

QUES1-1

# BLACK CLOAKS AND BITTER RIVALRIES

A DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® *LIVING  
FORGOTTEN REALMS* ADVENTURE

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You have haggled with the potter, you have given the coin to the stranger, and you have spared the life of an agent. Now, the Zhentarim is offering you a chance to join their ranks. Darkhold and the secrets of the Black Network await for those clever and ruthless enough to infiltrate the Zhentarim. A *Living Forgotten Realms* adventure set in the Western Heartlands for characters levels 7-10.

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

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This adventure retires from RPGA-sanctioned play on December 31, 2012.

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## PREPARING FOR PLAY

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

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

Along with this adventure, you'll find a RPGA Session Tracking sheet. If you're playing this adventure as part of an RPGA-sanctioned event, complete and turn in this sheet to your organizer directly after play.

## READING MONSTER STAT BLOCKS

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

## IMPORTANT DM INFORMATION

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

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

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

- **You are empowered to make adjustments to the adventure and make decisions about how the group interacts with the world of this adventure.** This is especially important and applicable outside of combat encounters, but feel free to use the "scaling the encounter" advice (usually for adjusting to different-sized groups) to adjust combat encounters for groups that are having too easy or too hard of a time in an adventure.
- **Don't make the adventure too easy or too difficult for a group. Never being challenged makes for a boring game, and being overwhelmed makes for a frustrating game.** Gauge the experience of the players (not the characters) with the game, try to feel out (or ask) what they like in a game, and attempt to give each of them the experience they're after when they play D&D. Give everyone a "chance to shine."
- **Be mindful of pacing, and keep the game session moving along appropriately.** Watch for stalling, as play loses momentum when this happens. At the same time, make sure that the players don't finish the adventure too early; provide them with a full play experience. *Living Forgotten Realms* adventures are designed to be played within 3.5 - 4 hours; try to be very

aware of running long or short. Adjust the pacing accordingly.

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

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

## APPROPRIATE CHARACTER LEVELS

This adventure is designed for player characters (PCs) levels 7 - 10. Characters that fall outside of the level range may not participate in the adventure. Make certain to check the levels of the PCs before beginning play to ensure that they are the proper level.

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

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

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

## FAILING TO DEFEAT AN ENCOUNTER

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

## CHARACTER DEATH

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

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

## MILESTONES

No matter if the characters succeed or fail in an encounter, they reach a milestone if it is the second encounter they've had since the start of the adventure or their last extended rest. **Encounters that do not give**

**out experience points do not count for purposes of reaching a milestone.** Make certain to mention this information to the players when applicable, as it gives each PC another action point and affects how some magic item powers are used.

## LASTING EFFECTS

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

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

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

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

## ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

This is a quest adventure. To qualify for this adventure, a character **MUST** have completed all tasks on the *Zhentarim Infiltration* quest reward card. Each character at the table must have completed the tasks. These tasks are:

**Task 1:** Find a wily merchant who traffics in ornate pottery. When you haggle over a pot, tell the merchant, "A storm is coming; you should really close up for the day."

**Task 2:** Give a scratched silver coin to a stranger wearing a yellow cloak with a black clasp and ask for their name.

**Task 3:** Defeat a Zhentarim agent in combat. Spare the agent's life. Tell the agent that you delivered the coin and to whom it was delivered. You cannot complete this task before Task 1 and 2.

The Zhentarim, also known as the Black Network, is a group of ruthless mercenaries, who will hire on to almost any job if the money is right, regardless of morality. About a century ago, the Zhentarim underwent a great period of upheaval, which changed its focus and leadership drastically. The Shadovar destroyed Zhentil Keep and the Citadel of the Raven in retaliation for the Zhentarim aligning with the phaerimms. In addition, Bane raised Fzoul Chembryl, who had wrestled control of the Zhentarim from Manshoon, to the position of Exarch. After these events, the Church of Bane withdrew its endorsement of the Zhentarim, and the Cyricists gained a firm hold over the Zhentarim that remained.

Manshoon reassumed control of the organization he founded and currently leads the organization from his citadel of Stormwatch, which is staffed mostly by undead. It is not suitable as a training ground and mustering point for the number of mercenaries employed by the Zhentarim. Darkhold, the largest surviving stronghold of the Black Network, fills that role.

Darkhold is a military fortress and the center for Zhentarim training of its sellswords. Before the Spellplague, the Zhentarim had nearly one thousand Zhentilar stationed at Darkhold. Now, that number has more than doubled as most recruits are sent to Darkhold for training where they are instructed in the ways of battle and indoctrinated into the merciless Zhent regimen.

As a group of morally unencumbered mercenaries, the Zhentarim are often hired by the worst sort of villains. Even now, they are negotiating with factions who would bring ruin upon the Forgotten Realms.

## PLAYER'S INTRODUCTION

Before play begins, ask the players to tell you in which adventures they completed the tasks from the *Zhentarim Infiltration* quest reward card.

This adventure presumes that the characters are opposed to the Zhentarim. Some reasons for their opposition are:

- The character serves the Crown of Cormyr and that nation is concerned about Zhentarim activity in and around the nation.
- The character is enlisted in the Flaming Fists of Baldur's Gate, and the leaders of that company are concerned about competition from the Zhentarim.
- The character is working with the Selûnite clerics in Westgate who face Zhentarim animosity daily.
- The character has had first-hand experience of the dastardly operations of the Zhentarim, such as in Daggerdale.

Whatever their reasons, the characters have come to the attention of Yazeth Cobb. The characters may have met Yazeth in SPEC1-1 *Shades of the Zhentarim* and SPEC1-2 *Zhent's Ancient Shadows* and have story awards SPEC02 **A Promise to Return** and SPEC03 **A Promise Fulfilled**.

*You have received a letter from Yazeth Cobb, a wealthy merchant and follower of Amaunator. He asks you to meet with him regarding a matter of some importance and sensitivity. He is vague in what the matter is, but he is specific that only you and a few select others can address it. Yazeth is in Berdusk on business and will be for the rest of the month. He is staying at the Sign of the Silver Sword.*

Assuming the characters travel to Berdusk to meet with him, Yazeth can easily be found at the inn. He recognizes and greets by name any character with whom he has had a previous association. If he has not met the character before, he knows them by reputation.

*Yazeth takes you aside to a private room. "More than business has brought me to Berdusk. You are no doubt aware of the menace that the Zhentarim poses to Faerûn. It seems they're up to something big, but I don't know what. That's where you come in. The Zhentarim is recruiting heavily. You have made a number of contacts with them and have the best chance of slipping into their ranks. I would like you to infiltrate the Zhentarim and find out what they are planning. To have any chance of learning more, you will need to impress them, or else they will keep a close eye on you, making it much more difficult to acquire the necessary information."*

For what information the characters may know about the Zhentarim, please see Appendix 1. Once the PCs have the appropriate information, go to Encounter 1.

While Yazeth is very well connected and has many informants, he does not have any particulars as to the Zhent plot. They are just recruiting heavily and gathering a lot of supplies. Yazeth realizes that the adventurers expect to be rewarded and is willing to give them 50 / 100 gp each if they can return with information on the Zhentarim's plot(s).

