



ADVENTURERS LEAGUE™



THE RED HERRING

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Adventure Designers

Adventure Code: HILL02-02

Optimized For: APL 8



The Mage's Guild has been implicated in a recent attack on a visiting dignitary from the Red Wizards. To what extent are they involved? Is there still a threat? The Mages have pledged their cooperation in your investigation, but are they sincere? Try to find the answers to these difficult questions and earn the respect of some powerful allies in the city of Hillsfar.

A four-hour adventure for 5th - 10th level characters

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to *The Red Herring*, a D&D Adventurers League adventure, part of the official D&D Adventurers League™ organized play.

This adventure is designed for three to seven 5th - 10th level characters, and is optimized for five 8th-level characters. Characters outside this level range cannot participate in this adventure.

Adjusting This Adventure

This adventure provides suggestions in making adjustments for smaller or larger groups, characters of higher or lower levels, and characters that are otherwise a bit more powerful than the adventure is optimized for. You're not bound to these adjustments; they're here for your convenience.

To figure out whether you should consider adjusting the adventure, add up the total levels of all the characters and divide the total by the number of characters (rounding .5 or greater up; .4 or less down). This is the group's APL. To approximate the **party strength** for the adventure, consult the following table.

Determining Party Strength

Party Composition	Party Strength
3-4 characters, APL less than	Very weak
3-4 characters, APL equivalent	Weak
3-4 characters, APL greater than	Average
5 characters, APL less than	Weak
5 characters, APL equivalent	Average
5 characters, APL greater than	Strong
6-7 characters, APL less than	Average
6-7 characters, APL equivalent	Strong
6-7 characters, APL greater than	Very strong

Some encounters may include a sidebar that offers suggestions for certain party strengths. If a particular recommendation is not offered or appropriate for your group, you don't have to make adjustments.

Before Play at the Table

Before you start play, consider the following:

- Read through the adventure, taking notes of anything you'd like to highlight or remind yourself of while running the adventure, such as a way you'd like to portray an NPC or a tactic you'd like to use in a combat. Become familiar with the adventure's appendices and handouts.

- Gather any resources you'd like to use to aid you in running this adventure--such as notecards, a DM screen, miniatures, and battlemaps.
- Ask the players to provide you with relevant character information, such as name, race, class, and level; passive Wisdom (Perception), and anything specified as notable by the adventure (such as backgrounds, traits, flaws, etc.)

Playing the Dungeon Master

You have the most important role—facilitating the enjoyment of the game for the players. You provide the narrative and bring the words on these pages to life. To facilitate this, keep in mind the following:

You're Empowered. Make decisions about how the group interacts with the adventure; adjusting or improvising is encouraged, so long as you maintain the adventure's spirit. This doesn't allow you to implement house rules or change those of the Adventurers League, however; they should be consistent in this regard.

Challenge Your Players. Gauge the experience level of your players (not the characters), try to feel out (or ask) what they like in a game, and attempt to deliver the experience they're after. Everyone should have the opportunity to shine.

Keep the Adventure Moving. When the game starts to get bogged down, feel free to provide hints and clues to your players so they can attempt to solve puzzles, engage in combat, and roleplay interactions without getting too frustrated over a lack of information. This gives players "little victories" for figuring out good choices from clues. Watch for stalling--play loses momentum when this happens. At the same time, make sure that players don't finish too early; provide them with a full play experience.

Adventure Primer

Adventure Background

Known as the City of Trade, Hillsfar is a powerful walled city on the southern coast of the Moonsea. Hillsfar has gone through a lot in the last year. First Lord Torin Nomerthal was ousted and Commandant Vuhm Yestral was elevated to First Lord. His first few months were tumultuous with the dissolution of the First Law of Humanity. Trade declined because of uncertainty with the new regime, and the citizens blamed the return on non-humans.

At present, the city is calm and adjusting to the new changes. Rebuilding after a wave of monster attacks seems to be bringing the citizenry together.

Recently, a Zulkir of Mulmaster's Red Wizards (Dar'lon Ma) came to Hillsfar on a diplomatic visit to speak with the Honored Khazark Shazzara Mahn (the highest ranking Red Wizard in Hillsfar) and the First Lord. He wished to discuss what the Red Wizards are doing to aid in the rebuilding of Mulmaster, and how they could do the same for Hillsfar. Unfortunately, there were several assassination attempts on Dar'lon Ma (HILL 2-1). They were thwarted by adventurers. This led to an investigation that pointed to the Mage's Guild being involved in the attempted assassination. Now the Zulkir is asking a group of adventurers to investigate the Mage's Guild to find proof of their culpability.

Adventure Overview

Part 1. A Series of Interviews (15 to 45 minutes)

A meeting between the heroes and the Mage's Guild begins very successfully, with full cooperation being promised and given by the guild members. However, little information can be gained from the guild members, since the Mages are innocent. Eventually, through conversations with members and non-members of the guild, the characters pick up a lead on a member of the Hillsfar Rogue's Guild.

Part 2. The Commotion Outside (1 Hour)

As the characters leave the Mage's Guild, they find a mob in the streets. They're all riled up and ready to attack the Mage's Guild, looking for justice for the attempted assassination. Worse, there's someone in the mob's midst who is pushing the mob to do it—and they have some elementals to help. The question is, will the characters be able to diffuse the situation without anyone getting hurt?

Part 3. The Red Herring Revealed (1 Hour)

With information about who was really behind the attacks, the characters head off to the Rogue's Guildhall with more questions. They find members of the Mage's Guild there trying to find answers of their own in a tense situation.

This leads to learning Isthana Ro is most likely behind the assassination attempt.

Part 4. Apprehend Isthana Ro (1 Hour)

Now that Isthana has been implicated, it's time for the characters to apprehend her for trial—but she runs. Once she's cornered, a group of Red Plumes try to kill the characters and take her into custody themselves.

