



THE BREATH OF LIFE

An Avernus Rising Adventure

An archdevil has invited you to a ball, and though it's likely a trap, it'd be rude to decline.

Dara, however, is keen on attending, since this fiend's most treasured possession is the bejeweled skull of a dead angel. Dara believes that the artifact holds the secret to accessing a long-dormant reliquary. Ready to crash a party?

Part One of the *Call for Aid* series of adventures.

A Four to Six-Hour Adventure for 11th through 16th Level Characters.

Optimized For: APL 13



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ADVENTURE PRIMER

*“Hell hath no limits, nor is circumscribed
In one self place, for where we are is hell,
And where hell is must we ever be.”*

— Christopher Marlowe, Dr. Faustus

This adventure is designed for **three to seven 11th-to-16th-level characters** and is optimized for **five characters with an average party level (APL) of 13**. Characters outside this level range cannot participate in this adventure.

This adventure occurs in Avernus, the first layer of the Nine Hells. The characters undertake a mission to infiltrate a ball, steal an artifact out from under the nose of a powerful devil, and escape with their lives.

BACKGROUND

Eons ago, the hound-headed angel **VERWYR** was summoned to the **NINE HELLS** by adventurers locked in combat with the **ARCHDEVIL QIROZZ**. Despite their best efforts, both the adventurers and the angel were slain. Ever vain, **QIROZZ** stripped the flesh from the angel and fashioned a drinking vessel of exquisite and terrible beauty from its skull. Every six hundred and sixty-six days **QIROZZ** hosts a ball to show off the **FETID CHALICE**.

The chalice has been demonstrating curious behavior lately; any liquid poured into it turns into **HOLY WATER**. Unbeknownst to Qirozz, the fragments of Verwyrr that linger within the chalice have heard a **CALL FOR AID** from on high. Although Qirozz can no longer abide the taste of anything served from her most treasured possession, it has been six hundred and sixty days since the last party. The festivities must go on!

OVERVIEW

The adventure’s story is spread over **three parts** and takes approximately **four hours** to play. The adventure begins with a Call to Action. It also contains **two optional bonus objectives**—each taking **one additional hour** to play.

- **Call to Action: Dream Done Diligently.** Dara asks the characters to retrieve an object she’s had visions of: the angel Verwyrr’s skull, which is the prized chalice of an Archdevil.
- **Part 1: Dubious Dealings.** The party must convince a reluctant Mahadi to attend the ball so they can infiltrate the event. This is **Story Objective A**.
- **Part 2: Heinous Heist.** Having gained entry to the ball, the party must formulate a plan and steal the chalice, all without implicating Mahadi. This is **Story Objective B**.
- **Bonus Objective A: Haggl’ing Hag.** Mahadi asks for a favor in exchange for his attendance at the ball. Just get some *soul coins* a hag owes him. This bonus objective is found in **Appendix 1**.
- **Bonus Objective B: Hasty Getaway.** The chalice is theirs, but now the characters must foil their pursuers and rendezvous at Mahadi’s Wandering Emporium. This bonus objective is found in **Appendix 2**.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

Dara tasks the characters to get Mahadi to attend a ball so he can bring them as guests. Once at the ball, the characters simply have to steal the Fetid Chalice under the nose of an archdevil and escape, all without implicating Mahadi.

Dara’s Dream. Dara, the chosen of Ilmater, had a dream sent by her god, and she charges the characters to retrieve Verwyrr’s skull at all cost.

Divinity on Display. Clerics, paladins and warlocks with a good-aligned god or patron receive visions of the chalice on display in Avernus.

Noble Background. Characters with the Noble background have heard that there is a grand ball being held in Avernus. This is no ordinary event and no self-respecting noble would miss it if they had a chance to attend.

ADVENTURE FLOWCHART

This section provides a basic understanding of not only the flow of the adventure, but also the outline of the different paths that your players may take in reaching their stated objective.





CALL TO ACTION: DREAM DONE DILIGENTLY

Estimated Duration: 15 minutes

DARA GETS WHAT DARA WANTS

The characters are summoned to Dara's tent, where she asks the characters to undertake a risky endeavor—to dance with a devil.

AREA INFORMATION

Dara's pavilion is located within Mahadi's Wandering Emporium and has the following features:

Dimensions & Terrain. Dara recently obtained a new pavilion from Mahadi. It's fairly large, approximately 40 feet on a side, and well-furnished with colorful pillows and candles. In the center of this luxury is a plain, wooden stool.

Light. The ever-present ambient light of Avernus—punctuated by the occasional flash of green light shed by passing meteors—sheds bright light throughout the area. Within the tent, Dara's candles provide welcome warmth.

Sound & Smells. The sweet, spicy smell of Dara's candles offers a soothing buffer against the pervasive stench of sulfur, blood, and iron. Outside, the sounds of commerce interspersed with the distant, dull thud of meteor impacts fill the air.

CREATURE INFORMATION

Dara sits with her eyes closed on a simple stool that contrasts with the opulence of the tent, but smiles as the characters arrive. A number of curiously similar humanoid (duplicates of **Fai Chen**) rest on pillows, their wounds from DDAL09-11 *Losing Fai* having been healed by Dara.

What Do They Want? Dara is searching for a powerful artifact—the skull of an angel—to aid her in a journey to a distant place called the Canyon of Screams, and she wants the characters to retrieve it for her.

What Do They Know? Dara has recently received visions of Verwyyr, a hound-headed angel who fell in battle long ago, and the archdevil Qirozz, who turned Verwyyr's skull into a chalice, which she displays at her infamous balls.

This time, Ilmater has indicated through the dreams she sends to Dara that retrieving Verwyyr's skull is of vital importance, but Dara's vision stopped shortly after seeing the skull.

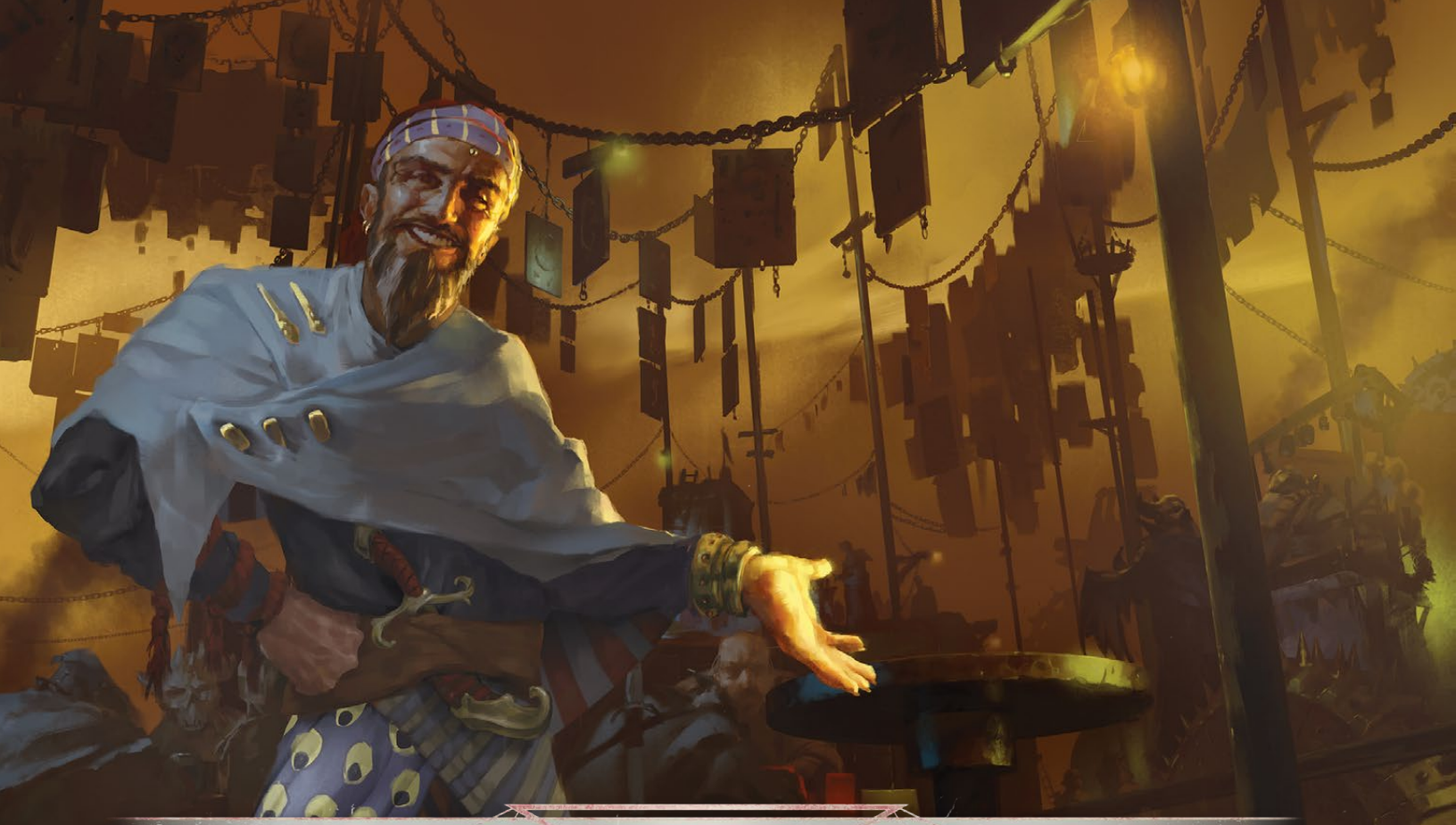
Dara also knows if the characters have used charges from *soul coins* previously: she can sense the corruption caused by using the coins. Obtain the number of charges used by each character. If any character has spent more than 4 charges, Dara averts her gaze and is very curt when speaking to them.

