'aerthe Disrespect
Through Izztyrr Mae'urden, word of your irrational behavior or failure has spread through the Bregan D'aerthe mercenary company. The group thinks of you as unpredictable and dangerously incompetent.

Adventure Questions

Mark the answers to the following adventure questions on the tracking form.

1. Did the PCs march with the Zhentarim to Sshamath, or did they follow them?
a. The PCs marched with the Zhentarim.
b. The PCs followed the Zhentarim.

2. What did the PCs choose for their first sabotage encounter?
a. Political Intrigue
b. Supply Destruction
c. Zhent Rabble Rousing
d. Slave Liberation

3. What did the PCs choose for their second sabotage encounter?
a. Political Intrigue
b. Supply Destruction
c. Zhent Rabble Rousing
d. Slave Liberation

4. How did the PCs assassinate the Netherese ambassador?
a. Subtle assassination (skill challenge)
b. Direct assassination (combat)
c. The PCs failed to assassinate the ambassador.

5. How do you (the DM) rate this adventure?
a. Five stars (best possible rating)
b. Four stars (very good)
c. Three stars (average)
d. Two stars (below average)
e. One star (really awful)

6. How do the players rate the adventure? (You can take the average of their individual ratings or come up with whatever other method works for everyone.)
a. Five stars (best possible rating)
b. Four stars (very good)
c. Three stars (average)
d. Two stars (below average)
e. One star (really awful)

New Rules

Darkspiral Rod +3 Level 14+
Lvl 14 +3 21,000 gp
Implement (Rod)
Enhancement: Attack rolls and damage rolls
Critical: +1d6 necrotic and psychic damage per plus
Property: When you hit an enemy affected by your Warlock's Curse with a warlock attack power using this rod, you deal extra damage equal to the value of your Darkspiral Aura class feature to the enemy.
Reference: Adventurer's Vault 2

Disguise Kit
Category: Gear
Price: 30 gp
Weight: 5 lb
Description: A disguise kit includes everything from cosmetics to prosthetics - all that you might need to conceal your identity. While using a disguise kit, you gain a +2 item bonus to Bluff checks made to pass off your disguises.
Reference: Dragon Magazine 373

Gloves of Dimensional Repulsion Level 14
Item Slot: Hands 21,000 gp
Property: When you use a teleport power on a target other than yourself, you can increase the distance the target is teleported by 2 squares.
Power (**Daily ✦ Teleportation**): Standard Action. Make an attack against an adjacent target: Charisma + 4 vs. Fortitude; on a hit, the target is teleported 10 squares to an unoccupied space of your choosing.
Reference: Adventurer's Vault

Mnemonic Staff +3 Level 12+
Lvl 12 +3 13,000 gp
Implement (Staff)
Enhancement: Attack rolls and damage rolls
Critical: +1d6 damage per plus
Property: Gain a +2 item bonus to any monster knowledge skill check.
Power (Daily): Minor Action. Swap a power you've prepared for another power in your spellbook of equal or lower level. Each power must also be of equal or lower level than the level of the staff, and you can only swap a utility power for another utility power or an attack power for another attack power.
Reference: Adventurer's Vault

Radiant Weapon +3 Level 15+
Lvl 15 +3 25,000 gp
Weapon: Any
Critical: +1d6 radiant damage per plus
Property: When this weapon is used to deal radiant damage, add its enhancement bonus as an item bonus to damage rolls.
Power (At Will ✦Radiant): Free Action. All damage dealt by this weapon is radiant damage. Another free action returns the damage to normal.
Reference: Adventurer's Vault

Shadowstrike Weapon Level 13+
Lvl 13 +3 17,000 gp
Weapon: Light Blade, Spear
Enhancement: Attack rolls and damage rolls
Critical: +1d6 damage per plus
Property: Attacks that use this weapon ignore concealment from dim light or darkness.
Power (**Daily**): Minor Action. Until the end of your next turn, this weapon's reach increases by 1 square and you have combat advantage against your target.
Reference: Manual of the Planes

Belt of Mountain Endurance Level 18
Item Slot: Waist 85,000 gp
Property: When you spend a healing surge, you can add your Strength modifier to the surge value.
Power (Daily): Free Action. You can trigger this power when you spend an action point. You gain a +2 bonus to all defenses until the start of your next turn.
Reference: Adventurer's Vault 2

Timeless Locket Level 14+
Lvl 14 +3 21,000 gp
Item Slot: Neck
Enhancement: Fortitude, Reflex, Will
Property: You gain an item bonus to initiative checks equal to the locket's enhancement bonus.
Power (**Daily**): Minor action. You take a standard action.
Reference: Adventurer's Vault 2

Appendix 1: Key NPCs

Elturgardans

Yazeth Cobb - Elturgardan merchant and mid-ranking priest of Amaunator. The PCs may know Yazeth from previous adventures.