Conclusion. With Isthana in custody, the Rogue's Guild is thrown into confusion and conflict. The Zulkir is informed about the 'real' perpetrators of the attacks, the Rogue's Guild! Happy to now know the 'true' identity of his attacker, he thanks the heroes and reaffirms his friendship with them.

Adventure Hooks

Continued from HILL 2-1

Characters who played in HILL 2-1 are already aware of the attack, and the Mage's Guild involvement. Since they proved themselves competent, the Zulkir asks them to personally investigate the extent of the Mage's Guild's involvement and will pay them 500 gp each to do so.

Harpers

An assassination attempt was made on one of the high ranking Red Wizards. I won't lose any sleep over the death of one of those Thayan monsters, but the Mage's Guild has been implicated in the attack. The Mage's Guild has asked for our help in clearing their name. We're not sure of the truth and need to know. You are the highest ranking

operative in the area that isn't otherwise occupied. Investigate the matter. Do this we'll make it worth your while. We've set aside 500 gp (per Harper) when you deliver your report.

Lord's Alliance

The order and stability of Hillsfar as a central hub for trade is threatened by news of an assassination attempt on a visiting dignitary. However, we can turn this to our advantage. If we can eliminate the threat, and widely publicize how the security forces of Hillsfar successfully ensured the safety of the Zulkir under very adverse conditions, we can use the boost in reputation to make Hillsfar even more attractive to travelling merchants. Do this and be rewarded 500 gp (per member of the Lord's Alliance)

Note: Don't give a character more than one hook.



PART 1. A SERIES OF INTERVIEWS

Estimated Duration: 30 minutes

This part of the adventure has the characters interviewing individuals at the Mage's Guild. The scene opens with the characters in the offices of Master Torsha Ladron, the leader of the Mage's Guild of Hillsfar. Read the following:

You're in the very nice yet modest office of Master Torsha Ladron, the leader of the Mage's Guild of Hillsfar. She's been very gracious, offering you tea and biscuits. As the tea is being poured, you remember the words the Zulkir said which brought you here.

"Discover who among these mages tried to have me killed so I may take my revenge upon them and not have Thay wage war against all of Hillsfar. I will also pay you handsomely for this work. Each of you will be gifted 500 gold pieces if you do this for me."

As the tea is being poured, your mind comes back to the situation at hand. Torsha is tall and seems annoyed with the situation, but not at your presence. She takes a cup

of tea, sips from it, places it back on the saucer, and speaks.

"I know you're here because the Zulkir believes we tried to have him killed. I know we didn't, and I'm willing to cooperate. We just want this situation sorted out quickly. To assist in that, I've instructed all guild members to cooperate with your investigation. If any of them give you trouble, let me know and I'll handle it.

"I've arranged for representatives of the guild's members and support staff to make themselves available. I have gathered these three individuals—Elizabeth, Mikk, and Vertek—to speed up the initiation of the investigation."

Torsha proceeds to walk down the line and introduce the individuals she has called here to be questioned. "You may already know Elizabeth Cantor, as she was present last night at the meeting. The others are our Treasurer, Mikk Ravastan, and our Provisioner, Vertek Salazar. Not present are Chief Security Officer Andrik Yost and

our Alchemical Ingredient Supplier Talia Chambers—but they are available if required. Also, if needed you can also question Morty, one of our service staff.”

Torsha turns to walk out of the room as the interviews begin but looks over her shoulder to add, “One last thing. I am not sure if it is connected, but in the interest of being one hundred percent forthcoming, we’ve had a problem with potions going missing recently. I tell you this because divulging even the smallest thing, no matter how odd, helps to build a bridge of trust.” Torsha exits.

The following individuals are available to interview. The bullet points are information they may or may not give. The only important things are:

- The Rogue’s Guild has infiltrated the Mage’s Guild to steal potions in order to weaken them.
- The Rogue’s Guild also tried to frame the Mage’s Guild for the assassination attempt.
- The Alchemical Ingredient Supplier, Talia Chambers, or Chief of Security Andrik Yost can point them at that information.

Elizabeth Cantor

Low ranking member of the Mage’s Guild, but also noble of Thay along with her brother Jeremiah Cantor. The meeting took place in their home in HILL02-01, where the Zulkir assassination attempt occurred. Her parents died while on a mission undertaken for the Zulkir.

- She understands that what happened to her parents has given her motive—but she wants answers, not revenge.
- Her brother is an active Red Wizard and would not do anything to “jeopardize” his standing.
- The meeting took place at her family manor, ruining it and causing a lot of death.
- She helped to save the Zulkir’s life.
- She almost lost her brother to the assassination attempt as well.

Mikk Ravastan - Guild Treasurer

Roleplaying tips. Male, balding, chubby, dirty fingers, a bit severe and sticks to protocol.

- He says as far as he can tell, none of the Guild Funds have been spent on an assassin. What else could you want from me?
- If the characters want to review the books, Mikk tells them they need Torsha (Guild Leader) to grant access to them. (Torsha allows it, but looking over the ledger shows no signs of tampering. A DC 14 Intelligence (Investigation) check does reveal that Talia Chambers, the Alchemical Ingredient Supplier, did get paid twice this month, and there is a note about earmarking funds for security next month.)
- He was here the night of the attack, but no one else was here.
 - A DC 12 Wisdom (Insight) check reveals a slight nervous twitch as he was answering the question.
 - A DC 10 Charisma (Persuasion or Intimidation) check makes Mikk tell the characters he was with Andrik Yost, Chief of Security, on the night of the assassination attempt. What they were doing isn’t the characters’ business. Mikk and Andrik are consenting adults, and that is all the characters need to know.
- The Guild had to pay Talia, the alchemical ingredient supplier for a 2nd batch of potion ingredients this month, because some of them went missing.
- The budget for next month has some extra funds earmarked for security because of this. Security would have been hired this month, except our extra funds this month went to Talia.

Vertek Salazar - Guild Provisioner

Roleplaying Tips. Male, Tall, thin, bored with life.