CALL TO ACTION

To obtain the skull, the characters must gain admittance to the archdevil's ball. This would normally be a challenge, but Qirozz always extends an invitation to Mahadi, though he routinely declines to attend. However, if the characters are able to convince him, he can bring them along as guests. Dara indicates that they should persuade Mahadi by any means necessary, short of violence.

Once the characters have been briefed, Dara wishes them luck and closes her eyes once more.

If all characters at the table have the **No Exceptions!** story award from DDAL09-05 *Faces of Fortune*, they're banned from entering the emporium. In this case, **Burney the Barber** acts as an intermediary between Dara and the characters. Burney the Barber relays Dara's message and also gets Mahadi to meet the characters at the entrance to the Emporium entrance so they can beg for his help.



PART 1. DUBIOUS DEALINGS

Estimated Duration: 45 minutes

YOU WANT WHAT?

The characters must perform a favor for the surly rakshasa if he's to attend the ball.

STORY OBJECTIVE

Convincing Mahadi to attend the ball is **Story Objective A**.

AREA INFORMATION

Mahadi's Wandering Emporium has the following features:

Dimensions & Terrain. Mahadi's Wandering Emporium has wide avenues lined with tents and stalls, as well as the famous **Infernal Rapture**, Mahadi's restaurant. Mahadi is in the main pavilion, overseeing customers perusing his goods.

Light. The main pavilion is well lit with lanterns and strange magical globes that seem to follow customers.

Sounds & Smells. There is a pleasing odor, both invigorating and calming, which masks the typical smells of sulfur, iron and blood. It's hard to identify, but something magical is definitely at play.

Infernal Rapture. This den of decadent indulgence is detailed in *Baldur's Gate: Descent into Avernus*. Its use isn't a requirement for this adventure, but can be used to enhance the players' experience.

NEUTRAL TERRITORY

Mahadi strictly enforces the rules that are written on the banner hanging over the entrance: "All are welcome. No fighting! No spellcasting! No exceptions!" Any violence or use of magic—even for benign effects—breaks these dictates and brings down the wrath of Mahadi on those foolish enough to tempt fate.

As warned, Mahadi doesn't suffer a rulebreaker. Anyone caught (and the enchantment placed over the space to detect spellcasting ensures it), is banished from the emporium by Mahadi (a **rakshasa**) and earns the **No Exceptions!** story award. Those who resist are beset upon by Mahadi, along with many of his indentured servants (**salamanders**, **hobgoblin captains**, **incubi** and **succubi**, and even an **erinyes**). Characters forcibly ejected from the emporium gain a level of exhaustion and are reduced to 1 hit point.

CREATURE INFORMATION

A well-dressed man of dark complexion stands in a spacious pavilion newly redecorated with decadent food and stylish trappings. He stands near a tall chair, fit for a king while overseeing dealings of his customers, which consist of devils, demons, and everything in between. As the characters enter, Mahadi grins and motions to an ornate sign carrying the same message as the banner over the emporium entrance. The sign is very clear on the rules: "All are welcome. No fighting! No spellcasting! No exceptions!"

What Do They Want? Mahadi serves his master Asmodeus by collecting information on customers—and he collects plenty of souls for himself while doing so. He very much wants Dara's pure and god-touched soul as a prize.

What Do They Know? Mahadi is known for selling goods, knowledge, and secrets—for a price. He knows about the upcoming ball and has received an invitation, but he is not keen on attending. After all, his emporium requires his watchful eye! Mahadi informs the characters that weapons and armor are not permitted at the ball. Spellcasting is also not allowed, but jewelry and attire, even if magical, are permitted. He has heard that attempts to smuggle banned items into past parties that have not gone well, as security is diligent. Also, attempting to fight the archdevil Qirozz would undoubtedly result in their deaths.

CONVINCING MAHADI

Mahadi waits for the characters to speak and listens intently. When asked about the ball, he asks why they want him to attend. Mahadi pays attention while trying to discern any deception. The characters must persuade Mahadi to attend the ball, and negotiate a payment to make it worth his while.

Bartering With Mahadi. For the paltry price of a few of the characters' souls (equal to half of the number of characters, rounded down), Mahadi will escort the characters to the ball, with all the pomp and circumstance that such an appearance demands. Mahadi requires an infernal contract which states that he will attend the ball with the characters as guests in exchange for the characters' soul when they die—provided the characters can assure him that he won't be implicated in any way, which would render the payment due immediately.

Otherwise, each character must provide one of the following payments:

- **Soul Coins.** Three *soul coins*.
- **Infernal Contract.** A character willing to sign an infernal contract, selling their soul to Mahadi.
- **Gold.** 500 gp tribute that he can spend towards some much-needed refurbishments to Infernal Rapture as well as some assistance getting the place fixed up a bit (an expenditure of 5 downtime days).

For example, a group of four characters could provide six *soul coins*, a signed infernal contract, and 500 gp and 5 downtime days to slake Mahadi's greed.

Persuading Mahadi. Mahadi isn't immune to the silver-tongued, but convincing him to do something he doesn't want to do is difficult. In addition to the above payments, the group must succeed on a DC 15 Charisma (Insight or Deception or Persuasion) **group check**. Additional information can be gleaned during the group check as follows:

- **Insight.** While interacting with Mahadi, characters who succeed on this check note that the subject of the ball seems greatly concerning to Mahadi.
- **Persuasion.** Characters who succeed on this check goad Mahadi into opening up about the ball. Mahadi knows that Qirozz was Fai Chen's first and best customer who, along with Fai's clones, greatly assisted in him escaping Mahadi's contract. Mahadi, yawning heavily, notes that

many interesting people attend, but it is a tired affair that is the same year after year. He then changes the subject back to his recompense for attending the ball.

- **Deception.** If the characters successfully deceive Mahadi regarding their reasons for attending the ball, he still insists that he not be implicated under any circumstances in any activity unrelated to the ball itself. He provides his list of forms of reasonable payment to secure his attendance.

BONUS OBJECTIVE A. If utilizing this additional content, Mahadi also requires the characters to perform a favor to secure his aid. Otherwise, successful negotiations and payments are sufficient.

DEVELOPMENT

Once the characters convince Mahadi to attend the ball, he snaps his fingers and an imp appears before him. He whispers a few words into the imp's ear and the imp vanishes in a puff of purple and black smoke. Proceed to **Part 2**.



PART 2. HEINOUS HEIST

Estimated Duration: 2 hours 45 minutes

ARRIVING FASHIONABLY ON-TIME

The characters arrive at the ball, plan a heist and escape, preferably without implicating Mahadi.

Mahadi's war machine—his prized demon grinder—stops before a looming basalt citadel. Your eyes try to take in the splendor. Winged devils dressed in purple vests welcome visitors in opulent attire through the flaming entrance.

STORY OBJECTIVE

Stealing the Fetid Chalice is **Story Objective B**.

AREA INFORMATION

Qirozz's estate has the following features:

Dimensions & Terrain. The citadel is carved out of a basalt formation in the vast plain which is pitted and cratered. The many sublevels and towers are out of scope for this adventure.

Light. The ball is well lit by candles in chandeliers and sconces.

Sounds & Smells. The ball is filled with laughter, shouts, and whispers. The exotic smells of food and a hint of jasmine permeate the air.

Cleansing Flame. Any creature passing through the flaming entrance is targeted by *dispel magic* cast at 9th level. This effect can't be dispelled by any means short of a wish.

CREATURE INFORMATION

When they arrive, Mahadi and the characters are greeted outside the ball by a **horned devil** with a purple velvet vest, who informs everyone that they are most welcome.

What Do They Want? The **horned devil** wants to welcome guests without allowing any miscreants or illegal items into the ball.

What Do They Know? The **horned devil** has a list of people who are permitted to attend—as well as a list of individuals to watch out for.

Characters who succeed on a **DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check** notice a burly devil escorting a guest to a nearby guard house.

SECURITY

The **horned devil** asks for the invitation, which Mahadi provides. All of the guests must provide their names, which are duly written upon a large scroll made out of a material which looks suspiciously like humanoid skin. Whether the characters give their real names, infernal nicknames,

or false names is up to them; if they have the **Plague of Plagueshield** story award and provide their infernal nicknames, they are watched closely, since the devils have already heard of them.

The horned devil relays that guests are not permitted to carry weapons, shields, or armor, but they may keep any jewelry or apparel. If the characters have weapons or armor, Mahadi tells them that they can leave them in his war machine and reclaim them after the ball. Otherwise, such items can be checked in at the front gate; the characters are given a claim receipt to retrieve their belongings.

