

FOR 5-6 PCS
OF 1ST LEVEL

THE SCORPION'S SHADOW

A 5E WARLOCK SOUTHLANDS ADVENTURE
BY CHRIS HARRIS

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THE SCORPION'S SHADOW

GM NOTE: When a creature's name appears in **bold**, that's a cue that its stat block appears in the *System Reference Document*, 5.1. If the stat block appears in the *Tome of Beasts*, it is noted as such.

This adventure takes place in the Southlands, beginning in the Eternal City of Cats, Per-Bastet, on the banks of that great artery of the world, the River Nuria. The hot winds

and shifting sands have revealed a long-buried city, and the struggle for control of this discovery recently resulted in a particularly nasty bit of murder.

This adventure was created as an optional prequel to the *Tomb of Tiberesh*, by Jerry LeNeave, and it should provide a beginning party of adventurers with the experience they need to take on the tomb.

Background

Recently, the forgotten city of Anu-Asir, long buried in the desert, has been discovered near Per-Bastet in the kingdom of Nuria Natal. Would-be explorers, scholars, and thieves have come from far and wide to harvest the ancient city's secrets, but one organization, Golden Falcon Antiquities, managed to wrangle exclusive permission to lead the excavation and exploration efforts. This well-funded archaeological team has been preparing this massive undertaking for the last several weeks, and the city is abuzz with what will be uncovered.

All of this activity was about to come to a screeching halt, however. Through his own research into the history of Anu-Asir, the High Councilor of Antiquities of Per-Bastet came to the conclusion that the plagues and curses that

destroyed Anu-Asir might come again if the ancient city were disturbed.

A day before he could give the order to halt all activity, he was attacked and killed in his chambers by a swarm of deadly scorpions. An assassin, who was seen fleeing the victim's chambers, escaped apprehension but killed two guards in the process. Posters of a reward for the assassin's capture have gone up and criers were dispatched with great speed to spread the word throughout the city.

The assassin, a member of the Cult of Selket (see *Demon Cults & Secret Societies*, p. 135), a largely-forgotten scorpion goddess, was sent by his cell to kill the High Councilor on behalf of Golden Falcon Antiquities. The archaeological outfit—in truth a part of the cult of Tiberesh,

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Open Game Content: The Open content in this book includes the scorpion cult assassin stat block, the immature night scorpion stat block, and the bell drop trap.

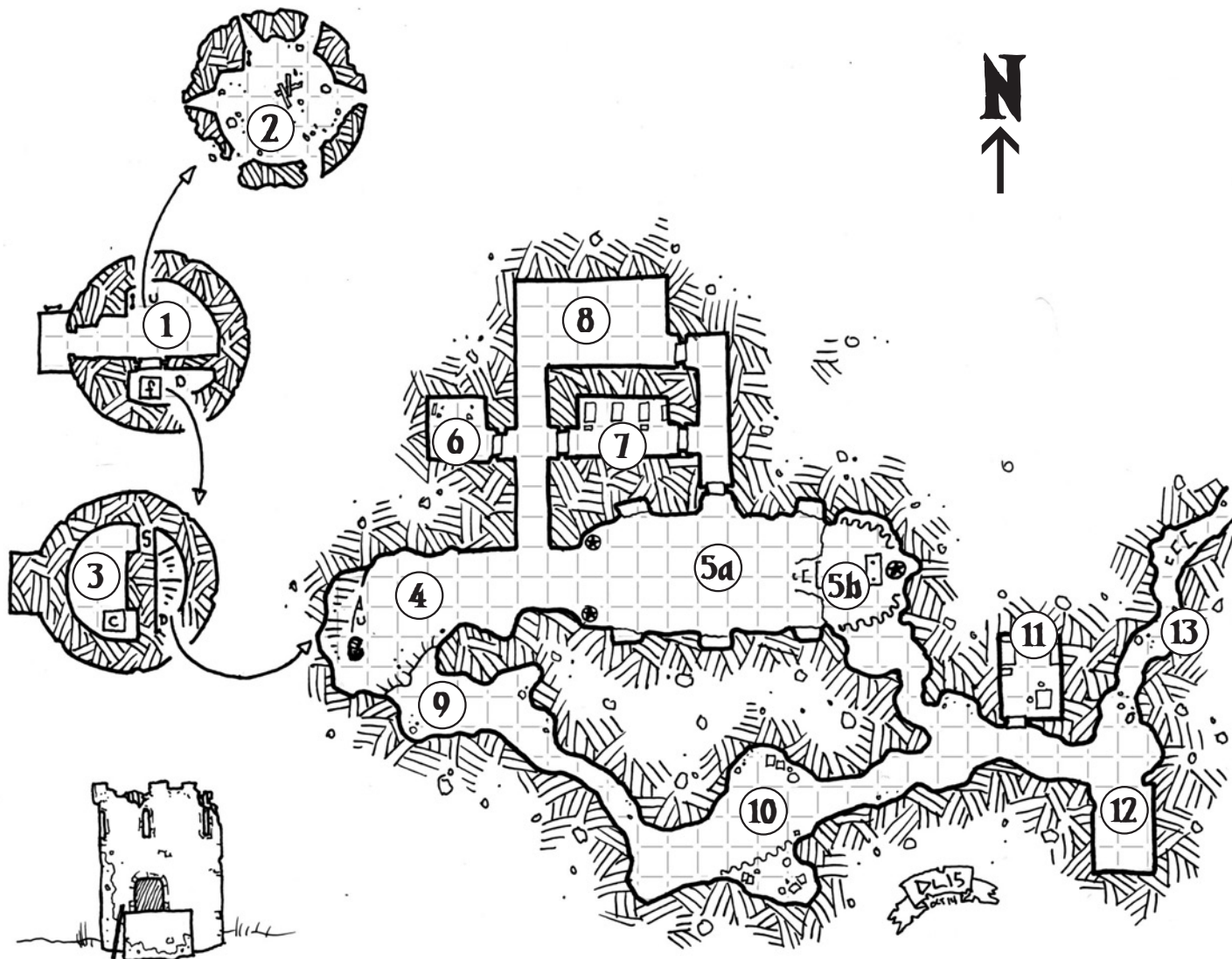
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the self-proclaimed god-king who ruled Anu-Asir—knows that the High Councilor’s fellow councilors will not delay the exploration of the ruin, as they are much more focused on the wealth to be discovered in Anu-Asir.