- He wants to keep the questioning quick as he says, “I’ve got my own problems to deal with.”
- None of the poisons or cursed elixirs have been taken. He asks, “What kind of physical evidence do you have against the Guild anyways?”
- If asked about the potions, he says, “The Guild has been losing a lot of potions lately. Andrik (Chief of Security) needs to get his people to get that locked down. I don’t see how that’s related to this.”

Morty the Service Tech

Roleplaying tips. Male, Medium height and build, middle aged, good natured, respectful.

- He does not want to talk to the characters. Morty says when questioned about the Mage's Guild, "These are good people, and they don't need you tarnishing their name."
- Morty won't say more unless someone can convince him to talk. A DC 12 Charisma (Persuasion or Intimidation) check gets him to answer any three question the characters ask.
- If a persuasion or intimidation check is successful, here is what Morty knows that's relevant to the situation. Anything else he's not sure about.
 - o When asked what he was doing, he says "I remember I had to clean up an ink spill. I remember, because when I went to get a potion of universal solvent, the door to the potion lab wasn't locked properly, and I thought that was odd."
 - o If asked if he saw the guild treasurer there that night, "Nope, Mr. Ravastan wasn't here that night."
 - o A DC 10 Wisdom (Insight) check reveals that he isn't sure if the guild treasurer was or wasn't there.
 - o If asked about the potions, "Concerning the missing potions, personally, I think the Security guards working for Mr. Yost are slacking off until they get a contract that includes overtime pay. You don't hear me complaining about overtime pay, do you? They don't even have to clean up after one of the students transmutes himself into a newt."

Talia Chambers - Alchemical Supplier

Roleplaying tips. Female, older with a bit of grey in her red hair and a bit of meat on her bones. No nonsense, organized, shrewd.

- She sells potion materials to the Guild. She is in and out of the guildhall all the time.
- If asked if she thinks the Mage's Guild is behind the assassination attempt, she responds, "I've know these people for a long time, they're good people, and you've got no right to give them even more grief."

- If asked about the ledger or her delivery schedule, she says, "I delivered two batches of ingredients this month. But I don't see how that is relevant."
- If prodded further (no check required) she states, "When I went to my sources to get the 2nd batch of ingredients, I noticed one of my shadier business partners, Rook Hearth, was selling material that looked exactly like something I had sold to the Mage's Guild earlier in the month. I suspect he is involved in the thefts somehow. I don't plan on buying from him again, but if you can do something to put a stop to his harassment of the Mages, I'll spread the word that you guys are serious about helping the Mages. It might make things easier for you with the investigation."
- If asked more about Rook Hearth, Talia tells the players that he is a member of the Rogue's Guild in Hillsfar.

Andrick Yost - Security Chief

Roleplaying tips. Male, elf, looks like he'd be 20 something if he was human, short brown hair. Kind of clueless, wears the sword at his side like he knows how to use it, more interested in romance than work.

- If asked if he was there that night, he replies, "It was my night off. I wasn't even here."
- If confronted with information gathered from Mikk, or a DC 10 Wisdom (Insight) check is made, he reveals that he was indeed with Mikk.
- A DC 12 Charisma (Persuasion or Intimidation) check will get him to answer any three question the characters ask. This is the pertinent information Andrick knows, anything else he's not sure about.
- I was with the Treasurer. We have a good thing going. I won't share the details of our relationship with you.
- I wasn't involved, and as far as I know, none of the Mages were either.
- We're aware of the missing potions, but we haven't been able to find out who is responsible. We're waiting on authorization from the Treasury to pay for overtime so we can set up a stake-out. I'm sure the Rogue's Guild is involved.

- Andrik tells them the following information regardless of any checks by stopping them before they walk away:

“I was planning to tell the Mages about this once they approved our overtime pay, but I think you should know about it now, considering if the Mage’s Guild gets shut down I’m out of a job. Just one thing—I’d appreciate it if you didn’t tell them what I’m about to tell you. It would really hurt our chances at getting that overtime contract approved. Is that fair? Agree to keep my name out of it?”

If the characters agree, he reveals the following:

“You didn’t hear this from me, but there’s chatter that the Rogue’s Guild is trying to frame the Mage’s Guild for a job they pulled. The guy you’d want to talk to about this is Rook Hearth. If he isn’t the one behind it, he knows who is. He’s holed up in a big house that is a front for the Rogue’s Guild.”

Andrik gives the characters directions to the Rogue’s Guild and says, “Remember, you didn’t hear it from me.”

Any further investigation does not lead to better information than what is provided. The only solid lead is Rook Hearth and the Rogue’s Guild. Before the adventurers can reach the Rogue’s Guild, however, they must deal with an angry crowd.



PART 2. THE COMMOTION OUTSIDE!

Scene: Outside the Mage’s Guild tower

Objective: Calm the crowd

When the characters exit the Mage’s Guild, they are greeted by a mob of angry citizens. The air is tense. The average citizen might be wary and distrustful of Thay, but the Red Wizards in Hillsfar are viewed favorably. The assassination attempt on Zulkir Dar’lon Ma—along with a few carefully whispered words by instigators—has riled up the masses to call for vengeance against the Mage’s Guild.

As you exit the Mage’s Guild, a mass of angry faces bearing torches and weapons approach. The incomprehensible shouting resolves itself into calls for “justice,” “vengeance,” and “burn all the witches” in equal intensity and frequency. The door to the Guild shuts firmly behind you, leaving your group to face the growing crowd.

“Send out the mages responsible for the assassination attempt or we will bring down the tower!” calls out a voice barely heard over the mob, punctuated by yells of “murderers” and “burn them.” The crowd begins to push closer, weapons and torches held in white-knuckled hands. It would only take a small spark for everything to erupt into violence.

The characters should realize that they are between the pot and the fire, and someone is about to throw a fireball into the mix. It only takes a successful DC 10 Charisma (Persuasion or Intimidation) check to get the crowd to part long enough to let the characters through. Things get ugly afterward as the mob attacks the tower and the mages—who are innocent—defend themselves vigorously. Feel free to describe the results of the attack from afar as waves of magic and screams carry through the night.