The characters can see other guests being patted down. Armor of any kind is noticed during a pat down. Weapons can be smuggled in with a successful DC 15 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check if—and only if—they are small (weighing 1 lb. or less) and non-magical. Otherwise, weapons are found during the pat down or noticed with *detect magic*. Magic items which are not jewelry or attire are detected and turned in by security to the front gate. Such items can be retrieved with the provided claim ticket.

GRAND ENTRANCE

Once through security, Mahadi and the characters join the line to pass through the large opening carved into the basalt, decorated with purple velvet curtains. The opening itself is filled with flames that the guests must pass through. Characters proficient in Arcana can tell that the flames aren't harmful, but *detect magic* or similar effects reveal extremely powerful abjuration emanating from within. Guests must enter here; all other entrances are locked and guarded.

The gala is in full swing. Devils, humanoids, and other interesting invitees mingle in the large room. A marble pedestal in the center of the room is partitioned off from the attendees by ropes. Resting upon the pedestal is a canine skull with gems, gilded patterns and ornate scrollwork with golden inlays.

CREATURE INFORMATION

Devils, humanoids and other denizens of Avernus fill the ballroom. Many are dressed in gaudy outfits that defy reason. Two invisible **imps** and a **horned devil** guard the chalice at all times.

What Do They Want? The **imps** want to enjoy the ball without actually moving. The **horned devil** is thirsty, as flying is hard work.

What Do They Know? The devils know that they are the last line of defense for the chalice. The **imps** have been ordered to stay with the chalice or alert Qirozz of any theft attempts. The **horned devil** knows his ex-girlfriend is attending the ball, but he is duty bound to guard the chalice. He hopes she doesn't cause him problems.

THE FETID CHALICE

The chalice rests on a marble pedestal which is cordoned off in an area 10 feet around the pedestal. The chalice weighs 11 pounds and is protected from theft via the following methods:

- Two invisible **imps** lay inside the empty chalice.
- A **horned devil** flies above the chalice, watching anyone who approaches. He ensures that no one enters the cordoned off area.
- An *alarm* spell in a 5-foot cube centered under the chalice pedestal mentally alerts Qirozz if any creature other than the imps, the horned devil, or Qirozz herself gets within 7 feet of the pedestal.
- A *forbiddance* spell (save DC 21) has been cast on the marble pedestal, warding it against celestials, elementals, fey, and undead. The spell deals necrotic damage, and there is no password.
- A *glyph of warding* has been placed on the chalice. The glyph activates if a creature that isn't lawful evil touches it; it casts *Otto's irresistible dance* (save DC 21) on the creature that triggers it. A creature that succeeds on a DC 21 Intelligence (Investigation) check finds the glyph.
- A *symbol of insanity* is cast on the chalice, which is triggered when touched by anyone other than a fiend. A creature that succeeds on a DC 21 Intelligence (Investigation) check detects the symbol.





THE GRAND BALL

The ball is a grand affair with elegant music from skilled bards and ample refreshments for all present. Qirozz has spared no expense: devils filter through the gala offering rare delicacies such as pickled mortal flesh, roasted weretiger, and seared abyssal chicken. Fine wine, cider, and even the finest stout is available.

CREATURE INFORMATION

See **Appendix 3** for details on the guests and the information that characters can gather, as well as information on stealing the Fetid Chalice.

THE PLAN

Stealing the chalice successfully hinges on obtaining the knowledge from ball guests. If the characters learn of the chalice's defenses, get aid, and deal with the devils guarding the chalice, they have the best chance. Depending on the plan, this may lead to success or failure, at the DM's discretion.

Use the Clues. By using all the clues obtained from interacting with the guests, the characters can successfully steal the chalice without complications—though they'll still have to make a quick getaway. To follow the clues, they must:

- Disable some or all of the spells on the chalice.
- Obtain Zaralais's aid (see **Appendix 3**) in roaring or casting *dispel magic*. Roaring also helps by getting rid of the two invisible **imps** inside the chalice.
- Distract the **horned devil** with "blood of angels."
- Tire Qirozz through an activity so she takes a nap.
- If any of the above steps are not completed, the players must improvise a cunning alternative. Simply grabbing the chalice and making a run for it likely results in failure. However, creative spellcasting combined with some of the above steps could work if the devils are neutralized.

TREASURE

The Fetid Chalice is an artifact that can produce holy water. It is fashioned from the inverted skull of what appears to be a hound—gilt in silver, gold, and precious stones with a thick stem of rune-engraved bone.

EXIT STAGE LEFT

Once the party has the Fetid Chalice (or if they failed to obtain it), they need to escape the ball. They must succeed on a DC 18 Dexterity (Stealth) group check to escape without implicating Mahadi. On a failed check, they manage to evade capture, but are identified—which implicates Mahadi, since he brought them to the ball. Regardless of the outcome of the check, the characters can still recover any items checked at the entrance without incident. The claim ticket is a binding agreement, after all. **Bonus Objective B.** If utilizing this additional content, the characters must now escape with the chalice or flee in shame, but they are pursued! Otherwise, the characters make their way back to Dara (proceed to **Wrap Up**, below).

PLAYING THE PILLARS

Here are some suggestions for this encounter:

If the two **imps** are not neutralized, one **imp** grabs the Fetid Chalice, rendering it invisible, then flies up in the air and away, screaming in Infernal about the attempted theft. The second **imp** also shouts in Infernal and heads straight to Qirozz or to alert security.

If the **horned devil** is not distracted, he attacks the characters. He also pursues the party, imposing disadvantage on the characters' Dexterity (Stealth) checks.

Combat. If the characters enter combat with any of the devils besides the two **imps** and **horned devil**, the entire ball, led by archdevil Qirozz, attacks the characters in a furious maelstrom. No rolls are required: the characters have no chance of survival. The foolish mortals who dared to challenge the archdevil are roasted, eaten, and mocked for ages to come.

Exploration. Investigating the ballroom yields information on possible escape routes, targets for a distraction, and the security on the chalice. There is an escape route through the kitchen or through the library and the garden.

Social. Each NPC holds vital information that proves helpful in planning and pulling off a theft that will be retold for generations, on both sides. Feel free to include other guests that may interest the characters to make the ball come alive, but not be a distraction from the heist.

WRAP UP

It turns out that Mahadi had a great time at the ball, and while he won't admit it, he's almost sorry that he let his pride keep him from attending in the past. Both Mahadi and Dara provide a few trinkets as thanks for the characters' efforts (see **Treasure**).

SUCCESS

If the characters managed to recover the Fetid Chalice, Dara greets them warmly when they return to her tent in the emporium. Taking the artifact, she reveals her true power: with a single kiss, she returns a long dead angel to life.

Dara displays a brilliant smile, her keen eyes showing wisdom beyond her age. She walks toward you with her hands extended, takes the skull, and bestows a kiss on its forehead. A burst of radiant light fills the tent and a few cries of alarm echo from outside. When your vision returns, an angel with the head of a great hound stands before Dara.

Seeing the girl, the angel's eyes narrow. In a throaty growl, he says, "Yuriial calls for aid...."

Dara smiles, her eyes focused on something only she can see.

Restored to his former glory, the angel Verwyyr growls angrily at being bested by fiends and mutters the name "Yuriial" and something about retrieving an artifact of Ilmater. At the mention of Ilmater, Dara seems to go into a trance with a smile on her face.

FAILURE

Dara is disappointed by the characters' botched theft, but she understands that failure is a part of life. She hopes that the characters can learn from their experiences, as she knows that failure can be more painful than any wound or harsh words.

TREASURE

- If Mahadi was not implicated in the theft, he provides the characters with a *potion of lightning resistance*. Dara nods to one of the Fai Chen clones who has recuperated—who provides the characters with a *cloak of arachnida*.

REWARDS

At the **end of the session**, the characters receive rewards based upon their accomplishments. Aside from advancement, these rewards are earned during the session.

CHARACTER REWARDS

The characters earn the following rewards:

ADVANCEMENT

Upon **completing** this adventure, each character gains a level. At their discretion, they may choose to decline advancement. Remind those that express an interest in this that they have a limit to how much gold they can earn per level; declining advancement means that they may reach a point where they earn no gold.



GOLD

Award each character gold for each hour of the session. Adventures typically features cues for this, but you can add it where you see fit. The maximum gold that you can award a character per hour is determined by their tier, as follows:

Tier	Hourly GP Award	GP Limit per Level
1	20 gp	80 gp
2	30 gp	240 gp
3	200 gp	1,600 gp
4	750 gp	6,000 gp

MAGIC ITEM(S)

If found during the adventure, the characters can keep the following magic items; these items are described in **Appendix 7**:

- *Cloak of arachnida*
- *Soul coin*
- *Potion of resistance (lightning)*
- *Potion of fire giant strength*

STORY AWARDS

The characters may earn the following story awards during the adventure; these awards are described in **Appendix 8**:

- **No Exceptions!**
- **Sleep Tight**

DUNGEON MASTER REWARDS

For running this adventure, you gain a **DM Reward**. This reward can be redeemed for levels, magic items, and other season-themed things. See the Adventurers League DM Rewards document for more info.



DRAMATIS PERSONAE

The following NPCs feature prominently in this adventure.

Dara (DAH ra). Dara is a ten-year-old human girl, wise beyond her years, who was raised by priests of Ilmater in Amn. She found and read from the *Book of Exalted Deeds*—which bestowed upon her great wisdom and the powers of a full-fledged cleric of Ilmater.