If the characters accept the mission, they must travel to Darkhold and present themselves to the Zhentarim. Yazeth recommends that characters hide any affiliation to good-aligned factions, countries, and deities before reaching Darkhold.

## DM'S INTRODUCTION

In this adventure, the characters must infiltrate the Zhentarim to learn of the plans of that mercenary organization. To accomplish this task, the characters join the Zhentarim to gain access to its secrets. The completion of the tasks from the Zhentarim Infiltration quest reward card allows the PCs to join the Zhentarim as an elite recruit.

The success or failure of the Infiltration is represented by a special quest challenge that gives major quest xp. Most of the encounters in the adventure represent a test toward completing this quest. If the characters gain 3 Infiltration failures, then the Zhentarim uncover them. If the PCs accumulate 5 Infiltration points, they discover what the Zhentarim is plotting.

The quest to infiltrate the Zhentarim is determined by the overall successes and failures of each encounter. Unlike most skill challenges, the victory or defeat of each element of the challenge is determined in separate encounters. Success in a particular encounter gives one success towards a final victory for the overall quest.

Many of the encounters do not need to be run in any particular order, or at all if the PCs show no interest in that particular area or person. The exceptions are Encounter 1, Encounter 4, Encounter 8 and Encounter 9. The encounters are likely to run into each other as characters move from one tactic to another.

Over the course of the adventure, the Zhentarim leaders assign two tasks to the PCs. Do not run two assigned tasks encounters back to back. It is better to assign Encounter 4 early in the adventure and Encounter 8 later in the adventure.

In Encounter 1, the PCs must convince the Master of Recruits to allow them to join the Zhentarim. This grants 1 Infiltration Point.

In Encounter 2, the PCs receive a tour of Darkhold and an introduction to the important Zhentarim officers.

They have the opportunity to earn the respect of those officers. This grants 1 Infiltration Point.

In Encounter 3, the PCs settle into their role as Zhentarim recruits. They can listen to rumors and survive the intensive training.

In Encounter 4, the PCs are sent out to capture a dangerous ettin for use by the Zhentarim in their schemes. This grants 1 Infiltration Point.

In Encounter 5, the PCs may attempt to rescue a prisoner held captive by the Zhentarim. This grants 1 Infiltration Point.

In Encounter 6, the PCs can search the archives to discover clues to the Zhentarim plot. This grants 1 Infiltration Point.

In Encounter 7, the PCs can break into the vault to discover clues to the Zhentarim plot. This grants 1 Infiltration Point.

In Encounter 8, the PCs are tasked to guard a Zhentarim caravan. This grants 1 Infiltration Point.

At the end of the adventure, the PCs are ordered to accompany the leaders of the Zhentarim at Darkhold. At this meeting, the PCs learn that the Zhentarim are plotting with the drow of Sshamath. If the PCs succeeded in their infiltration, they can slip away from Darkhold with their new found knowledge. If the PCs failed the infiltration, the Zhentarim hand the PCs over to the drow as slaves. However, Yazeth Cobb rescues the PCs from this horrible fate.

## ENCOUNTER 1: RECRUITMENT

### SKILL CHALLENGE LEVEL 8 / 10, COMPLEXITY 2 (700 / 1000 XP)

#### SETUP

When the PCs arrive at Darkhold to join the ranks of the Zhentarim, read or paraphrase the following:

*Built out of black stone, Darkhold sits in a cleft high up on a rock shoulder of a huge mountain known as Gray Watcher of the Morning. Once a castle of the Giant-Emperors, the citadel was built for folk of giant stature and its dimensions are enormous. The gate of the castle is too large to be opened easily so the Zhents have cut a smaller door in the gate that is dwarfed by the overall size of the fortress.*

When the PCs approach the gates, the guards challenge them. Assuming the PCs identify themselves and mention they want to join the Zhentarim, they are permitted through the gates and taken into an interrogation room, where they are met by the Master of Recruits.

*The door slams open and possibly the meanest looking dwarf you have ever seen stomps into the room. His face and arms are laced with scars, and he's missing several teeth. He looks you over with a cruel sneer. "I'm Hult Irontoe, Master of Recruits. You'll learn to curse that name. Now why would we want worms like you in the Zhentarim?"*

Hult Irontoe hired on as a mercenary to the Zhentarim about twenty years ago. Always a dangerous and aggressive dwarf, Hult bullied the other Zhents. After Hult killed the former Master of Recruits in bare-fisted brawl and then intimidated a room full of observers into silence, Avrezt made him the new master. The position suits Hult fine as he likes hurting people and his rank gives him plenty of opportunity to do so.

To infiltrate the Zhentarim, the PCs must persuade Hult to allow him to join. During the skill challenge, if a character makes appropriately evil answers, Hult grins and nods encouragingly. If a character gives reasons that are soft or otherwise good-aligned, Hult insults the character, and tells them that he'll make something of them yet.

#### SKILL CHALLENGE

**Goal:** To get acceptance into the Zhentarim.

**Complexity:** 2 (1 success per character before 3 failures)

**Primary Skills:** Arcana, Athletics, Bluff, Diplomacy, History, Intimidate, Religion, Thievery

**Other Skills:** Insight

**Victory:** The characters are accepted as elite recruits to the Zhentarim.

**Defeat:** The characters are accepted into the Zhentarim, but only as grunts, making that much harder to gather the necessary information.

Each PC must try to succeed at least at one check. Characters can assist one another, but the check is made against the same DC as the primary check. Hult is looking at individual skill and frowns somewhat on assists unless hidden well.

#### Arcana DC 20/21 (maximum 1 per PC)

A character could demonstrate their knowledge of eldritch power. A character cannot make this check more than once. A failed Aid Another check annoys Hult and gives a -2 circumstance penalty to the final check.

#### Athletics DC 20/21 (maximum 1 per PC)

A character could demonstrate their physical prowess to Hult. A character cannot make this check more than once. A failed Aid Another check annoys Hult and gives a -2 circumstance penalty to the final check.

#### Bluff DC 20/21 (maximum 1 per PC)

A character can make up stories to impress Hult. A character cannot make this check more than once. A failed Aid Another check annoys Hult and gives a -2 circumstance penalty to the final check.

#### Diplomacy DC 20/21 (maximum 1 per PC)

A character can explain why they would be valuable to the Zhentarim, or mention the release of the Zhentarim agent in Task #3. A character cannot make this check more than once. A failed Aid Another check annoys Hult and gives a -2 circumstance penalty to the final check.

#### Insight DC 15/16 (0 successes, 1 maximum)

The character realizes that Hult wants them to show some spunk and that at least one Intimidate check is needed.

**Insight DC 20/21** (0 successes, 1 maximum)

With a successful Insight check, a character can grant a +2 bonus to one social check against Hult.

**Intimidate DC 15/16** (1 success, no maximum)

Hult wants to see his recruits have some bite. If a character gets back into his face, Hult likes it. At least one character must attempt an Intimidate check to pass this skill challenge. A character cannot make this check more than once. A failed Aid Another check annoys Hult and gives a -2 circumstance penalty to the final check.