Calm Down. In order to speak with the citizens, the characters need to calm them down first. This requires some way for the characters to be heard and then saying something to calm them down along with a DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion) check. This is most likely made with disadvantage as the calls and shouts from the crowd are very distracting and drown out the characters when they speak.

If the check fails a character can try by making a DC 15 Charisma (Intimidation) check. A character casting a spell must succeed at a DC 15 Charisma (Deception) or Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check or their attempt to cast automatically fails. The mob is wary of spellcasters and they are on their guard.

If the characters fail to calm the crowd, the mob pushes forward to attack. See *The Swarm* below.

If the characters succeed, the mob calms down and Vergo Carpa steps forward to address the characters.

A well-dressed man steps out of the crowd to address you. Though partially concealed, the symbol of the Rogue's Guild is visible as a brooch on his lapel.

"It is commendable that heroes of Hillsfar have found the perpetrators of the assassination attempt upon the Zulkir of Thay; however, the citizens have spoken." He waves his hand to the gathered mob. "I must ask you to stand aside as justice is served."

Vergo does not introduce himself, but the characters can take a few minutes speaking with him and attempt to convince him that the mages are innocent. He listens attentively and invites them to continue. The citizens around him begin to murmur and a hush goes over the crowd, with some even starting to disperse around the edges. If a character wishes to, a successful DC 20 Wisdom (Insight) check allows them to realize that while the man's outward demeanor is calm, he is concealing something. They see him fiddle with the brooch before the whole area explodes in flame. See The Swarm below.

The Swarm. Vergo instigates a fight by activating hidden elemental gems that are meant to be used to attack the Mage's Guild. The flames of several lit torches flare up as two **fire elementals** and an **efreeti** emerge from them. Instead of attacking the mages, they target the characters. They fight to the death and have no knowledge of who summoned them if captured. They disappear after an hour.

Adjusting this Encounter

Here are some suggestions for adjusting this encounter, according to your group. These are not cumulative.

- **Very Weak or Weak:** Remove one fire elemental.
- **Strong:** Add one fire elemental.
- **Very Strong:** Add two fire elementals.

If the characters succeeded at calming the crowd earlier, the mob panics and flees during the first three rounds of combat, creating difficult terrain. Any character in the crowd also takes 1d6 bludgeoning damage at the end of their turn as they are jostled and pummeled. The **fire elementals** ignore the difficult terrain with their Fire Form ability and because the people actively avoid them. The **efreeti** flies above the crowd.

If the characters failed to calm the crowd, they actively hinder the characters. The press of the mob acts as difficult terrain. Also, at the end of a character's turn, any character inside the crowd takes 1d6 bludgeoning damage and must make a DC 15 Strength (Athletics) or Dexterity (Acrobatics) check. Those failing the check are grappled by the mob (which has a +5 Strength), moved 1d6 x 5 feet in a random direction, and take an additional 1d6 bludgeoning damage (2d6 total). After three rounds, the mob disperses as they flee the elementals. As above, the elementals have ways of maneuvering around the mob.

Characters using area effect spells or powers automatically hit the mob during this time, injuring and killing many. If they kill anyone, they gain the Story Award Enmity of Hillsfar. Hand it to them right there, because their sullied reputation spreads quickly. You can choose to apply penalties or disadvantage to characters for the rest of the adventure because of the negative emotions and remorse that comes from killing citizens of Hillsfar.

Development

The characters can take time after the battle to help those injured by the panic or accidental contact with the elementals. Unless the characters caused it, there are no casualties. Vergo Carpa has vanished into the crowd amid to the confusion. Red Plumes arrive shortly afterward and question anyone left at the scene, including the characters.

Emerald Enclave. If the characters search the grounds around the tower, they find shards of an unusual elemental gem that held the efreeti. If the characters turn the shards over to the Emerald Enclave & if no civilians were killed during this scene, Emerald Enclave characters earn extra Renown.

Next. Once they've dealt with this situation, the adventurers can move on to hunting down Rook Hearth and discovering who was really behind the assassination attempt on the Zulkir. The directions

they were given lead them to a very lavish manor not far from the Cantor Family home (for those that played in HILL02-01).



PART 3. THE RED HERRING REVEALED

This encounter has the characters in the middle of a tricky political situation. The stakes here are the characters' reputations with the Rogue's Guild and Mage's Guild. During these interactions, they could find themselves in or out of favor with both guilds.

Favor points are rewarded to the party in this section. During these encounters, the characters need to interact with the guilds.

If they make the check as presented or do something that would gain favor with one of the guilds, award a **favor point** with that guild. If they do something to anger one of the guilds, remove a success with that guild.

If they have three favor points with a guild at the end of this section, they've gained that guild's favor and the Story Award **Friend of the Rogue's Guild** or **Friend of the Mage's Guild**.

Read or paraphrase the following:

Following the directions you were given, you arrive at a lavish and opulent chateau. Magical driftglobes hang lazily in the air, illuminating the circumference of the building. As you approach, the closest driftglobe changes color from blue to a bright yellow and intensifies to fully illuminate your party.

You also get the feeling that you are being watched. Before you can figure out if you are truly being spied on, you notice a small contingent of individuals wearing the purple and yellow robes of the Mage's Guild of Hillsfar, and they appear to be heading in your direction.

As they approach, you recognize the leader, Torsha Ladron, the Mage Guild leader. The mob stops in front of your group, and Torsha speaks in a loud voice

to ensure that everyone in the area can hear. "We understand that you are here to perform your investigation of the person or persons that are behind the attack on the Zulkir, the Khazark, and the First Lord, but we also would like to perform our own investigation—one that only a large group of mages can accomplish. Our guild's name has been sullied with the implication that we were somehow involved in what occurred and the only way to remove this blemish is to find the true perpetrator of this transgression against the nation of Thay."

