

# REMNANTS OF A DREAM

## *Part One of the Fire and Steel Resurgent Series*

Heroes of the Realms have risen to stand against several recent events. The schemes of foul villains would have caused catastrophe across the lands of Faerûn, had they not been thwarted. And although they were indeed thwarted ... there were those who escaped justice. Some of these remnants still scheme, still desire to make their dreams of destruction reality.

It is time for new heroes to rise ...

*Five One-Hour Mini-Adventures for 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> Level Characters*



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## INTRODUCTION

Welcome to *Remnants of a Dream*, a D&D Adventurers League™ adventure, part of the official D&D Adventurers League™ organized play system and The Role Initiative's *Fire and Steel Resurgent* series.

The adventure, a series of five mini-missions, takes place in and about the city of Hillsfar.

This adventure is designed for **three to seven 1<sup>st</sup>–2<sup>nd</sup> level characters** and is optimized for **five characters with an average party level (APL) of 1**. 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. Familiarize yourself with the adventure's appendices and handouts.
- Gather any resources you'd like to use to aid you in running this adventure—such as note cards, a DM screen, miniatures, and battle maps.
- 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 role-play 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 the players don't finish too early; provide them with a full play experience.

# ADVENTURE PRIMER

“Since the beginning of time, man has yearned to destroy the sun.”

—Mr. Burns

## ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

The Cults of Elemental Evil sought to scourge civilization from the face of Faerûn. Bringing forth their masters, the Princes of Elemental Evil would have only been the first step. The Princes would have then made the way ready for the Elder Elemental Eye to step into the world and wipe it clean of all they saw as corrupt.

The cults failed; thwarted by heroes of the realm. But some of their number escaped, as their numbers were never truly known. For a while, these cultists were content to have escaped with their lives and freedom. But the seed of their dream remained, the promise of rewards from the Eye.

The Cults have begun to reform. But before they can take action, they must regain their strength. For this, they need allies and they need items of power. Members of both the Cult of Eternal Flame and the Cult of the Black Earth have come to Hillsfar in search of both allies and items of power.

### LOCATION AND NPC SUMMARY

The following NPCs and locations feature prominently in this adventure.

**The Stop.** A way station which is usually the last stop on the Trade Road for caravans traveling to Hillsfar from Yûlash.

**The Plodding Plow.** A tavern within The Stop which is a favorite of travelers and locals alike.

**Finch.** A half-elf who has been hired by representatives of the five factions to handle the party's accommodations at The Plodding Plow.

### ADVENTURE OVERVIEW

The members of the party have been contacted by representatives of the Five Factions, who are looking for aspiring adventurers willing to help the recovering city of Hillsfar.

Using The Plodding Plow inn as a headquarters, the party will be dispatched to handle several investigations and missions in the area. Some of these missions may hint at something larger going on, but those are questions which will not be answered here.

The adventure is broken down into 6 parts:

**Introduction.** This section establishes the characters at The Plodding Plow and gives the players the opportunity to introduce themselves and interact.

**Mission 1.** The party is engaged by a young druid to investigate a cave in which the cultists of the Eternal Flame were interested.

**Mission 2.** The party is engaged to prevent an alliance between a group of outcast drow and remnants of an elemental cult.

**Mission 3.** The party is engaged to investigate a series of arsons at some local horse farms.

**Mission 4.** The party is hired to prevent the theft of a potentially dangerous object.

**Mission 5.** The party is engaged to help determine why Zhentarim contacts at the docks have stopped communicating.

### ADVENTURE HOOKS

The factions of the Realms have put out a call for adventurers. In the wake of several world shaking events, the heroes of the lands have been stretched thin. Many are engaged in the North, others have found themselves pulled to far-flung lands, and still others have fallen in the defense of Faerûn.

The characters are among those who have been called, but some of the characters may find the following Adventure Hooks engaging:

**Legacy of a Hero.** Characters who are related to existing player characters, either by blood or by experiences, may have been contacted by their relative. They have been encouraged to join the fight, and to follow in their footsteps (or to be somehow better than their mentor)

**Defender of the People.** Hillsfar and the areas surrounding the city have suffered in the past few years. Characters who are local to Hillsfar may have seen personal tragedy and seek to rise above it, either to become a protector of the innocence, or simply so they will never be a victim again.

**Agent of the Factions.** Characters who have the Faction Agent background have been sent to Hillsfar to bolster the restoration efforts in that city and in the Cormanthor.

**Sent by a Mentor.** Many character concepts involve a mentor figure. That mentor figure may be an established member of one of the factions, or may have contacts within that faction.

**It's a job, right?** The character may simply be in it for the money. While initial jobs may not pay a great deal, they would establish the character as a reliable agent for future more lucrative deals.

As this is an adventure targeted at new players, these hooks are presented to inspire players to join the story.

## INTRODUCTION: THE PLODDING PLOW

The party begins the adventure in a small village commonly known as “The Stop”. It is the last stop on the trade way from Yûlash to Hillsfar. As such, it is a place that caters to travelers. Local farmers and craftspeople offer their wares in shops and stalls.

In past years, most of the villagers in and about this way station would have been human, but as the new First Lord has relaxed the Great Law of Humanity, there are more non-humans present amongst those selling their wares.

Each of the characters have come to this way station for reasons of their own. But each of them has learned that a man named Finch is hiring adventurers for work. Some characters may have heard this through a mentor or through a contact in the factions. Others may have learned this by asking merchants and locals where a hero might find work. Still others may have seen a sign on the door of The Plodding Plow which reads:

**Adventurers sought for contract work.  
Inquire within (Seek Finch)**

The Plodding Plow is not hard to find. The common room of the inn is packed with individuals of various races, some enjoying meals, others negotiating business deals. Anyone who asks after Finch will be directed to a half-elf who is sitting beside the door to a private dining area.

### GENERAL FEATURES

The Plodding Plow has the following general features:

**Ceilings.** Fifteen feet to a high, open ceiling with exposed joists and struts.

**Light.** During the day, ample light streams in through the windows. At night, numerous oil lamps are placed on the tables.

**Fireplace.** A fire is typically burning in the common room, except on the hottest days of the year. The fireplace in the private room is typically not lit, except on demand.

Finch is just a middleman. He’s simply here to arrange for the room and to take care of minor tasks for the party. He knows the merchants well enough to help them obtain any gear from the *Player’s Handbook*.

As the party settles into the room and is given a hot meal and a tankard of ale or mead, have the players introduce themselves to each other and to you. Use this opportunity to collect information from each of the characters that you would like to have available to you during the game. This could include the following:

- Passive Perception, Passive Insight
- Character Class and Levels
- Character Faction

Finch will be ensuring that the party is provided with meals, and will arrange for a small sideboard in the room to be replenished. Some drinks will be provided, but characters who insist on indulging heavily (either in quantity or quality) may find themselves being asked to foot that part of the bill themselves.

### ORDER OF MISSIONS

You can proceed with the mini-missions in any order. Completing any mission will not prevent a character from participating in any of the others.

**Time between missions.** As these missions are geared towards low-level characters, the DM may wish to allow the party to take long rests between missions. However, keep in mind that some veteran players may enjoy the challenge of having their resources limited. Feel free to award inspiration to players who have expended resources that require a long rest to recover (spells, for example), but who proceed to the next mission without the benefit of that rest.

## MISSION ONE. THE ELEMENTALIST'S CAVE

The party is engaged by a young druid to investigate a cave in which the cultists of the Eternal Flame were interested.

### BEHIND THE SCENES

A group of dark cultists, known as the Cult of the Eternal Flame has been searching for items of power with which to rebuild their strength. This cult worships a being called Imix, the Prince of Evil Fire, and strive to 'scour corrupt civilization' from the face of the world with as much fire as they can muster.

While this cult was not much of a problem around Hillsfar, some characters may remember that they did cause problems in several areas of the North and were responsible for great devastation in the city of Mulmaster before the cult was shattered.

But they were not wiped out entirely. Some of their number have regrouped and are working to rebuild their strength. To this end, a group has been dispatched to seek a powerful staff, one which belonged to a powerful elemental named Jhesrhi Coldcreek, and which is reputed to be sentient.

### A CHANCE ENCOUNTER

The cultists followed clues to a small cave west of The Stop where Jhesrhi had constructed a vault. But before they were able to puzzle out how to enter the vault, they were discovered by a Red Plume patrol.

The cultists fought to the death, taking most of the soldiers with them. Two surviving Red Plumes, who were near death, were discovered by a young druid who now seeks to hire the party to investigate the cavern and Jhesrhi's Vault.

### THE DRUID'S REQUEST

Shortly after the party has arrived at the Plow and made their introductions. Finch will bring Arbella in to meet the party.

### ROLEPLAYING ARBELLA RIVERSTONE

This young human druid attempts to live a very simple life, dressing in simple wool dresses. She is typically adorned with flowers, both embroidered in the cloth as well as real flowers which have been pinned and woven into her garb and her reddish blonde hair. She has a smile ready for most people.

Arbella grew up in the area, and has a strong connection to the people of The Stop. As many of the local people look to her for advice and strength, she tries to keep a stoic demeanor, but this situation is new to her, so she may seem stressed once alone with the party.

### THE DRUID'S STORY

Arbella will explain that she encountered two wounded soldiers on the road while she was bringing a wagon back to a local farm. One was near death, and the other had suffered grievous wounds. The second rambled about cultists and fire as he passed in and out of consciousness. The young druid brought the soldiers to a local farm, where she stabilized their conditions before investigating the area herself.

### WHO ARE THE RED PLUMES?

Some players may not be familiar with the Red Plumes. If so, Arbella will tell them that they are the private army of the First Lord of Hillsfar, and often act as peacekeepers. **This is not entirely accurate**, but it is what the young woman will tell the party as she has a slightly skewed opinion of the Plumes.

Arbella did not investigate the cavern but did investigate the bodies. On one of the cultists, she found a series of notes suggesting that the group was investigating the area for the vault of Jhesrhi Coldcreek. The notes describe the general area west of The Stop and describe the staff that she was reputed to have carried.

Knowledgeable members of the party (those who succeed on a DC 13 Intelligence (Arcana) check) may know stories of Jhesrhi, and that she carried a staff imbued with powerful magics and was reputed to be sentient. If the party does not know this information, have Arbella inform them.

She also found a pouch on one of the cultists, which she presents to the party. Within the pouch are six stone hemispheres. There was also some coin, which she is withholding so that she has something to pay the party with.

### THE STONES

A quick inspection reveals the following:

- All six sphere pieces have writing on them.
- Three of the pieces each have the name of a race upon them (dwarves, elves, and humans).
- The other three pieces each have a symbol corresponding to an element upon them (air, fire, and water).

### Combining a Race Piece with an Element Piece.

The stones have a slight magnetic quality to them. Touching a race and an element piece together along the flat sides will cause them to click together. It takes very little effort to pull them apart.

**Other combinations.** It is always possible that players may try to find other ways to connect the pieces. For example, they may try to hold two Element pieces together. The stones will not stick together to form a sphere in this way, but this will not harm the stones in any way.



## THE JOB

Arbella wishes to hire the party to investigate the cavern. While she does intend to share their findings with the Red Plumes, she wants the party to have a look around. She is worried that Jhesrhi's staff might be there and doesn't trust the Red Plumes enough to allow them to have it.

She will pay the party 75 gp after they fully investigate the cave. She is fine with the party keeping what they find within the cavern with two stipulations.

First, they must let her know what they find and give her the opportunity to catalog or even copy of their findings. While she believes she knows what the cult was looking for, she has contacts in a group called The Emerald Enclave who may know more.

Second, she warns them that if they find a staff which seems to radiate heat, they are not to touch it. Without the proper precautions, touching it could instantly incinerate them.

**DM Note.** Arbella's concerns about the staff are based on some stories that she has heard. While they may be overblown, the young druid certainly believes them.

## TRAVELING TO THE CAVERN

The cavern is about 4 miles away, which should take most parties about an hour to walk. The party will turn off the trade road and will follow a secondary road which leads out to farms. About twenty minutes up this path, the party will come across a pair of large stones in a small copse of trees on the western side of the path.

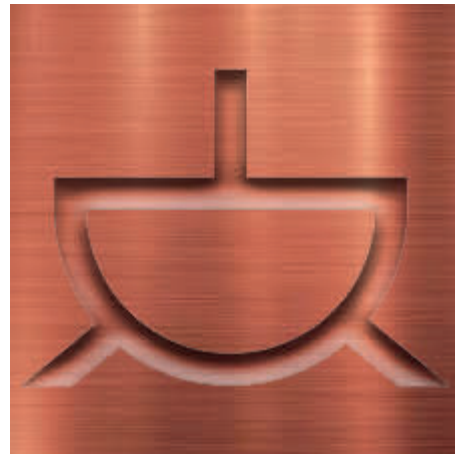
Between the stones is a narrow path, one which most travelers would not have even noticed. But the party had been told to look for it, and the wounded Plumes left a smear of blood across the rocks as they stumbled away.

The path leads down into a small depression within the trees. Within a small clearing at the end of the path, there are several dead bodies.

## INVESTIGATING THE SCENE

Nine bodies lie about the clearing. From the armor and weapons, the party can identify four of them as Red Plumes. These individuals have nothing of interest on their persons.

The other five are dressed in different styles, but each bears an insignia, some on amulets, others have the sigil embossed on leather vambraces.



Individuals versed in the recent history of the North may recognize this sigil if they succeed on a DC 12 Intelligence (History) check as being that of the Cult of the Eternal Flame. From their dress, and from the burn marks on several of the Red Plumes, it will not be difficult to discern—by succeeding on a DC 10 Intelligence (Arcana) check—that two of them were spell casters.

The cultists do not have anything of interest on them. Arbella took the notes which they had on them, and no small part of the gold she is paying the party came from the cult's pockets.

## THE CAVE

Beyond the bodies lies a dark cave, extending into the hillside. The cavern is not lit, but only extends about 30 feet into the hillside.

The door has been shaped out of the wall itself. Rough walls of the cave leading up to the door are a sharp contrast to the remarkably smooth surface of the door.

Characters who investigate the cave construction and succeed on a DC 10 Intelligence (Investigation) check will confirm that there was no mining here; the door was shaped by powerful earth magicks. (Characters with proficiency in mining tools or stone-crafting tools gain advantage on this roll. A dwarf with either of these proficiencies makes the check automatically.)

## THE DOOR

A thin line runs down the center of the door, suggesting that the 10x10 block of stone is a pair of doors, but the line doesn't seem to run more than a quarter inch into the stone. Likewise, the seams around the door only seem to be carved in, there are no gaps around the door.

Upon the door is an inscription, a puzzle which the party must solve to open the door. The inscription on the door is too fine to be read from outside the cave. **Player Handout 1** reproduces the inscription.

**Fire must come first but the Race of Man aspires to soar in the sky.**

**Conflict between the dwarves and humans must be mediated.**

Beneath the door are three rounded indentations, each 2 inches in diameter. The indentations are 3 feet apart.

### UNLOCKING THE DOOR

To unlock the door, the party must use the stones provided by Arbella. All three Race Pieces must be paired with the correct Element Piece, and then held in the correct indentation. However, it must be held in place by a living creature.

Attempting to hold them in place using magic or other objects will not unlock the door. All combinations could be tried using this method, with absolutely no result. (It is recommended that should a party seem to be following this path that the DM advise them that this will not work.)

If the stones are placed in an incorrect combination, each stone will inflict 1d4 points of the appropriate elemental damage to the person holding it in place (fire damage for the fire stone, cold damage for the water stone, and lightning damage for the air stone.)

### PUZZLE SOLUTION

This is an Einstein-style puzzle. The players need to pair a Race piece with the appropriate Element piece and place it in the appropriate slot. **Player Handout 2** may be helpful for players who wish to map this out.

- The Fire and Dwarf stones must be paired and placed in the first slot.
- The Water and Elf stones must be paired and placed in the second slot.
- The Air and Human stones must be paired and placed in the third slot.

### WHEN THE CORRECT COMBINATION IS USED

When the stones are aligned properly, the spheres spin in place and are absorbed into the door. Dust falls from the seams around the door as they deepen into the stone, separating it from the surrounding wall.

The walls will seem to grumble and shake throughout this transformation, and when it is complete, it will be silent for a moment before the doors begin to open with a grinding sound.

### TRICKS OF THE TRADE

If the party is having problems with this challenge, don't give the solution away, but offer the following:

**After 5 minutes:** A character who successfully makes a DC 13 Intelligence (History) will recall that "Fire must come first" is actually a dwarven forge smith's saying. (Dwarves make this check with advantage)

**After 10 minutes:** Consider pointing out any errors in the party's current placement. If this does not help them complete the puzzle, use your discretion on how to proceed.