**Religion DC 20/21** (maximum 1 per PC)

A character can demonstrate understanding of the power of the gods. A character cannot make this check more than once. A failed Aid Another check annoys Hult and gives a -2 circumstance penalty to the final check.

**Thievery DC 19/21** (no maximum)

A character can demonstrate their legerdemain. A character cannot make this check more than once. A failed Aid Another check annoys Hult and gives a -2 circumstance penalty to the final check.

## ENDING THE ENCOUNTER

**Success:** If the PCs succeed at this skill challenge, they gain 1 Infiltration Point. They are recruited into the Zhentarim as prime recruits.

*Hult walks over to the door and shouts “Hey, Thaelmand! Get in here, you lazy sack of horse droppings.” A Zhentarim agent enters the room. You recognize him. He’s the agent you spared. Hult says, “Give them a quick tour of the place, get them some uniforms, and assign them a barrack. Try not to screw this up.” Thaelmand presses his fist to his chest and replies, “Yessir.”*

*Hult turns back to you. “I’m going to give you one warning, you pathetic maggots. We operate on a strict three strikes and you’re out policy. And when you’re out, you’re really out.”*

The man is the Zhentarim agent that the most PCs spared for Task #3. Most likely, this individual is one of the Zhentarim from *DALE1-2 Blades for Daggerdale*, *SPEC1-1 Shades of the Zhentarim*, or *SPEC1-2 Zhent’s Ancient Shadows*. Regardless of which one the characters spared, his name is Thaelmand.

**Failure:** If the PCs fail at this skill challenge, the characters also gain one defeat on the Infiltration. They

are still recruited into the Zhentarim. However, they are given lower-ranking positions. For the rest of the adventure, describe how the characters get the worst jobs in the keep - latrine duty, kitchen patrol, ditch digging, and mucking out the hippogriff mews. **This low profile gives the characters a -2 penalty on Bluff, Diplomacy, Intimidate, and Streetwise skill checks while in Darkhold during this adventure.**

### EXPERIENCE POINTS

The PCs receive 140 / 200 xp each for overcoming the skill challenge.

## ENCOUNTER 2: ORIENTATION

**SKILL CHALLENGE LEVEL 8 / 10,  
COMPLEXITY 2 (700 / 1000 XP)**

### SETUP

Thaelmand shows the PCs around Darkhold. The characters will notice that the proportions of Darkhold are huge. Its halls, stairs, and chambers are vast and icy cold in the winter. Most of the giant-sized doors have smaller human-sized doors set into them.

The following list of rooms are the significant locations the characters see on the orientation. They are presented in the order that the characters come across them. Thaelmand introduces the characters to the leaders of the Zhentarim as prime recruits. The characters have an opportunity to make observations that could help them later in the adventure and impress the officers.

While the skill challenge is presented in the form of a tour of Darkhold, the characters need not finish it at this time. They can come back to this again and again, as they need, over the course of the adventure. Be careful when running this encounter that you are not just telling a story. You are seeding leads for the PCs so that they can gather the information they need. If the PCs do not show any direct interest in the NPCs or the situation, just summarize the events and allow the PCs to later return to those NPCs that caught their interest. Running Encounter 4 in between as a change of pace is certainly a good idea.

For a list of the officers of Darkhold and the skills that influence them, see Appendix 2.

### SKILL CHALLENGE

**Goal:** To gain the confidence of one or more of the Zhent officers at Darkhold.

**Complexity:** 2 (6 successes before 3 failures)

**Primary Skills:** Arcana, Athletics, Bluff, Diplomacy, Dungeoneering, History, Intimidate, Nature, Religion  
**Other Skills:** Insight, Streetwise

**Victory:** The characters impress one or more of the Zhentarim officers.

**Defeat:** The characters have alienated one or more of the Zhentarim officers.

### SCENE 1: THE TRAINING HALL

*Thaelmand leads you inside the main keep of Darkhold to a gargantuan hall used for weapons practice and*

*athletic training. The floor is checkered with padded mats, and sparring partners go back and forth, filling the room with their shouts and the clang of metal on metal. A row of Zhentarim recruits are feathering straw-stuffed targets.*

*A hulking dragonborn in heavy armor watches the practice in silent disdain, while a half-elf with weathered skin is shouting encouragement to the archers. Thaelmand introduces the dragonborn as Gron, Captain of the Storm Watch and the half-elf as Tomias Palesun, Captain of the Grey Feathers.*

Tomias Palesun is a seemingly easygoing man with a quick wit and many jokes, but he has the cold eyes of a killer. He'll make small talk with the PCs before getting back to his duties.

After Fzain's arrival, Tomias has become a firm supporter of Bane, and is having a liaison with the cleric of Bane. During their trysts, he feeds information to Fzain about Zhentarim activities. Unfortunately, Tomias is a poor actor and has not fooled as many as he hoped. Varlosh (see Scene 5) has noticed and is blackmailing him. Tomias has already made plans with Fzain to flee Darkhold in the near future.

#### **Diplomacy DC 15/16 (1 maximum)**

Tomias likes to play cards. He proposes a game during the tour. A character can impress him by joining him for a game and losing often.

#### **Insight DC 15/16 (0 successes, 1 maximum)**

With a successful Insight check, a character notices that there is a lot of tension between Gron and Tomias.

#### **Intimidate DC 24/25 (1 maximum)**

If the PCs learn about Tomias' relationship with Fzain, they can attempt an Intimidate check against him. Otherwise, the check automatically fails.

#### **Perception DC 20/21 (0 successes, 1 maximum)**

A character notices that Tomias carries a symbol of Bane on a chain around his neck. He appears to be hiding the symbol. It opens up the use of Religion.

#### **Religion DC 15/16 (1 maximum)**

By subtly playing on Tomias' religious loyalty, the PC impresses him. Tomias subtly mentions Fzain (see Scene 4), and tells that if the PCs mention his name if they acquire her help. This grants them a +2 bonus on Bluff and Diplomacy checks when dealing with Fzain.

On the other hand, openly expressing any interest in Bane, causes Gron to treat the PCs with suspicion (-2

penalty on social checks in interaction with Gron) and causes Tomias to grow cold, earning 1 automatic failure.

Gron is terse when introduced with the party and informs them that he will give them no special treatment.

Gron left his homeland of Tymanther for reasons that have never been specified. Because of Gron's horrible temper, it is commonly believed that he murdered someone important during one of his rages and had to flee the country. Gron is a devout follower of Cyric and revels in the strife of physical combat. He has little respect for Tomias and believes him to be a two-faced cad. If he finds out that Tomias is passing information to Fzain, Gron will kill him.

#### **Athletics DC 15/16 (1 maximum)**

Gron respects strength and challenges the strongest looking character to a match during the tour. If a character shows skill in a physical competition (such as a wrestling bout or a spar), they get his respect. If the beat the DC of the check by 10 or more they beat him, granting 1 extra success or removing 1 failure.

#### **Bluff DC 20/21 (1 maximum)**

PCs could play to his devotion to Cyric and claim to also be followers of the Dark Sun.

#### **Diplomacy DC 20/21 (1 maximum)**

Gron is suspicious of lickspittles and this check automatically fails with one exception. If the characters tell him about Tomias' spying for Fzain, they may make a Diplomacy check to convince Gron of its truth. If they succeed, they have Gron's respect, and Gron kills Tomias within a day.