Inquisitor Tellar - Spymaster for the High Observer of Elturgard. His dour and serious manner often belies his piousness.

High Morninglord Orman - High priest of Amaunator of the church in Elturgard.

Sshamathan Political Faction Leaders

Nurissa Vyllshan - Female drow dark-pact warlock, leader of the School of Darkness, the faction of dark-pact warlocks currently in control of the Conclave. She is a worshipper of Shar, and the alliance with Netheril is her brainchild. She has only narrowly been maintaining control over the political situation in Sshamath, and most of her rivals are waiting for her plans to fail before striking a coup. Unchallenged Nurissa shall successfully lead Sshamath into an alliance with Netheril that threatens the surface.

Guldor Zau'viir - Male drow wizard, de facto leader of the School of Wizardry in Sshamath. Guldor feels the Conclave's acceptance of warlocks and other non-wizards is a blow to the strength and purpose of Sshamath, and he is one of Nurissa's most powerful opponents.

Molbelphyr Ilmtar - Male drow spellscarred bard, self-proclaimed worshipper of blue fire as the remnant of Mystra. Molbelphyr has ties to the Order of Blue Fire, and leads the School of Blue Fire in the city.

Matron Zarylene Oussate - Devout priestess of Lolth and leader of the School of Lolth in Sshamath. She is currently unable to use her clerical powers due to being out of favor with Lolth.

Other NPCs

Izztyrr Mae'urden - Male drow rogue, member of Bregan D'aerthe contracted by Menzoberranzan to gather information in the city and cause chaos. Izztyrr should become an ally of the PCs in the course of the adventure.

Ambassador Tolgruss Korvem - Male Shade rogue in the service of Prince Clariburnus of Shade, ambassador extraordinary and plenipotentiary, with all the powers to negotiate on behalf of Netheril. He is currently having a tryst with Nurissa Vyllshan, with each believing themselves the manipulator.

Nadrelon Fre'iv - Male drow warlord and Black Cloak in the Zhentarim, Nadrelon commands the Zhent forces contracted to work with Sshamath. Nadrelon is a devout worshipper of Cyric and hates the Netherese.

G'eldighaun - Female drider ranger who has thrown in with Nurissa. As an outcast from Lolthite society, she hopes that she and her fellow driders may be able to find a place for themselves in Sshamath. She is currently charged with guarding important supplies in a warehouse near the Darkfire Pillars.