### INSIDE THE CHAMBER

The doors open to a large chamber. A half-circle landing extends past the door for about 10 feet, and then steps descend into the room. It's not clear what this room was intended for, as it is mostly empty.

The walls are smooth, as if they were shaped like wet clay. However, as perfectly as this room seems to have been created, the cavern was not properly protected against the elements. In the years since it was created, several areas along the walls have begun to erode and leak, staining the walls in many places.

The room is not lit, but once the party is able to see the other end of the 60' room, they will see a large stone table. Upon the table appears to be a large pile of packs and clothing. Behind the table, there is also a small alcove which holds several books, scrolls, vials, and other small items.

The floor appears to be made of 5-foot square blocks, 4 squares by 8 squares. Upon the face of each block is a symbol. In the first row, it begins with a flame, then three lines suggesting a gust of wind, a drop of water, and then a mountain. The next row follows the same order but begins with the wind symbol. The third begins with the drop of water, and so on.

The pattern on the floor is not important, there are no further traps in the room. Stepping on a block will cause it to depress slightly, but no other effect occurs.

### TRICKS OF THE TRADE

**Play up the red herring.** Allowing the party to think there is another trap in the room will make the ghastr's attack be more of a surprise to the players (if not just their characters). If they search for traps, allow their Investigation checks to simply indicate that "they do not detect anything" instead of "there are no traps".

### THE BEAST

When anyone comes within 30 feet of the table, the occupant of the chamber will become aware of their presence.

A *ghast* lies in wait underneath the packs. For reasons that even the prisoner doesn't remember, Jhesrhi sealed it within the chamber when she left.

It does not comprehend that it is already dead, and its inability to understand this has driven it completely insane. It has wreaked ruin upon itself in rage and grief, rendering its original race and gender unrecognizable.

The creature will remain absolutely still, watching the party from beneath the rags and refuse. (If the party's strength dictates that there are multiple undead, the other undead are sitting motionless behind the table. They will also move to attack when their master strikes.)

Extremely observant characters—with a passive Perception of 16 or higher—will notice a dark orb of some sort (the ghost's eye) within the pile.

Once a character has come within 10 feet, the creature will spring to attack. It is possessed only by a desire to retain anything in the room, and it will scream "Mine!" over and over as it attacks.

If the party decides to open fire on the pile before investigating, the ghost will have full cover from attacks and resistance to all damage while in the pile. Area of effect attacks could also damage the scrolls and other items in the alcove.

#### SETTING UP THE ENCOUNTER

##### *Weak*

- **Ghoul:** AC 12, 22 hp, Init +2  
This ghoul also possesses the ghost's Stench feature

##### *Average*

- **Ghast:** AC 13, 36 hp, Init +3

##### *Strong*

- **Ghast:** AC 13, 36 hp, Init +3
- **Ghoul:** AC 12, 22 hp, Init +2

##### *Very Strong*

- **Ghast:** AC 13, 36 hp, Init +3
- **Ghoul (2):** AC 12, 22 hp, Init +2

#### TREASURE

Buried within the piles of pack are some supplies which have long since rotted away. Still salvageable is an old hooded lantern and a small hourglass.

Within the alcove are several items. The first are a series of scrolls containing arcane instructions. Characters who are trained in Arcana may attempt to make a DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana) check. Those who succeed can deduce that these are notes and fragmented instructions on how the traps within the floor panels would be charged and set to repel any intruders.

There are also several vials and jars, which hold the remnants of alchemical materials. These have no value as the containers were not intended for long term storage and have long since dried and spoiled.

Finally, there is also a traveling spellbook in the alcove, although water has begun down the side of

the shelf where it has been resting. While much of it has been rotted, there is enough remaining that a wizard could use them to learn the following spells: *absorb elements*, *burning hands*, *ice knife*, and *continual flame*.

#### DEVELOPMENT

Investigating the room more thoroughly does not yield any information about the purpose of this chamber. It somehow feels unfinished, as if it had been hollowed out in preparation for something to be stored here.

The stone table has a ring runes lightly carved around the edge. Again, a successful DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana) check will reveal some, but not all, of the purpose behind the runes. They are unfinished; awaiting the last marks and an investment of arcane energy. Once complete, the runes would exhibit a minor evocation magic ... something to do with cold.

When the party returns to The Plodding Plow, Arbella will be eager to hear their tale, and as promised, will pay the party the 75 gp reward for their information. She is at a loss as to what the chamber may have been intended for. But she would agree with the party's assessment if someone suggested that it was unfinished, and that it was intended to house something.



## REWARDS

Make sure players note their rewards on their adventure log sheets. Give your name and DCI number (if applicable) so players can record who ran the session.

### EXPERIENCE

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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
Ghast	450
Ghoul	200

#### NON-COMBAT AWARDS

Task or Accomplishment	XP Per Character
Solving the Puzzle (without help)	25
Solving the Puzzle (with help)	10

The **minimum** total award for each character participating in this adventure is **75 experience points**.

The **maximum** total award for each character participating in this adventure is **100 experience points**.

### TREASURE

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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
Arbella's payment	75 gp

**Consumable magic items** should be divided up however the group sees fit. If more than one character is interested in a specific consumable magic item, the DM can determine who gets it randomly should the group be unable to decide.

**Permanent magic items** are divided according to a system detailed in the D&D Adventurers League Dungeon Master's Guide.

### TRAVELING SPELLBOOK

Much of this old leather-bound book is ruined, pages lost to rot over the years. However, a wizard may attempt to copy the following spells into their spell book.

1st level: *absorb elements*, *burning hands*, *ice knife*

2nd level: *continual flame*

This item can be found in **Player Handout 3**.

### RENOWN

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**Members of the Emerald Enclave** earn **one renown** at the end of this adventure—other characters earn no renown.

### DM REWARD

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

## APPENDIX. DRAMATIS PERSONAE

The following NPCs are featured prominently in this adventure:

**Finch (*finch*).** A half-elf who has been retained by several members of the factions to act as a liaison between the party and the members of the factions who will be hiring them. Sort of a dull individual, and has been relegated to this role because he has little ambition.

**Arbella Riverstone (*AR-bell-a river-stoun*).** A young human druid who assists the farmers in and about The Stop. New to her role, but has gained the respect of the locals, who consider her one of their own.

## APPENDIX. MONSTER/NPC STATISTICS

### GHAST

Medium undead, chaotic evil

Armor Class 13

Hit Points 36 (8d8)

Speed 30 ft.

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STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	17 (+3)	10 (+0)	11 (+0)	10 (+0)	8 (-1)

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**Damage Resistances** necrotic

**Damage Immunities** poison

**Condition Immunities** charmed, exhaustion, poisoned

**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

**Languages** Common

**Challenge** 2 (450 XP)

**Stench.** Any creature that starts its turn within 5 feet of the ghastr must succeed on a DC 10 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned until the start of its next turn. On a successful saving throw, the creature is immune to the ghastr's Stench for 24 hours.

**Turning Defiance.** The ghastr and any ghouls within 30 feet of it have advantage on saving throws against effects that turn undead.

### ACTIONS

---

**Bite.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 12 (2d8 + 3) piercing damage.

**Claws.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (2d6 + 3) slashing damage. If the target is a creature other than an undead, it must succeed on a DC 10 Constitution saving throw or be paralyzed for 1 minute. The target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.

### GHOUL

Medium undead, chaotic evil

Armor Class 12

Hit Points 22 (5d8)

Speed 30 ft.

---

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
13 (+1)	15 (+2)	10 (+0)	7 (-2)	10 (+0)	6 (-2)

---

**Damage Immunities** poison

**Condition Immunities** charmed, exhaustion, poisoned

**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

**Languages** Common

**Challenge** 1 (200 XP)

### ACTIONS

---

**Bite.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 9 (2d6 + 2) piercing damage.

**Claws.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (2d4 + 2) slashing damage. If the target is a creature other than an elf or undead, it must succeed on a DC 10 Constitution saving throw or be paralyzed for 1 minute. The target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.

## APPENDIX. ENCOUNTER SETUP

### WITHIN THE VAULT

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#### WEAK PARTY STRENGTH (200 XP)

- **Ghoul:** AC 12, 22 hp, Init +2  
This ghoul also possesses the ghast's Stench feature

#### AVERAGE PARTY STRENGTH (450 XP)

- **Ghast:** AC 13, 36 hp, Init +3

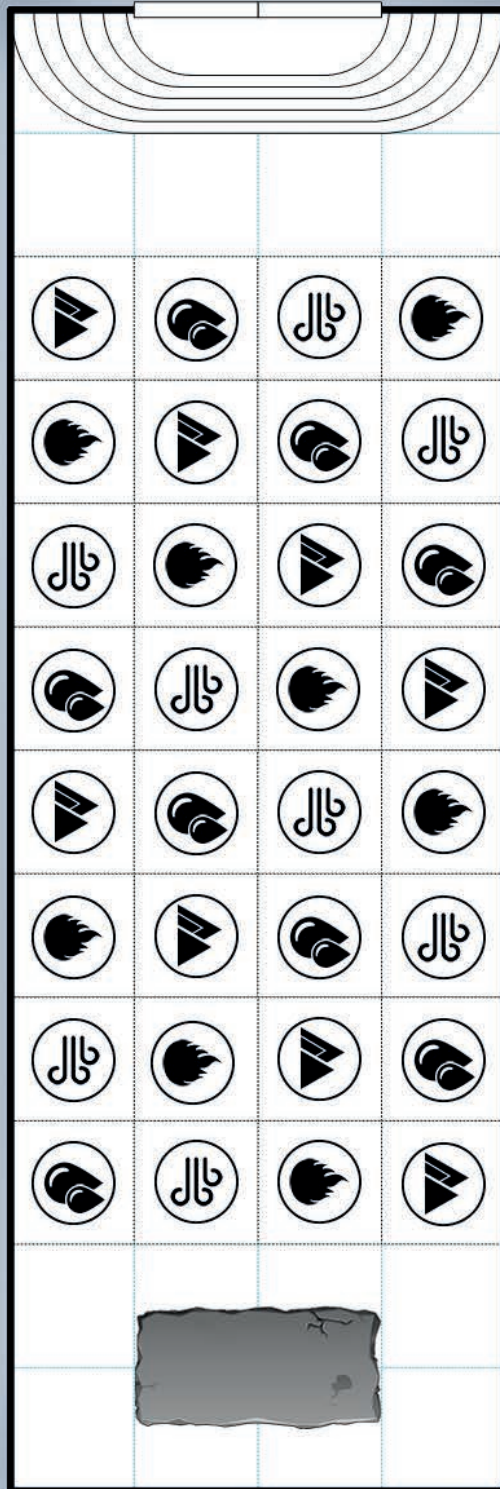
#### STRONG PARTY STRENGTH (650 XP)

- **Ghast:** AC 13, 36 hp, Init +3
- **Ghoul:** AC 12, 22 hp, Init +2

#### VERY STRONG PARTY STRENGTH (850 XP)

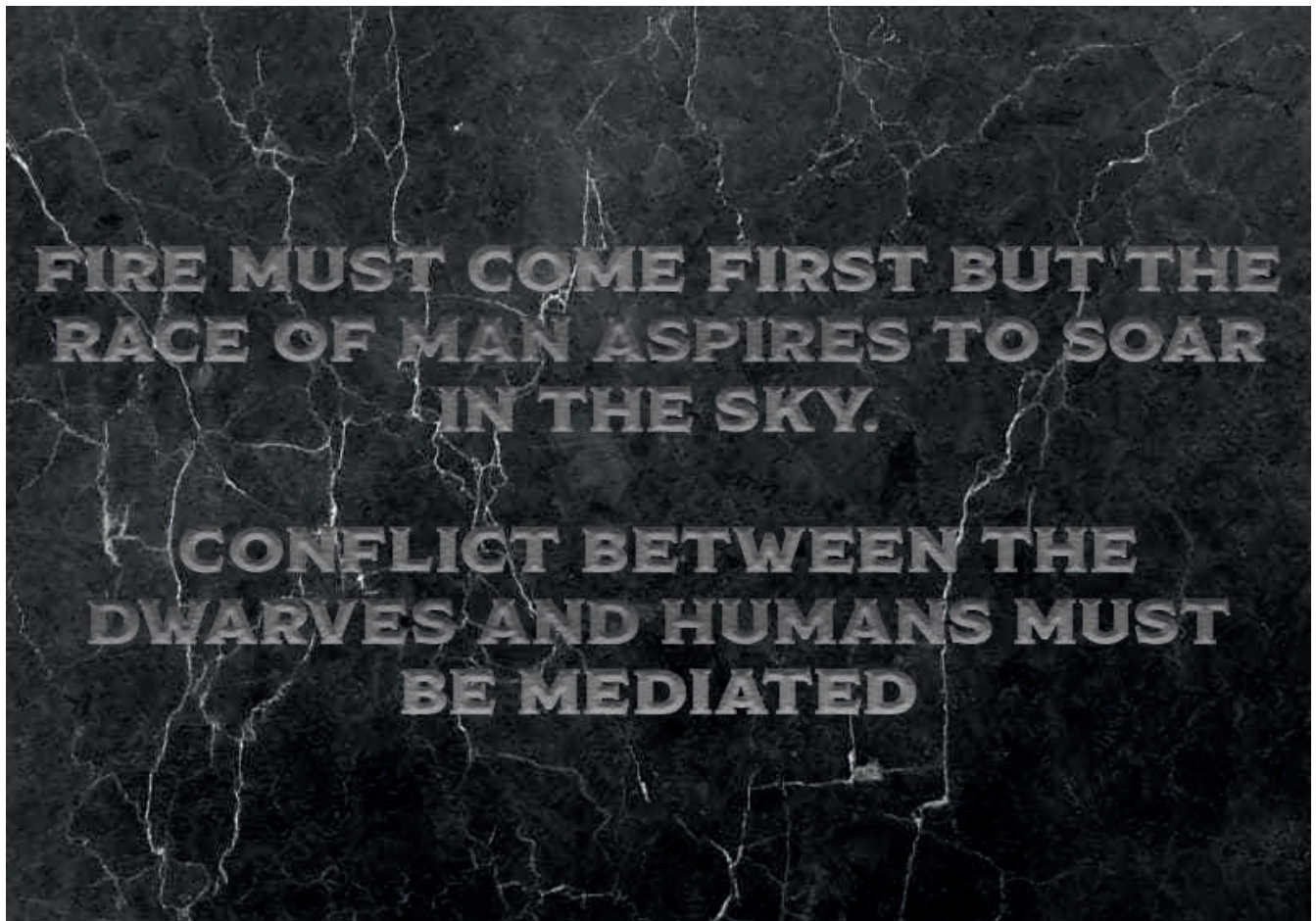
- **Ghast:** AC 13, 36 hp, Init +3
- **Ghoul (2):** AC 12, 22 hp, Init +2

# APPENDIX. THE ELEMENTALIST'S VAULT MAP





## PLAYER HANDOUT 1: DOOR INSCRIPTION



# PLAYER HANDOUT 2. DOOR PUZZLE WORKSHEET

	1st	2nd	3rd	Human	Dwarf	Elf
Air			.			.
Water			.			.
Fire			.			.
Human			.			.
Dwarf			.			.
Elf			.			.

## PLAYER HANDOUT 3. SPELLBOOK

### TRAVELING SPELLBOOK

Much of this old leather-bound book is ruined, pages lost to rot over the years. However, a wizard may attempt to copy the following spells into their spell book.

1st level: *absorb elements, burning hands, ice knife*

2nd level: *continual flame*

## MISSION TWO. ALLIANCES

The party is engaged to prevent an alliance between a group of outcast drow and remnants of an elemental cult.

### LOOKING FOR HELP

In the early afternoon, Finch will open the door to the private room to admit an elf dressed in weathered traveling clothes. (If the party has decided to roam about The Stop, someone from The Plodding Plow will come to collect them while this visitor waits in the private room.)

### ROLEPLAYING GALEN

Galen is a woodsman who spends much of his time attempting to be as unnoticeable as possible. His movements will be as subtle as possible, as if he is trying not to disturb anything around him.

He is a bit timid and may act shell-shocked around individuals who are loud and aggressive. He is out of his comfort zone when dealing with the party. But he has been asked to enlist them, so he will do his best.

Galen had been recruited by the Harpers to monitor a group of drow who have been camping in the outskirts of the Cormanthor Forest. Galen is not entirely clear on the sequence of events that led to the dark elves being displaced from the Underdark, only that it had to do with a demonic incident that occurred in their homeland.

When the demons were defeated, not all the drow returned to the Underdark. One of these groups seems to be gravitating around a drow named Belafein, an exiled weapons master of a minor house which was destroyed during the Rage of Demons. What was once the drow veteran and a few aides has grown into a much larger group, including more than one priestess. Neither the elves of Cormanthor nor the First Lord of Hillsfar see this as a bad thing. Both believe that when the group gains enough strength, Belafein will lead them back into the Underdark.