Synopsis

Cultists of Tiberesh and those of Selket are attempting to come to an arrangement. Tiberesh’s people hope to receive Selket’s backing when their god-king arises, and in return, they promise to see a great temple to Selket built and her worship fostered in Per-Bastet. They also hope to

attain the aid of Selket’s assassins, the Desert Scorpions, in future assassinations. The cultists of Selket are less than enthusiastic, as the Tibereshi have yet to prove themselves to be of any consequence. In a show of good will, the Tibereshi have prepared a human sacrifice to Selket to be witnessed and offered directly to her agents. The two groups are currently awaiting news of the assassination attempt and the return of their agent.

One of the PCs sees a man on the street on a galloping horse, dressed in the robes of a Tamasheq nomad. The horseman comes to a halt, turns, and heads down an alleyway in the general direction of the Jaguar Gate. In the

MAP: [CLICK HERE TO DOWNLOAD THIS MAP FOR YOUR VIRTUAL TABLE TOP.](#)

moment before the man races off again, the PC sees blood trickling from his boot.

Within an hour, notices are being posted throughout the city.

Justiciar Lamasara Fahir, Keeper of Laws, offers a **REWARD** for the capture of the **ASSASSIN** responsible for the **MURDER OF HUSSANI SAMIS, THE HIGH COUNCILOR OF ANTIQUITIES OF PER-BASTET**.

An assassin did enter Hussani Samis' abode in the Palace District, killing Samis by means of **SCORPION VENOM**. The killer then **MURDERED TWO CITY GUARDS** while making his escape through the city.

The killer is believed to have left the city by boat from the Wharf District and is believed to have taken a wound from one of the valiant guards he slew.

300 GOLD PIECES to the Person or Persons who **APPREHEND THE ASSASSIN**. If the assassin is killed in the attempt, then 200 Gold Pieces will be awarded on proof of his death.

With a clear advantage over other bounty hunters, the PCs can attempt to give chase before anyone else knows the real direction the assassin took to escape the city.

The trail itself leads out of the Leopard Gate and into the crags, tors, and canyons south of the city, though it is not overly difficult to follow due to the assassin making little effort to hide the discarded bits of his robe he used for bandaging or the blood he left on the trail when doing so. This detail can be fleshed out, or not, at the DM's discretion. However you choose to handle it, the trail leads to a partially collapsed tower at the top of a steep trail, barely visible among the surrounding crags. The tower is occupied, but currently the occupants are distracted by the death of a horse on the opposite side.