#### **Insight DC 19/21 (0 successes, 1 maximum)**

A character gleans that Diplomacy and Intimidate are of limited use here.

#### **Intimidate DC -/-**

Gron does not respond well to any sort of intimidation by the PCs. Use of this skill does not grant a success or failure.

#### **Perception DC 15/16 (0 successes, 1 maximum)**

A character notices that Gron is tattooed with the skull and dark burst that is the symbol of Cyric.

#### **SCENE 2: QUARTERMASTER'S SUPPLY**

The party cannot make headway on the skill challenge in this scene, however, they may notice the vault which

could hold clues. Breaking into the vault is discussed in Encounter 5.

*From the Training Hall, Thaelmand leads you to the quartermaster's supply to get your uniform. A counter stretches the length of the room and blocks further entry. A number Zhents stand at the counter making requests for gear and provisions from a female tiefling. Thaelmand introduces her as Rikla Ulgrum and then asks for your uniforms.*

Rikla Ulgrym is the quartermaster of Darkhold. She is harried by the constant requests for supplies and is having several arguments concurrently. She does not have time for much more than handing the PCs their uniforms, which consists of a surcoat with the symbol of the Zhentarim - a skull surmounting a gold and black sunburst.

Rikla is particularly angry at Jesym (see Scene 6) as the old captain of the Outriders was her embezzlement partner. While she has no proof, Rikla suspects foul play and makes Jesym's life as unpleasant as possible. For some reason Hult Irontoe has taken an instant dislike to Rikla and considers her weak and therefore a target. Rikla has to actively avoid the dwarf or suffer his beatings.

#### **Perception DC 15/16 (0 successes, 1 maximum)**

The character notices the large vault in the back room. The vault door is open, and Rikla and her assistants constantly go in and out with supplies.

#### **Perception DC 20/21 (0 successes, 1 maximum)**

The character notices that the shelves are stacked with mundane gear and consumables, but the character cannot see everything in the vault.

#### **Perception DC 24/25 (0 successes, 1 maximum)**

The character notices a large combination lock on the front side of the vault. Because of the way the door is angled, the character cannot see the combination.

#### **SCENE 3: SHRINE TO CYRIC**

*When the giants built Darkhold, they must have intended this chamber to glorify their gods. Now it is dedicated to the worship of Cyric. Dark purple cloths drape the walls and a magnificent fresco of the Dark Sun glares down on the Zhentarim kneeling in worship before the Prince of Lies.*

*A bald, middle-aged man in wizard's robes is having a hushed conversation with a priest of Cyric. "Lady Avrezt should expel her," the cleric demands.*

*The wizard shakes his head. "She represents powerful interests. We can't throw her out."*

*"She's all but stalking you," the Cyricist grins wickedly. "Perhaps, you enjoy being chased by such a lovely tigress?"*

*The wizard colors at that comment, and then notices your group. "Ah. Thaelmand. New recruits?" Your guide introduces the bald man as Senior Black Cloak Taalor Darkhope and the cleric as Watchful Skull Nombrail Calist.*

Taalor Darkhope appraises the characters carefully when introduced to them. He is an incredibly intelligent man with eclectic tastes in literature and is widely read.

A descendant of the Darkhope family that has served the Zhentarim for generations, Taalor is a crafty man who allows his captains to handle the daily affairs of the elite companies stationed at Darkhold. Taalor is often called "The Binder" because of his expertise in summoning creatures and binding them to his will. He has created helmed horrors and homunculi. Taalor is particularly concerned about the recently arrived cleric of Bane and her designs upon him.

**Arcana DC 15/16 (1 maximum)**

Taalor is impressed by scholarly discussions of arcane topics.

**Dungeoneering DC 20/21 (1 maximum)**

Taalor is impressed by scholarly discussions of the Underdark.

**History DC 15/16 (1 maximum)**

Taalor is impressed by scholarly discussions of historical events, especially if they mention an interest in military interest.

**Insight DC 15/16 (0 successes, 1 maximum)**

The character understands that Taalor is embarrassed that Nombrail noticed Fzain's pursuit of him.

**Insight DC 20/21 (0 successes, 1 maximum)**

The character learns that Taalor respects knowledge and Intimidate is of no value.

**Insight DC 25/26 (0 successes, 1 maximum)**

The character realizes that Taalor does like the idea that Fzain is pursuing him.

**Religion DC 20/21 (1 maximum)**

Taalor is impressed by scholarly discussions of the faiths of Faerûn.

Nombrail Calist is the high cleric of Cyric at Darkhold. He greets the PCs with unsettling enthusiasm and a shark's grin. He mentions the weekly services, and he expects to see them at the shrine often.

Nombrail is a treacherous weasel of a man who delights in abusing his underlings. He spreads the word of the Black Sun through the Zhentarim in Darkhold and ensures that the average member of the organization has a healthy respect and fear for Cyric. Nombrail despises Fzain and longs for the day that Avrezt gives him leave to crush the hated Banite. Until then, he taunts and provokes her at every opportunity. Nombrail's long-term goal is to free Cyric from his imprisonment, and he urges Avrezt to pursue this goal at every opportunity.

**Bluff DC 15/16 (1 maximum)**

The character spreads nasty rumors about Fzain through the Zhentarim at Darkhold or shows great devotion to Cyric.

**Insight DC 15/16 (0 successes, 1 maximum)**

The character understands that Nombrail is a murderous sociopath and is obsessed with destroying Fzain.

**Stealth DC 20/21 (1 maximum)**

A character can plant incriminating evidence in Fzain's room, such as false orders or goods stolen from the Zhentarim.

**Thievery DC 20/21 (1 maximum)**

A character steals Fzain's holy symbol and gives it to Nombrail.

**SCENE 4: MESS HALL**

*Your next destination is a long, barrel-vaulted hall, which acts as the mess hall for the mercenaries and the social center of Darkhold. Currently, there are a good number of off-duty Zhentarim relaxing here. A stunningly beautiful woman with honeyed locks and dressed in the red and black vestments of Bane approaches you. Thaelmand looks about quickly for a way to avoid her but no options show themselves.*

*"Newcomers to the Zhentarim banner?" she asks. "Are you trying to hide them from me, Thaelmand? How quaint. I am Fzain Nerist. The sane representative of the sane god here in Darkhold."*

Fzain Nerist is the representative of the High Imperceptor in Mulmaster to the Zhentarim. She is

curious of the new arrivals. She asks the character their names and what brought them to join the Zhentarim.

Born in a family of dedicated Banites, Fzain was named in honor of Bane's exarch, Fzoul. Manshoon will not permit her into Stormwatch so she stays at Darkhold. She is a strong-willed woman and a brilliant speaker who is able to sway crowds. This, combined with her good looks, has made her popular among the sellswords at Darkhold and brought some into the service of the Black Hand. She is convinced that Bane is the future of the Realms and will triumph over all other gods. She has occasional liaisons with Tomias, but she has her eye on Taalor.

**Bluff DC 15/16** (1 maximum)

The character announces reverence for Bane and urges other Zhentarim to attend services to the Black Hand.