However, they have received word that a group of people are on their way to meet with Belafein. They intend to enlist him and those who will follow him in their crusade. Since the individuals leading this group are wanted in Mulmaster as being members of the Cult of the Black Earth, it is not believed that enlisting the services of a drow weapons master and his followers would be a good thing for the Realm.

Galen has been instructed to hire the party to stop any potential alliance.

### AVAILABLE CHOICES

The party has two options available to them.

**Dealing with the Cultists on the Road:** Galen's contacts have provided enough information to predict the path the cultists will travel. Should the party wish to deal the cultists on the road, there are two locations which Galen knows of which would make good ambush points.

Some players may question the morality of ambushing travelers; Galen will tell them that these are men who are wanted in Mulmaster for their involvement in the attacks on the city and the deaths of thousands. Still, the elf will let them know that he respects the desire to deal with this without bloodshed, and will ensure that he will be able to take any prisoners off their hands.

**Speaking their case to the Drow:** Some parties may choose to travel to the drow encampment in order to convince them not to join the cultists. Galen will point out two things:

- It would be exceptionally foolish to pick a fight within the drow encampment. Not only does the weapons master have a large number of warriors at his disposal, Belafein knows that the elves of the Cormanthor forest have their eyes on him. He has banished some of his own warriors from the camp when they could not keep the peace. We don't believe he did this out of any sort of goodness... but because he believes that any violence in his camp will give the elves a reason to come after them.
- Galen does not have anything to offer the party which might sway the weapons master. The party is on its own to come up with any ways to persuade the drow not to join the cultists.

### PAYMENTS

Galen is authorized to pay the party a total of 75 gp for the successful completion of either eliminating the cultists, or for convincing the drow not to join the cultists in a non-violent manner. Galen will let the party know that they will not be paid if they attack the drow, as both the elves of Cormanthor and the First Lord of Hillsfar have acknowledged and approved their presence. Attacking them might rally other groups of drow in the area to retaliate in some way.

### AMBUSHING THE CULTISTS

Galen has suggested two locations where they might be able to intercept the cultists.

- The first location has a bit of cover with an area where the party may be able to gain higher ground.
  - Slopes indicated on the map are difficult terrain to climb or descend.

- The second location is at an old ruined stone building. It's not clear what this building used to be, but hunters occasionally use it to clean game. The stone roof is cracked in many places, and the puddles on the floor suggest that it leaks when it rains.
  - The foliage here is not very dense. Players who are not trained in Stealth will not be able to hide anywhere except the stone building.

If the party chooses to ambush the cultists at the first location, the cultists will be accompanied by a **scout**. The scout will break off from the main group after this point. His job is to report back in case the group's leaders do not return from the meeting.

### SETTING UP THE ENCOUNTER

#### *Weak*

- **Acolyte (3)**: AC 10, 9 hp, Init +0
- **Guard (2)**: AC 16, 11 hp, Init +1

#### *Average*

- **Acolyte (3)**: AC 10, 9 hp, Init +0
- **Guard (2)**: AC 16, 11 hp, Init +1
- **Sacred Stone Monk**: AC 14, 22 hp, Init +2

#### *Strong*

- **Acolyte (4)**: AC 10, 9 hp, Init +0
- **Guard (2)**: AC 16, 11 hp, Init +1
- **Sacred Stone Monk (2)**: AC 14, 22 hp, Init +2

#### *Very Strong*

- **Black Earth Priest**: AC 17, 45 hp, Init +0
- **Guard (2)**: AC 16, 11 hp, Init +1

*Additional cultist at Site One (all party strengths)*

- **Scout**: AC 13, 16 hp, Init +2

### TREASURE

The cultists have 15 gp, a small tent, and the contents of an explorer's pack amongst them.

### CONVINCING THE DROW

Approaching the drow encampment will not be difficult, although anyone skilled in Survival or Stealth will be positive that they are being watched on their way in. Should a party wish to sneak into the encampment unseen, it will be difficult—they must succeed on a DC 18 Dexterity (Stealth) group check. Failure will result in the party being surrounded by a dozen drow warriors and then escorted into the encampment.

The camp is set on the edge of a clearing. Tents surround a large open area in a haphazard pattern, some clumped together and others staggered about the outskirts of the camp. Over the entire encampment, there appears to have been an effort to erect a large canopy. Numerous large poles have been erected around the tents. However, judging by

the scorch marks on numerous tarps, this has been less than successful.

When the party approaches, Belafein will be training some of his warriors. Predictably, even though the younger warriors are both armed with steel blades, the older drow, who is armored lightly will make quick work of them armed with only a short baton.

### ROLEPLAYING BELAFEIN

Belafein is a man who has been seen numerous betrayals over the past few years. The House he served is no more, thrown to the wolves during the Rage of Demons. He is considered a traditionalist by most of his contemporaries, and if he were 50 years younger, he would have found a place as a lesser weapons master in another House. But no weapons master would dare allow an alpha wolf into his den, and they whisper lies maligning his honor.

So he has been left to fend for himself, and for those who would follow him. He is very distrustful of all surface dwellers. For all their talk, he still sits as an exile, while the 'favorites of the Faction' regained their power below.

Belafein is a lean man, with long white hair braided into beaded cornrows. He remains quiet, both because he was trained to hold his tongue, and because his silence often causes others to reveal more than they had intended.

**Quote:** "Go on..."

When the fight ends (or if the party interrupts), Belafein will make his way to a chair at the edge of the fighting circle, which is the only chair in sight. About two dozen other drow warriors in the camp will begin to make their presence known. Additionally, two drow priestesses will emerge from their tents, each attended by a handmaiden. The two handmaidens will carry stools for the priestesses, placing them carefully equidistant ten paces away from Belafein.

Belafein will simply wait for the party to speak, not offering any introductions nor amenities. About a minute or three later, preferably at an appropriate point in the conversation, Graund and his group will appear from the other side of the circle, escorted by two more drow soldiers. The Black Earth cultist will be surprised at the party's presence, but will not let it dissuade him from speaking to the drow, including speaking over the party.

Graund has come to offer an opportunity to join his organization and to take a place in the world which is rightfully theirs. He will attempt to convince Belafein that the surface world sees them as evil villains, and that they offer no true opportunity. He offers Belafein a chance to "carve out what he are entitled to".



## ROLEPLAYING GRAUND

Graund is a patient man, one who has survived the cult's previous failures by considering his steps and statements before proceeding. Have the cult leader listen to the party's statements and consider his responses.

It will be possible to get under his skin. This is his opportunity to elevate himself within the newly reformed cult, and if the party is dismissive of his statements, he will begin to grow angry.

Additionally, Graund chafed under the leadership of Talia, and saw her as a conniving whore who he believed slept her way into a position of strength. This has left him a bit narrow minded, and he will not realize that Belafein is still deferring in a large way to the priestesses.

Belafein will remain silent while Graund questions the party's intent, calling them messengers and dupes of the establishment. What the cultist does not grasp will be the fact that Belafein's silence is driven in large part by discomfort.

As is the case with most drow males, Belafein has been subservient to the priestesses of his house throughout his entire career and life. Everything he had attained or that he possessed was only his by the grace of the Lady of his house. Now, he has power of his own, but he holds it precariously. Two priestesses have arrived seeking to use him as a rallying point for their own agendas. He is aware of their scheming, and that there are those in his ranks who are ambitious enough to gut him in his sleep should he lose favor with one (or both) of the priestesses.

The weapons master knows that both the priestesses will be swayed by the promises of power. There may be nothing for them to ever go back to beneath the ground. They will pretend to let the decision be his, but he is well aware that this is only a pretense, that each of them expects him to seek the option which is in her own best interest. And so, he will remain silent during this exchange, letting the party and the cultists argue amongst themselves.

## NO VIOLENCE HERE!

Belafein will not allow violence in his camp. A death here risks scrutiny by the surface folk, of a type he is not willing to endure. Graund is not aware of this, but will listen to the single warning Belafein will give.

## WE ATTACK THE DROW! ("WAIT, WHAT?")

The party is not expected to engage in combat with them. In fact, they have been specifically told not to. **Engaging in combat with the drow will cause the party to fail the mission.** However, should the party decide that the best way to stop the alliance is to kill the drow, then keep the following in mind:

- Remind the party that they do appear to be greatly outnumbered.
- After each round of combat, Belafein will encourage the party to stand down.
- On round one, a dozen drow will enter the area and engage the party. Two trios of additional drow will move to protect the priestesses.
- On round two, the priestesses will begin casting Hold Person on the party members. (DC 15 Wis save).
- If the party has not chosen to stand down by the end of the second round, or if they kill a drow, Belafein will enter the fray, and will attempt to cut the most dangerous targets down as fast as possible.
- Graund's forces will defend themselves, or if they are not the targets of the party's attack, they will join the fray on the second round.

This is NOT going to be a fair fight, which may bother some players who insist on the fight. However, the drow will not kill the party if they can help it. If the party is defeated or stands down after initially attacking, they will be thrown out of the camp. Belafein will not negotiate with people who attack his people.

## STAT BLOCK CHANGES

- Belafein wields a long sword. Replace the Greatsword attack with:  
**Longsword.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 12 (1d8 + 5) slashing damage.
- The drow priestesses have found that being above ground often limits the usefulness of the *web* spell:  
Replace *web* with *hold person*.

## CONVINCING THE DROW

The task of convincing the drow not to join the cultists should be based in roleplay. The party should explain why they think this is a bad idea. They will need to succeed on a series of three DC 14 Charisma (Persuasion) checks, which should be made during the course of roleplay.

Since Belafein will usually consider two people trying to make the same point to be annoying, **characters cannot gain advantage on checks by assisting each other** (unless the DM wishes to reward exceptional roleplay!). Likewise, characters trying to leverage spellcraft (including *guidance*) will seem treacherous to Belafein, **which will inflict disadvantage on the roll.**

However, methods where the players can gain advantage on one of the rolls include:

- Showing respect to the priestesses without snubbing the weapons master in the process.
- Speaking to the fact that the Underdark is the drow's true home will play to the desire that most of the drow have.
- Openly questioning the Cult's motives; specifically suggesting that the drow are intended to be pawns and fodder.
- Calling out the recent failures of the Cult of Elemental Evil.
- A drow player character participates in the conversation.

Reasons for gaining disadvantage on the rolls include:

- Being overly aggressive towards the cultist; making the drow believe that they would prefer to settle this in combat.
- Disrespecting the drow culture (for example, being rude to the priestesses)
- Attempting to leverage spell craft to assist the party's arguments.
- The very presence of a deep gnome player character.

Graund's arguments largely focus around the fact that he believes the drow's choices are limited to "crawling back to the Underdark and hoping a new master will claim them" or seeking their own glory alongside them. If the party calls them villains, the cultist will point out that the drow now live in the shadow of people who think they are worse than what the players accuse the cultists of.

However, Graund does not understand the intricacies of Belafein's positions. He sees the weapons master as someone who has thrown off the shackles binding him to the priestesses. He only speaks to Belafein directly, never to the priestesses. The party can use this to their advantage.

Players who attempt to use the Insight skill may make a DC 13 Wisdom (Insight) check. Success will allow a character to discern one of the following (provide one revelation per character making a successful check).

- Graund is only addressing Belafein, which seems to be discomfiting to many of the soldiers.
- The priestesses seem somehow affronted.
- Many of the soldiers seem discomfited by any mention of not returning home.
- Belafein's silence and stern nature strikes the character as if he is gauging all of the visitors as possible threats.

## ROLEPLAYING THE PRIESTESSES

Both of the priestesses are young, and displaced from their original houses. They are vying for control over Belafein and his followers. Neither will say anything during the debate, but will watch the petitioners (and each other) looking for weakness.

Unless the party succeeds in all three of the challenges, Belafein's decision will largely be made by the reactions of the priestesses.

## DEVELOPMENT

**If the party succeeds on all three of the Persuasion checks:** Belafein will tell the cultists to leave, that he has no interest in letting the cult engage his blades on their behalf, to die for their cause and to throw away what the drow have achieved and wish to achieve in exchange for the cult's goals.

He will request that the party let them leave unharmed, largely because he has no interest in dealing with another emissary from the cults. Repeated visits from the cultist will make it more difficult for him to convince the elves of Cormanthor that he has not struck a bargain with the cultists.

**If the party succeeds on one or two checks:** Belafein will tell both the party and the cultists to leave. They are not happy with the hospitality that they were promised, that they have been kept from the prime hunting lands. But they will not join their blades to those of the cult, as their promises seem hollow.

Both groups will be escorted out of the camp in opposite directions. The soldier leading the party will ask that the party let the cultists leave unharmed. Should they not return and report their failure to their masters, they will only send another emissary, and it will place Belafein's ability to remain neutral in jeopardy.

**If the party fails on all three challenges.** After both priestesses nod, Belafein agrees to go with the cultists and hear more about their offer. They do not promise to follow, only to listen.

He suggests that the party leaves now, and promises that in return for your apparent concern, the drow will permit the party safe passage out... should they leave now.

## RETURNING TO THE STOP

When the party returns to The Plodding Plow, Galen will want to hear the party's story. Assuming that the party succeeded in preventing the negotiations from being successful, Galen will pay them the 75 gp fee.

## REWARDS

Make sure players note their rewards on their adventure log sheets. Give your name and DCI number (if applicable) so players can record who ran the session.

### EXPERIENCE

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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
Acolyte	50
Black Earth Priest	700
Guard	25
Sacred Stone Monk	100

#### NON-COMBAT AWARDS

Task or Accomplishment	XP Per Character
Convincing the drow to not join the Cult	100

The **minimum** total award for each character participating in this adventure is **75 experience points**.

The **maximum** total award for each character participating in this adventure is **100 experience points**.

### 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
Galen's payment	75 gp

**Consumable magic items** should be divided up however the group sees fit. If more than one character is interested in a specific consumable magic item, the DM can determine who gets it randomly should the group be unable to decide.

**Permanent magic items** are divided according to a system detailed in the D&D Adventurers League Dungeon Master's Guide.

### RENOWN

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**Members of the Harpers** earn **one renown** at the end of this adventure if they have prevented the alliance without attacking the drow—other characters earn no renown.

### DM REWARD

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

## APPENDIX. DRAMATIS PERSONAE

The following NPCs are featured prominently in this adventure:

**Finch (*finch*).** A half-elf who has been retained by several members of the factions to act as a liaison between the party and the members of the factions who will be hiring them. Sort of a dull individual, and has been relegated to this role because he has little ambition.

**Galen (*Gae-lenn*).** An elven ranger who has been tasked with monitoring the activity of a drow encampment in the area. He lacks self-confidence, and easily gets flustered when around more than 2–3 people.

**Belafein (*Bell-eh-feign*).** A drow weapons master who was effectively exiled from the Underdark when the leadership of his house was killed during the Rage of Demons. He now has become a rallying point for other exiled drow. Very quiet and precise, the veteran blade sees potential enemies at all points.

**Graund (*Graw-nde*).** A member of the Cult of the Black Earth who is looking to improve his station within the organization. He is ambitious, and sees most people as potential obstacles to overcome in his climb.

## APPENDIX. MONSTER/NPC STATISTICS

### ACOLYTE

Medium humanoid (any race), any alignment

**Armor Class** 10

**Hit Points** 9 (2d8)

**Speed** 30 ft.

---

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	14 (+2)	11 (+0)

---

**Skills** Medicine +4, Religion +2

**Senses** passive Perception 12

**Languages** any one language (usually Common)

**Challenge** 1/4 (50 XP)

**Spellcasting.** The acolyte is a 1st-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 12, +4 to hit with spell attacks). The acolyte has the following cleric spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *light, sacred flame, thaumaturgy*

1st level (3 slots): *bless, cure wounds, sanctuary*

### ACTIONS

**Club.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 2 (1d4) bludgeoning damage.

### BLACK EARTH PRIEST

Medium humanoid (human), neutral evil

**Armor Class** 17 (splint)

**Hit Points** 45 (7d8 + 14)

**Speed** 30 ft.

---

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
15 (+2)	11 (+0)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)	16 (+3)

---

**Skills** Intimidation +5, Religion +3, Persuasion +5

**Senses** passive Perception 10

**Languages** Common, Terran

**Challenge** 3 (700 XP)

**Spellcasting.** The priest is a 5th-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 13, +5 to hit with spell attacks). It knows the following sorcerer spells (an asterisked spell is from *Princes of the Apocalypse*, appendix B):

Cantrips (at will): *acid splash, blade ward, light, mending, mold earth\**

1st level (4 slots): *earth tremor,\* expeditious retreat, shield*

2nd level (3 slots): *shatter, spider climb*

3rd level (2 slots): *slow*

### ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** The priest makes two melee attacks.

**Glaive.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d10 + 2) slashing damage.

### REACTIONS

**Unyielding.** When the priest is subjected to an effect that would move it, knock it prone, or both, it can use its reaction to be neither moved nor knocked prone.