- **What They Want.** Dara is on a holy mission to find the souls of lost angels and mortal Hellriders who once accompanied Zariel into the Nine Hells.
- **Wise Beyond Her Years.** Dara is single minded about accomplishing her mission and often sounds much more knowledgeable and mature than her years would suggest.

Mahadi (muh HAH dee). Mahadi appears to be a brown-skinned Turmish merchant lord, but he is actually a rakshasa who serves Asmodeus. He is completely dedicated to his policy of neutrality with customers.

- **What They Want.** Mahadi serves his master by collecting information on customers. And he certainly gathers plenty of souls and debts for himself while doing so. He very much wants Dara's pure and god-touched soul as a prize for his collection.
- **A Charismatic Host.** Mahadi is more than willing to act as a negotiator and broker for all sorts of creatures in Avernus. His adherence to rules makes him a smart choice and endears him to those he spies on for Asmodeus.

Galabraga (GALL ab RAH guh). This crone is festooned with desiccated flesh, boils and sores that have festered and she smells like burnt rotten flesh, an unmistakable smell.

- **What They Want.** Galabraga collects and trades information, as well as soul coins, debts, infernal contracts, and other valuable infernal currency.
- **A Feisty Host.** Galabraga is a master at negotiation and the art of making a deal that benefits her. She's too old to fight—that's why she has minions.

Burney the Barber (BUR nee). Burney appears as a polite and friendly Calishite woman. She is happy to tell stories (often with a moral message) and willing to provide cosmetic or medical treatments as well as spellcasting services.

- **What They Want.** Burney is an ancient copper dragon named Balarystul, keeping an eye on the fiends in Avernus on behalf of Bahamut. She wants to ensure any goodly folk have a chance to walk away with their lives and their souls, but only so long as she can keep her cover intact. Her stories can direct good-aligned characters toward help.
- **Talented Healer.** Burney is treated as having the Healer feat and proficiency in herbalism and healer's kits with a +3 to relevant rolls. All non-spellcasting services cost 1 gp. She won't even touch *soul coins* when payment is due.

CREATURE STATISTICS

The following creatures appear in this adventure.

HORNED DEVIL

Large fiend (devil), lawful evil

Armor Class 18

Hit Points 178 (17d10+55)

Speed 20 ft., fly 60 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
22 (+6)	17 (+3)	21 (+5)	12 (+1)	16 (+3)	17 (+3)

Saving Throws Str +10, Dex +7, Wis +7, Cha +7

Damage Resistances cold, bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons that aren't silvered

Damage Immunities fire, poison

Condition Immunities poisoned

Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive perception 13

Languages Infernal, Telepathy 120 ft.

Challenge 11 (7,200 XP)

Devil's Sight. Magical darkness doesn't impede the horned devil's darkvision.

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

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The devil makes three melee attacks: two with its fork and one with its tail. It can use Hurl Flame in place of any melee attack.

Fork. Melee Weapon Attack: +10 to hit, reach 10ft., one target. **Hit:** 10 (1d8 + 6) piercing damage. If the target is a creature other than an undead or a construct, it must succeed on a DC 17 Constitution saving throw, and the target or lose 10 (3d6) hit points at the start of each of its turns due to an infernal wound. Each time the devil hits the wounded target with this attack, the damage dealt by the wound increases by 10 (3d6). Any creature can take an action to staunch the wound with a successful DC 12 Wisdom (Medicine) check. The wound also closes if the target receives magical healing.

Hurl Flame. Ranged Spell Attack: +7 to hit, range 150ft., one target. **Hit:** 14 (4d6) fire damage. If the target is a flammable object that isn't being worn or carried, it also catches fire.

IMP

Tiny fiend (devil), lawful evil

Armor Class 13

Hit Points 10 (3d4+3)

Speed 20 ft., fly 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
6 (-2)	17 (+3)	13 (+1)	11 (+0)	12 (+1)	14 (+2)

Skills Deception +4, Insight +3, Persuasion +4, Stealth +5

Damage Resistances cold; bludgeoning; piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons that aren't silvered

Damage Immunities fire, poison

Senses darkvision 120ft, passive Perception 11

Languages Infernal, Common

Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Shapechanger. The imp can use its action to polymorph into a beast form that resembles a rat (speed 20ft.), a raven (20ft., fly 60ft), or back into its true form. Its statistics are the same in each form, except for the speed changes noted. Any equipment it is wearing or carrying isn't transformed. It reverts to its true form if it dies.

Devil's Sight. Magical darkness doesn't impede the imp's darkvision.

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

ACTIONS

Bites. Melee Weapon Attack: +5 to hit, reach 5ft., one target. **Hit:** 5 (1d4 + 3) piercing damage, and the target must succeed on a DC 11 Constitution saving throw, taking 10 (3d6) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Invisibility. The imp magically turns invisible until it attacks or until its concentration ends (as if concentrating on a spell). Any equipment the imp wears or carries is invisible with it.

NIGHT HAG

Medium fiend, neutral evil

Armor Class 17 (natural armor)

Hit Points 112 (15d8+45)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	15 (+2)	16 (+3)	16 (+3)	14 (+2)	16 (+3)

Skills Deception +7, Insight +6, Perception +6, Stealth +6

Damage Resistances cold, fire, bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons that aren't silvered

Condition Immunities charmed

Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive perception 16

Languages Abyssal, Common, Infernal, Primordial

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Innate Spellcasting. The hag's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 13, +5 to hit with spell attacks). She can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

At will: *detect magic*, *magic missile*

2/day each: *plane shift* (self only), *ray of enfeeblement*, *sleep*

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

ACTIONS

Claws. (Hag Form Only). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 13 (2d8 + 4) slashing damage.

Change Shape. The hag magically polymorphs into a Small or Medium female humanoid, or back into her true form. Her statistics are the same in each form. Any equipment she is wearing or carrying isn't transformed. She reverts to her true form if she dies.

Etherealness. The hag magically enters the Ethereal Plane from the Material Plane, or vice versa. To do so, the hag must have a heartstone in her possession.

Nightmare Haunting (1/day). While on the Ethereal Plane, the hag magically touches a sleeping humanoid on the Material Plane. A protection from evil and good spell cast on the target prevents this contact, as does a magic circle. As long as the contact persists, the target has dreadful visions. If these visions last for at least 1 hour, the target gains no benefit from its rest, and its hit point maximum is reduced by 5 (1d10). If this effect reduces the target's hit point maximum to 0, the target dies, and if the target was evil, its soul is trapped in the hag's soul bag. The reduction to the target's hit point maximum lasts until removed by the greater restoration spell or similar magic.

NIGHT HAG MODIFICATIONS

The **night hag** the players meet is a *simulacrum* of Galabraga. As such, it has 56 hit points and if destroyed reverts to dirty snow that melts and smells strongly of some urine.

SCAVENGER

Huge vehicle (9,000 lb.)

Creature Capacity 8 Medium creatures

Cargo Capacity 2 tons

Armor Class 20 (19 while motionless)

Hit Points 150 (damage threshold 10, mishap threshold 20)

Speed 100 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	12 (+1)	20 (+5)	0 (-5)	0 (-5)	0 (-5)

Damage Immunities fire, poison, psychic

Condition Immunities blinded, charmed, deafened, frightened, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, stunned, unconscious

Crushing Wheels. The Scavenger can move through the space of a Large or smaller creature. When it does, the creature must succeed on a DC 12 Dexterity saving throw or take 16 (3d10) bludgeoning damage and be knocked prone. If the creature was already prone, it takes an extra 16 (3d10) bludgeoning damage. This trait can't be used against a particular creature more than once each turn.

Magic Weapons. The Scavenger's weapon attacks are magical.

Prone Deficiency. If the Scavenger rolls over and falls prone, it can't right itself and is incapacitated until flipped upright.

ACTION STATIONS

Helm (Requires 1 Crew and Grants Three-Quarters Cover). Drive and steer the Scavenger.

Grappling Claw (Requires 1 Crew and Grants Half Cover). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +10 to hit, reach 15 ft., one target. Hit: The target is grappled (escape DC 12). If the target is a creature, it is restrained until the grapple ends.

The grappling claw can grapple only one target at a time, and the claw's operator can use a bonus action to make the claw release whatever it's holding.

2 Harpoon Flingers (Each Station Requires 1 Crew and Grants Half Cover). *Ammunition:* 10 harpoons. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, range 120 ft., one target. Hit: 10 (2d8 + 1) piercing damage.

SHADAR-KAI FANATIC (GLADIATOR)

Medium humanoid (any race), any alignment

Armor Class 16 (studded leather, shield)
Hit Points 112 (15d8 + 45)
Speed 30 ft.

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

Saving Throws Str +7, Dex +5, Con +6
Skills Athletics +10, Intimidation +5
Senses passive Perception 11
Languages any one language (usually Common)
Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

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

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

ACTIONS

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

Spear. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft. and range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 11 (2d6 + 4) piercing damage, or 13 (2d8 + 4) piercing damage if used with two hands to make a melee attack.