**Diplomacy DC 20/21** (1 maximum)

The character can convince Taalor that Fzain would be a powerful ally and encourage him to meet with her.

**Insight DC 15/16** (0 successes, 1 maximum)

The character understands that Fzain is interested in spreading Bane's influence through Darkhold.

**Insight DC 15/16** (0 successes, 1 maximum)

The character notices that Thaelmand stiffens when Fzain approaches. He is obviously uncomfortable around her. Thaelmand is a follower of Cyric and finds Fzain intimidating.

**Intimidate DC 20/21** (1 maximum)

The character can bully other Zhentarim into attending Banite services.

**SCENE 5: ARCHIVES**

*The party cannot make headway on the skill challenge in this scene, however, they should notice the archives hold many clues. Breaking into the archives is discussed in Encounter 6.*

*After the Mess Hall, Thaelmand takes you to the Archives, which are a series of oblong rooms, bursting with the many contracts, reports, and files of the Zhentarim. The walls are lined with shelves, and a ladder gives access to the upper-most shelves.*

*At the center of the archives sits an urbane older man, with hair that is mostly gray and a disturbingly intense stare. He is assisted by a half-elven woman who is attached to his desk with a long cord that is fastened*

*to a collar around her neck. Thaelmand introduces the man as Varlosh, the Archivist of Darkhold. He doesn't introduce the woman at all.*

Varlosh keeps track of all the contracts, reports, and intelligence gathered by the Zhentarim. He greets the PCs with polite condescension. They are expendable fodder that makes money for the Zhentarim. He informs the party that they will be filing their reports and contracts here.

A vampire and follower of Shar, Varlosh works closely with Avrezt to receive reports from many of the Zhentarim corps working around Faerûn. He is disliked by many Black Cloaks as he keeps close tabs on the amount of income they are supposed to be reporting. He has survived numerous assassination attempts, mostly because no one knows he's a vampire. Varlosh has noticed Tomias' relationship with Fzain and is blackmailing the archer captain. This is mostly for show. In reality, he has already reported the treachery to Avrezt, and they are feeding Tomias false information.

The woman chained to the desk is Nualla A'Ashemmi. She is the daughter of Sememmon and Ashemmi, the Renegades of Darkhold who turned from the Black Network before the Spellplague. She has made it her life's work to oppose the Zhentarim at every turn, but was recently caught by the Zhents and held prisoner. Varlosh believes that he has her dominated and cowed, but she fought off his control some time ago. She pretends to still be under the influence to avoid Varlosh re-dominating her.

The PCs may want to rescue Nualla. This is covered in Encounter 7.

**Insight DC 20/21** (0 successes, 1 maximum)

A character notices that Nualla is staring right at him. There is still a spark of resistance in her eyes.

**Perception DC 15/16** (0 successes, 1 maximum)

A character notices that Nualla has a necklace with the stars and eyes of Selûne around her neck.

**SCENE 6: HIPPOGRIFF MEWS**

*Thaelmand leads you up a circular flight of stairs to what he promises is the last stop on the orientation. You exit out onto the wide flat-roof of the keep of Darkhold which are the mews of the hippogriffs trained by the Black Network. The reek of horse dung mixed with bird droppings is nearly unbearable. A female halfling is ordering around the Zhentarim grunts who are mucking out the stalls. Meanwhile, a copper elf is scratching the neck of a particularly vicious-looking hippogriff.*

**Thaelmand introduces the two as Jesym Drein, Captain of the Outriders and Lerilenaniel, Beast-tamer of Darkhold.**

Jesym Drein is very friendly with the PCs as she sees them as potential recruits to her future plots. She recently rose to command after she managed the “accidental” death of Hallook Breidorlzan, the former captain. Once she has the Outriders consolidated under her control, she intends to build up her cult of personality among the Zhents of Darkhold until she has enough support to split from the Zhentarim and form her own mercenary band.

**Bluff DC 20/21 (1 maximum)**

Jesym is receptive to promises to join her mercenary band or to back her in her rise to power.

**Insight DC 20/21 (0 successes, 1 maximum)**

A character realizes how ambitious Jesym is. She won't be satisfied until she controls her own fate

**Intimidate DC 20/21 (1 maximum)**

If the party learns about her hand in killing her the former captain of the Outriders, they can attempt an Intimidate check against her.

Lerilenaniel is cool and distant to the PCs, especially any elves or eladrin. If any of the PCs are down, she spits on the ground. Lerilenaniel mostly wanders the wilds of Western Heartlands, hunting for monsters, trapping them, and then moving them to places where needed by the Zhentarim. She is quiet and doesn't like people very much. Lerilenaniel has a deep and lasting hatred of the High Observer of Torm who rules Elturgard over his barricading of the Reaching Woods. She uses monsters to kill or harass the paladins of Elturgard, even though Avrezt has ordered her not to provoke the city. The hippogriff that Lerilenaniel is petting is named Bitey.

**Bluff DC 20/21 (1 maximum)**

If the PCs express their hatred of Elturgard, they can impress Lerilenaniel. Alternately, they can claim to have killed the two paladins in Encounter 4, which also impresses her.

**History DC 15/16 (1 maximum)**

If the PCs recount atrocities committed by the paladins of Elturgard (especially that of barricading of the Reaching Woods), they can win the copper elf's favor.

**Insight DC 15/16 (0 successes, 1 maximum)**

The character gets the feeling that a lot of rage lurks below the surface of Lerilenaniel's coolness.

**Insight DC 20/21 (0 successes, 1 maximum)**

The character notices the passion that Lerilenaniel has for the monsters kept by the Zhentarim.

**Nature DC 20/21 (1 maximum)**

Lerilenaniel loves to talk about monsters - the more dangerous the better. However, the character must be able to discuss obscure monsters to win her respect.

## SCENE 6: BARRACKS

***These smaller rooms probably housed one giant, but now each room holds half-a-dozen bunks and lockers. There are a scores of rooms just like this one in the keep.***

The Zhentarim make the most of the over-sized chambers in Darkhold and assign each Gauntlet (squad of 4-6 mercenaries) to one room. The barracks concludes the tour. Thaelmand assigns them a chamber and tells them select a Jack (the officer of the gauntlet) and be ready to begin training tomorrow.

## ENDING THE ENCOUNTER

**Success:** If the PCs succeed at this skill challenge, they gain the confidence of the officers of the Zhentarim at Darkhold. They gain 1 Infiltration Point. In addition, if they impressed any particular officer, this might reduce the effects of failures in later or earlier challenges, such as preventing a beating. In addition the PCs gain a +2 bonus on any social skill checks while inside Darkhold.

**Failure:** If the PCs fail at this skill challenge, they also gain one defeat on the Infiltration. They also offend one or more of the officers at Darkhold. The characters get the worst jobs at the keep for the next week and they lose one healing surge.

## EXPERIENCE POINTS

The PCs receive 140 / 200 xp each for overcoming the skill challenge.

## ENCOUNTER 3: INSIDE THE ZHENTARIM

### SETUP

The PCs have joined the Zhentarim, received an orientation tour of Darkhold, and met the important

officers of the Black Network. Now they must survive the training and tests while trying to uncover their plans.