Source: *Princes of the Apocalypse*



## DROW

Medium humanoid (elf), neutral evil

**Armor Class** 15 (chain shirt)

**Hit Points** 13 (3d8)

**Speed** 30 ft.

---

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	11 (+0)	11 (+0)	12 (+1)

---

**Skills** Perception +2, Stealth +4

**Senses** darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 12

**Languages** Elvish, Undercommon

**Challenge** 1/4 (50 XP)

**Fey Ancestry.** The drow has advantage on saving throws against being charmed, and magic can't put the drow to sleep.

**Innate Spellcasting.** The drow's spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 11). It can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

At will: *dancing lights*

1/day each: *darkness*, *faerie fire*

**Sunlight Sensitivity.** While in sunlight, the drow has disadvantage on attack rolls, as well as on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight.

## ACTIONS

---

**Shortsword.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage.

**Hand Crossbow.** *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, range 30/120 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage, and the target must succeed on a DC 13 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned for 1 hour. If the saving throw fails by 5 or more, the target is also unconscious while poisoned in this way. The target wakes up if it takes damage or if another creature takes an action to shake it awake.

## DROW PRIESTESS OF LOLTH

Medium humanoid (elf), neutral evil

**Armor Class** 16 (scale mail)

**Hit Points** 71 (13d8 + 13)

**Speed** 30 ft.

---

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	13 (+1)	17 (+3)	18 (+4)

---

**Saving Throws** Con +4, Wis +6, Cha +7

**Skills** Insight +6, Perception +6, Religion +4, Stealth +5

**Senses** darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 16

**Languages** Elvish, Undercommon

**Challenge** 8 (3,900 XP)

**Fey Ancestry.** The drow has advantage on saving throws against being charmed, and magic can't put the drow to sleep.

**Innate Spellcasting.** The drow's spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 15). It can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

At will: *dancing lights*

1/day each: *darkness*, *faerie fire*, *levitate* (self only)

**Spellcasting.** The drow is a 10th-level spellcaster. Her spellcasting ability is Wisdom (save DC 14, +6 to hit with spell attacks). The drow has the following cleric spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *guidance*, *poison spray*, *resistance*, *spare the dying*, *thaumaturgy*

1st level (4 slots): *animal friendship*, *cure wounds*, *detect poison and disease*, *ray of sickness*

2nd level (3 slots): *lesser restoration*, *protection from poison*, *web*

3rd level (3 slots): *conjure animals* (2 giant spiders), *dispel magic*

4th level (3 slots): *divination*, *freedom of movement*

5th level (2 slots): *insect plague*, *mass cure wounds*

**Sunlight Sensitivity.** While in sunlight, the drow has disadvantage on attack rolls, as well as on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight.

## ACTIONS

---

**Multiattack.** The drow makes two scourge attacks.

**Scourge.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage plus 17 (5d6) poison damage.

**Summon Demon (1/Day).** The drow attempts to magically summon a yochlol with a 30 percent chance of success. If the attempt fails, the drow takes 5 (1d10) psychic damage. Otherwise the summoned demon appears in an unoccupied space within 60 feet of its summoner, acts as an ally of its summoner, and can't summon other demons. It remains for 10 minutes, until it or its summoner dies, or until its summoner dismisses it as an action.

## GUARD

Medium humanoid (any race), any alignment

**Armor Class** 16 (chain shirt, shield)

**Hit Points** 11 (2d8 + 2)

**Speed** 30 ft.

---

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
13 (+1)	12 (+1)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)	11 (+0)	10 (+0)

---

**Skills** Perception +2

**Senses** passive Perception 12

**Languages** any one language (usually Common)

**Challenge** 1/8 (25 XP)

## ACTIONS

---

**Spear.** *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d6 + 1) piercing damage.

## SACRED STONE MONK

Medium humanoid (human), lawful evil

**Armor Class** 14

**Hit Points** 22 (4d8 + 4)

**Speed** 40 ft.

---

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
13 (+1)	15 (+2)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)	14 (+2)	9 (-1)

---

**Skills** Acrobatics +4, Athletics +3, Perception +4

**Senses** tremorsense 10 ft., passive Perception 14

**Languages** Common

**Challenge** 1/2 (100 XP)

**Unarmored Defense.** While the monk is wearing no armor and wielding no shield, its AC includes its Wisdom modifier.

**Unarmored Movement.** While the monk is wearing no armor and wielding no shield, its walking speed increases by 10 feet (included in its speed).

## ACTIONS

---

**Multiattack.** The monk makes two melee attacks.

**Unarmed Strike.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) bludgeoning damage.

## REACTIONS

---

**Parry.** The monk adds 2 to its AC against one melee or ranged weapon attack that would hit it. To do so, the monk must see the attacker.

## SCOUT

Medium humanoid (any race), any alignment

**Armor Class** 13 (leather armor)

**Hit Points** 16 (3d8 + 3)

**Speed** 30 ft.

---

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (+0)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	11 (+0)	13 (+1)	11 (+0)

---

**Skills** Nature +4, Perception +5, Stealth +6, Survival +5

**Senses** passive Perception 15

**Languages** any one language (usually Common)

**Challenge** 1/2 (100 XP)

**Keen Hearing and Sight.** The scout has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on hearing or sight.

## ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** The scout makes two melee attacks or two ranged attacks.

**Shortsword.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage.

**Longbow.** *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, range 150/600 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d8 + 2) piercing damage.

## WARLORD

Medium humanoid (any race), any alignment

**Armor Class** 18 (plate)

**Hit Points** 229 (27d8 + 108)

**Speed** 30 ft.

---

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	16 (+3)	18 (+4)	12 (+1)	12 (+1)	18 (+4)

---

**Saving Throws** Str +9, Dex +7, Con +8

**Skills** Athletics +9, Intimidation +8, Perception +5, Persuasion +8

**Senses** passive Perception 15

**Languages** any two languages

**Challenge** 12 (8,400 XP)

**Indomitable (3/Day).** The warlord can reroll a saving throw it fails. It must use the new roll.

**Survivor.** The warlord regains 10 hit points at the start of its turn if it has at least 1 hit point but fewer hit points than half its hit point maximum.

## ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** The warlord makes two weapon attacks.

**Greatsword.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 12 (2d6 + 5) slashing damage.

**Shortbow.** *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, range 80/320 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) piercing damage.

## LEGENDARY ACTIONS

The warlord can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. The warlord regain spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

**Weapon Attack.** The warlord makes a weapon attack.

**Command Ally.** The warlord targets one ally it can see within 30 feet of it. If the target can see and hear the warlord, the target can make one weapon attack as a reaction and gains advantage on the attack roll.

**Frighten Foe (Costs 2 Actions).** The warlord targets one enemy it can see within 30 feet of it. If the target can see and hear it, the target must succeed on a DC 16 Wisdom saving throw or be frightened until the end of warlord's next turn.

Source: *Volo's Guide to Monsters*

# APPENDIX. ENCOUNTER SETUP

## THE CULTISTS

If the party engages the cultists at the first ambush point, there will be an additional cultist (**scout**) with the cultists. (This provides an additional 100 XP to the encounter.)

- **Scout:** AC 13, 16 hp, Init +2

### WEAK PARTY STRENGTH (200 XP)

- **Acolyte (3):** AC 10, 9 hp, Init +0
- **Guard (2):** AC 16, 11 hp, Init +1

### AVERAGE PARTY STRENGTH (300 XP)

- **Acolyte (3):** AC 10, 9 hp, Init +0
- **Guard (2):** AC 16, 11 hp, Init +1
- **Sacred Stone Monk:** AC 14, 22 hp, Init +2

### STRONG PARTY STRENGTH (425 XP)

- **Acolyte (4):** AC 10, 9 hp, Init +0
- **Guard (2):** AC 16, 11 hp, Init +1
- **Sacred Stone Monk (2):** AC 14, 22 hp, Init +2

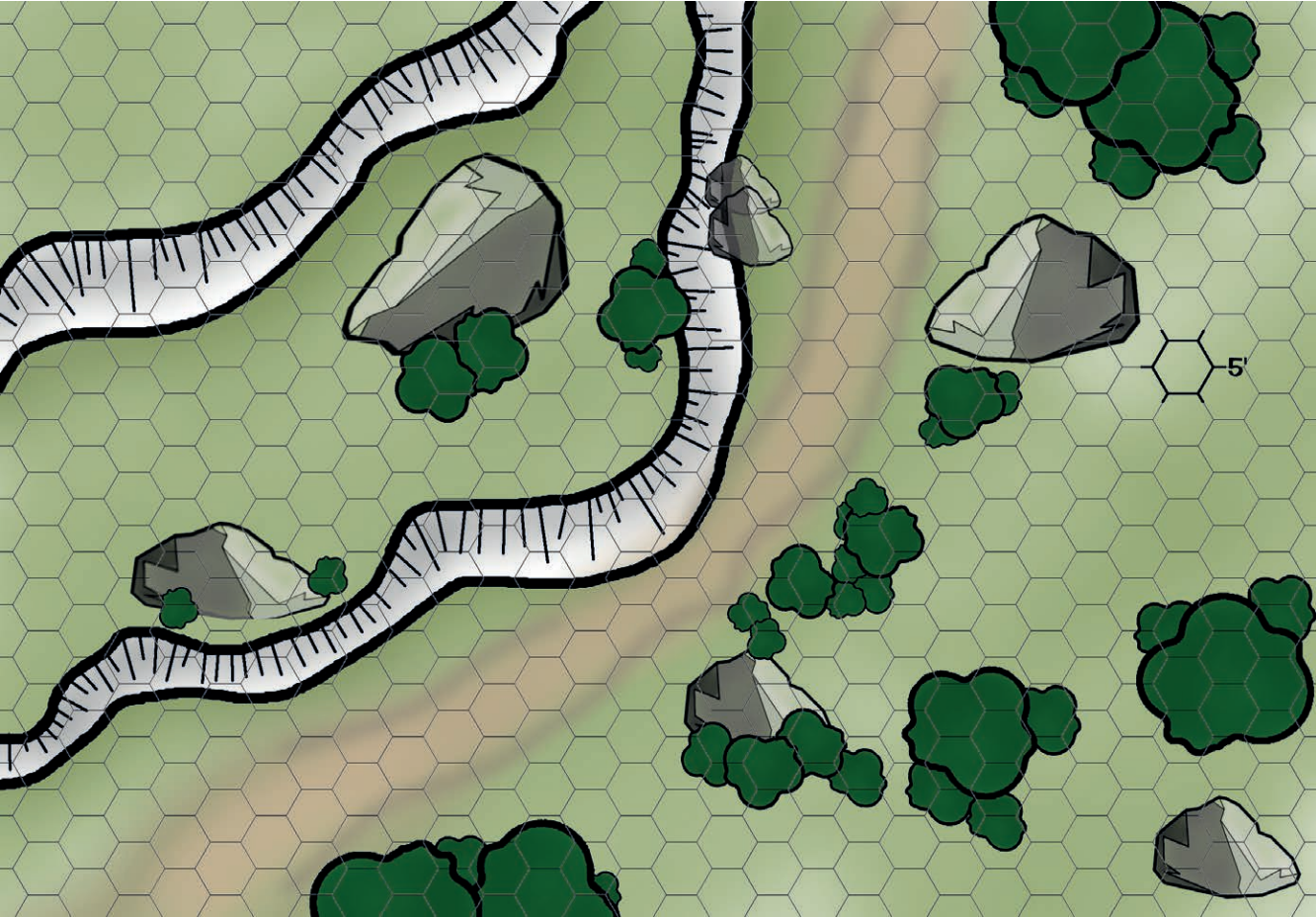
### VERY STRONG PARTY STRENGTH (750 XP)

- **Black Earth Priest:** AC 17, 45 hp, Init +0
- **Guard (2):** AC 16, 11 hp, Init +1

## STAT BLOCK CHANGES

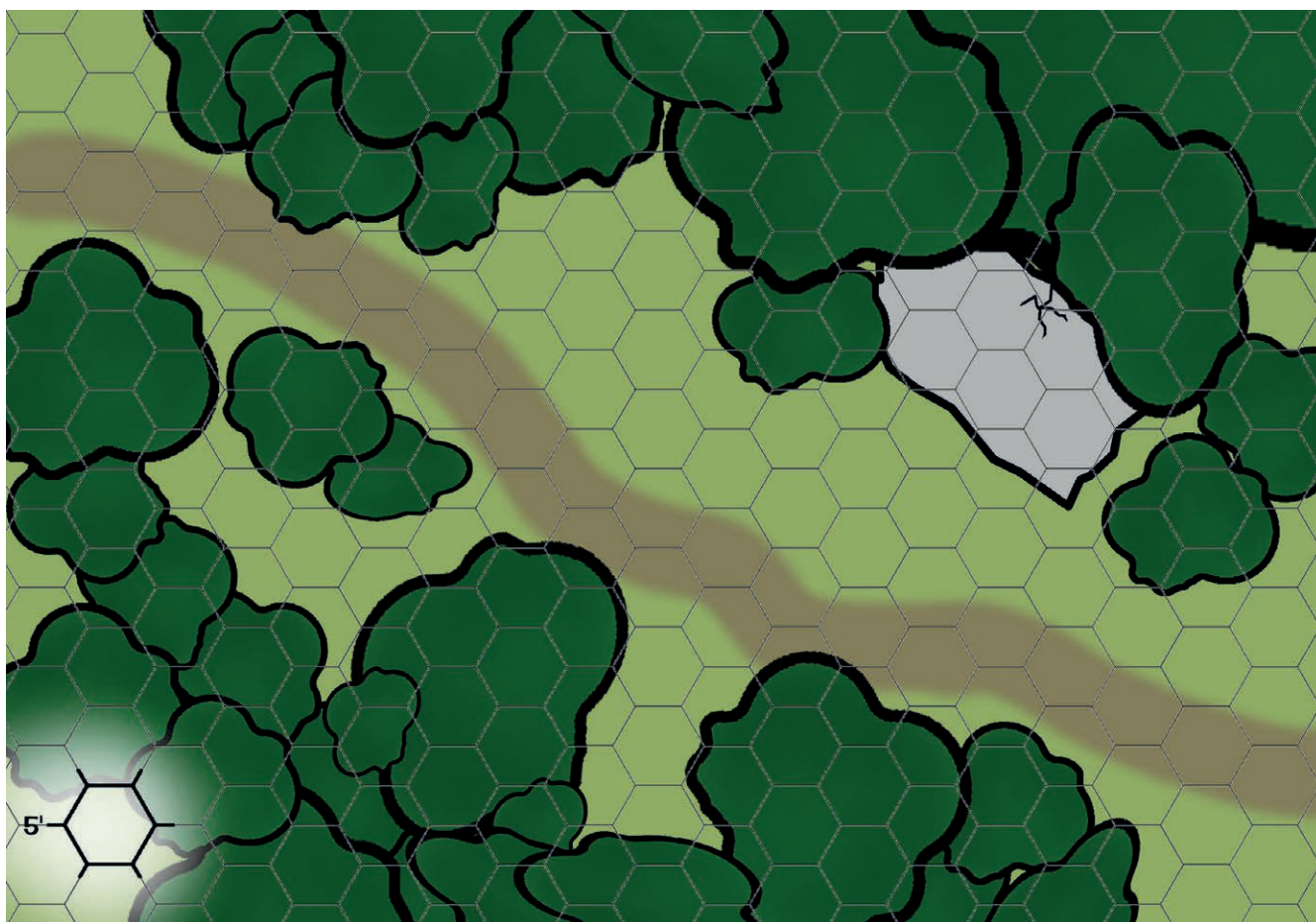
- Belafein wields a long sword. Replace the Greatsword attack with:  
*Longsword. Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 12 (1d8 + 5) slashing damage.
- The drow priestesses have found that being above ground often limits the usefulness of the *web* spell:  
Replace *web* with *hold person*.

# APPENDIX. AMBUSH MAP





## APPENDIX. DROW ENCAMPMENT MAP



## MISSION THREE. NIGHTMARES

The party is engaged to investigate a series of arsons at some local horse farms.

### BEHIND THE SCENES

The cultists searching for Jhesrhi's staff (Mission One) brought a group of mephits with them. Predictably, they grew tired of the impish elementals' antics, and set them to watch the camp while they searched the Vault.

One of the mephits, Scorch, quickly grew bored with this job, and pilfered the lead cultist's "boss hat". He convinced the other mephits to follow him, and he would show them how to make a 'fire-horse'. Scorch's previous attempts to create a nightmare steed have repeatedly failed, but he wears the 'boss hat' which 'make brain big!', so the other mephits continue to follow him.