Area A. Near the Tower

Two figures in the robes of Tamasheq nomads stand over a wounded horse, kicking weakly on its side. Another figure stalks toward them from the tower; this one is a hulking brute with exaggerated features and a maul cocked over his shoulder.

The last of the scorpions the assassin carried with him crawled free of its jar during the flight from Per-Bastet, eventually dropping onto the horse's hide, stinging the creature. The horse is now near death. Two Selket cultists (**scorpion cultists**, *Tome of Beasts*, p. 425) stand over the horse, watching it die. Ganbataar, the trollkin and second-in-command of the Selket cultists here, has run out of patience with the horse's cries, and he soon puts the horse out of its misery with his maul. After that, they will quickly butcher the horse and haul the meat in to **Area 8**.

Tactics. If interrupted, Ganbataar (see **Ganbataar the Trollkin Barbarian** below) enters a rage, attacking the stoutest looking opponent without hesitation. The cultists attack any obvious spellcasters by preference.

Note: The sounds of battle cannot be heard by those beneath the tower.

GANBATAAR THE TROLLKIN BARBARIAN

Medium humanoid (trollkin), neutral evil

Armor Class 14

Hit Points 37 (5d8+15)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	13 (+1)	16 (+3)	10 (+0)	12 (+1)	8 (-1)

Saving Throws Str +5, Con +5

Skills Athletics +5, Intimidation +1, Perception +3

Senses darkvision 60 ft., Inhuman Vigor, thick hide, passive Perception 13

Languages Custom Language, Northern

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Danger Sense. Ganbataar has advantage on Dexterity saving throws against effects that he can see, such as traps and spells. To gain this benefit, Ganbataar can't be blinded, deafened, or incapacitated.

Rage (3/Day). As a bonus action, Ganbataar can become enraged. While raging, Ganbataar has advantage on Strength checks and Strength saving throws, and he gains a +2 bonus to the damage roll of any melee weapon attacks he makes. Ganbataar also has resistance to bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage while raging. Ganbataar's rage lasts for 1 minute.

Thick Hide. The trollkin's skin is thick and tough, granting it a +1 bonus to AC. This bonus is already factored into the trollkin's AC.

ACTIONS

Maul. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +10 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (2d6+3) bludgeoning damage.

Handaxe. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20 ft./60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6+3) slashing damage.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d4+3) piercing damage.

1. THE TOWER, GROUND FLOOR

The plain stone walls of this room are pocked and scoured by sand, which covers the floor in a fine layer. A tarp hangs in the one interior doorway, and a ladder on the opposite wall climbs upward.

No check is necessary to spot the many crisscrossing tracks on the sandy floor, but a DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals that they were made by sandal-wearing humans and one larger creature (Ganbataar).

Through the curtain is a small room and a trapdoor leading down to **Area 3**.

2. THE TOWER TOP

An old crate sits here against what remains of the crenellations overlooking the canyon and the trailhead. Next to it, a half-filled waterskin lies on the ground.

The two human cultists from **Area A** kept watch here until the assassin arrived on his dying horse. There is nothing else of note here.

3. THE CELLAR

Very old and very crude graffiti covers the stone walls of this room. A tattered old blanket, almost more holes than cloth, lies in a pile along one wall.

The graffiti is as old as it looks and of no relevance. Likewise, the blanket holds only fleas.

The **secret door** in the corner of the room can be detected with a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check or a DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check. It is unlocked and trapped.

TRAP: BELL DROP

Mechanical trap

A DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check notices a taut length of twine stretching from the bottom of the doorframe to behind the door and up, which will snap if the door is opened halfway, causing a large brass bell to drop down the stone stairway to **Area 4**, alerting anyone in **Areas 4, 5, and 9** to the intrusion. A DC 12 Dexterity check with thieves' tools safely disarms the trap.

4. THE ENTRANCE CAVE

Most of the walls in this cavern are in their natural state, though the floor has been made smooth and the wide passage leading further in has clearly been shaped as well. Dim light and long shadows fill the area from the ensconced torches leading further in. To one side, a 10-foot high lip of stone opens into another chamber. To the other side, a hallway opens up where worked stone begins.

If the bell trap was triggered, one of the Tibereshi cultists from **Area 9** will be lying prone with a crossbow on the stone ledge leading to **Area 9**, ready to attack intruders, and another will be hiding behind a statue in **Area 5a**, ready to follow suit. Nawa will be coming down the hall from **Area 6** and arriving the next round.