## LIFE AS A ZHENT

*The coming days are a living hell of training and initiation into the Zhentarim regimen. Your instructors work you hard, teaching you Zhent techniques and how to fight as a cohesive unit. They haze you, getting you up in the middle of the night to run laps around the courtyard. You also get a full dose of Zhent philosophy: might makes right, money is power, and strife breeds opportunity.*

The training techniques of the Zhentarim are that of military boot camp run by evil drill instructors who openly worship a god of strife. They weed out the weak by any means necessary. Any good tendencies in the recruits are ruthlessly crushed while selfishness, cruelty, and violence are encouraged. Some examples are:

- Gron instructs the characters on how to fight in a unit, follow orders given in battle, and how to loot their companions quickly if they fall.
- Tomias instructs the characters on how to scan crowds for do-gooders who intend to interfere with a Zhent mission.
- Hult instructs the characters on how to bully weaker people around and get what you want.
- Jesym instructs the characters in how to remain mobile in a fight and how to ride a hippogriff.
- Varlosh instructs the characters on how to negotiate a contract.

The characters spend 12 hours a day in physical and mental education to become Zhentarim. No down time lasts more than 3 hours. The characters cannot take an extended rest during this adventure. and cannot recover their daily powers or healing surges once spent.

## TALKING TO THE ZHENTS

The characters can talk to their fellow Zhentarim while they are training and gain clues as to how to impress officers or gain information as to what the Zhentarim is plotting. Each bit of information is a separate check, which requires one hour if the character does this as part of their three hours off a day. This triples to three hours per check, if the character talks to other Zhents during training. To collect all the information should take days.

**Streetwise DC 15/16:** The character hears that Lord Manshoon is due to visit Darkhold in two weeks. The

Zhents are nervous as to the purpose of this visit. When Manshoon visits, bad things often happen to those in charge. A DC 12 Insight check tells the PCs that they need to be long gone before Manshoon arrives.

**Streetwise DC 15/16:** The character learns that Fzain recently arrived at Darkhold as an emissary from the Banites in Mulmaster. She was originally sent to Stormwatch, but Manshoon is making her stay here.

**Streetwise DC 20/21:** The character hears of Lerilenaniel's violent past with Elturgard. She strikes at the paladins of that land at every opportunity.

**Streetwise DC 20/21:** The character learns that Taalor is expected to be promoted to Tolak (one of the primary leaders of the Zhentarim). Lady Avrezt, the Castellan of Darkhold, is thought to be worried and is plotting the Senior Black Cloaks' death.

**Streetwise DC 24/25:** The characters learn that Jesym had a hand in the death of Hallook Breidorlzan, who recently died on a scouting mission. They can use this information to Intimidate Jesym.

**Streetwise DC 24/25:** The character learns that Tomias is having an affair with Fzain and feeding her information about the Zhentarim. They can use this information to Intimidate Tomias or to gain favor with Gron.

## INVESTIGATING THE ZHENTARIM

The characters have perhaps two hours each day to investigate. They have a lot of options. If the characters decide to continue to win favor with the Zhentarim officers use the skills available in Encounter 2. If the PCs wish to free Nualla, go to Encounter 4. If the PCs attempt to break into the quartermaster's vault, go to Encounter 5. If the PCs search the Archives, go to Encounter 6.

In addition to the success or failure in each encounter, there are some general actions that cause an automatic defeat in this skill challenge.

- Displaying the holy symbol of a good-aligned deity.
- Openly professing allegiance to Cormyr, Baldur's Gate, or other good-aligned country.
- Attacking an important Zhent officer. The characters should not be able to kill an important Zhent officer in this adventure as the officer retreats.

## **ENDING THE ENCOUNTER**

The infiltration ends when the characters either have gained 5 Infiltration Points or gained 3 Infiltration defeats. At which time, go to Encounter 9.

## **EXPERIENCE POINTS**

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

## ENCOUNTER 4: KIDNAPPING A MONSTER

ENCOUNTER LEVEL 8 / 10 (1700 / 2400 XP)

### SETUP

This encounter includes the following creatures at the low tier:

- 1 ettin marauder (level 9) (E)
- 5 dire stirges (S) (3 of which attack the PCs)

This encounter includes the following creatures at the high tier:

- 1 ettin marauder (level 11) (E)
- 5 dire stirges (level 9) (S) (3 of which attack the PCs)

Lerilenaniel the beast tamer at Darkhold approaches the PCs with a task for them.

*Lerilenaniel pulls you aside from your training early one morning. The cold and dispassionate elf begins without preamble. “We have a task for you where you can prove your worth. An ettin has moved into some ruins about eight miles southeast of Darkhold. Capture it and bring it back here. Be back by nightfall.”*

The beasttamer gives reliable directions to the ettin’s lair. She also assigns them a cart to carry the creature back to Darkhold and she recommends that they keep it unconscious for the trip.

During the conversation, Lerilenaniel tells the party with sadistic glee that the creature will be unleashed on a village (which one hasn’t been decided yet) so that the villagers will hire Zhent mercenaries to protect them.

The party must hurry if they’re going to make it there and back again by nightfall. With Lerilenaniel’s directions, they have no trouble finding the lair and nothing attacks them on the way. When the party arrives at the ettin’s lair, read the following:

*The ettin has made its lair in some ruins on top of a small foothill. The carcasses of several kills hang from the ruins as the ettin is making a fire to roast his prizes. Two of the carcasses are human. Their battered armor is heaped on the ground near the ettin. Several trees grow in the area despite the rocky soil, including a hollow-trunked tree that grows near the ruins. The bushes and trees are covered with sharp uninviting thorns and the whole region is desolate and foreboding.*

The ettin is making a fire to cook its kills. If the party does not intervene, he gets a good fire going, spits the human carcasses and has a marvelous feast. The ettin has no interest in talking to edibles and attempts at social skills automatically fail.

The stirges are slumbering inside the hollow trunk of the tree and have total cover from the party. Likewise, they do not notice the party until they are awakened by the ettin’s roar.

### FEATURES OF THE AREA

**Illumination:** The PCs reach the area in early afternoon. The area is brightly lit.

**Boulders:** Squares with large boulders in them count as blocking terrain. A DC 20 Athletics check (or DC 10 Athletics check with a running start) allows a character to jump on top of the boulders and occupy that square.

**Pond:** The pond is relatively shallow. All pond squares count as difficult terrain, costing 2 squares of movement.

**Ruins:** The menhir on the map represents an old ruin that has mostly crumbled to rubble. The ettin must squeeze to get through the ruins, but they provide superior cover. A character slammed into any of these ruins, causes a collapse the first time, which might crush that character. Once collapsed that square is considered difficult terrain and the ettin can move freely through it. There are ample of boulders for the ettin to use (see Tactics below).

#### Collapsing Ruins

#### Single Use Terrain

+11 vs. AC; 2d6 + 5 damage and the collapsing ruins make a secondary attack against the same target. *Secondary Attack* +9 vs. Reflex; target is knocked prone and immobilized (save ends).