### THE OLD SOLDIER

Shortly after lunch, Finch opens the door to allow an older human, with short cropped grey hair, to step into the room.

The man's name is Gustav Klines, and he has been acting as a "Racial Liaison" within the Red Plumes since the ascension of the new First Lord. His role is to facilitate relations involving the non-humans who have recently been welcomed back into the city.

### ROLEPLAYING GUSTAV KLINES

Klines is in his mid-fifties and served much of his life as a captain in the cavalry of the Vilhon Mercenary Company. He clearly takes a large amount of pride in the order that he brings to any scenario. This is evident in the fact that he still wears his military uniform, which is old, but very well kept. Likewise, his hand rests on the well-worn pommel of a saber when he is speaking.

Unfortunately, until one gets to know him, he tends to come across as cold, rigid and overly militaristic. His severe manner may make it appear as if he does not have a sense of humor. While he does not place much emphasis on race, gender or station when evaluating people, he has a high disdain of people who do not seem to take anything seriously.

*Quote: (raises eyebrow) "Humph"*

### DETAILS OF THE ARSONS

The fires have occurred over the past three nights, one each night. Klines has investigated the first two arsons personally but has not visited the third site. He will produce a map for the duration of the conversation but will not provide it to the party.

- The first fire was at the Oda ranch. The Odas are a half-elf couple, which is originally why Klines was sent to investigate.

- The fires occurred there three nights ago, and Klines has investigated the site himself.
- The fire was started within the stables, and Klines believes that one of the horses was either dragged into the source of the fire or was actually set on fire itself.
- All of the horses were killed during the fire.
- The Odas put Klines up for the night, which is why he is sure that the subsequent fires were not acts of retaliation.
- The second was the Kaeda ranch, a family of human ranchers. This fire was set two nights ago.
  - The attack at the Kaedas followed the same pattern as the arson at the Odas. First, the stables were shut, and barred from within, and then a horse was set on fire.
  - All of the horses were killed during the fire.
- Last night's fire was set at the Sarsk ranch.
  - Klines has not investigated this site yet. After the second fire, he returned to the Stop to obtain assistance, as he was beginning to believe that this was a serial arsonist.
  - He arrived at the Stop at about the same time the news of the third fire. He also has just learned that two people were killed in this fire.
- The three farms are in a generally straight line. Along that same path lies a fourth ranch. Klines has not made any inquiries about this ranch (but if the party asks anyone in The Stop, they will be able to learn that the ranch belongs to Jak Graham.

### THE JOB

Klines is offering the party 75 gp to investigate the Sarsk ranch, and then to move to the next ranch, Graham ranch. Should the arsonists attempt to hit that ranch, the party is to bring them to justice.

If asked, or if there are any party members who he thinks looks "seedy," Klines will also mention that while 'justice' may include using lethal force if the culprits resist, it does not include summary execution following capture. If the arsonists are captured, the party is to bring them to Klines or to the authorities of Hillsfar.

### INVESTIGATING THE RANCHES

The party has about 5 hours until nightfall. If they insist on revisiting one of the other ranches, they will reach the Graham ranch shortly after nightfall.

All the ranchers are on good terms, having known each other for generations. There's always a bit of friendly rivalry, but between the Red Plumes and the trade along the main road, there's enough business to keep them all afloat. Investigating the first two ranches is not necessary, and Klines will recommend against it, as he thinks that the party should probably stake out the last farm. However,

some players will be insistent, so information is provided below.

Each of the ranches are modest farms. Each has a small farmhouse where the ranchers reside, several sheds where supplies and provisions are kept and a stable with ample room for several additional horses should the need arise.

### **THE ODA RANCH**

This ranch is run by a half-elven couple (Sylhana and Ginn) who were asleep when the fire started. By the time they were able to reach the stables, they were already ablaze. They were alone at the time, as the other ranchers who work for them have their own homes.

The Oda stables housed six horses and has burned to the ground. There won't be much to investigate here.

### **THE KAEDA RANCH**

Omar is a younger human, large and burly with a barrel chest and a bright red mane of curly hair and large bushy beard. He had heard about the fire at the Odas. Like the Odas, he doesn't have a lot of hands who stay at the ranch, but two of them (a human named Drew and a halfling named Tarnas) were sleeping on the couch and helped respond when they heard the horses start to scream. They kept the building from burning down completely, but are all still shaken up after having to put the wounded horses down.

Investigation here could turn up that the fire started in one of the horse's berths and spread quickly when the horse got loose and ran around the stables. (The party may be able to deduce from this that the horse was set on fire by something exceptionally hot.)

Omar previously had seven horses should the party inquire.

### **THE SARSK RANCH**

The men at the Sarsk Ranch had heard about the fires at the other ranches, so Otto Sarsk had two of his hands camp out in the stables. He feels bad about this, and claims they thought it was only a bunch of bandits who would run off at the first sign of trouble. (In truth, he asked Diego and Kolas to stay in the barn, because he was pretty sure they would catch the culprits and 'throw them a good beating'.)

They did manage to get to the barn in time to save some of the animals. As they threw the door open, one of the stallions burst out, covered in fire, it looked like there was somehow fire riding the creature, screaming as loud as the horse. The stallion ran for a quarter mile, and then died as it plunged itself into the river. They haven't collected the body, yet, but investigation seems to suggest that

the creature was set on fire by objects which clung to the horse as it ran. Said objects are not to be found. (The number of objects matches the number of magma mephits which the party must fight.)

Otto did have to put down one of the other horses, but the other three were saved.

### **THE GRAHAM RANCH**

Traveling to the Graham Ranch from the Sarsk ranch should take the party just over an hour. Unless the party decided to investigate the other two ranches, they should arrive at the Graham ranch about two hours before dusk. If they insisted on visiting the other ranches, they will be arriving as the sun sets.

When the party arrives at the ranch, they will find the ranchers in an argument. They had been planning on staking out the stables, until they heard about what happened at the Sarsk ranch. Jak Graham, the owner of the ranch, and his son Wil still believe that they should arm themselves and 'give these horse killers what for.' Jak's wife, Ella is expressing a strong disapproval, not wanting her husband and son to risk themselves. The two hands, Mikos and Zoe have mixed feelings about the matter. While they are passionate about caring for the horses, they're not so sure about risking their own lives.

Hopefully, the party will volunteer to stake the place out. The Grahams don't have anything to offer in payment, but Ella will insist on feeding them.

### **STAKING OUT THE BARN**

Jak will have no problem with the party camping out in the barn. He isn't creative enough to consider that someone might lie about being there to catch the arsonists. While some may wish to set up outside the barn, there isn't much cover in the area. There are eight horses in the stables and four open stables. Ella will come out several times around dusk to ensure that the party has enough blankets, that the horses aren't bothering them, and will generally mother the party until Jak tells her to "bloody leave them to their business!"

The party will see shadows in the house, illuminated by candles, for an hour or so after the sun has fully set. The Grahams seem to be watching the stables, checking to see if there is anything going on. Eventually, they seem to give up, and the lights go out one by one.

Allow the party to set up watches, perhaps even get some rest in. They may also wish to set up certain defenses. Identify who is watching each side of the barn; it is not possible for someone to pay attention to all sides for an extended period.

## THE MEPHITS ARRIVE

Shortly after midnight, the **mephits** will come from the wood and approach the barn from the side obscured to the house. Players watching that side of the building, who either have a Passive Perception of 16 or make a DC 14 Wisdom (Perception) will be able to see the mephits approach. They may choose to engage the mephits immediately or wait until they have entered the stables.

### SETTING UP THE ENCOUNTER

The number of mephits will be equal to the number of party members.

- For each 1st level party member, there will be one smoke mephit.
- For each 2nd level party member, there will be one magma mephit.

Scorch will always be present, so if all characters are 1st level, replace one of the smoke mephits with Scorch. (For example, if there are 6 1st-level characters, Scorch will be accompanied by 5 smoke mephits)

- **Scorch (Magma Mephit):** AC 11, 33 hp, Init +1
- **Smoke Mephits:** AC 12, 22 hp, Init +1
- **Magma Mephits:** AC 11, 22 hp, Init +1

The party can either drive them off or attempt to defeat the mephits. Since they are elemental creatures and will dissolve into magma or smoke when defeated, it is unlikely that the party will be able to take one alive.

However unlikely, if they take one alive and someone speaks Primordial, they can attempt to interrogate the mephits with a successful DC 12 Charisma (Intimidation) or Charisma (Persuasion) check, and learn that Scorch claimed he knew how to make a “devil fire horse.”

### ENCOUNTER MODIFICATIONS

- Scorch is larger than most magma mephits and has 33 hit points. He is also wearing a large steel skull helmet, etched with flames. “Me got BOSS HAT! Make Brain Big!”
- If the combat occurs in the stables, the magma mephits will have an additional action available to them. This ability is not available if the party has chosen to fight the mephits outside of the stables, or if they have spent at least an hour clearing the hay.

**Bonfire.** The mephit spits bits of magma up to 30 feet to a 5-foot cube of the mephit’s choice, which will cause a small bonfire which lasts until the end of the mephit’s next turn. Any creature in the bonfire’s space must succeed on a DC 10 Dexterity saving throw or take 1d8 fire damage. A creature must also make the saving throw when it moves into the bonfire’s space for the first time on a turn or ends its turn there. The bonfire ignites flammable objects in its area that aren’t being worn or carried.

## TRICKS OF THE TRADE

**Variant for Mephits.** If the party looks like they are having an exceptionally easy time with this encounter, consider leveraging the Summon Mephits action to summon more mephits. Be careful to keep track of which mephit is the summoner, as killing the summoner will dismiss the summoned mephits.

### VARIANT: MEPHIT SUMMONING

Some mephits can have an action option that allows them to summon other mephits.

**Summon Mephits (1/Day).** The mephit has a 25 percent chance of summoning 1d4 mephits of its kind. A summoned mephit appears in an unoccupied space within 60 feet of its summoner, acts as an ally of its summoner, and can’t summon other mephits. It remains for 1 minute, until it or its summoner dies, or until its summoner dismisses it as an action.

## DEVELOPMENT

When the party returns to the inn, Klines will want them to give him a report. When he learns that the arsonists were not human, he will ask for a description of the creatures if the party does not know what they were. He will be able to generate a quick sketch based on their description.

Klines will pay the party as promised, and depart, with only a curt nod to the party.



## REWARDS

Make sure players note their rewards on their adventure log sheets. Give your name and DCI number (if applicable) so players can record who ran the session.

### EXPERIENCE

---

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
Magma Mephit	100
Smoke Mephit	50

The **minimum** total award for each character participating in this adventure is **75 experience points**.

The **maximum** total award for each character participating in this adventure is **100 experience points**.

### 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
Kline's payment	75 gp

**Consumable magic items** should be divided up however the group sees fit. If more than one character is interested in a specific consumable magic item, the DM can determine who gets it randomly should the group be unable to decide.

**Permanent magic items** are divided according to a system detailed in the *D&D Adventurers League Dungeon Master's Guide*.

### RENOWN

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**Members of the Order of the Gauntlet** earn **one renown** at the end of this adventure—other characters earn no renown.

### DM REWARD

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

## APPENDIX. DRAMATIS PERSONAE

The following NPCs are featured prominently in this adventure:

**Finch (*finch*).** A half-elf who has been retained by several members of the factions to act as a liaison between the party and the members of the factions who will be hiring them. Sort of a dull individual, and has been relegated to this role because he has little ambition.

**Gustav Klines (*Goo-stave Klines*).** A former military officer who now acts as an investigator and negotiator with the Red Plumes. His primary role is interceding when there are issues with integrating non-humans back into Hillsfarian society.



## APPENDIX. MONSTER/NPC STATISTICS

### MAGMA MEPHIT

*Small elemental, neutral evil*

**Armor Class** 11

**Hit Points** 22 (5d6 + 5)

**Speed** 30 ft., fly 30 ft.

---

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
8 (-1)	12 (+1)	12 (+1)	7 (-2)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)

---

**Skills** Stealth +3

**Damage Vulnerabilities** cold

**Damage Immunities** fire, poison

**Condition Immunities** poisoned

**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

**Languages** Ignan, Terran

**Challenge** 1/2 (100 XP)

**Death Burst.** When the mephit dies, it explodes in a burst of lava. Each creature within 5 feet of it must make a DC 11 Dexterity saving throw, taking 7 (2d6) fire damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

**False Appearance.** While the mephit remains motionless, it is indistinguishable from an ordinary mound of magma.

**Innate Spellcasting (1/Day).** The mephit can innately cast *heat metal* (spell save DC 10), requiring no material components. Its innate spellcasting ability is Charisma.

#### ACTIONS

---

**Claws.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 3 (1d4 + 1) slashing damage plus 2 (1d4) fire damage.

**Fire Breath (Recharge 6).** The mephit exhales a 15-foot cone of fire. Each creature in that area must make a DC 11 Dexterity saving throw, taking 7 (2d6) fire damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

### SMOKE MEPHIT

*Small elemental, neutral evil*

**Armor Class** 12

**Hit Points** 22 (5d6 + 5)

**Speed** 30 ft., fly 30 ft.

---

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
6 (-2)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	11 (+0)

---

**Skills** Perception +2, Stealth +4

**Damage Immunities** fire, poison

**Condition Immunities** poisoned

**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 12

**Languages** Auran, Ignan

**Challenge** 1/4 (50 XP)

**Death Burst.** When the mephit dies, it leaves behind a cloud of smoke that fills a 5-foot-radius sphere centered on its space. The sphere is heavily obscured. Wind disperses the cloud, which otherwise lasts for 1 minute.

**Innate Spellcasting (1/Day).** The mephit can innately cast *dancing lights*, requiring no material components. Its innate spellcasting ability is Charisma.

#### ACTIONS

---

**Claws.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 4 (1d4 + 2) slashing damage.

**Cinder Breath (Recharge 6).** The mephit exhales a 15-foot cone of smoldering ash. Each creature in that area must succeed on a DC 10 Dexterity saving throw or be blinded until the end of the mephit's next turn.

## APPENDIX. ENCOUNTER SETUP

### THE ARSONISTS

The number of mephits will be equal to the number of party members.

- For each 1st level party member, there will be one smoke mephit. (50 XP each)
- For each 2nd level party member, there will be one magma mephit. (100 XP each)

Scorch will always be present, so if all characters are 1st-level, replace one of the smoke mephits with Scorch.

- **Scorch (Magma Mephit):** AC 11, 33 hp, Init +1
- **Smoke Mephit:** AC 12, 22 hp, Init +1
- **Magma Mephits:** AC 11, 22 hp, Init +1

For example,

- If there are 6 1st level characters, Scorch will be accompanied by five (5) smoke mephits
- If there are 4 2nd level characters, Scorch will be one of four (4) magma mephits.
- If there are 3 1st level characters and 3 2nd level characters, Scorch will be one of three (3) magma mephits and will be accompanied by three (3) smoke mephits.

### ENCOUNTER MODIFICATIONS

- Scorch is larger than most magma mephits and has 33 hit points. He is also wearing a large steel skull helmet, etched with flames. “Me got BOSS HAT! Make Brain Big!”
- If the combat occurs in the stables, the magma mephits will have an additional action available to them. This ability is not available if the party has chosen to fight the mephits outside of the stables, or if they have spent at least an hour clearing the hay.