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

REACTIONS

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

GLADIATOR MODIFICATIONS

These gladiators have the following modifications:

- AC 14 (studded leather) The **gladiators** are driving and manning the weapon station on the war machines and don't use their shields. They do, however, benefit from half-cover.
- **Damage Resistances** necrotic
- **Condition Immunities** charm, exhaustion
- **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.
- **Languages** Common, Elvish, Thieves' Cant
- The sneak gains the Fey Ancestry trait:
Fey Ancestry. The sneak has advantage of saving throws against being charmed, and magic can't put it to sleep.
- If at the weapon station, the gladiator gains a harpoon attack which is once per round.

Harpoon. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, range 80/240 ft., one target. *Hit:* 14 (3d6 + 4) piercing damage. If the target is a Huge or smaller creature, it must succeed on a Strength contest against the war machine or be pulled 40 feet toward the war machine.

SHADAR-KAI SNEAK (MASTER THIEF)

Medium humanoid (elf), neutral

Armor Class 16 (studded leather)
Hit Points 84 (13d8 + 26)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (+0)	18 (+4)	14 (+2)	11 (+0)	11 (+0)	12 (+1)

Saving Throws Dex +7, Int +3
Skills Acrobatics +7, Athletics +3, Perception +3, Sleight of Hand +7, Stealth +7
Senses passive Perception 13
Languages Common, Thieves' Cant
Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Cunning Action. On each of its turns, the sneak can use a bonus action to take the Dash, Disengage, or Hide action.

Evasion. If the sneak is subjected to an effect that allows it to make a Dexterity saving throw to take only half damage, it instead takes no damage if it succeeds on the saving throw, and only half damage if it fails. It can't use this trait if it's incapacitated.

Sneak Attack (1/Turn). The sneak deals an extra 14 (4d6) damage when it hits a target with a weapon attack and has advantage on the attack roll, or when the target is within 5 feet of an ally of the sneak that isn't incapacitated and the sneak doesn't have disadvantage on the attack roll.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The sneak makes three attacks with its rapier.

Rapier. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d8 + 4) piercing damage.

Hand Crossbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, range 30/120 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 7 (1d6 + 4) piercing damage.

REACTIONS

Uncanny Dodge. The bandit sneak halves the damage that it takes from an attack that hits it. It must be able to see the attacker.

SHADAR-KAI SNEAK MODIFICATIONS

The sneak has the following modifications:

- **Damage Resistances** necrotic
- **Condition Immunities** charm, exhaustion
- **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.
- **Languages** Common, Elvish, Thieves' Cant
- The sneak gains the Fey Ancestry trait:
Fey Ancestry. The sneak has advantage of saving throws against being charmed, and magic can't put it to sleep.

SHADAR-KAI WARLORD (DUERGAR)

Medium humanoid (elf), neutral

Armor Class 20 (plate, shield)

Hit Points 75 (10d8 + 30)

Speed 25 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	11 (+0)	17 (+3)	12 (+1)	12 (+1)	14 (+2)

Damage Resistances poison

Senses Darkvision 120 ft, passive Perception 11

Languages Dwarvish, Undercommon

Challenge 6 (2,300 XP)

Duergar Resilience. The duergar has advantage on saving throws against poison, spells, and illusions, as well as to resist being charmed or paralyzed.

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

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The duergar makes three hammer attacks or javelin attacks and uses Call to Attack or Enlarge.

Psychic-Attuned Hammer. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 9 (1d10 + 4) bludgeoning damage, or 15 (2d10 + 4) bludgeoning damage while enlarged, plus 5 (1d0) psychic damage.

Javelin. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., or range 30/120 ft., one target. Hit: 7 (1d6 + 4) piercing damage, or 11 (2d6 + 4) piercing damage while enlarged.

Call to Attack. Up to three allied duergar within 120 feet of this duergar that can hear it can each use their reaction to make one weapon attack.

Enlarge (Recharges after a Short or Long Rest). For 1 minute, the duergar magically increases in size, along with anything it is wearing or carrying. While enlarged, the duergar is Large, doubles its damage dice on Strength-based weapon attacks (included in the attacks), and makes Strength checks and Strength saving throws with advantage. If the duergar lacks the room to become Large, it attains the maximum size possible in the space available.

Invisibility (Recharge 4-6). The duergar magically turns invisible for up to 1 hour or until it attacks, it casts a spell, it uses its Enlarge, or its concentration is broken (as if concentrating on a spell). Any equipment the duergar wears or carries is invisible with it.

REACTIONS

Scouring Instruction. When an ally that the duergar can see makes a d20 roll, the duergar can roll a d6 and the ally can add the number rolled to the d20 roll by taking 3 (1 d6) psychic damage. A creature immune to psychic damage can't be affected by Scouring Instruction.

DUERGAR WARLORD MODIFICATIONS

The warlord has the following modifications:

- **Damage Resistances** necrotic
 - **Condition Immunities** charm, exhaustion
 - **Speed** 30 ft.
 - **Languages** Common, Elvish, Undercommon
- Fey Ancestry.** The warlord has advantage of saving throws against being charmed, and magic can't put it to sleep.

SOUL MONGER

Medium Humanoid (elf), neutral

Armor Class 15 (studded leather)

Hit Points 123 (19d8+38)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
8 (-1)	17 (+3)	14 (+2)	19 (+4)	15 (+3)	13 (+1)

Saving Throws Dex +7, Wis +7, Cha +5

Skills Perception +7

Damage Immunities necrotic, psychic

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive perception 17

Languages Common, Elvish

Challenge 11 (7,200 XP)

Fey Ancestry. The soul monger has advantage on saving throws against being charmed, and magic can't put it to sleep

Innate Spellcasting. The soul monger's innate spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 16, +8 to hit with spell attacks). It can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

At will: *chill touch* (3d8 damage), *poison spray* (3d12 damage) 1/day each: *bestow curse*, *chain lightning*, *finger of death*, *gaseous form*, *phantasmal killer*, *seeming*

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

Soul Thirst. When the soul monger reduces a creature to 0 hit points, the soul monger can gain temporary hit points equal to half the creature's hit point maximum. While the soul monger has temporary hit points from this ability, it has advantage on attack rolls.

Weight of Ages. Any beast or humanoid, other than a shadar-kai, that starts its turn within 5 feet of the soul monger has its speed reduced by 20 feet until the start of that creature's next turn.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The soul monger makes two phantasmal dagger attacks.

Phantasmal Dagger. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5ft., one target. Hit: 13 (4d4 + 3) piercing damage plus 19 (3d12) necrotic damage, and the target has disadvantage on saving throws until the start of the soul monger's next turn.

Wave of Weariness (Recharge 4-6). The soul monger emits weariness in a 60-foot cube. Each creature in that area must have a DC 16 Constitution saving throw. On a failed save, a creature takes 45 (10d8) psychic damage and suffers 1 level of exhaustion. On a successful save, it takes 22 (5d8) psychic damage.

STAT BLOCK MODIFICATIONS

This soul monger has the following modifications:

- 56 temporary hit points from *Soul Thirst*, meaning this ability is active when combat starts.

APPENDIX 1: HAGGLING HAG (BONUS OBJECTIVE A)

Estimated Duration: 1 hour

PERCEPTION IS REALITY

Mahadi requests a favor to secure his aid. The characters must retrieve his *soul coins* from the ancient hag Galabraga. He warns them that the hag is very old and dangerous—which is why he is asking them to fetch the coins for him. The characters can make deals with the hag or take what they want by force.

Mahadi provides the characters with general directions towards Galabraga's cave, but finding it without getting lost on the way requires a successful **DC 20 Wisdom (Survival) group check**. On a failure, each character must succeed on a **DC 15 Constitution saving throw** or gain a level of exhaustion after contending with the harsh wasteland of Avernus.

AREA INFORMATION

The area has the following features.

Dimensions & Terrain. Galabraga's cave is accessible through a narrow passageway that is 40 feet long and 5 feet wide, which opens into a 30-by-25-foot chamber with 10-foot-high ceilings. The floor has skulls and bones littering the floor; the debris cover a pair of trapdoors hidden amongst the bones. The chamber also has a small 10-foot-square alcove which is divided from the main chamber by a permanent *wall of force*.

Light. The cave is dimly lit by candles placed in crevices.

Smells and Sounds. The tang of old blood and the fetid odor of rotten flesh fill the cave. It is quiet except for the crunch of bone as the characters move.

CREATURE INFORMATION

The **night hag** Galabraga is ancient and doesn't have time for adventurers. Her *simulacrum* is behind the *wall of force* picking at a boil (Galabraga herself is out galivanting around the Lower Planes). Two **shadar-kai warlords** and four **shadar-kai sneaks** lurk under the trapdoor pits.

Characters with a **passive Perception of 17 or higher** notice the trapdoors. The shadar-kai only attack if the *simulacrum* is threatened or if Galabraga commands them to attack before she becomes ethereal. If the characters didn't notice the trapdoors, the shadar-kai get a surprise round. The **warlords** both use their action to drink a potion on the first round of combat.

ADJUSTING THE SCENE

Here are some suggestions for adjusting this scene:

- **Very Weak:** Remove a **shadar-kai sneak**.
- **Weak:** The **shadar-kai sneaks** have 54 hit points.
- **Strong:** The **shadar-kai sneaks** have 114 hit points.
- **Very Strong:** Add two **shadar-kai sneaks**.