**Trees:** Any square that contains mostly foliage in it counts as covering terrain. The center square of the big trees (where the trunk is located) counts as blocking terrain. The hollow trunked tree is marked. Moving through these bushes deals 1d6 + 4 damage per round.

### TACTICS

The ettin can see as far as the line of trees on the map. Characters moving beyond this line of trees must make Stealth checks against the ettin’s passive Perception.

The ettin wades into the middle of the party and starts swinging. It tries to space out its actions during the round to reset its immediate reactions. It uses its action point to club the most dangerous character. The first time it is struck for damage, the ettin bellows in rage. This wakes up the dire stirges.

The dire stirges are nesting in the hollow trunk of a tree near the ettin's lair. When disturbed by the ettin's roar, they fly out and attack on their Initiative on the second round of combat. Two of the stirges attack the ettin while the other two attempt to latch onto characters. Ongoing damage from the stirges stack.

The ettin views the party as a much greater threat and ignores the pesky little stirges. He does not spend a move action to pull the stirge out and continues to attack the big, shiny and powerful party. Since the ettin has two turns, it takes ongoing damage from the stirges twice each round. The stirges kill the ettin when the ettin reaches 0 hit points.

If the PCs stay at a distance, the ettin hides among the ruins, throwing boulders at the PCs below while gaining superior cover itself.

**R Boulder** (standard; at-will) ♦ **Weapon**  
Range 5/10; +12 / +14 vs. AC; 1d6 + 8 / 1d6 + 9 damage.

## SCALING THE ENCOUNTER

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

**Four PCs:** Remove one of the dire stirges.

**Six PCs:** Add another dire stirge.

## ENDING THE ENCOUNTER

**Success:** If the PCs subdue the ettin and return it to Darkhold, they gain 1 Infiltration Point. The carcasses are the torn shreds of two paladins from Elturgard. If the PCs bring these bodies back to Darkhold, they can claim credit with Lerilenaniel for killing them. This will impress her as described in Encounter 2.

**Failure:** If the PCs fail to bring back a live ettin (including letting the stirges kill it), they also gain one defeat on the Infiltration. They also offend one or more of the officers at Darkhold. The characters get the worst jobs at the keep for the next week and they lose one healing surge.

## EXPERIENCE POINTS

The PCs receive 340 / 480 xp each for overcoming the ettin and the stirges. The two stirges that only attack the ettin are not counted towards the xp for this encounter. PCs receive this xp even if they kill the ettin and get a defeat on the Infiltration.

## TREASURE

The party can search the ettin's belongings and find a stash of 50 gp each in various coins. In addition, the ettin owns a *belt of vigor* (level 12).

## ENCOUNTER 4: KIDNAPPING A MONSTER STATISTICS (LOW LEVEL)

Ettin Marauder (level 9) Large natural humanoid (giant)	Level 9 Elite Soldier XP 800
<b>Initiative</b> +8; see also <i>double actions</i> <b>Senses</b> Perception +12	
<b>HP</b> 206; <b>Bloodied</b> 103	
<b>AC</b> 27; <b>Fortitude</b> 25, <b>Reflex</b> 17, <b>Will</b> 18	
<b>Saving Throws</b> +2	
<b>Speed</b> 6	
<b>Action Points</b> 1	
<b>m Club</b> (standard; at-will) ♦ <b>Weapon</b>	
Reach 2; +14 vs. AC; 1d8 + 9 damage and the target is pushed 1 square.	
<b>M Swat</b> (immediate reaction; when an enemy moves into a position that flanks the ettin; at-will) ♦ <b>Weapon</b>	
The ettin targets one creature flanking it; +12 vs. Fortitude; the target is pushed 3 squares.	
<b>Double Actions</b>	
An ettin rolls initiative twice, gets two turns during a round, and has a full set of actions (standard, move, minor) on each turn. Each set of actions corresponds to a different head. The ettin's ability to take immediate actions refreshes on each of its turns.	
<b>Dual Brain</b>	
At the end of its turn, the ettin automatically saves against the dazed and stunned conditions and against charm effects that a save can end.	
<b>Alignment</b> Chaotic Evil	<b>Languages</b> Giant
<b>Str</b> 28 (+14) <b>Dex</b> 12 (+6)	<b>Wis</b> 15 (+7)
<b>Con</b> 23 (+11) <b>Int</b> 8 (+4)	<b>Cha</b> 9 (+4)
<b>Equipment</b> hide armor, 2 clubs	

Dire Stirge Small natural beast	Level 7 Lurker XP 300
<b>Initiative</b> +10 <b>Senses</b> Perception +3; darkvision	
<b>HP</b> 60; <b>Bloodied</b> 30	
<b>AC</b> 21; <b>Fortitude</b> 17, <b>Reflex</b> 19, <b>Will</b> 16	
<b>Speed</b> 2; fly 6 (hover)	
<b>m Bite</b> (standard; at-will)	
+12 vs. AC; 1d6 damage, and the target is grabbed (until escape) and takes ongoing 10 damage until it escapes. A dire stirge doesn't make attack rolls while grabbing a target and gains a +5 bonus to its AC and Reflex defenses.	
<b>Alignment</b> Unaligned <b>Languages</b> -	
<b>Skills</b> Stealth +11	
<b>Str</b> 10 (+3)	<b>Dex</b> 16 (+6) <b>Wis</b> 10 (+3)
<b>Con</b> 12 (+4)	<b>Int</b> 1 (-2) <b>Cha</b> 4 (+0)