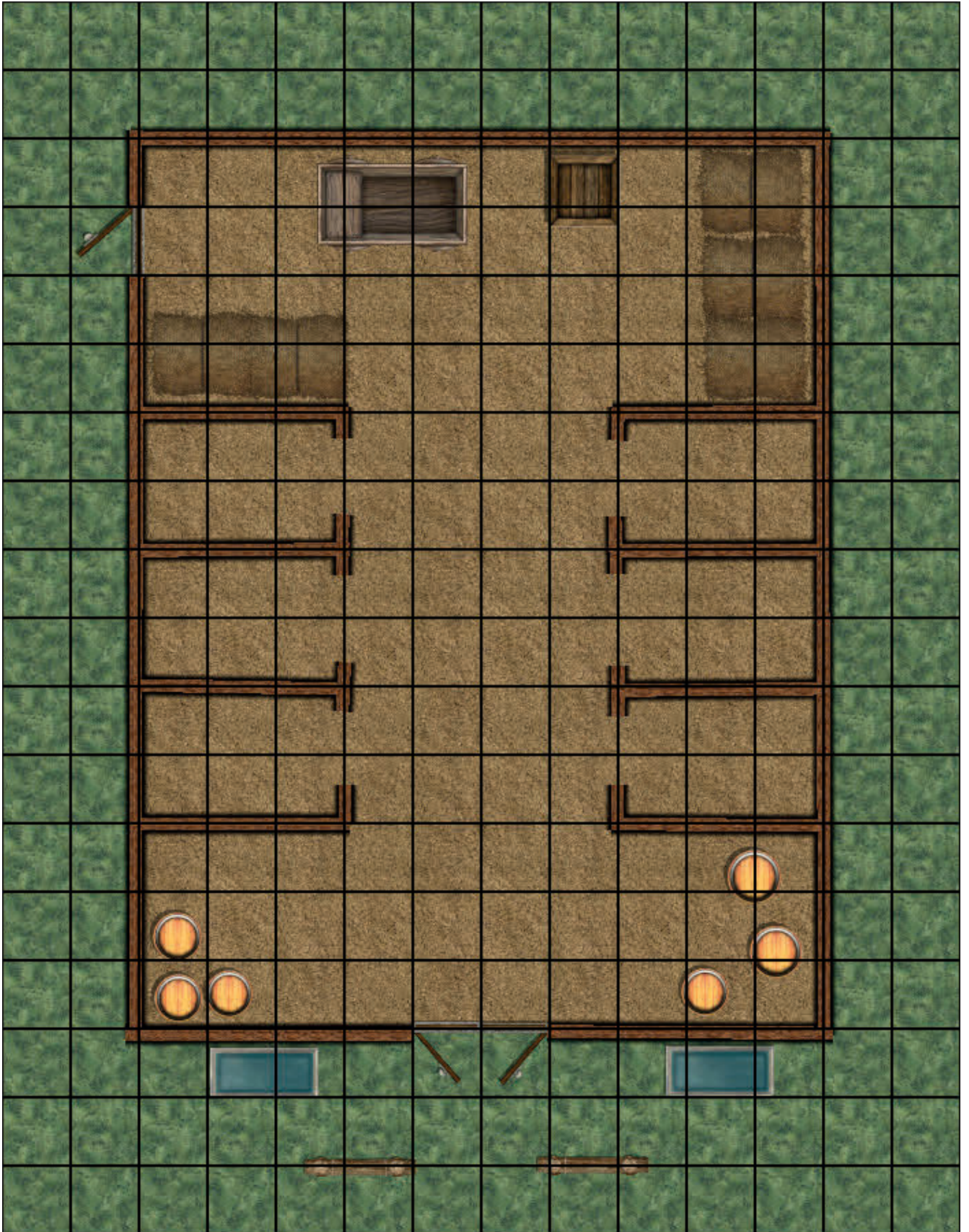
**Bonfire.** The mephit spits bits of magma up to 30 feet to a 5-foot cube of the mephit’s choice, which will cause a small bonfire which lasts until the end of the mephit’s next turn. Any creature in the bonfire’s space must succeed on a DC 10 Dexterity saving throw or take 1d8 fire damage. A creature must also make the saving throw when it moves into the bonfire’s space for the first time on a turn or ends its turn there. The bonfire ignites flammable objects in its area that aren’t being worn or carried.

### VARIANT: MEPHIT SUMMONING

Some mephits can have an action option that allows them to summon other mephits.

**Summon Mephits (1/Day).** The mephit has a 25 percent chance of summoning 1d4 mephits of its kind. A summoned mephit appears in an unoccupied space within 60 feet of its summoner, acts as an ally of its summoner, and can’t summon other mephits. It remains for 1 minute, until it or its summoner dies, or until its summoner dismisses it as an action.

# APPENDIX. STABLES MAP





## MISSION FOUR. THE HEIST

The party is enlisted to assist in preventing the theft of a potentially dangerous object.

### THE CLERK

Finch will escort a small human man into the room who will introduce himself as Vernon deArmando, steward to Lord Brienus Wido. Agents of the Lords' Alliance may recognize—with a successful DC 12 Intelligence (History) check—that Lord Wido is a prominent contact within Hillsfar.

If new players have joined the group, and have not participated in character introductions, this would be a great opportunity to do so. If not, Vernon will continue.

### ROLEPLAYING VERNON DEARMANDO

Vernon looks very much like the book keeper he is, with thick spectacles and tufts of reddish hair extending from the sides of his head.

Vernon is a bureaucrat, through and through. As he tends to drone on in his nasally tone about things that few adventurers will care about, many may find him annoying. If given the opportunity, he will gladly explain how the new forms he implemented have enhanced his record keeping and were largely responsible for him being able to detect the anomaly in the shipping crates.

Lord Wido deals in the importing and exporting of various art objects into and out of Hillsfar. Among deArmando's job roles is the inspection and cataloging of the shipments in the warehouse. Yesterday, he discovered a discrepancy which led to the discovery of something which should not have been classified as an art object. His contacts in the Lords' Alliance have led him to believe that the item is a shell which is required in the creation of an orb of devastation.

The item had been in the warehouse for some time. It had been largely forgotten, as the individual who would have been receiving it (one "Zor Aleksi Drajkov") was apparently killed in some recent unpleasantness in Mulmaster.

Vernon immediately began planning for the Alliance to remove the item safely from the city. However, shortly thereafter, he learned that there is a group which plans on stealing the orb.

### THE PLOT

Vernon was contacted by an individual who is known for smuggling. He had originally been hired to move the item once it had been removed from the warehouse.

However, Vernon's discovery of the item and decision to move it seems to have been misinterpreted by the thieves as a discovery of their plans. Fearing that they had a leak in their operation, the thieves

opted to cut out anyone who wasn't part of their group. The smuggler decided to recoup his losses by selling the information that the theft will likely occur tonight.

Vernon will pay the party the sum of 50 gp to keep watch over the warehouse until the transport arrives in the morning. There is also an additional reward of 25 gp for the capture of the criminals. The Alliance is interested in who they are, who they work for, and how they knew about the orb.

### ONE MORE THING

There is one caveat to the employment. The items in the warehouse have been carefully inventoried, should anything be stolen, the entire party will be placed under investigation and all will be held accountable for the actions for any member of their party.

The party may have some questions:

- **Can we look through the other items?** The party will not be permitted to look through the crates. Vernon is confident that the rest is mundane enough. The Drajkovs utilize Lord Wido's services regularly and the item was shipped through him because it would be unnoticed in the steady stream of shipments.
- **What's an orb of devastation?** An orb of devastation, as it has been explained to Vernon, is essentially a mass of destructive elemental energy. The bookkeeper is no arcane scholar, so he knows little more than the fact that several of these orbs were responsible for the recent devastation inflicted on Mulmaster. (Pressing him for more information could result in incorrect information)

### THE WAREHOUSE

The party will be transported by carriage into the city of Hillsfar. Within the city, they are brought to an area containing several rows of warehouses

The party does not know exactly when and if the thieves plan to sneak in, but they have about 3 hours until nightfall. Let the players explore the warehouse and plan accordingly.

- The warehouse is 95 feet long and 60 feet wide. At each of the shorter ends are a set of double doors which open outwards.
  - The doors to the north are locked and chained, and several large crates also block any entrance.
- On the eastern side of the warehouse is an office which is elevated 10 feet off the ground. A set of stairs lead up to it.
- At the top of the stairs is a spiral staircase which leads to a catwalk. The catwalk stretches around the interior wall of the warehouse, except over the doors.

- The catwalk is used by warehouse workers to operate a series of pulleys and winches which allow the movement of crates to and from wagons.
- Accessible from the catwalk are several vents, which are typically kept closed. It would be difficult for anyone to crawl through the vents, but a small-size creature might be able to manage it.

Vernon will be in attendance until shortly before dusk. He will permit the party to move some of the crates around, if they are not marked with red (which most of the crates are). These crates contain items which are considered too fragile to be moved around. Vernon will protest at any attempts to open these crates. The items inside would not be useful to the party in any event.

### EXAMINING THE ORB

The party has been instructed not to open any crates. However, in the event that they ignore those directions, they may come across the orb.

**Damaging / Destroying the Orb.** The unfinished orb has an AC of 10, and 15 hp. Should a party member damage or destroy it, they will have failed in their assigned mission. (Award experience based on how the party engages with the cultists, but Vernon will not pay the party for their time)

### INVESTIGATING THE AREA

Wandering around the warehouse area will not yield a lot of information. None of the people working the warehouses have noticed anyone obviously casing the area.

But if the party take to the roofs of the warehouses, they will encounter a rogue who is clearly casing another warehouse. Once she is certain that the party isn't after her, or if they chase and catch her, she will share that she has not seen anyone up here casing Warehouse 15. At least not from the roofs, the rogue admits she wouldn't have noticed anyone wandering the streets in that area.

### WHAT ABOUT SEWERS?

Some players may inquire about sewers. There are no sewers in the immediate area. Should the party choose to investigate the sewers, it is conceivable that the party could encounter the cultists digging their way underneath the city.

### WAITING FOR THE THIEVES

Once night falls, determine what the party will be doing, and where they will be stationed. Determine if they will be taking shifts, and if any of them will be resting.

Should you have the time for false alarms, consider one or more of the following distractions:

**Late Pick-up.** About an hour after dusk, a wagon will pull up in front of the warehouse. A trio of men will hop out of the wagon and will begin to prepare the wagon to take on a crate (removing the rear gate, tossing ropes across the sides which look as if they are intended to lash a crate down. They will eventually enter the warehouse across the street and extract a crate from that warehouse.

If the party engages with them, they will not really be interested in chatting. However, if they are pressed, they will admit that they were supposed to deliver this crate about 6 hours ago, and they're in a bit of trouble. This escapade will take the trio about an hour, or 30 minutes if two or more of the party help.

**Wandering Drunk.** About three hours after dusk, the party will hear a thump from outside. This is only a drunk who bumped into the door on his way into the alley before relieving himself. Depending on where the party has stationed themselves, they may or may not send him on his way.

### THE CULTIST'S ENTRANCE

For the past two weeks, a cultist of the Black Earth known as **Bulder the Digger** has been utilizing a small team to dig a tunnel to a large empty crate (10x20) which has been placed at a specific location within the warehouse. The tunnel was largely complete when they learned of the plans to move the orb. It will take the cultists (use **bandit** statistics) until shortly after midnight to complete the tunnel which extends a quarter mile back into the sewers. They have been using a combination of spell craft, largely *mold earth*, and the efforts of **giant weasels**.

Characters with a passive Perception of 14 or higher will hear sounds which at first sound like sliding. Unless one of the party members has positioned themselves within 10 feet of that particular crate, the direction of the sound will be unclear. The party will be able to locate the source of the sound at about the same time that the cultists have all climbed up into the crate.

Bulder will then blow the side of the crate off using the *thunderwave* spell. He believes he knows exactly where the Orb is, so he is not concerned about raising any alarms. Anyone listening at the side of the crate will need to be make a saving throw against this spell (at advantage). If no one in the party has a passive Perception of 14 or higher, then this will take them all by surprise.

## SETTING UP THE ENCOUNTER

### Weak

- **Bulder (Apprentice Wizard):** AC 10, 9 hp, Init +0
- **Giant Weasel:** AC 13, 9 hp, Init +3
- **Bandit (3):** AC 12, 11 hp, Init +1

### Average

- **Bulder (Apprentice Wizard):** AC 10, 9 hp, Init +0
- **Giant Weasel:** AC 13, 9 hp, Init +3
- **Bandit (2):** AC 12, 11 hp, Init +1
- **Thug (2):** AC 11, 32 hp, Init +0

### Strong

- **Bulder (Apprentice Wizard):** AC 10, 9 hp, Init +0
- **Giant Weasel (2):** AC 13, 9 hp, Init +3
- **Thug (4):** AC 11, 32 hp, Init +0

### Very Strong

- **Bulder (Warsh):** AC 15, 9 hp, Init +0
- **Giant Weasel:** AC 13, 9 hp, Init +3
- **Bandit:** AC 12, 11 hp, Init +1
- **Thug (2):** AC 11, 32 hp, Init +0

## BULDER (APPRENTICE WIZARD)

- As Bulder is an adept of the Cult of the Black Earth, the following changes should be made to his spell list:  
Cantrips: Replace *prestidigitation* with *mold earth*  
1st level: Replace *burning hands* with *thunderwave*

## BULDER (WARSH)

- As Bulder is an adept of the Cult of the Black Earth, the following changes should be made to his spell list:  
Cantrips: Replace *mage hand* with *mold earth*  
1st level: Replace *magic missile* with *thunderwave*
- Bulder will expend one of his 1st level spell slots by casting *thunderwave* during his exit from the crate.

## TREASURE

Between the cultists, the party can find 5 gp in coins. In addition, Bulder wears a silver torque worth 10 gp.

## DEVELOPMENT

If the party is successful in defeating or repelling the thieves, the rest of the night passes uneventfully. The next morning, Vernon will arrive on an armored cart which is being driven by a stern-looking dwarf. If one of more players are obviously members of the Lords' Alliance, the older dwarf may introduce himself as Dornal Whitebeard, but otherwise will remain silent, as he's been driving this wagon 'all blasted night'. Two men in armor will supervise the loading of the crate into the wagon.

Once Dornal has arrived, Vernon will inspect the warehouse. He will require an explanation of any damage, but unless the party was responsible for the damage, he will not withhold the promised payment. However, if any member of the party has

stolen any merchandise, the entire party will be held accountable, and will be awarded the story award "Busted!"

## STORY AWARD: BUSTED!

A member of your party swiped something from the warehouse you were supposed to guard. The magistrate found that you were all culpable for the theft. Any payment for services rendered were reclaimed and the group of you were thrown in jail. You must spend 10 downtime days to free yourselves from captivity. Alternately, you can grease the palms of a warden with at least 100 gp to alter paperwork to make it appear as if your time was already served.

Once the orb is secure and on its way, Vernon will pay the party and arrange for transportation to bring them back to The Stop. The party will not be permitted to ride with Dornal.

## IS THAT A REAL ORB OF DEVASTATION?

Unfortunately (or perhaps fortunately, depending on your point of view), the orb is flawed, and cannot be empowered. The former leaders of the Cult of the Black Earth were aware of this, which is why was left to rot. Any attempt to empower the orb would cause the death of those involved in the ritual, as well as anyone nearby.

This important piece of information was lost when those leaders were killed. Bulder is unaware of this flaw and only knew that the orb had not reached the location where it was to be empowered.



## REWARDS

Make sure players note their rewards on their adventure log sheets. Give your name and DCI number (if applicable) so players can record who ran the session.

### EXPERIENCE

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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
Bandit	25
Bulder (as Apprentice Wizard)	50
Bulder (as Warsh)	450
Giant Weasel	25
Thug	100

The **minimum** total award for each character participating in this adventure is **75 experience points**.

The **maximum** total award for each character participating in this adventure is **100 experience points**.

### TREASURE

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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
Vernon's payment	75 gp*
Cultist's coins	5 gp
Silver torque	10 gp

\* Vernon's payment will not be collected if the party gains the Story Award "Busted!".

**Consumable magic items** should be divided up however the group sees fit. If more than one character is interested in a specific consumable magic item, the DM can determine who gets it randomly should the group be unable to decide.

**Permanent magic items** are divided according to a system detailed in the D&D Adventurers League Dungeon Master's Guide.

### RENOWN

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**Members of the Lords' Alliance** earn **one renown** at the end of this adventure, but only if the party does not earn the "Busted" story award—other characters earn no renown.

### STORY AWARD

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If any of the characters have stolen anything from the warehouse, the entire party will receive this Story Award. The Red Plumes do not care whether each individual party member did or did not participate in or know about the theft.

**Busted!** A member of your party swiped something from the warehouse you were supposed to guard. The magistrate found that you were all culpable for the theft. Any payment for services rendered were reclaimed and the group of you were thrown in jail.

Additionally, you now have a criminal record in Hillsfar. This may work to your disadvantage in the future.

More information can be found in **Player Handout 4**.

### DM REWARD

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

## APPENDIX. DRAMATIS PERSONAE

The following NPCs are featured prominently in this adventure:

**Finch (*finch*).** A half-elf who has been retained by several members of the factions to act as a liaison between the party and the members of the factions who will be hiring them. Sort of a dull individual, and has been relegated to this role because he has little ambition.

**Vernon deArmando (*Verr-nonn de-R-mon-do*).** A bureaucrat and administrator in the employ of a Hillsfar trader (Lord Wido). He is a very bookish sort of man, who believes that his status as an intellectual and as the ‘hand’ of a lord will protect him from harm.