What Do They Want? Galabraga collects and trades information, as well as soul coins, debts, infernal contracts, and other valuable infernal currency.

What Do They Know? Galabraga is a master negotiator. She's too old to fight—that's why she has minions. If the characters disrespect or attack her, she calls upon her minions and fade into the Ethereal Plane. She does owe Mahadi a number of *soul coins* but their agreement stipulates he must come and collect himself. Open to re-negotiation, she accepts the following in exchange for Mahadi's soul coins:

- Two magic items that are rare, very rare, or legendary, or that can conjure creatures.
- An infernal contract where a character's soul belongs to Galabraga when they die.
- A ritual scar dedicated to Galabraga's deity, the Raven Queen. Galabraga offers to have her shadar-kai minions perform ritual scarring on behalf of the Raven Queen for a character with a Charisma higher than 14. If the character agrees, the ritual drains their willpower and forcefulness, along with a few worthless memories. This causes a permanent -2 penalty to Charisma which cannot be removed in any way short of a *wish* spell; the ritual pleases the Raven Queen and the scars are curiously immune to healing magic.

PLAYING THE PILLARS

Here are some suggestions for this encounter:

Combat. The group can fight Galabraga, but there may be repercussions. If the *simulacrum* is destroyed, she melts and a bag with Mahadi's *soul coins* is left in the puddle. They also earn the **Sleep Tight** story award.

Exploration. Seeing the trapdoors, identifying that the hag is behind a *wall of force*, or detecting she is a *simulacrum* may change the party's outlook on the encounter. Getting behind the *wall of force* and taking the *soul coins* by grappling the *simulacrum* is an option, but the *simulacrum* enters the Ethereal Plane if able.

Social. Negotiating for Mahadi's *soul coins* is the preferred method of resolution. If the characters bargain with the hag and are not hostile, they can obtain what they need.

TREASURE

The **shadar-kai warlords** have three *potions of fire giant strength* between them.

DEVELOPMENT

After completing this encounter, proceed to **Part 2**. The ball takes place the next day, giving the characters time for a long rest.

APPENDIX 2: HASTY GETAWAY (BONUS OBJECTIVE B)

Estimated Duration: 1 hour

SMOOTH CRIMINALS?

The characters stole the chalice or were seen attempting to do so, and are now trying to escape with their lives, pursued by a group of shadar-kai riding war machines. The characters must evade their pursuers or defeat them in combat.

Shouts of anger draw your attention as red-skinned devils covered in chains appear riding war machines that are similarly adorned with chains and wicked-looking harpoons.

AREA INFORMATION

The area has the following features.

Terrain. The characters are making their escape across the open wastes of Avernus towards Mahadi's Wandering Emporium.



Light. The area is brightly lit by the ever-present ambient light of Avernus.

Smells and Sounds. The unescapable stench of blood, sulfur, and iron permeate the area. The occasional booming thud of a meteor strike, cries of pursuit, and revving of war machines echo across the wasteland.

CREATURE INFORMATION

A **soul monger** accompanies three **shadar-kai fanatics** on four **scavenger** war machines armed with ten harpoons each. They are on a mission to recover the chalice for the archdevil. The **soul monger** has cast *seeming* on the group so that they look like chain devils. The war machines are possessed by the spirit of a cultist who can drive the war machine and perform attack maneuvers.

ADJUSTING THE SCENE

Here are some suggestions for adjusting this scene:

- **Very Weak:** Remove a **shadar-kai fanatic**.
- **Weak:** The **shadar-kai fanatics** have 82 hit points.
- **Strong:** The **shadar-kai fanatics** have 142 hit points.
- **Very Strong:** Add two **shadar-kai fanatics**.

What Do They Want? The **shadar-kai** want the Fetid Chalice back. If the **soul monger** can obtain an infernal contract or more *soul coins* then all the better.

What Do They Know? The **shadar-kai** know that the characters probably have the Fetid Chalice or attempted to steal it. They have been sent to get the chalice back or kill those responsible for this insult—and if they fail, they dare not return to Qirozz in disgrace.

PLAYING THE PILLARS

Here are some suggestions for this encounter:

Combat. The group is being pursued by a faster opponent with range. It's likely that some combat ensues—if so, the party has to finish off the creatures before reaching safety.

Exploration. Clever groups can attempt to evade pursuit if they enact a reasonable plan. Examples include spells that affect the entire party such as *invisibility*, *wind walk* or similar magic. *Fly* does not help, since the war machines are faster and they are armed with harpoons.

Social. Bribery is still alive and well. The **soul monger** accepts the Fetid Chalice and an infernal contract, or 25 *soul coins*, to spare the characters' lives.

TREASURE

The **shadar-kai fanatics** have one *soul coin* each, which they use to add movement to the war machine or to deal an extra 1d10 force damage using their harpoon.

DEVELOPMENT

If the characters escape or defeat their pursuers, they successfully make it back to Mahadi's Wandering Emporium without further incident. Proceed to **Wrap Up** in **Part 2**.

APPENDIX 3: IMPORTANT GUESTS AT THE BALL

These NPCs feature prominently in Part 2.

LEXI, THE GRACEFUL MINOTAUR

Lexi (**LECK see**) glides through the ball with a shimmering dress that was made for her by a skilled seamstress. She is carrying an infernal delicacy on a fancy napkin. Lexi is trying to find a new suitor to make her ex-boyfriend jealous. Unbeknownst to Lexi, the dress casts *friends* on the nearest creature if she twirls around. Any character that flirts or shows amorous intentions towards Lexi can obtain the infernal delicacy she is holding.

Lexi knows that the horned devil guarding the chalice, who is her ex-boyfriend, is partial to a drink that is known as “blood of angels.” This drink is expensive and is only available if asked for and bought with a *soul coin* from the wait staff. An aasimar character can provide the drink from their own blood, taking 2 hit points of piercing or slashing damage.

If a creature dancing with Lexi succeeds on a DC 15 Charisma (Performance) check, she reveals that the horned devil is partial to a drink known as blood of angels. Offering this drink distracts the horned devil from his duties for one minute. If not distracted, the horned devil attacks characters that he believes are trying to take the chalice. Further, he tracks the character holding the chalice; any checks made to escape the ball unseen are made with disadvantage. On a failed check, Lexi sarcastically thanks the character for the dance and moves on to her next suitor.

- **Skills:** Performance +5, Persuasion +7, Insight +7

HASTINGS, THE RELUCTANT CONJURER

Hastings (**HAY stings**) is a conjurer of some repute who has *see invisibility* active at the beginning of the ball. As a result, Hastings knows about the two invisible **imps** guarding the chalice. He has an infernal delight but is not sure if he wants to eat it.

Hastings wants to discuss spells and lore with another spellcaster. A creature discussing arcane lore with Hastings that succeeds on a DC 15 Arcana check gets him to reveal that there is heavy magic on the chalice and the surrounding area. Hastings also relays that two invisible **imps** guard the chalice. If this check fails, Hastings merely yawns and walks away.

A creature flattering Hastings with flowery words that succeeds on a DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion or Deception) check gets him to reveal that the hostess, a powerful archduchess named Qirozz, gets tired after exerting herself. She is known to take naps after strenuous activity. On a failed check, Hastings nods in agreement and moves away to talk to someone across the room.

- **Skills:** Arcana +10, Insight +5

QIROZZ, THE ARCHDUCHESS

Qirozz (**kir ROZ**) is the hostess of the ball. She has purple skin, large horns, and jewelry on each finger that shimmers in the candlelight. She wears a ceremonial breastplate inlaid with carved bone. Qirozz wants to greet her guests, make sure they have a good time, and enjoy herself. Qirozz has a tray of infernal delights carried by a servant that follows her.

Qirozz is proud of the Fetid Chalice and gladly brags that she obtained it by slaying adventurers that summoned an angel. The chalice is the skull of the angel, but it has been acting strangely of late. She mentions that any drink placed in it turns into holy water.

Characters speaking with Qirozz that succeed on a DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion/Deception), or a character with Paladin levels, gets Qirozz to laugh and she boldly challenges the character to an activity of their choosing. If a character partakes, Qirozz exerts herself during the activity which causes her to take a nap following and is delayed in responding to the theft. She is awoken by the *alarm* spell if it is activated. Characters roll with advantage on attempts to escape. If no one partakes, Qirozz is alert and characters do not roll with advantage. If this check fails, Qirozz chortles and dismisses the character.

Characters that observe Qirozz or are near her that succeed on a DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) notice that a servant follows Qirozz from afar with one Infernal Delight left. A character that either succeeds on a DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion) check demonstrates the proper etiquette and form are important when asking for a favor from an archduchess. A paladin or a character with the Noble background makes this check with advantage. She motions for the servant to give the treat. If this check fails, Qirozz greedily eats the infernal delight in front of the character.

- **Skills:** Arcana+13, Persuasion +15, Insight +12

WAITSTAFF

Characters who interact with the waitstaff are greeted politely and can obtain most of the fine food and drink offered at the ball. The staff offer sincere apologies that they are out of infernal delights, as a gnome in a black robe ate most of them. If asked, they all point at Pingle.