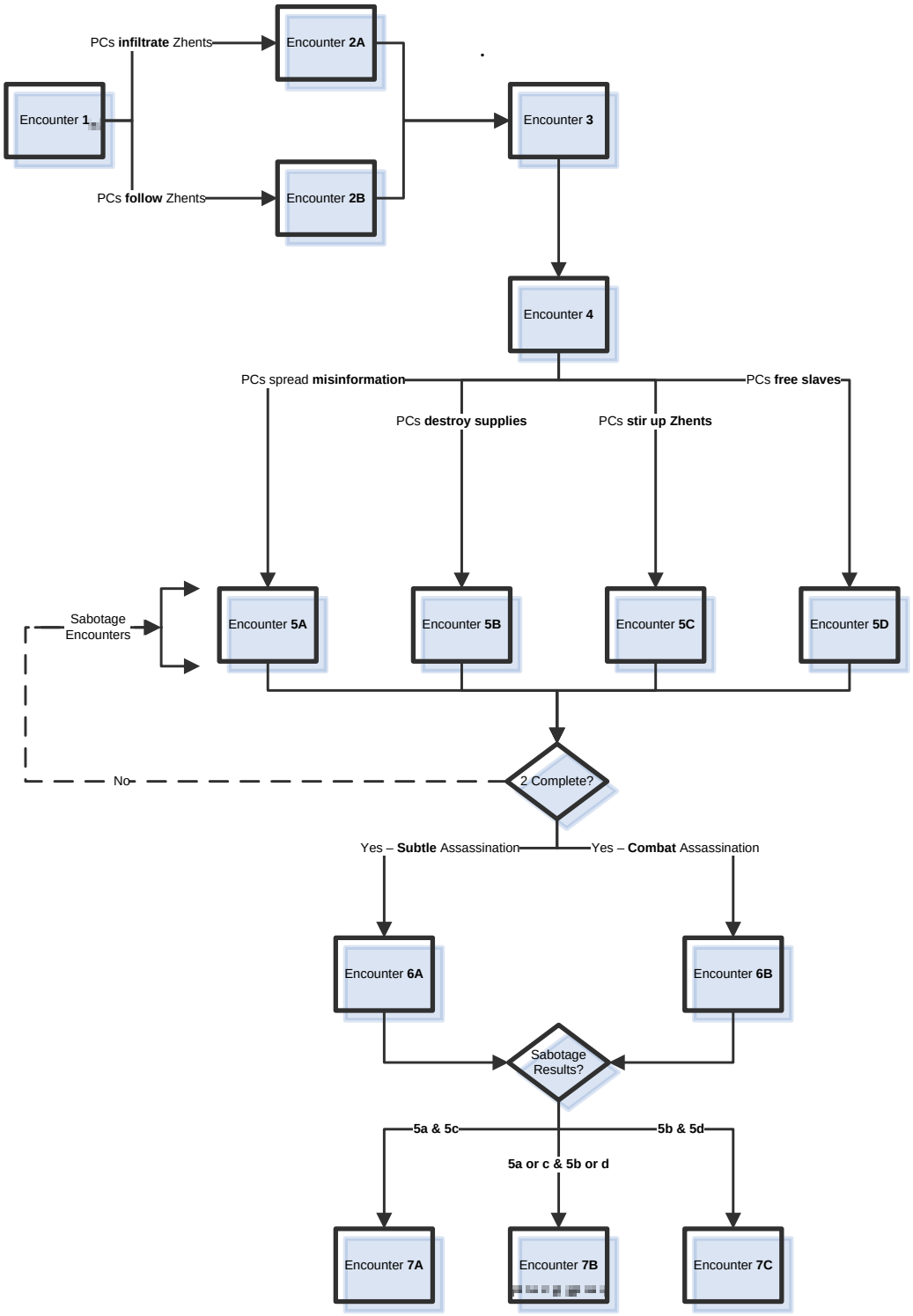
Jesym Drein - Female halfling Zhent, Captain of the Outriders. Jesym is extremely ambitious and unhappy with her current contract. She can be convinced to cause trouble.

Nym Mlezzir - Male drow swordmage and leader of the city watch.

Zixzzuthzikyriin Xvixaithnick (zicks-ZOOTH-zuh-KAI-REEN zvicks-EYE-thnik) - Umber hulk merchant (from Nezchenzûr, an umber hulk city near Sloopdilmonpolop) with a stall in the Dark Weavings Bazaar. Zixzzuthzikyriin is a nervous, passive aggressive creature with a dislike of the city watch, who killed his brother on sight despite his protestations of peaceful intentions. He never meets another creature's eyes. Zixzzuthzikyriin sells glue made from kuo-tua secretions and a number of poisons, including *traveler's essence*.

Sethkin - Human Red Wizard imprisoned (unjustly) for spying for Szass Tam. Sethkin is being held with the slaves at the cage, bound by magical manacles that deprive him of magic use. He is a wizard-merchant who is an expert in the art of magical tattoo creation.