Things the characters would know:

- The Rogue's Guild probably won't let a bunch of Mages inside their guildhall without a fight.
- Torsha is angry. A successful DC 12 Intelligence (History) check lets a player remember a rumor that she's also very stubborn and doesn't enjoy being insulted. She turned someone into a frog last time she was insulted.

The characters can try and reason with Torsha, asking her how she intends to investigate the situation. A successful DC 12 Charisma (Persuasion) check convinces her to reveal her desire to speak with Rook Hearth about his involvement with the assassination attempt on the Zulkir. If they promise to get her into the same room as Rook or something like that, record that as a favor point with the Mage's Guild.

Once that conversation reaches its endpoint, read or paraphrase the following:

The front door of the chateau opens. On cue, a large contingent of members of the Rogue's Guild emerge. Not just from the entrance of the building, but from side

streets and behind the group of mages as well. They congregate on the lawn that is in front of the sprawling manse, with your group standing between them and that of the Mage's Guild.

Obvious to everyone, your group is grotesquely outnumbered on both sides.

The following becomes obvious to the characters:

- There are 12 members of the Mage's Guild (**11 mages and one Archmage**) present, along with Morty the janitor.
- The exact number of rogues is hard to determine, (there are **15 Assassins**) as the driftglobes are not lit above their heads to hide their numbers, but it appears as if there are at least the same number of rogues to match that of the mages.
- Each side seems to be waiting for the other side to do something, but they are all on edge.
- Both groups keep looking toward your group as well, trying to divine your intent.

Read or paraphrase the following:

Stepping forward from the group of rogues is Martek Leer, the second in command of the Rogue's Guild. His rakish figure and sharp nose give him an imposing and predatory presence that is felt as the murmurs from both groups quiet immediately.

"Torsha?", he says, questioning the gathering in front of the guild house with but a single word.

As if on cue, Torsha speaks up, "Martek, we have it on good authority that someone, a member of your guild named Rook Hearth, has been named as the perpetrator of the assassination attempt on the Zulkir."

Nodding tentatively, Martek somewhat confirms, "Yes...Rook is a member of our guild, but I have no idea who you have been talking to. He is a fine member of our guild, a trusted merchant in his own right, and has the respect of many people in Hillsfar."

Martek searches in the crowd looking for Rook but is unable to find him, then looks to another of the thieves, "Have you seen

Rook recently?"

The thief replies, "I saw him about half a bell ago in the manor talking to Isthana before she left for Hillsfar Castle."

Martek nods and turns to Torsha, "I respect you, madam mage, but I can't just let you into our guild house, and I won't turn one of ours over to you."

Torsha's face turns a deep shade of red. Things look like they might explode.

Ask the character what they want to do?

- Torsha wants to get inside the Rogues guild.
- Martek Leer doesn't want to let all the mages in but he is more amenable to just allowing Torsha in.
- A DC 10 Wisdom (Insight) check shows that Martek doesn't want a fight.
- If the PCs don't do anything a fight breaks out between the mages and the rogues in the middle of the street.

If the characters suggest Torsha going inside with them as an escort, they gain a favor point with both guilds. They can also make a successful DC 12 Charisma (Persuasion) check to have the same result occur. Any Intimidation check results in a **favor point** being removed from whichever Guild was intimidated. Torsha doesn't seem to like bullies.

Roleplaying Martek Leer

Martek is a rakish figure in fine black and green leathers, with short black hair and green eyes. His thin mustache and sharp nose remind you of a bird of prey. He's impressed by cunning and strength and seems to have a love and appreciation for the finer things in life.

Ideal: The beautiful things in life are for me

Bond: I love my mistress more than anything

Flaw: I buckle when outside personal pressure is applied to me

Martek Leer leads the group to an empty study. He looks puzzled, "Hmmm, he's not here..."

Whichever character has the highest passive Perception notices there are some drops of blood next to a closed armoire in the corner of the study. If they reveal this information aloud to both guild leaders no favor points are gained or removed.

If they point it out to just Torsha or Martek they get a favor point for that guild only.

Once Martek sees the drops he walks over to the spot on the floor. If the characters follow him, point out to the same person who noticed the blood on the floor that there is also some blood on the handle of the armoire.

Regardless of who opens the armoire, the body of Rook falls from it with Isthana Ro's prized dagger sticking out of his back.

Martek lets out a gasp, as do other members of the Rogue's Guild, at seeing Isthana's dagger sticking out of Rook's spine. After careful inspection of the body, in his boot there is a letter asking Rook to steal some of the potion ingredients from the Mage's Guild, saying they were needed for something big on the day that the assassination attempt took place.

"Oh my", says Martek. "I can't believe Isthana would do something like this. It is her dagger, but she and Rook were friends. Let me see the letter."

Martek reads over the note, then says, "It looks like her handwriting, but why would she kill him? She's a member of the council."

That's when Torsha intervenes. "It's not for us to determine guilt or innocence, but to apprehend her so the courts can decide. You say she's at Hillsfar Castle. Then we should go to Hillsfar Castle, inform the First Lord of Isthana's alleged actions, and have her arrested."

If the characters insist strongly on catching Isthana Ro, they get a favor point with the Mage's Guild. If they say justice should be served but with a fair trial, they get favor point for both guilds. If they defend Isthana Ro, then they just get a favor point with the Rogue's Guild.

Note on this system: If the characters ever disagree or provide more than one answer, you should give or take away favor points as you see fit. However, the group is thought of as a whole, and any negative actions by a single character should trump any positive actions from a character in that moment. After all, it only takes one person to make a mess out of a social situation.

Notes for the GM. To help you understand the situation, here's what's going on:

- Martek Leer is being blackmailed to fabricate evidence that implicates Isthana.
- Martek killed Rook to set up Isthana.
- Isthana trusts Martek, so she would have no reason to suspect that he betrayed her.
- Martek can't be found out to be the traitor in this adventure. Any Wisdom (Insight) check against him reveals him to be telling the truth. He's that good at lying.