If the trap was bypassed or disarmed, this room is clear though creatures in **Area 5a** have advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks to hear any loud noises coming from this area.

5A. THE TEMPLE TO SELKET

Several alcoves flank this long, oval-shaped chamber. At one end, a stair rises to a platform lined with crimson curtains and bearing a stone altar. A rough-hewn statue of a woman in a royal headdress stands behind the altar. The opposite end of the chamber opens into a natural cavern beyond two more statues, almost identical to the one on the platform.

To cement an agreement between the two cults, the Tibereshi priest (see below) is directing two of his men (**cultists**) in the preparation of the chamber for the sacrifice in Selket's name of the captive being held in **Area 11**. One of the men is arranging prayer rugs on the floor while another is cleaning the altar with a sponge. The priest is standing in the middle of the room with his fists on his hips, studying the dais.

Tactics. If caught unaware, the cultists draw their scimitars and race to attack while the priest grabs his crossbow, firing one round before engaging with spells and his scimitar.

TIBERESHI PRIEST

Medium humanoid (human), lawful evil

Armor Class 12 (leather armor)

Hit Points 19 (3d8+6)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
9 (-1)	13 (+1)	15 (+2)	11 (+0)	16 (+3)	14 (+2)

Saving Throws Wis +5, Cha +4

Skills Persuasion +4, Religion +2

Senses passive Perception 13

Languages Common, Draconic

Challenge 1/2 (100 XP)

Touch of Death (1/Day). The Tibereshi priest adds +9 necrotic damage to his next melee attack. If the attack misses, he can't use the ability again until completing a long rest.

Spellcaster. The Tibereshi priest's spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 13, +5 to spell attacks). He can cast the following spells:

Cantrips: *chill touch, mending, sacred flame, spare the dying*

1st (3 slots): *command, create or destroy water, cure wounds, false life, guiding bolt, healing word, ray of sickness*

ACTIONS

Mace. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +1 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 2 (1d6-1) bludgeoning damage.

Light Crossbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, range 80 ft./320 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d8+1) piercing damage.

5B. THE DAIS

The statue atop the dais, as well as the other two statues in the room, has been chiseled quite recently into its current shape, that of a woman in a royal headdress. A cartouche at the base on the statue contains a scorpion. The altar is carved from the stone of the chamber and bears no markings.

These funerary statues have but recently been chiseled and repurposed in an effort to please the Selket cultists. The curtains conceal a cavern leading south to **Area 10**.

6. NAWA'S CHAMBER

This room contains a cot covered in furs, a small table holds a lit oil lamp, and a pitcher of water sitting in an empty basin that stands against one wall.

If she hasn't been disturbed, Nawa sits meditating on her cot.

Tactics: Assured she will serve Selket in the afterlife, Nawa asks no quarter and embraces death.

NAWA, LEADER OF THE SELKET CELL

Medium humanoid (human), neutral evil

Armor Class 12

Hit Points 16 (3d8+3)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
9 (-1)	15 (+2)	13 (+1)	14 (+2)	11 (+0)	16 (+3)

Saving Throws Con +3, Cha +5

Skills Deception +5, Intimidation +5

Senses passive Perception 10

Languages Nurian, Trade Tongue

Challenge 1/2 (100 XP)

Spellcaster. Nawa's spellcasting ability is Charisma (save DC 13, +5 to hit with spell attacks). She can cast the following spells:

Cantrips: *mage hand, message, poison spray, prestidigitation*

1st (4 slots): *disguise self, mage armor, ray of sickness*

2nd (2 slots): *web*

ACTIONS

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

Treasure: 4 moonstones worth 50 gp each, 24 sp, an *elixir of health*, and a *potion of heroism*.

7. BARRACKS

The room contains several cots and two full, unlit oil lamps but is otherwise bare.

Two Tibereshi cultists (**cultists**) sleep here unless disturbed by the sound of fighting from Nawa's room. The doors effectively muffle sounds from farther away.

8. MESS HALL

Some food has been lain out on a table—bread, hummus, a plate of figs—and next to it, a large clay pot filled with water and a ladle hanging from a rope.

Traces on the walls indicate this was once a temple dedicated to Horus.

9. OVERLOOK CAVERN

Beneath an outcrop of stone that sparkles in the torchlight, a ladder stands against one wall of this cavern.

One Tibereshi cultist (**cultist**) peers upward from the top of the ladder, trying to determine if the stones in the ceiling are valuable. Another cultist holds the ladder. The outcropping is quartz crystal and is of little value.