PINGLE, THE MERCENARY ARCHMAGE

Pingle (**PING el**) is a gnome archmage who wears an ornate black robe embroidered with arcane symbols. He likes to have his ego stroked a bit and also is hungry for infernal delights, which he mentions in passing. Pingle placed the arcane defenses on the Fetid Chalice: he knows about the *forbiddance*, *glyph of warding*, and *symbol of insanity*.

Characters who succeed on a DC 15 History (Intelligence) check recall that Pingle's exploits in Avernus are legendary. He is a renowned spellcaster available for hire.



Characters who speak with Pingle and succeed on a DC 15 Charisma (Deception or Persuasion) get him to reveal that he was the mind and author behind the Fetid Chalice defenses—except the *alarm* spell, which he does not know about. On a failed check, Pingle sneezes on the character which exposes them to cackle fever (see **Appendix 6**).

Pingle loves infernal delights. If the players obtain any and give one to him, he chattily informs them of one fact about the spell defenses cast on the chalice.

Cackle Fever. Pingle gets around Avernus and is a carrier of cackle fever (see **Appendix 6**) but he is immune as a gnome and is unaware he carries it. Players interacting with him are exposed, as are other guests, at the DM's discretion. Any character who contracts the disease does not know until a stressful situation, such as during the theft or during the escape. It can also come up if using **Bonus Objective B**.

- **Skills:** Arcana+12, History +12, Insight +7

ZARALAI, THE GRUMPY ANDROSPHINX

Zaralais (**ZAR a lace**) is an **androsphinx** and stands out from the other guests. He wants to see an end to these tiresome balls, which he is extorted into attending by Qirozz. Zaralais knows about the two invisible **imps**, thanks to his truesight.

Zaralais begins any interaction with a tirade about the ball, complaining about the poor selection of food, drink, decorations, being away from his lair, etc. Characters who listen without interrupting learn that the androsphinx loathes being at the ball, which allows them to roll with advantage on all skill checks when interacting with him. Interrupting imposes disadvantage on skill checks to interact with him.

Characters who interact with Zaralais and succeed on a DC 15 Wisdom (Insight) check understand that Zaralais could be an ally in stealing the chalice. On a failed check, the character believes Zaralais is dour and not worth their time.

Characters who succeed on a DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion) check succeed at getting Zaralais to open up. He reveals he is only here because he is being extorted by Qirozz, whom he is afraid of. He laments that Qirozz for some reason enjoys his presence, but he is hopeful that she leaves the ball early and he can teleport away. Characters that fail the check are greeted with a low growl and haughtily dismissed.

Characters proficient in Arcana or Nature know that androsphinxes are not common. A character who succeeds on a DC 20 Intelligence (Arcana or Nature) check recalls that an androsphinx has the ability to roar and cast spells such as *dispel magic*.

If the characters recall the special abilities of an androsphinx, they can attempt to persuade Zaralais to help them steal the chalice with a DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion) check. On a success, Zaralais is willing to roar as a distraction if Qirozz is present, which causes the **imps** to flee. If Qirozz is not present, he offers to roar or cast *dispel magic* at 6th level himself, which automatically negates all spells on the chalice (except the *symbol of insanity* which can be dispelled with a successful DC 17 ability check; Zaralais has a +4 to this check). On a failure, Zaralais does not trust the characters enough to help them, and they are dismissed.

- **Skills:** Arcana+9, Perception +10, Religion +15

APPENDIX 4: INFERNAL WAR MACHINE RULES

BASE WAR MACHINE

BASE WAR MACHINE

Huge land vehicle

Creature Capacity 8 Medium creatures
Cargo Capacity 10 tons
Armor Class 16
Hit Points 150 (damage threshold 10)
Mishap Threshold 35
Speed 100

STR DEX CON INT WIS CHA
 23 (+6) 16 (+3) 14 (+2) 1 (-5) 1 (-5) 1 (-5)

Damage Resistances cold, psychic; bludgeoning, piercing, slashing from nonmagical attacks that aren't silvered
Damage Immunities fire, poison
Condition Immunities blinded, charmed, deafened, frightened, incapacitated, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, stunned, unconscious

CREATURE CAPACITY

The maximum amount of creatures that can fit onto the war machines

DAMAGE THRESHOLD

If a single attack deals less damage than the damage threshold, it is deflected

MISHAP THRESHOLD

If a single attack deals equal or greater damage than the mishap threshold, the war machine suffers a mishap



RIDING A WAR MACHINE

A war machine counts as difficult terrain (i.e. movement costs doubled).

Each war machine has **stations** that you can occupy. Entering a station costs all your movement, but leaving it costs none. Only one creature can fit into a station.

- The character in the **helm** station can use their movement to execute a **basic maneuver** and their action to perform an **attack maneuver** (see Helm Maneuvers).
- A character in a **weapon** station can use their action to make a **weapon attack** with that weapon.

All other creatures embarked on a war machine are considered to be riding on top of it, unless they choose to shelter inside as part of their movement. Characters inside the vehicle can't be targeted by attacks.

HELM MANEUVERS

A character in the Helm station can perform the following:

Basic Maneuver. A character in the helm station can use their **movement** to move the vehicle its speed. During this movement, they can take two turns of up to 90 degrees.

Attack Maneuver. A character in the helm station can use their **action** to perform one of the following:

- **Ram** Move up to the vehicle's speed in a straight line, entering Large or smaller creatures' spaces. Each target must make a DC 18 Dexterity save. On a success, it is pushed 5 feet to the nearest unoccupied space. On a failure, it falls prone and takes 28 (8d6) damage. At the end of the move, the vehicle can ram an adjacent creature or object. **Attack:** the driver makes a Dexterity attack (land vehicles). **Hit:** the target takes 22 (4d10) bludgeoning damage and the attacker takes half damage.
- **Sideswipe Target:** one vehicle at close range ahead. **Attack:** Strength check using the vehicle's Strength modifier contested by the target vehicle's Dexterity or Strength check. **Success:** target vehicle pushed into adjacent zone and passengers must succeed on DC 10 Strength check or fall prone.

SOUL COINS

As a bonus action, you can feed 1 soul coin to the machine to achieve one of the following effects:

- Increase the war machine's speed by 20 feet until the end of the character's next turn.
- The next time a weapon on the war machine deals damage before the end of the character's next turn, it deals an additional 10 force damage.
- The infernal war machine regains 20 hit points.

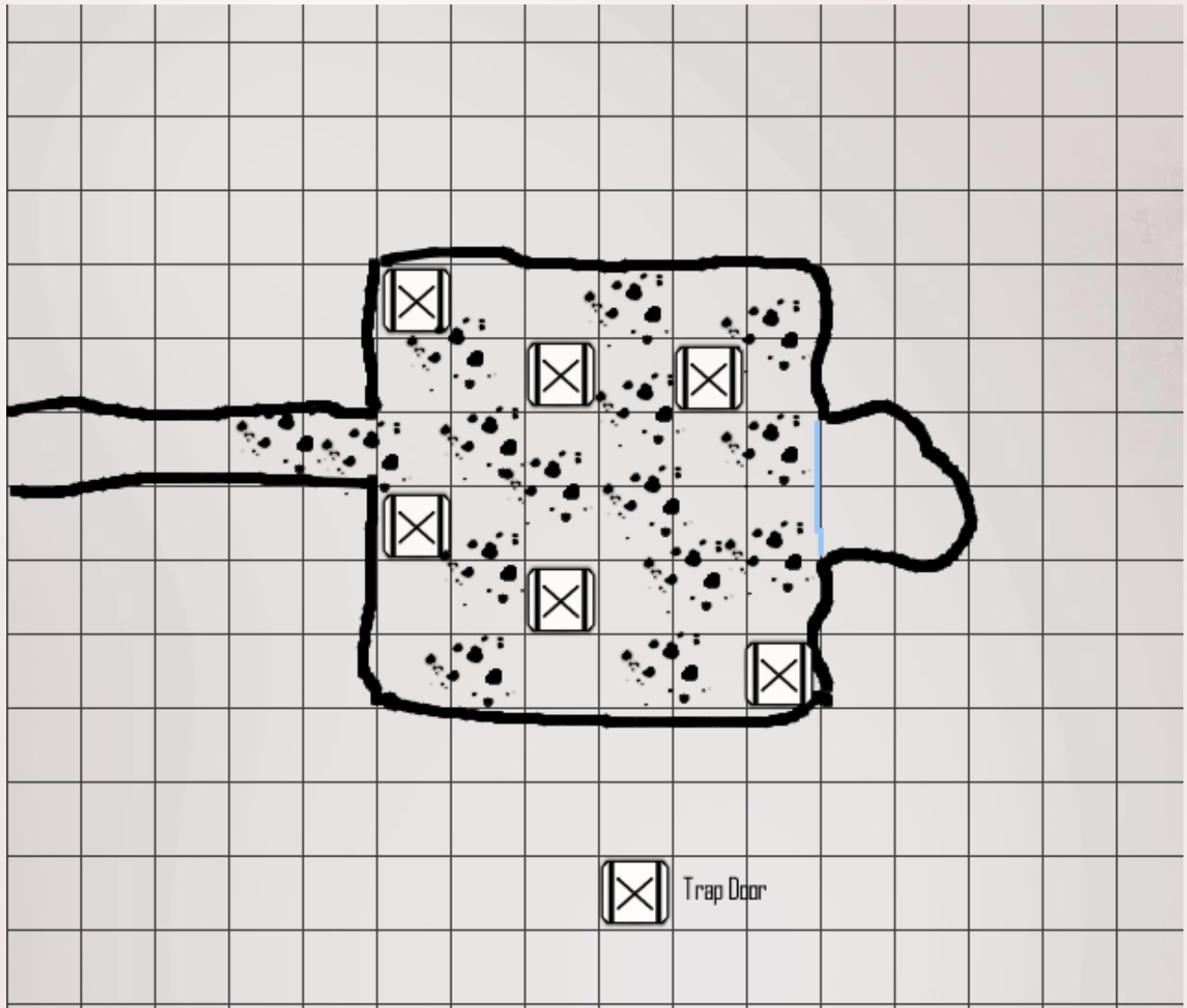
STATION COVER

A creature manning a station has cover:

- The helm station has three-quarter cover (+5 AC and Dexterity saving throws).
- Each weapon station has half-cover (+2 AC and Dexterity saving throws).