Next, it's on the characters to go to Hillsfar Castle, let the First Lord know what's transpired, and have Isthana arrested.



PART 4. APPREHEND ISTHANA RO

Scene: Seat of government, during business hours

Objective: Confront Isthana Ro and apprehend her.

What's Actually Happening: The PCs are caught in a struggle between the guilds of Hillsfar. The Red Plumes want to take the top spot but this won't come out until the final adventure of the series. Currently the Red Plumes want to capture Isthana Ro and gain the glory themselves to help their guild look good. They believe the characters are working for the First Lord and have no problem killing them off to say they were conspirators with Isthana to make the First Lord look weaker. Isthana has no idea what's going on or that she's being set up.

Your travel to Hillsfar Castle is subdued and weighed down by the burden of the news you bear. Word has traveled faster, however, and you find that both Commandant Jandra Gragdowel and Zulkir Dar'lon Ma await your arrival at the castle gate. They are flanked by a small contingent of guards and mages. Jandra's face is full of concern and anger. "Report please."

The characters can explain the situation as the contingent listens carefully. The Commandant instructs the characters to apprehend Isthana on her authority. Jandra knows Isthana is very capable and might escape without their help. She assigns a contingent of Red Plumes to accompany them, while the Zulkir insists that his Red Wizards accompany the characters as well. Jandra explains that Isthana is meeting with some senior officials on the second floor of the Castle and gives them directions.

You catch up to Isthana and her aides in the upper floors. The small woman turns to your group. Her intelligent eyes catch your posture and she is immediately on edge. The rest of her aides form a barrier around her as you approach.

"What is the meaning of this?" she says, addressing all of you.

Your response is cut off as Isthana grunts and staggers backwards, an arrow sprouting from her shoulder. Her hand comes away from the wound covered with blood. The moment of shock does not last long as her aides suddenly brandish concealed blades and the Red Plumes draw swords. A trio of magic darts flies past you, smashing into one of the rogues and a cry of pain comes from behind as a Red Wizard falls to the floor with a thrown knife in their knee.

In that brief exchange, Isthana races down the hall away from you, quickly turning a corner out of sight. The blood trail is easy enough to follow as you hurry after her, leaving a chaotic melee behind.

Have the PCs make Strength (Athletics) or Dexterity (Acrobatics) checks to determine how well they stay up with Isthana. Their check determines the initiative order of the next encounter. Ask them how they take the turns, corners, and passages of the hall to chase down their target.

Isthana knows the Castle well and always manages to stay ahead of the characters, though they can always catch signs of her passage--a stumble here, a drop of blood there, etc. If she wasn't struck with a poison that will eventually paralyze her she'd have gotten away.

As the chase moves forward, the characters, the Red Wizards, and the Red Plumes all become separated.

You come to a second-floor window opening on a courtyard where people practice fighting. Currently there are ropes and banners hanging from them, probably celebrating the talks between the Mulmaster elite and Hillsfar nobility

If the highest check was a 25 or higher they see Isthana climbing out the 2nd floor window. If the highest check was a 15 or higher they find Isthana on the rope across the courtyard trying to pick a lock on the shutters. If the highest check was lower than 15 then when the characters get to the window they find Isthana Ro being thrown through a shuttered window into the training ground below. She takes 10 (3d6) falling damage.

Use the **Assassin** for Isthana Ro.

The Shutters. They require a DC 15 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check to unlock them.

The Ropes. Balancing on the ropes is a DC 15 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check. On a failure, the character falls 30 feet, taking 10 (3d6) bludgeoning damage.

Courtyard Doors. They are locked but a DC 15 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check will unlock a door.

Development

Isthana is poisoned. Every action she takes has disadvantage. If she drops below 50 hp, she surrenders. To that, if Isthana does get through the shuttered window she comes crashing out another one of them, having been thrown through it by one of the Red Plumes. She takes 10 (3d6) bludgeoning damage when she hits the ground.

If she doesn't get through the shuttered window and ends up in the courtyard, have the Red Plumes enter on round three or after she surrenders. If Isthana is knocked below 0 hp she automatically makes her first death save.

If Isthana surrenders before the Red Plumes show up, read the following:

Isthana leans against a wall. Her face is pale and her breathing is labored beyond what her injuries should cause. "Poison," you hear her mutter under her breath.

"Very well, heroes," Isthana says sarcastically and coughs up some blood, "I surrender—on one condition. We will see Vuhm together and sort out this sordid mess. Do I have your word to deliver me only to his custody?"

When she says that, the doors burst open into the courtyard and several warriors in Red Plume uniforms enter. One of the Red Plumes opens one of the shuttered windows on the second floor. She is a tall, statuesque woman in ornate plate armor and flowing red cape with a longbow. She does not spare any of you more than a glance before her gaze settles on Isthana.

"Double-crossing adventurers! They're in league with her! Kill her conspirators and bring her to me—alive!"

The characters are confronted by four **gladiators** and one disguised **Erinyes** up in the window.

The gladiators have an Armor Class 18 (chain mail, shield).

Adjusting this Encounter

Here are some suggestions for adjusting this encounter, according to your group. These are not cumulative.

- **Very Weak or Weak:** Remove one gladiator.
- **Strong:** Add one gladiator.
- **Very Strong:** Add two gladiators.

Tactics. The gladiators move to surround the characters and prevent their escape, while the erinyes stays at a distance, targeting Isthana—or any character granting her cover—with a longbow. The enemies are intelligent and work together to down one opponent at a time before moving on. The erinyes is in disguise—a successful DC 20 Wisdom (Perception) check sees through it. She does not reveal herself or her wings unless it is advantageous, or the characters and Isthana attempt to flee by air. If Isthana dies, the Red Plumes make a fighting withdrawal and leave.

The erinyes dissolves and evaporates when killed, leaving no trace.

Isthana Ro takes no actions, as she is poisoned. The gladiators knock her out if they reduce her to 0 hp.

Treasure. Isthana Ro's +1 crossbow

Next. Go to Conclusion.