## APPENDIX. MONSTER/NPC STATISTICS

### APPRENTICE WIZARD

Medium humanoid (any race), any alignment

**Armor Class** 10

**Hit Points** 9 (2d8)

**Speed** 30 ft.

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STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	11 (+0)

---

**Skills** Arcana +4, History +2

**Senses** passive Perception 10

**Languages** any one language (usually Common)

**Challenge** 1/4 (50 XP)

**Spellcasting.** The apprentice is a 1st-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 12, +4 to hit with spell attacks). The apprentice has the following wizard spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *fire bolt*, *mending*, *prestidigitation*  
1st level (2 slots): *burning hands*, *disguise self*, *shield*

### ACTIONS

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

Source: *Volo's Guide to Monsters*

### BANDIT

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

**Armor Class** 12 (leather armor)

**Hit Points** 11 (2d8 + 2)

**Speed** 30 ft.

---

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (+0)	12 (+1)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)

---

**Senses** passive Perception 10

**Languages** any one language (usually Common)

**Challenge** 1/8 (25 XP)

### ACTIONS

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**Scimitar.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d6 + 1) slashing damage.

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

## GIANT WEASEL

Medium beast, unaligned

**Armor Class** 13

**Hit Points** 9 (2d8)

**Speed** 40 ft.

---

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (+0)	16 (+3)	10 (+0)	4 (-3)	12 (+1)	5 (-3)

---

**Skills** Perception +3, Stealth +5

**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 13

**Languages** —

**Challenge** 1/8 (25 XP)

**Keen Hearing and Smell.** The weasel has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on hearing or smell.

### ACTIONS

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

## THUG

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

**Armor Class** 11 (leather armor)

**Hit Points** 32 (5d8 + 10)

**Speed** 30 ft.

---

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
15 (+2)	11 (+0)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	11 (+0)

---

**Skills** Intimidation +2

**Senses** passive Perception 10

**Languages** any one language (usually Common)

**Challenge** 1/2 (100 XP)

**Pack Tactics.** The thug has advantage on an attack roll against a creature if at least one of the thug's allies is within 5 feet of the creature and the ally isn't incapacitated.

### ACTIONS

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**Multiattack.** The thug makes two melee attacks.

**Mace.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) bludgeoning damage.

**Heavy Crossbow.** *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit, range 100/400 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d10) piercing damage.

## WARSH

Medium humanoid (human), chaotic neutral

**Armor Class** 12 (15 with *mage armor*)

**Hit Points** 22 (5d8)

**Speed** 30 ft.

---

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

---

**Saving Throws** Int +5, Wis +3

**Skills** Arcana +5, History +5

**Senses** passive Perception 11

**Languages** Common, Draconic, Dwarvish, Elvish

**Challenge** 2 (450 XP)

**Spellcasting.** Warsh is a 4th-level spellcaster. His spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 13, +5 to hit with spell attacks). He has the following wizard spells prepared:

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

1st level (4 slots): *charm person*, *mage armor*, *magic missile*

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

## ACTIONS

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**Quarterstaff.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +1 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 3 (1d8 – 1) bludgeoning damage.

Source: DDEX1-3 *Shadows over the Moonsea*

# APPENDIX. ENCOUNTER SETUP

## THE THIEVES

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### WEAK PARTY STRENGTH (150 XP)

- Bulder (Apprentice Wizard): AC 10, 9 hp, Init +0
- Giant Weasel: AC 13, 9 hp, Init +3
- Bandits (3): AC 12, 11 hp, Init +1

### AVERAGE PARTY STRENGTH (325 XP)

- Bulder (Apprentice Wizard): AC 10, 9 hp, Init +0
- Giant Weasel: AC 13, 9 hp, Init +3
- Bandits (2): AC 12, 11 hp, Init +1
- Thugs (2): AC 11, 32 hp, Init +0

### STRONG PARTY STRENGTH (500 XP)

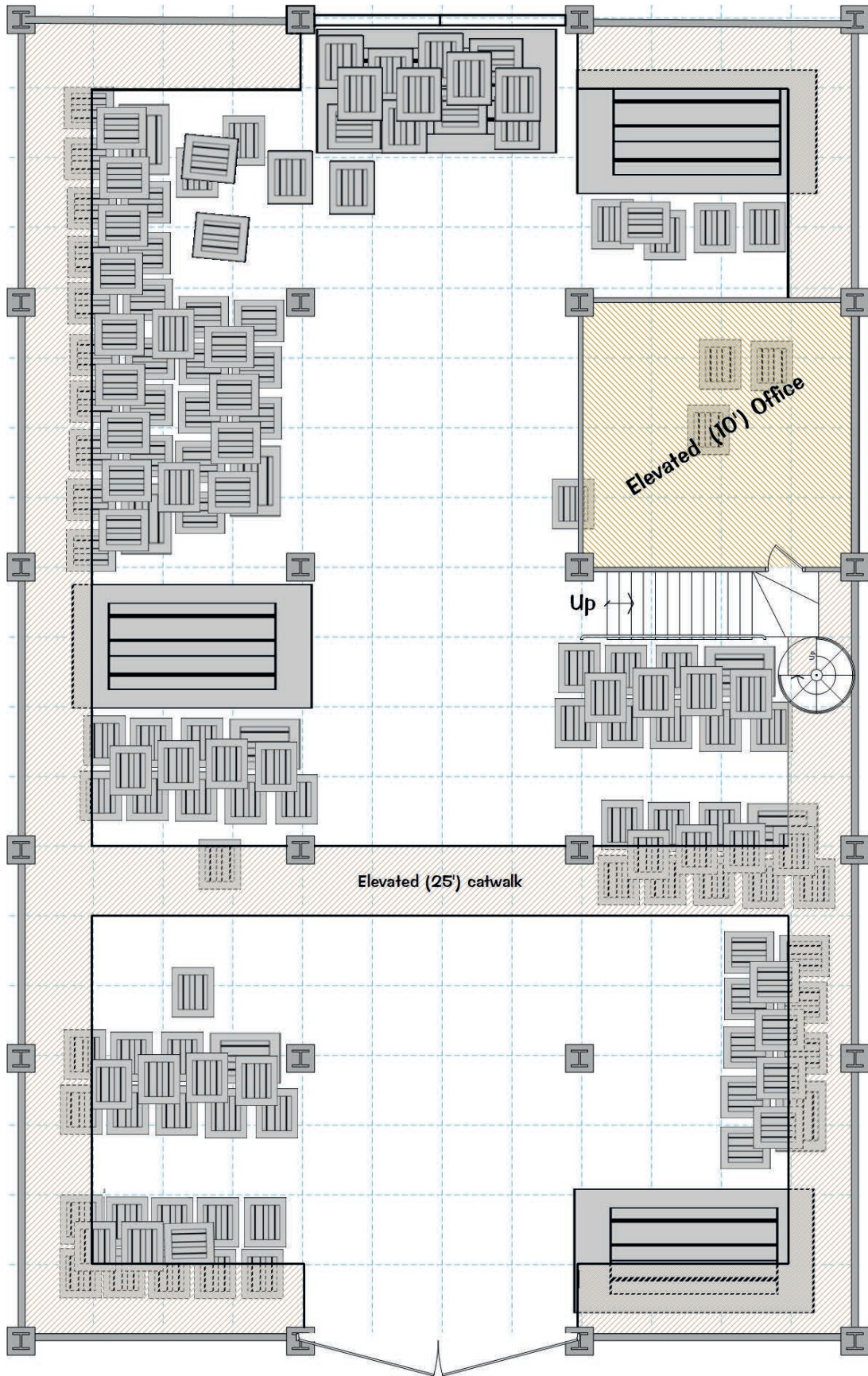
- Bulder (Apprentice Wizard): AC 10, 9 hp, Init +0
- Giant Weasel (2): AC 13, 9 hp, Init +3
- Thugs (4): AC 11, 32 hp, Init +0

### VERY STRONG PARTY STRENGTH (700 XP)

- Bulder (Warsh): AC 15, 9 hp, Init +0
- Giant Weasel: AC 13, 9 hp, Init +3
- Bandits (1): AC 12, 11 hp, Init +1
- Thugs (2): AC 11, 32 hp, Init +0



# APPENDIX. WAREHOUSE MAP



## PLAYER HANDOUT 4. STORY AWARD

### STORY AWARD

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**Busted!** A member of your party swiped something from the warehouse you were supposed to guard. The magistrate found that you were all culpable for the theft. Any payment for services rendered were reclaimed and the group of you were thrown in jail.

Additionally, you now have a criminal record in Hillsfar. This may work to your disadvantage in the future.

## MISSION FIVE. THE DOCKS

The party is engaged to help determine why Zhentarim contacts at the docks have stopped communicating.

### BEHIND THE SCENES

The Cult of the Black Earth is known as the more patient and methodical of the elemental cults. Their actions in Hillsfar are to establish a foundation. One part of that foundation must be the ability to transport some of the resources they have hidden around the Moonsea south past the Dragon's Reach to a new stronghold.

To this end, they have obtained the necessary leverage to force a dockworker to aid them. They know he is no stranger to smuggling, as they have learned that he assisted in sneaking non-humans out of the city when they were being imprisoned and persecuted.

Unfortunately, the Zhentarim do not always like it when their resources are co-opted.

### THE HANDLER

The representative from the Zhentarim, Caddock, will not be let in by Finch. Instead, he will make his own way into the party's private room through the door leading into the kitchen. He had been making a nuisance of himself with the young cook before joining the party.

### ROLEPLAYING CADDOCK

To call this half-elf a pretentious, pompous jerk would be ... surprisingly accurate. Caddock is not half as charming as he thinks he is. He will often refer to people as "pal," "babe," "friend-o," or some other nickname simply because he can't be bothered to learn their names.

While talking to the party, he'll help himself to any food and drink in the room. Attempts to dissuade him will be brushed off. (If the party wants to punch him, then you're probably doing it right.)

His one redeeming quality might be that he does seem genuinely concerned about the situation he is bringing to the party's attention. Whether this is because he values the dockworker's well-being and contributions (or simply because he's on the hook) is not quite clear.

**Quote.** "Yeaaaah, you're the guys ... and gals I'm looking for. They tell me you might be able ... ooh, Gouda."

### FRIEND ON THE DOCKS

Caddock has come to ask the party's help in bringing one of his contacts back into the fold. The individual, a man named Finnius, is no stranger to moving things "quietly" through the ports of Hillsfar. Under the "First Law of Humanity", many

non-humans were detained within the city (some were even forced to fight in the arena).

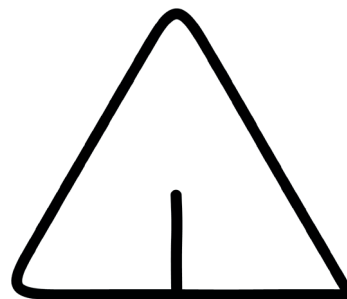
Finnius was instrumental in securing passage out of the city for many of these people who were freed by the Zhentarim. Recently, the First Lord was overthrown, and the law was relaxed, but Caddock still works with Finnius whenever there is a shipment or transport which needs to be handled discreetly

### LOST CHILD

About a week ago, Finnius came to Caddock with a significant problem. Finnius' daughter, a young girl named Katia, had been kidnapped. The individuals who contacted him afterwards indicated that they would keep the 5-year old "safe" as long as Finnius agreed to help them.

Finnius' help would involve providing information on ships' cargo as well as smuggling certain items onto and off of certain ships. However, Caddock doesn't believe that the kidnappers have any reason to return the girl any time soon. When he asked Finnius if he remembered anything about the men, all the dockworker could tell him was that one of them was wearing a ring with an emblem on it.

He will produce a hand drawn version of this emblem. If the party does not recognize it, he will let them know that he found out it's the sign of the Cult of the Black Earth.



Some of his 'boys' have been running into people wearing these sigils, and they appear to be laying the groundwork for their own smuggling operations. While he doesn't believe that there are that many of them in Hillsfar, he hasn't been able to get any information about them.

His boys tried to grab one of them last week, but that didn't end so well. They found out that these guys are "true believers", and couldn't get any information out of the one they caught. (Caddock will admit that they did "some things he wasn't proud of" trying to get the location of the cult's hideout. In the end, the cultist ended up chewing his own tongue out.)

But he's got a plan ...

## CADDOCK'S PLAN

Finnius let Caddock know that he was handed a package earlier today, and that someone named “Zibo” would be by tonight to collect it. Caddock has arranged for the party to stake out the dockworker's home from a nearby building.

He expects the party (or some of the party) to trail Zibo back to their hideout. From there, they can “do their hero thing and save the girl”. He'll indicate that the party can be as rough on the kidnappers as they want ... but only once they've found the cultist's headquarters.

## WAITING FOR ZIBO

The docks are located southeast of the walls of the city, so the party does not need to deal with the long lines of caravans trying to enter the gates. Most of the dockworker's homes, including that of Finnus, are located a bit further out than that.

Should the party wish to explore the docks, there isn't much for them to find there. The area seems extremely busy, a number of ships are currently tied up and are being unloaded, and several others are moored nearby.

About an hour before dusk, the dockworker's shift will change, and the party is brought to a house across the street from Finnus' home. Both buildings are simple one-story houses, each boasting four modestly furnished rooms. Caddock and Finnus will give the party some additional information at this point.

- They are expecting the courier about two hours after dusk. They don't know if there will be other people watching the courier's back (but Caddock suggests that he would have someone watching).
- One of the reasons they have had a problem following the cultists in the past is that they seem to be able to change their cloaks on demand. Finnus isn't quite sure how, but one moment it was a fancy blue cloak with stars, and the next, it was a simple brown wool cloak.
- Caddock will remind the party that jumping the courier before they lead the party back to their hideout is a bad idea that will most likely end in failure.

## THE HAND OFF

The road between the houses is well traveled, and even after dark, there is still some traffic on it. About two and a half hours after dark, a figure in a black silk cloak pauses before Finnus' home. He adjusts his cloak while scanning the area.

Unless the party is doing something overt, like standing in the open, Zibo will not see anything amiss. He then walks up to Finnus' door and knocks.

The dockworker will let him in, and a few moments later, Zibo will leave, having changed his *cloak of many fashions* into a drab hooded cloak made of wool.

Following Zibo with a small group (1–2 characters) will be simple, requiring only a DC 9 Dexterity (Stealth) group check, as Zibo isn't expecting any problems. But should the entire party go, they will be more noticeable, which increases the difficulty to a DC 12 Dexterity (Stealth) group check.

## WHAT COULD GO WRONG?

The character's choices (or dice rolls) could mean that following the cultist will not be possible.

- Should the party kill Zibo without learning the location of their hideouts, **they will have failed this mission**, and will not be paid for their efforts.
- If Zibo realizes he is being followed, he will attempt to run. There are many ways the DM can handle this:
  - Characters who are proficient in tracking may be able to follow Zibo's trail with a successful DC 12 Wisdom (Survival) check, as he will have sacrificed a bit of stealth for speed.
  - The players may attempt to catch Zibo (see the “Foot Race” sidebar as a suggestion for mechanics).
  - The DM may decide to do something else.
- If the party captures Zibo, it will be very difficult to extract any information from him, requiring a successful DC 14 Charisma (Intimidation) or DC 16 Charisma (Persuasion) check, as he is a true believer, and is willing to die rather than give up his cause.

## FOOT RACE!

Each of the characters involved will make a series of Strength (Athletics) checks against Zibo in order to close the distance between them. If they beat Zibo's check result, then that character gains on the cultist. If Zibo beats a character's check, then that character loses ground on Zibo. (Assume all characters are dashing, and ignore the character's normal movement rate for this. If the character has the ability to Dash using a bonus action, then they get advantage on all checks).

If any of the characters can beat Zibo on 3 checks before he beats all of the players on 3 checks, then they are rewarded by being able to tackle Zibo into a pile of crates, knocking the cultist momentarily senseless. However, if Zibo can beat all of the players on 3 checks first, then he will have given them the slip. To find him, the party will need to succeed on a DC 12 Wisdom (Survival) check in order to track the cultist the rest of the way.



## THE LEAKY BARREL

Following Zibo leads to a secluded section of the shoreline, which boasts a number of old run-down buildings. The cultists have taken over one of these, an old abandoned tavern called the Leaky Barrel.

The windows are boarded up, but if the party waits until after dark, they will see light flickering through the seams of those boards. Unless the party has somehow done something to put the cultists on alert, they will not be expecting trouble. Sneaking up to the building should be relatively easy, by succeeding on a DC 10 group Dexterity (Stealth) check.

### KICKING DOWN THE DOOR

The party may decide to come in ‘blades swinging.’ The door is closed and locked but will only be barred if the cultists have somehow been warned. Forcing the door open will require a DC 12 Strength (Athletics) check if the door is not barred. The difficulty rises to 15 if the door is barred.

### COMING IN THE WINDOWS

The windows are all boarded up. Removing the boards without alerting the cultists will be extremely difficult, as the boards will creak and snap loudly when pulled. Bashing through the boards will also require a DC 12 Strength (Athletics) check. Each window is approximately 3’ wide and 4’ high. Climbing through an opened window will count as 10 additional feet of movement (5’ for difficult terrain, and 5’ for climbing)

Once the party enters the common room of the tavern, they will have to contend with the cultists. In addition, on the second round of combat, Splorch, a bloated **mud mephit** will join the fight, entering from the kitchen.