If a creature occupying a station is subjected to an effect that allows it to make a Dexterity saving throw to take only half damage, it instead takes no damage if it succeeds on the saving throw.

APPENDIX 5: HAGS LAIR MAP



APPENDIX 6: CACKLE FEVER

This disease is introduced in Part 2. Note the saving throw DCs can be increased to DC 13 and the save can be made with disadvantage if Pingle has any additional infernal treats.

This disease targets humanoids, although gnomes are strangely immune. While in the grips of this disease, victims frequently succumb to fits of mad laughter, giving the disease its common name and its morbid nickname: “the shrieks.”

Symptoms manifest 1d4 hours after infection and include fever and disorientation. The infected creature gains one level of exhaustion that can't be removed until the disease is cured.

Any event that causes the infected creature great stress, including entering combat, taking damage, experiencing fear, or having a nightmare forces the creature to make a DC 13 Constitution saving throw. On a failed save, the creature takes 5 (1d10) psychic damage and becomes incapacitated with mad laughter for 1 minute. The creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the mad laughter and the incapacitated condition on a success.

Any humanoid creature that starts its turn within 10 feet of an infected creature in the throes of mad laughter must succeed on a DC10 Constitution saving throw or also become infected with the disease. Once a creature succeeds on this save, it is immune to the mad laughter of that particular infected creature for 24 hours.

At the end of each long rest, an infected creature can make a DC 13 Constitution saving throw. On a successful save, the DC for the save to avoid an attack of mad laughter drops by 1d6. When the saving throw drops to 0, the creature recovers from the disease. A creature that fails three of these saving throws gains a randomly determined form of indefinite madness, as described in Chapter 8 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

APPENDIX 7: CHARACTER REWARDS

If found during the adventure, the characters can keep the following magic items; it's suggested that you print off enough copies of this page to be able to give one to each of your players (crossing out rewards they didn't receive during the session):

CLOAK OF ARACHNIDA

Wondrous item, very rare (requires attunement)

This fine garment is made of black silver interwoven with faint silvery threads. While wearing it, you gain the following benefits:

- You have resistance to poison damage.
- You have a climbing speed equal to your walking speed.
- You can move up, down, and across vertical surfaces and upside down along ceilings, while leaving your hands free.
- You can't be caught in webs of any sort and can move through webs as if they were difficult terrain.
- You can use an action to cast the *web* spell (save DC 13). The web created by the spell fills twice its normal area. Once used, this property of the cloak can't be used again until the next dawn.

This item is found in the *Dungeons Master's Guide*.

This cloak has been in Avernus for ages and been worn in constant conflict. While actively using any properties of the item, the bearer experiences a harmless flash of pain. In addition, the cloak whispers warnings to its bearer, granting a +2 bonus to initiative if the bearer isn't incapacitated.

SOUL COIN

Wondrous item, uncommon

Soul coins are about 5 inches across and about an inch thick, minted from infernal iron. Each *coin* weighs 1-third of a pound and is inscribed with Infernal writing and a spell that magically binds a single soul to the coin. Because each *soul coin* has a unique soul trapped within it, each has a story. A creature might have been imprisoned as a result of defaulting on a deal, while another might be the victim of a night hag's curse.

Carrying Soul Coins. To hold a *soul coin* is to feel the soul bound within it—overcome with rage or fraught with despair. An evil creature can carry as many *soul coins* as it wishes (up to its maximum weight allowance). A non-evil creature can carry a number of *soul coins* equal to or less than its Constitution modifier without penalty. A non-evil creature carrying a number of *soul coins* greater than its Constitution modifier has disadvantage on its attack rolls, ability checks, and saving throws.

Using a Soul Coin. A *soul coin* has 3 charges. A creature carrying the *coin* can use its action to expend 1 charge from a *soul coin* and use it to do one of the following:

Drain Life. You siphon away some of the soul's essence and gain 1d10 temporary hit points.

Query. You telepathically ask the soul a question and receive a brief telepathic response, which you can understand. The soul knows only what it knew in life, but it must answer you truthfully and to the best of its ability. The answer is no more than a sentence or two and might be cryptic.

Freeing a Soul. Casting a spell that removes a curse on a *soul coin* frees the soul trapped within it, as does expending all of the *coin's* charges. The *coin* itself rusts from within and is destroyed once the soul is released. A soul can also be freed by destroying the *coin* that contains it. A *soul coin* has AC 19, 1 hit point for each charge it has remaining, and immunity to all damage except that which is dealt by a hellfire weapon or an infernal war machine's furnace. Freeing a soul from a *soul coin* is considered a good act, even if the soul belongs to an evil creature.

POTION OF FIRE GIANT STRENGTH

Potion, rare

When you drink this potion, your Strength score changes to 25 for 1 hour. The potion has no effect on you if your Strength is equal to or greater than that score.

This potion's transparent liquid has floating in it a sliver of fingernail from a fire giant. This item can be found in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

POTION OF RESISTANCE (LIGHTING)

Potion, uncommon

When you drink this potion, you gain resistance to lightning damage for 1 hour.

APPENDIX 8: STORY AWARDS

Characters can earn the following story awards during the adventure:

NO EXCEPTIONS!

You've broken Mahadi's only rules: No fighting! No spellcasting! No exceptions!" By choosing to break the rules, you've been kicked out of Mahdi's Wondrous Emporium. Now you must survive in the wastes without its safe shelter. You start any tier 2 or higher Avernus Rising adventure at half hit points and with a level of exhaustion that can't be removed.

SLEEP TIGHT

Galabraga is ancient even by hag standards, she has made countless bargains with all manner of creatures to her benefit. One does not live as long as she without having the occasional double cross or deal gone wrong, but woe to those that try.

Galabraga is extremely irritated by having to have a new *simulacrum* made. She was visiting her numerous daughters residing in Minauros when the character destroyed her *simulacrum*. As such, she requests her daughters haunt the characters' dreams until such time as they die. Galabraga allows her daughters to keep the souls for their service, see **Nightmare Haunting**. Characters who have assisted in destroying her *simulacrum* in any way earn this story award. If the characters provide Galabraga a new *simulacrum* and 5 *soul coins* for their insolence as well as her pain and suffering, may remove the story award.

APPENDIX 9: DUNGEON MASTER TIPS

To DM an adventure, you **must** have 3 to 7 players—each with their own character within the adventure's level range (see Adventure Primer). Characters playing in a **hardcover** adventure may continue to play to but if they play a different hardcover adventure, they **can't return** to the first if outside its level range.

NEW TO D&D ADVENTURERS LEAGUE?

<http://dnd.wizards.com/playevents/organized-play>

NEW TO THE ANNUAL STORYLINE?

<http://dndadventurersleague.org/storyline-seasons/descent-into-avernus/>

PREPARING THE ADVENTURE

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. Familiar 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 notecards, a DM screen, miniatures, and battlemaps.
- Ask the players to provide you with relevant character information, such as name, race, class, and level; passive Perception score, and anything the adventures specifies as notable (such as backgrounds, traits, flaws, etc.)

Players can play an adventure they previously played as a Player or Dungeon Master but may only play it once with a given character. Ensure each player has their character's adventure logsheet (if not, get one from the organizer) with their starting values for level, magic items, gold and downtime days. These are updated at the conclusion of the session. The adventure information and your information are added at the end of the adventure session—whether the completed the adventure or not.

Each player is responsible for maintaining an accurate logsheet. If you have time, you can do a quick scan of a player's character sheet to ensure that nothing looks out of order. If you see magic items of very high rarities or strange arrays of ability scores, you can ask players to provide documentation for the irregularities. If they cannot, feel free to restrict item use or ask them to use a standard ability score array.

Point players to the *D&D Adventurers League Players Guide* for reference. If players wish to spend downtime days and it's the beginning of an adventure or episode, they can declare their activity and spend the days now, or they can do so at the end of the adventure or episode. Players should select their characters' spells and other daily options prior to the start of the adventure, unless the adventure specifies otherwise. Feel free to reread the adventure description to help give players hints about what they might face.

ADJUSTING THIS ADVENTURE

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

DETERMINING PARTY STRENGTH

Party Composition	Party	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