10. TIBERESHI BARRACKS

Behind a hide curtain to one side of this cavern, a few bedrolls lay on the floor along with several full waterskins. This area is where the cultists from **Area 9** bed down when not on watch.

11. STORAGE ROOM

Crates, barrels, and sacks line the walls of this room. Chipped and pitted paint on the walls indicates that it once served some greater purpose, but the evidence of what that was has long faded away. In one corner, sits a bamboo cage containing a young man sitting with his chin on his knees. Standing before the cage and facing the door, a midnight-black scorpion with a bright red stripe down its tail spreads its claws.

The young man in the cage has his hands bound behind his back and presses himself against the back of the cage to avoid the scorpion, though the creature can't reach through the bars. His name is Nafiq, and he was waylaid with a small merchant caravan over a week ago and taken captive. He knows he is to be sacrificed soon and that his captors are from two different cults: one the cult of Selket, the scorpion goddess, and the others who captured him venerate some ancient pharaoh. He has no coin to offer as reward for his rescue, but he offers to serve any of the PCs as a porter if they are willing to take him on.



IMMATURE NIGHT SCORPION

Medium beast, unaligned

Armor Class 14 (natural armor)

Hit Points 55 (10d8 + 10)

Speed 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
13 (+1)	13 (+1)	13 (+1)	1 (-5)	9 (-1)	3 (-4)

Senses blindsight 60 ft., passive Perception 9

Languages —

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The scorpion makes two attacks: one with its claws and one with its stinger.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d6 + 1) bludgeoning damage, and the target is grappled (escape DC 12). The scorpion has two claws, each of which can grapple one target.

Stinger. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 4 (1d6 + 1) piercing damage, and the target takes 3 (1d6) poison damage and is blinded for 1d3 hours. A successful DC 12 Constitution saving throw reduces damage by half and prevents blindness. If the target fails the saving throw by 5 or more, the target is also paralyzed while poisoned in this way. A paralyzed target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself with a successful save.

12. THE ASSASSIN'S CHAMBER

The painted walls of this room depict the crossing over of a person of some importance to the afterlife. Time and the hot wind gusting through the passageway have worn away much of the detail. Leather saddlebags lie on the floor next to a wooden cot.

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If undisturbed by the sound of fighting, the assassin who recently arrived here sits on the edge of the cot, using a moistened cloth to wipe the dust of the trail from his neck. He will fight to the death, knowing torture and execution await him in Per-Bastet should he surrender. If alerted to intruders, he attempts to sneak up the hall toward the fighting and attack from hiding. The gusts of wind down the passage make sound travel inconsistently here (DM's discretion).

SCORPION CULT ASSASSIN

Medium humanoid (human), neutral evil

Armor Class 14 (leather armor)

Hit Points 32 (5d8 + 10)

Speed 30ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (+0)	17 (+3)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	15 (+2)	11 (+0)

Saving Throws Dex +5, Int +3

Skills Acrobatics +5, Insight +4, Intimidation +4, Stealth +7

Senses passive Perception 12

Languages Nurian, Trade Tongue

Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Cunning Action. The cult assassin can take a bonus action on each of his turns in combat. This action can only be used to take the Dash, Disengage, or Hide actions.

Sneak Attack (1/Turn). The cult assassin deals an extra 7 (2d6) damage when he hits a target with a weapon attack and has advantage on the attack roll, or when the target is within 5 feet of an ally of the assassin that isn't incapacitated and the assassin doesn't have disadvantage on the attack roll.

ACTIONS

Shortsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) piercing damage.

Dagger. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 5 (1d4 + 3) piercing damage.

Treasure: The saddlebags contain 120 gp, a *scroll of bless*, a *potion of climbing*, and 2 *potions of healing*.

13. PASSAGEWAY

Partially collapsed in places, this passage leads a long distance to a well-concealed ledge with a view of a trail below.

Conclusion

With the foiling of the cultists' attempt at working together, the PCs have effectively ended the cult of Selket's involvement. When the PCs return to the Justiciar, he listens intently to their report and then grants each of them citizenship in Per-Bastet if they are not already locals. This grant means absolutely nothing, but if they are foreigners, they will likely be ignorant of that. Otherwise, he will admit that it is meant as an honor more than an official legal status. He also hands each a small sack containing 60 gp and tells them they should not hesitate to seek his counsel in the future should they require it. He will be happy to provide a letter of recommendation should they wish it.

Total XP: 2050

Adjusted for Success: 2,500 XP

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