Appendix 2: Encounter Flowchart



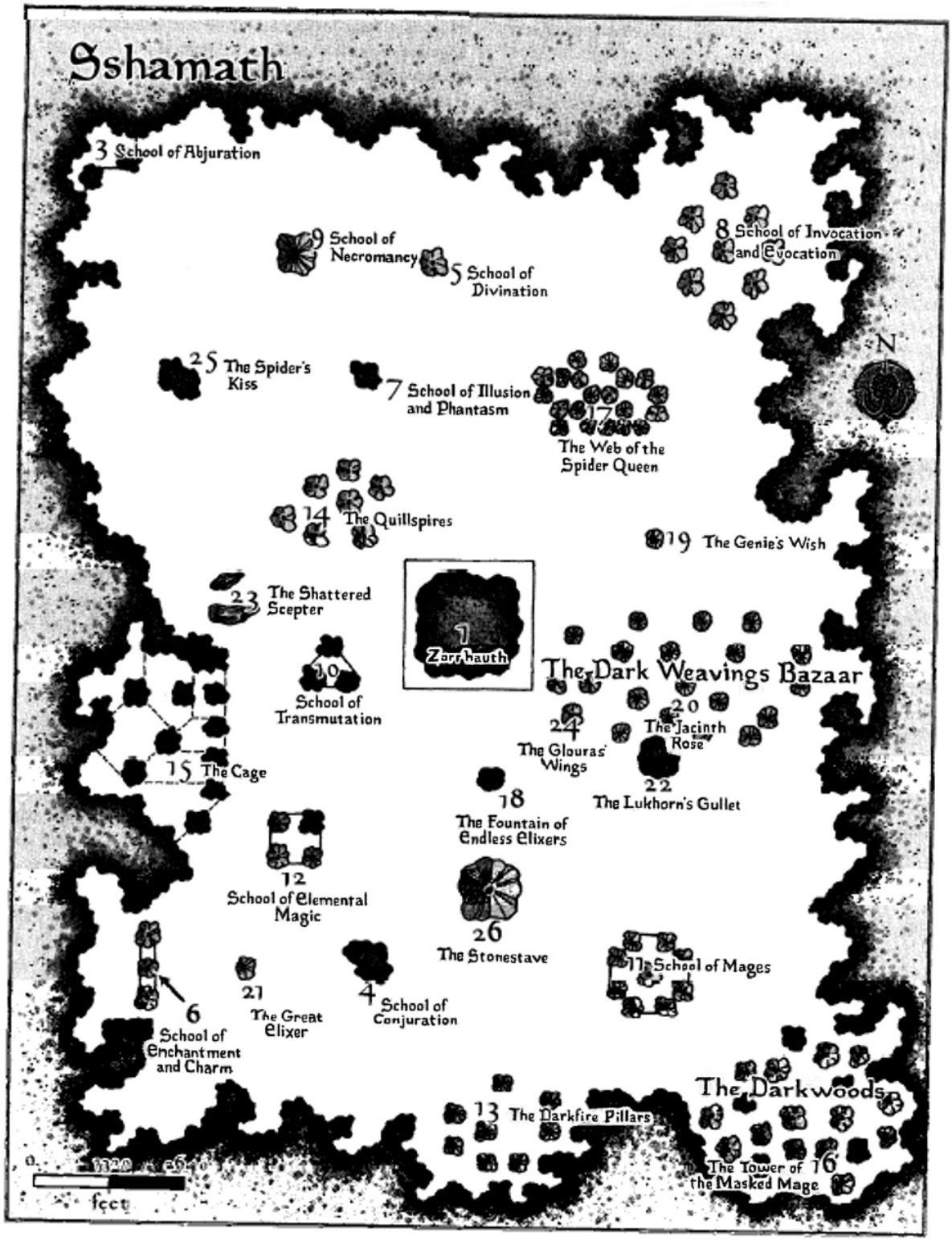
Appendix 3: Sshamath Locations

The outdated map provided by Inquisitor Tellar is still mostly accurate. The original pillar Z'orr'bauth fell upon the Web of the Spider Queen which was completely destroyed. Many of the previous wizard towers that were the strongholds of the various schools of magic were destroyed or are too dangerous to use now, but most other damage to the city was due to scattered debris falling from the cavern ceiling. Numerous small, active plaguelands dot the city. The main cavern is warded against long distance teleportation; if the PCs wish to use the Linked Portal ritual, they must do so outside the city limits. The following is a list of important locations in the adventure.