### COMING AROUND THE BACK.

The tavern hangs out over the water, so sneaking around the back will require obtaining some sort of boat, or swimming. As the party approaches, they will be able to see a platform underneath the building’s overhang with a ramp leading up to a large trap door on the bottom of the building. This was used to load supplies straight into the kitchen. The trap door opens upwards, but is barred from below. (Unbarring it will not cause anyone standing on it to fall through)

Splorch will be in the kitchen, searching for Katia, who is hiding in a cupboard. She is terrified of the mephit because she saw him kill and eat the other mephit who was watching her. Since he is now stuck watching her by himself, he has been entertaining himself by chasing her around the room. If the party comes up through the trap door, he will scream loudly and attack. The cultists will come running on the second round of combat.

## SETTING UP THE ENCOUNTER

### Weak

- **Splorch (Mud Mephit):** AC 11, 42 hp, Init +1
- **Acolyte:** AC 10, 9 hp, Init +0
- **Cultist (2):** AC 12, 9 hp, Init +1

### Average

- **Splorch (Mud Mephit):** AC 11, 42 hp, Init +1
- **Acolyte (2):** AC 10, 9 hp, Init +0
- **Cultist (3):** AC 12, 9 hp, Init +1

### Strong

- **Splorch (Mud Mephit):** AC 11, 42 hp, Init +1
- **Acolyte:** AC 10, 9 hp, Init +0
- **Cultist (2):** AC 12, 9 hp, Init +1
- **Sacred Stone Monk:** AC 14, 22 hp, Init +2

### Very Strong

- **Splorch (Mud Mephit):** AC 11, 42 hp, Init +1
- **Cult Fanatic:** AC 13, 33 hp, Init +2
- **Cultist (2):** AC 12, 9 hp, Init +1
- **Sacred Stone Monk (2):** AC 14, 22 hp, Init +2

## HE’S A BIG ONE...

Splorch is large for a mud mephit, having devoured several of his kin.

- The mud mephit begins the encounter with maximum hit points (42 hp).

## DEVELOPMENT

Once the cultists and the mud mephit have been dealt with, the party will be able to find Katia in the kitchen. She has hidden herself in a cupboard, but part of her dress is sticking out. When the party rescues Katia, she will be on the verge of tears. Should any of the party members try to console her, she will collapse into their arms, sobbing hysterically. If a character can calm her down using roleplay or succeeding on a DC 10 Charisma (Persuasion) check, that character will gain the “My Hewo! Have a cookie!” story award.

When the party returns to Finnius’ home, the dockworker will be extremely grateful to the party. He will offer to share his last few bottles of ale to thank them. Caddock will pay the party at this point.

## WHAT WAS THE PACKAGE?

Many players will be interested in the package. The package is a heavy stone cylinder wrapped in paper. The length of it is covered in what appear to be Chultan writings, but if anyone can read Chultan, they will realize that it is just gibberish. It is simply a stone which has been crafted as a shell to smuggle coded messages.

To get at the message, it must be broken open using either force or magic. Both Finnius and Caddock will try to prevent the party from doing this

before the hand off. Caddock will threaten the party with non-payment if they insist.

If the party breaks open the cylinder, they will find a series of ship names, each with a date and a set of ports. Finnius (or another dock worker) will be able to confirm that these look like travel routes for the ships. The dates are scattered over the next week and list a series of ports which are further and further south. It looks like the cult is interested in shipping people or materials to other locations. This should leave the characters with questions.

#### **STORY AWARD: "MY HEWO! HAVE A COOKIE!"**

Katia, the young girl you rescued from the cultists now considers you her hero and her "bestest friend." Whenever you enter the docks of Hillsfar, there is a 50% chance that the 5-year old will bound up to you, and exclaim that "You! You my hewo! Have cookie?" and offer you one of her gingerbread cookies.

#### **TREASURE**

The cultists have about 50 sp amongst them. Splorch has eaten numerous interesting looking rocks, which the party might choose to retrieve, but which have no monetary value.



## REWARDS

Make sure players note their rewards on their adventure log sheets. Give your name and DCI number (if applicable) so players can record who ran the session.

### EXPERIENCE

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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
Acolyte	50
Cult Fanatic	450
Cultist	25
Mud Mephit	50
Sacred Stone Monk	100

The **minimum** total award for each character participating in this adventure is **75 experience points**.

The **maximum** total award for each character participating in this adventure is **100 experience points**.

### TREASURE

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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
Caddock's payment	75 gp
Cultist's coins	5 gp

**Consumable magic items** should be divided up however the group sees fit. If more than one character is interested in a specific consumable magic item, the DM can determine who gets it randomly should the group be unable to decide.

**Permanent magic items** are divided according to a system detailed in the D&D Adventurers League Dungeon Master's Guide.

### CLOAK OF MANY FASHIONS

*Wondrous item, common*

While not worn, this cloak reverts to a turquoise cape sized for a gnome.

This item can be found in **Player Handout 6**.

### RENOWN

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**Members of the Zhentarim** earn **one renown** at the end of this adventure—other characters earn no renown.

### STORY AWARD

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The character who successfully calmed the young girl down after her rescue now has a friend for life, and gains the following story award:

**“My Hewo! Have a cookie!”** Katia, the young girl you rescued from the cultists now considers you her hero and her “bestest friend.” Whenever you enter the docks of Hillsfar, there is a 50% chance that the 5-year old will bound up to you, and exclaim that “You! You my hewo! Have cookie?” and offer you one of her gingerbread cookies.

More information can be found in **Player Handout 5**.

### DM REWARD

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

## APPENDIX. DRAMATIS PERSONAE

The following NPCs are featured prominently in this adventure:

**Finch (*finch*).** A half-elf who has been retained by several members of the factions to act as a liaison between the party and the members of the factions who will be hiring them. Sort of a dull individual, and has been relegated to this role because he has little ambition.

**Caddock (*Cadd-dock*).** A human rogue who manages some of the Zhentarim's contacts within Hillsfar. Most people find him very unlikable, as he takes "smarmy" and "greasy" to a new level. However, he does have a reputation of having the backs of the people he works with.

**Finnius (*Finn-i-us*).** A human dockworker who has been placed in an awkward position between the Zhentarim and the Cult of the Black Earth.

**Katia (*Khat-ya*).** Finnius' daughter. A 5-year old human child.

## APPENDIX. MONSTER/NPC STATISTICS

### ACOLYTE

Medium humanoid (any race), any alignment

**Armor Class** 10

**Hit Points** 9 (2d8)

**Speed** 30 ft.

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STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	14 (+2)	11 (+0)

---

**Skills** Medicine +4, Religion +2

**Senses** passive Perception 12

**Languages** any one language (usually Common)

**Challenge** 1/4 (50 XP)

**Spellcasting.** The acolyte is a 1st-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 12, +4 to hit with spell attacks). The acolyte has the following cleric spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *light, sacred flame, thaumaturgy*

1st level (3 slots): *bless, cure wounds, sanctuary*

### ACTIONS

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**Club.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 2 (1d4) bludgeoning damage.

### CULT FANATIC

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

**Armor Class** 13 (leather armor)

**Hit Points** 33 (6d8 + 6)

**Speed** 30 ft.

---

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (+0)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)	13 (+1)	14 (+2)

---

**Skills** Deception +4, Persuasion +4, Religion +2

**Senses** passive Perception 10

**Languages** any one language (usually Common)

**Challenge** 2 (450 XP)

**Dark Devotion.** The fanatic has advantage on saving throws against being charmed or frightened.

**Spellcasting.** The fanatic is a 4th-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 11, +3 to hit with spell attacks). The fanatic has the following cleric spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *light, sacred flame, thaumaturgy*

1st level (4 slots): *command, inflict wounds, shield of faith*

2nd level (3 slots): *hold person, spiritual weapon*

### ACTIONS

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**Multiattack.** The fanatic makes two melee attacks.

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

## CULTIST

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

**Armor Class** 12 (leather armor)

**Hit Points** 9 (2d8)

**Speed** 30 ft.

---

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (+0)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	11 (+0)	10 (+0)

---

**Skills** Deception +2, Religion +2

**Senses** passive Perception 10

**Languages** any one language (usually Common)

**Challenge** 1/8 (25 XP)

**Dark Devotion.** The cultist has advantage on saving throws against being charmed or frightened.

## ACTIONS

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**Scimitar.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 4 (1d6 + 1) slashing damage.

## MUD MEPHIT

Small elemental, neutral evil

**Armor Class** 11

**Hit Points** 27 (6d6 + 6)

**Speed** 20 ft., fly 20 ft., swim 20 ft.

---

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
8 (-1)	12 (+1)	12 (+1)	9 (-1)	11 (+0)	7 (-2)

---

**Skills:** Stealth +3

**Damage Immunities** poison

**Condition Immunities** poisoned

**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

**Languages** Aquan, Terran

**Challenge** 1/4 (50 XP)

**Death Burst.** When the mephit dies, it explodes in a burst of sticky mud. Each Medium or smaller creature within 5 feet of it must succeed on a DC 11 Dexterity saving throw or be restrained until the end of the creature's next turn.

**False Appearance.** While the mephit remains motionless, it is indistinguishable from an ordinary mound of mud.

## ACTIONS

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**Fists.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 4 (1d6 + 1) bludgeoning damage.

**Mud Breath (Recharge 6).** The mephit belches viscid mud onto one creature within 5 feet of it. If the target is Medium or smaller, it must succeed on a DC 11 Dexterity saving throw or be restrained for 1 minute. A creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.

## SACRED STONE MONK

Medium humanoid (human), lawful evil

**Armor Class** 14

**Hit Points** 22 (4d8 + 4)

**Speed** 40 ft.

---

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
13 (+1)	15 (+2)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)	14 (+2)	9 (-1)

---

**Skills** Acrobatics +4, Athletics +3, Perception +4

**Senses** tremorsense 10 ft., passive Perception 14

**Languages** Common

**Challenge** 1/2 (100 XP)

**Unarmored Defense.** While the monk is wearing no armor and wielding no shield, its AC includes its Wisdom modifier.

**Unarmored Movement.** While the monk is wearing no armor and wielding no shield, its walking speed increases by 10 feet (included in its speed).

### ACTIONS

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**Multiattack.** The monk makes two melee attacks.

**Unarmed Strike.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) bludgeoning damage.

### REACTIONS

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**Parry.** The monk adds 2 to its AC against one melee or ranged weapon attack that would hit it. To do so, the monk must see the attacker.

# APPENDIX. ENCOUNTER SETUP

## MISSION FIVE: THE KIDNAPPERS

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### WEAK PARTY STRENGTH (200 XP)

- Splorch (Mud Mephit): AC 11, 42 hp, Init +1
- Cleric, 1st level: AC 12, 9 hp, Init +0
- Cultists (4): AC 12, 9 hp, Init +1

### AVERAGE PARTY STRENGTH (300 XP)

- Splorch (Mud Mephit): AC 11, 42 hp, Init +1
- Cleric, 1st level: AC 12, 9 hp, Init +0
- Cultists (4): AC 12, 9 hp, Init +1
- Sacred Stone Monk: AC 14, 22 hp, Init +2

### STRONG PARTY STRENGTH (575 XP)

- Splorch (Mud Mephit): AC 11, 42 hp, Init +1
- Cleric, 5th level: AC 12, 9 hp, Init +0
- Cultists (3): AC 12, 9 hp, Init +1

### VERY STRONG PARTY STRENGTH (650 XP)

- Splorch (Mud Mephit): AC 11, 42 hp, Init +1
- Cleric, 5th level: AC 12, 9 hp, Init +0
- Cultists (3): AC 12, 9 hp, Init +1
- Sacred Stone Monk: AC 14, 22 hp, Init +2

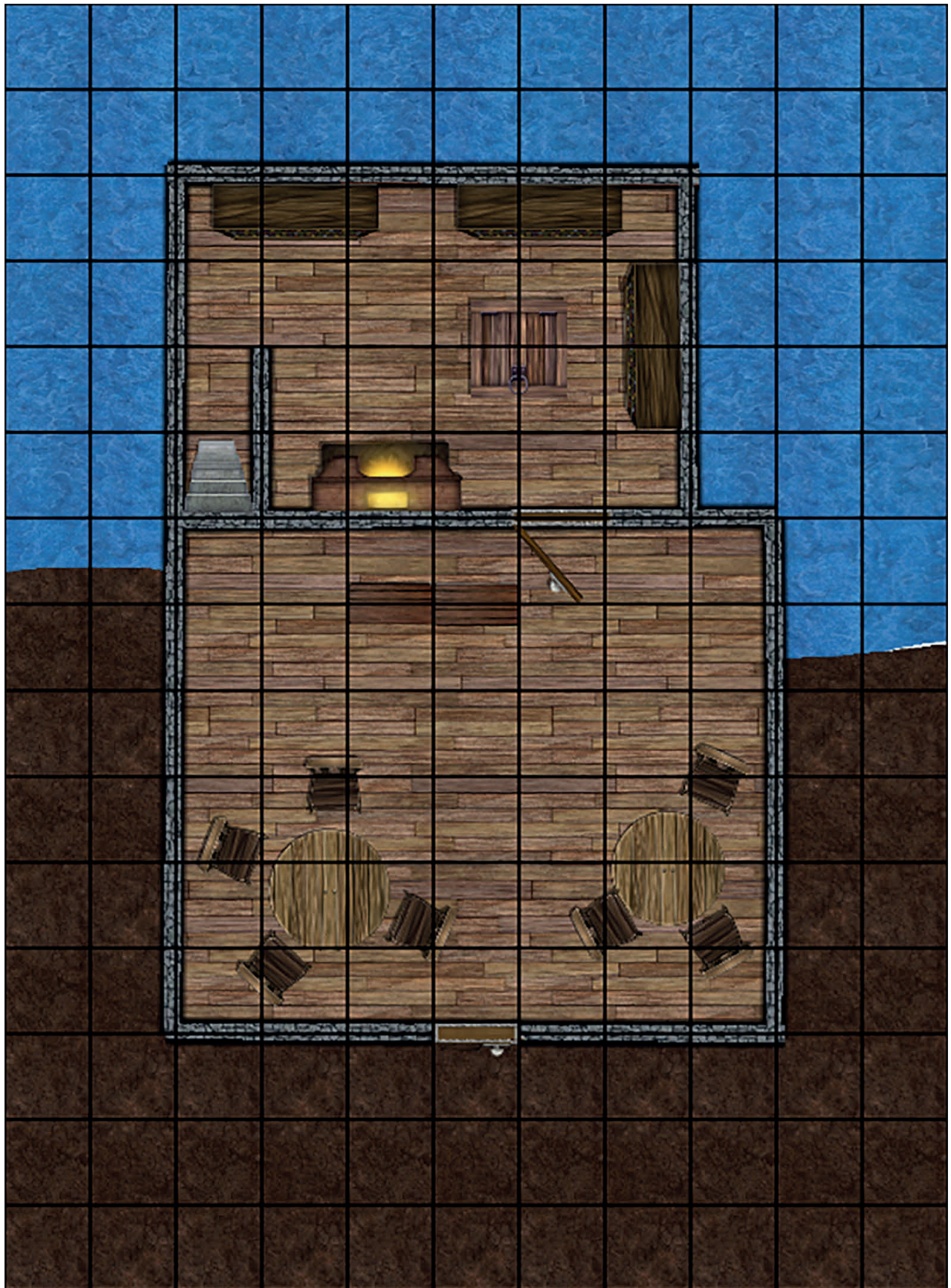
#### HE'S A BIG ONE...

Splorch is large for a mud mephit, having devoured several of his kin.

- The mud mephit begins the encounter with maximum hit points (42 hp)



## APPENDIX. BAYSIDE TAVERN MAP



## PLAYER HANDOUT 5. STORY AWARD

### STORY AWARD

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**“My Hewo! Have a cookie!”** Katia, the young girl you rescued from the cultists now considers you her hero and her “bestest friend.” Whenever you enter the docks of Hillsfar, there is a 50% chance that the 5-year old will bound up to you, and exclaim that “You! You my hewo! Have cookie?” and offer you one of her gingerbread cookies.

## PLAYER HANDOUT 6. MAGIC ITEM

### CLOAK OF MANY FASHIONS

*Wondrous item, common*

While wearing this cloak, you can use a bonus action to change the style, color, and apparent quality of the garment. The cloak's weight doesn't change. Regardless of its appearance, the cloak can't be anything but a cloak. Although it can duplicate the appearance of other magic cloaks, it doesn't gain their magical properties.

While not worn, this cloak reverts to a turquoise cape sized for a gnome.

This item can be found in *Xanathar's Guide to Everything*.