Conclusion

Isthana Ro. If the characters escort Isthana to the First Lord, he looks at her with great disappointment and despair before she is led off by Red Plumes and Commandant Jandra Gragdowel. The Zulkir is quite pleased with the characters' actions, pays them for their efforts, and ensures them of future friendship.

Her trial for the attempted assassination is set quickly and the outcome is assured...

Rewards

Experience (Min/Max: 4,500/7,500 Ea)

Total up all **combat experience** earned for defeated foes, and divide by the number of characters present in the combat. For **non-combat experience**, the rewards are listed per character.

Combat Awards

Name of Foe	XP per Foe
Fire Elemental	1800
Efreeti	7200
Mage	2300
Archmage	8400
Assassin	3900
Gladiator	1800
Erinyes	8400

Non-Combat Awards

Task or accomplishment	XP per Char.
Keep a fight from breaking out at the Rogues Guild hall	500
Don't kill anyone outside the Mages Guild hall	500

Treasure

The characters receive the following treasure, divided up amongst the party. Treasure is divided as evenly as possible. Gold piece values listed for sellable gear are calculated at their selling price, not their purchase price.

Treasure Awards

Item Name	GP Value
Zulkir or faction reward	500

Widowmaker

Weapon (Hand crossbow), uncommon

This +1 black wooden hand crossbow has a blood red heart engraved on it that bleeds a little every a bolt from it kills someone.

Player Rewards

For completing this mission, the characters earn downtime and renown as described in the D&D Adventurers League Dungeon Master's Guide (ALDMG).

Story Awards

Characters have the opportunity to earn the following story awards during this adventure.

Enmity in Hillsfar

The citizens of Hillsfar don't take kindly to being pushed around. They have started to report your movements and activities to your foes. As a result, whenever you are adventuring in the Hillsfar region, your enemies have advantage on Dexterity (Stealth) and Wisdom (Perception) checks used to determine surprise. The Story Reward "A Favor of Rogues" or "Savior of Hillsfar" can be used to negate the effects of this Story Reward.

You've got a friend in me

The Zulkir remembers his debts and debtors and spreads through the Red Wizard channels that you are a friend of Thay. You receive advantage on all ability checks when playing HILL2-1 and HILL2-3 in dealing with the Red Wizards. Each module has this Story Award and if a character receives three ranks of this, the effect is permanent in any dealings with the Red Wizards of Thay. If you have already received this Story Award from a previous adventure, this counts as earning another rank towards making it permanent.

Friend of the Mage's Guild

If you're in Hillsfar and need some help with a magical problem and have time to bring it to the Mage's Guild, you gain advantage on any check that deals with Arcana once per session. Also, any future interactions with members of the Hillsfar Mage's Guild that require skill checks have advantage.

Friend of the Rogue's Guild

If you're in Hillsfar and need some help with getting information about people or places in and around the city, you can reach out to the Rogue's Guild once per session and gain advantage on that check. Also, any future interactions with members of the Hillsfar Rogue's Guild that require skill checks have advantage.

DM Rewards

In exchange for running this adventure, you earn DM Rewards as described in the D&D Adventurers League Dungeon Master's Guide (ALDMG).

Appendix:

NPC / Monster Statistics

Fire Elemental

Large elemental, neutral

Armor Class 13

Hit Points 102 (12d10 + 32)

Speed 50 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	17 (+3)	16 (+3)	6 (-2)	10 (+0)	7 (-2)

Damage Immunities fire, poison

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks.

Condition Immunities exhaustion, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, restrained, unconscious

Senses Darkvision 60 ft., Passive Perception 10

Languages Ignan

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Fire Form The elemental can move through a space as narrow as 1 inch wide without squeezing. A creature that touches the elemental or hits it with a melee attack while within 5 feet of it takes 5 (1d10) fire damage. In addition, the elemental can enter a hostile creature's space and stop there. The first time it enters a creature's space on a turn, that creature takes 5 (1d10) fire damage and catches fire; until someone takes an action to douse the fire, the creature takes 5 (1d10) fire damage at the start of each of its turns.

Illumination The elemental sheds bright light in a 30-foot radius and dim light in an additional 30 feet.

Water Susceptibility For every 5 feet the elemental moves in water, or for every gallon of water splashed on it, it takes 1 cold damage.

Actions

Multiattack The elemental makes two touch attacks.

Touch Melee Weapon Attack: +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 10 (2d6 + 3) fire damage. If the target is a creature or a flammable object, it ignites. Until a creature takes an action to douse the fire, the target takes 5 (1d10) fire damage at the start of each of its turns.

Efreeti

Large elemental, lawful evil

Armor Class 17(natural armor)

Hit Points 200 (16d10 + 112)

Speed 40 ft., fly 60 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
22 (+6)	12 (+1)	24 (+7)	16 (+3)	15 (+2)	16 (+3)

Saving Throws INT +7, WIS +6, CHA +7

Damage Immunities fire

Senses Darkvision 120 ft., Passive Perception 12

Languages Ignan

Challenge 11 (7,200 XP)

Elemental Demise If the efreeti dies, its body disintegrates in a flash of fire and puff of smoke, leaving behind only equipment the efreeti was wearing or carrying.

Innate Spellcasting The efreeti's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 15, +7 to hit with spell attacks). It can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

At will: *detect magic*

3/day: *enlarge/reduce, tongues*

1/day each: *conjure elemental (fire elemental only), gaseous form, invisibility, major image, plane shift, wall of fire*

Actions

Multiattack The efreeti makes two scimitar attacks or uses its Hurl Flame twice.

Scimitar Melee Weapon Attack: +10 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 13 (2d6 + 6) slashing damage plus 7 (2d6) fire damage.

Hurl Flame Ranged Spell Attack: +7 to hit, range 120 ft., one target. Hit: 17 (5d6) fire damage.