- **Exit to Varalla's Passage** – Northeast of the Dark Weavings Bazaar, the exit is protected by a large gatehouse. This area is relevant in encounters 2 and 7, as the PCs are expected to enter and exit the city through here.
- **The Darkwoods** – Petrified forest of stalagmites in the southeastern portion of the city. The Darkwoods is an undeveloped area only recently cleared out of dark ones under the direction of the School of Darkness. The Zhentarim mercenaries camp in the Darkwoods upon their arrival. This area is relevant to encounter 5C.
- **Dark Weavings Bazaar** – Near the exit to Varalla's Passage in the eastern section of the city, the bazaar is the area where least attention is paid to outsiders. This area is relevant to encounters 3, 4, and 6A.
- **Z'orr'bauth** – Though the original Z'orr'bauth was indeed destroyed in the Spellplague, the wizards of the city recently conjured a replacement in a massive ritual, which retains the original's name. This huge column has spiraling stairs and magically powered elevators that take the city's residents to the cavern ceiling or floor, and numerous bridges already connect the column to stalactites where many of the wealthier citizens reside. This area may be relevant in encounter 6A.
- **The Darkfire Pillars** – The center of the industrial district of the city, spewing odd colored smoke into the air from numerous forges. The area is relatively quiet as the city is just beginning to trade again and industry is weak from years of inactivity. This area is relevant in encounter 5B.
- **The Cage** – An area of columns walled off by magical walls. The area was traditionally used by the Breeder's guild for holding, breeding, and training various creatures for sale. This area is relevant in encounter 5D.
- **The Stonestave** – A stalactite shaped like a wizard's staff hanging from the cavern ceiling that serves as the center of government for the Conclave, the ruling oligarchy of Sshamath. This area is relevant in encounters 5A, 6A, and 6B.

Player Handout #1 – Old Map of Sshamath

Map of Sshamath acquired by Inquisitor Tellar that is over 120 years old:



Map Source: Drizzt Do'Urden's Guide to the Underdark by Eric Boyd © 1999 TSR/WOTC

Player Handout #2 – Briefing on Sshamath

- Sshamath is known as the City of Dark Weavings and lies some thirty miles south of Darkhold and several miles down.
- The city did not follow the way of Lolth, unlike most drow cities. Though there was some Lolth worship, it was in the minority and had little sway over the city's dealings.
- The city was ruled by the Conclave, an oligarchy of wizards representing different schools of magic.
- Sshamath was considered the most cosmopolitan city of the Underdark; all races significantly capable of wizardry were considered free, if not citizens, and arcane spellcasters from all over Faerûn above and below journeyed to its Dark Weavings Bazaar, where one could purportedly find any magical item for sale, or pay for its acquisition for a very large fee. Even surface adventurers were commonplace.
- Religious leanings varied greatly, but many citizens disdained religion, seeing it as a crutch for those too weak-willed or too stupid to be wizards. Arcane magic was revered above all.
- In a critical area at the nexus of several trade routes between various Underdark regions, Sshamath's location is strategic for both military and trading purposes.
- The city was protected by a multitude of magical wards and traps. Furthermore, Sshamath was said to be without the Faezress, the magical radiation that pervades most of the Underdark and scrambles divination and teleportation magics.
- The city is extremely difficult to reach from the surface. The Zhentarim are rumored to have a secret route called Varalla's Passage.
- Sshamath went silent after the Spellplague. Rumor was that Z'orr'bauth, the great stone column that held up the two mile wide cavern collapsed and the city caved in. Most assumed the city destroyed from the backlash of the Spellplague.
- Sshamath was never known to be hostile to the surface. If they harbor no ill will towards the surface, Elturgard does not wish to purge them of evil at this time.

Player's Handout #3: Zhent Orders

Personnel Distribution, Darkhold
12 Alturiak, 1479 DR

By Order of Tolak Avrezt

Jack Galvon,

Your gauntlet is hereby ordered to enter Eastern Elturgard, out of uniform. You are to capture a dozen strong, healthy adults as slaves. Kill any witnesses and avoid the Elturgardan border patrols. Once you've completed your task, proceed to the rendezvous point – the intersection of two creeks twelve miles north of the ruins of Kezel. You must arrive before noon on the fourth day of Ches. You will fall under the command of Black Cloak Nadrelon Fre'iv for a contract of one year, serving the drow of Sshamath. You and the men under your command shall earn triple the normal fee under this contract. Successful completion of the contract may warrant promotion; failure or desertion shall result in your capture followed by torture and execution by my own hand.

–Lady Avrezt, Zhentarim Tolak and Castellan of Darkhold