Mage

Medium humanoid (any race), any alignment

Armor Class 12 (15 with mage armor)

Hit Points 40 (9d8)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
9 (-1)	14 (+2)	11 (+0)	17 (+3)	12 (+1)	11 (+0)

Saving Throws Int +6, Wis +4

Skills Arcana +5, History +6

Senses passive Perception 11

Languages any four languages

Challenge 6 (2,300 XP)

Spellcasting. The mage is a 9th-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 14, +6 to hit with spell attacks). The mage has the following wizard spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *fire bolt, light, mage hand, prestidigitation*

1st level (4 slots): *detect magic, mage armor, magic missile, shield*

2nd level (3 slots): *misty step, suggestion*

3rd level (3 slots): *counterspell, fireball, fly*

4th level (3 slots): *greater invisibility, ice storm*

5th level (1 slot): *cone of cold*

Actions

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

Archmage

Medium humanoid (any race), any alignment

Armor Class 12 (15 with mage armor)

Hit Points 99 (18d8 + 18)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	20 (+5)	15 (+2)	16 (+3)

Saving Throws Int +9, Wis +6

Skills Arcana +13, History +13

Senses passive Perception 12

Languages any six languages

Challenge 12 (8,400 XP)

Magic Resistance. The archmage has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Spellcasting. The archmage is an 18th-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 17, +9 to hit with spell attacks). The archmage can cast *disguise self* and *invisibility* at will and has the following wizard spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *fire bolt, light, mage hand, prestidigitation, shocking grasp*

1st level (4 slots): *detect magic, identify, mage armor, magic missile*

2nd level (3 slots): *detect thoughts, mirror image, misty step*

3rd level (3 slots): *counterspell, fly, lightning bolt*

4th level (3 slots): *banishment, fire shield, stoneskin*

5th level (3 slots): *cone of cold, scrying, wall of force*

6th level (1 slot): *globe of invulnerability*

7th level (1 slot): *teleport*

8th level (1 slot): *mind blank*

9th level (1 slot): *time stop*

*The archmage casts *mind blank*, *stoneskin* and *mage armor* spells on itself before combat.

Actions

Dagger. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target Hit: 4 (1d4+2) piercing damage.

Assassin

Medium humanoid (any race), any non-good alignment

Armor Class 15 (studded leather)

Hit Points 78 (12d8 + 24)

Speed 30ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (+0)	16 (+3)	14 (+2)	13 (+1)	11 (+0)	10 (+0)

Saving Throws Dex +7, Int +5

Skills Acrobatics +7, Deception +4, Perception +4, Stealth +11

Damage Resistances poison

Senses passive Perception 14

Languages Thieves' cant plus any two languages

Challenge 8 (3,900 XP)

Assassinate. During its first turn, the assassin has advantage on attack rolls against any creature that hasn't taken a turn. Any hit the assassin scores against a surprised creature is a critical hit.

Evasion. If the assassin is subjected to an effect that allows it to make a Dexterity saving throw to take only half damage, the assassin instead takes no damage if it succeeds on the saving throw, and only half damage if it fails.

Sneak Attack (1/Turn). The assassin deals an extra 13 (4d6) damage when it 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

Multiattack. The assassin makes two shortsword attacks.

Shortsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 6 (1d6 + 3) piercing damage, and the target must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw, taking 24 (7d6) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Light Crossbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, range 80/320 ft., one target. Hit: 7 (1d8 + 3) piercing damage, and the target must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw, taking 24 (7d6) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Gladiator

Medium humanoid (any race)

Armor Class 16 (Studded Leather, Shield)

Hit Points 112 (15d8 + 45)

Speed 30ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	15 (+2)	16 (+3)	10 (+0)	12 (+1)	15 (+2)

Saving Throws Str +7, Dex +5, Con +6

Skills Athletics +10, Intimidation +5

Damage Resistances poison

Senses passive Perception 11

Languages Any one language (usually Common)

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Brave. The gladiator has advantage on saving throws against being frightened.

Brute. A melee weapon deals one extra die of its damage when the gladiator hits with it (included in the attack).

Actions

Multiattack. The gladiator makes three melee attacks or two ranged attacks.

Spear. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 11 (2d6 + 4) piercing damage, or 13 (2d8 + 4) piercing damage if used with two hands to make a melee attack.

Shield Bash. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. Hit: 9 (2d4 + 4) bludgeoning damage. If the target is a Medium or smaller creature, it must succeed on a DC 15 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone.

Reactions

Parry. *Melee Weapon Attack:* The gladiator adds 3 to its AC against one melee attack that would hit it. To do so, the gladiator must see the attacker and be wielding a melee weapon.

Erinyes

Medium fiend, lawful evil

Armor Class 18(plate)

Hit Points 153 (18d8 + 72)

Speed 30 ft. (fly 60 ft.)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	16 (+3)	18 (+4)	14 (+2)	14 (+2)	18 (+4)

Saving Throws Dex +7, Con +8, Wis +6, Cha +8

Damage Resistances Cold; Bludgeoning, Piercing, and Slashing from Nonmagical Attacks that aren't Silvered

Damage Immunities Fire, Poison

Condition Immunities Poisoned

Senses Truesight 120 ft., Passive Perception 12

Languages Infernal, Telepathy 120 ft.

Challenge 12 (8,400 XP)

Hellish Weapons The erinyes' weapon attacks are magical and deal an extra 13 (3d8) poison damage on a hit (included in the attacks).

Magic Resistance The erinyes has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Actions

Multiattack The erinyes makes three attacks.

Longsword *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 8 (1d8 + 4) slashing damage, or 9 (1d10 + 4) slashing damage if used with two hands, plus 13 (3d8) poison damage.

Longbow *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, range 150/600 ft., one target. Hit: 7 (1d8 + 3) piercing damage plus 13 (3d8) poison damage, and the target must succeed on a DC 14 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned. The poison lasts until it is removed by the lesser restoration spell or similar magic.

Reactions

Parry The erinyes adds 4 to its AC against one melee attack that would hit it. To do so, the erinyes must see the attacker and be wielding a melee weapon.

Maps

The Courtyard