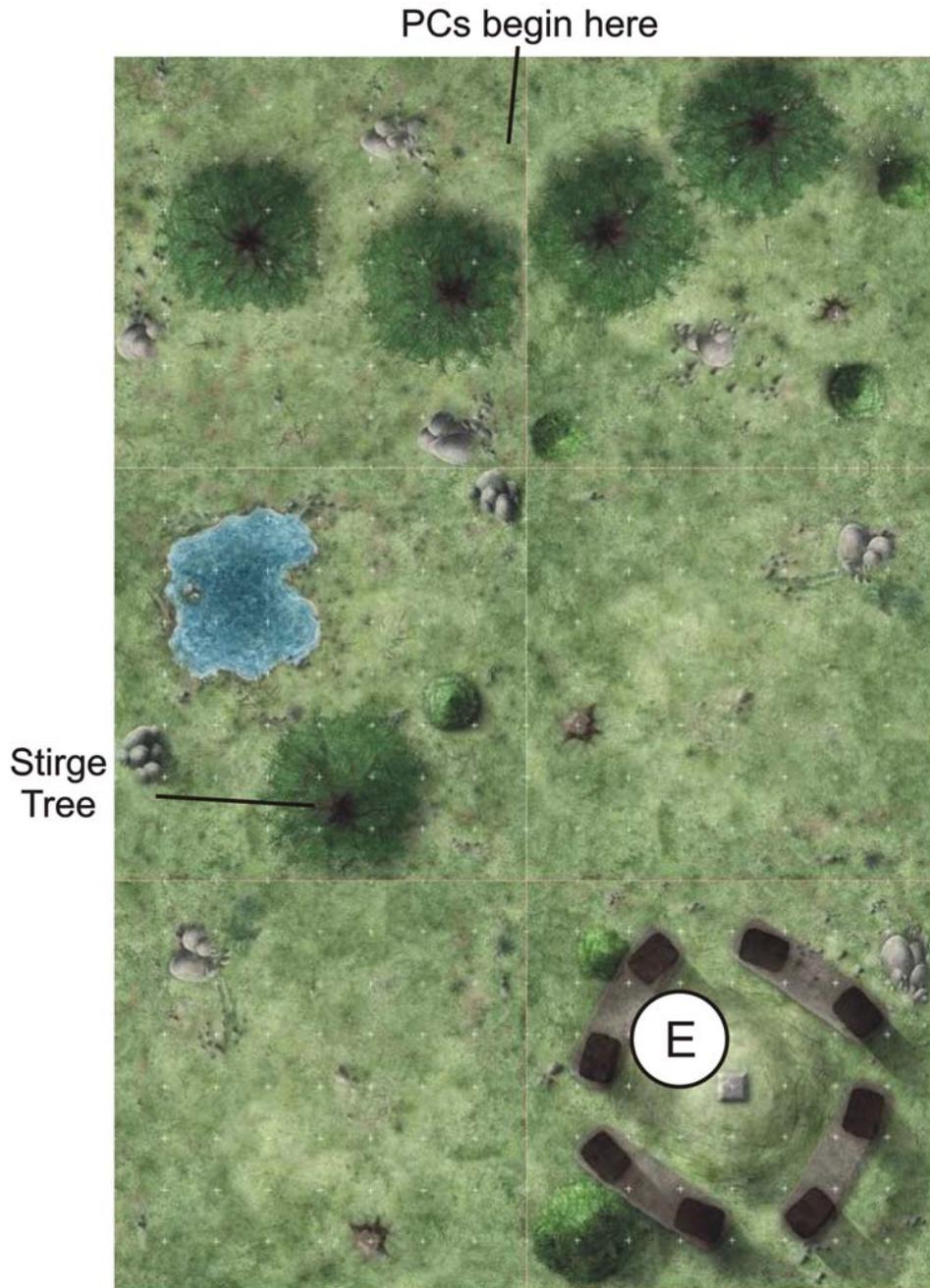
## ENCOUNTER 4: KIDNAPPING A MONSTER STATISTICS (HIGH LEVEL)

Ettin Marauder (level 11) Large natural humanoid (giant)	Level 11 Elite Soldier XP 1,200
<b>Initiative</b> +9; see also <i>double actions</i> <b>Senses</b> Perception +13	
<b>HP</b> 238; <b>Bloodied</b> 119	
<b>AC</b> 29; <b>Fortitude</b> 27, <b>Reflex</b> 19, <b>Will</b> 20	
<b>Saving Throws</b> +2	
<b>Speed</b> 6	
<b>Action Points</b> 1	
<b>m Club</b> (standard; at-will) ♦ <b>Weapon</b>	
Reach 2; +16 vs. AC; 1d8 + 10 damage and the target is pushed 1 square.	
<b>M Swat</b> (immediate reaction; when an enemy moves into a position that flanks the ettin; at-will) ♦ <b>Weapon</b>	
The ettin targets one creature flanking it; +14 vs. Fortitude; the target is pushed 3 squares.	
<b>Double Actions</b>	
An ettin rolls initiative twice, gets two turns during a round, and has a full set of actions (standard, move, minor) on each turn. Each set of actions corresponds to a different head. The ettin's ability to take immediate actions refreshes on each of its turns.	
<b>Dual Brain</b>	
At the end of its turn, the ettin automatically saves against the dazed and stunned conditions and against charm effects that a save can end.	
<b>Alignment</b> Chaotic Evil	<b>Languages</b> Giant
<b>Str</b> 28 (+15) <b>Dex</b> 12 (+7)	<b>Wis</b> 15 (+8)
<b>Con</b> 23 (+12) <b>Int</b> 8 (+5)	<b>Cha</b> 9 (+5)
<b>Equipment</b> hide armor, 2 clubs	

Dire Stirge (level 9) Small natural beast (reptile)	Level 9 Lurker XP 400
<b>Initiative</b> +11 <b>Senses</b> Perception +4; darkvision	
<b>HP</b> 72; <b>Bloodied</b> 36	
<b>AC</b> 23; <b>Fortitude</b> 19, <b>Reflex</b> 21, <b>Will</b> 18	
<b>Speed</b> 2; fly 6 (hover)	
<b>m Bite</b> (standard; at-will)	
+14 vs. AC; 1d6 + 1 damage, and the target is grabbed (until escape) and takes ongoing 10 damage until it escapes. A dire stirge doesn't make attack rolls while grabbing a target and gains a +5 bonus to its AC and Reflex defenses.	
<b>Alignment</b> Unaligned <b>Languages</b> -	
<b>Skills</b> Stealth +12	
<b>Str</b> 10 (+4)	<b>Dex</b> 16 (+7) <b>Wis</b> 10 (+4)
<b>Con</b> 12 (+5)	<b>Int</b> 1 (-1) <b>Cha</b> 4 (+1)

# ENCOUNTER 4: KIDNAPPING A MONSTER MAP

TILE SETS NEEDED  
*Ruins of the Wild* x2



## ENCOUNTER 5: BREACHING THE VAULT

**SKILL CHALLENGE LEVEL 8 / 10,  
COMPLEXITY 2 (700 / 1000 XP)**

### SETUP

The PCs may decide to search through the quartermaster's supplies to gain clues of Zhentarim activities. Rikla Ulgrym leaves her office at night so it is an easy matter to get into the quartermasters' supply room. However, she puts everything of value in the vault for the night.

*In marked contrast to earlier, the quartermaster's supply is dark and quiet. The counter is clear of every last scrap of paper, and you don't see a single parcel laying around. The only thing of interest is a large vault door set in the wall of the back room. The thick iron door looks imposing, as does the complicated lock mechanism on it.*

The party cannot break into the vault through physical force as the vault is warded magically to alert the Zhentarim. A character can notice this with a DC 15 Arcana check.

The Lich-Queen Varalla, who ruled Darkhold before the Zhentarim, installed the vault's lock mechanism. The Zhentarim figured she was the only one who knew the answer to the puzzle (and she conveniently left the answer encoded in her study) so they left the mechanism in place.

*The mechanism locking the vault is composed of six steel rings. There are notches inscribed on each ring and words engraved on the metal at each notch. Each ring slides in its own groove and turns independently of the others. There is an arrow engraved at the top of the concentric rings, designating the selections below. A large lever on the right side of the door appears to open the vault if it could be unlocked.*

See Players' Handout 1 for a picture of the six rings. The writing on each of the rings are:

- Ring 1: Helmthorn, Suth, Blueleaf, Zalantar, Weirwood, Shadowtop.
- Ring 2: Blinding Sickness, Mummy Rot, Cackle Fever, Mindfire, Hellfever, Slimy Doom.

- Ring 3: Kobold, Troglodyte, Kuo-Toa, Grell, Illithid, Aboleth.
- Ring 4: Dispater, Mammon, Belial, Geryon, Moloch, Mephistopheles.
- Ring 5: Magic Mouth, Arcane Lock, Phantom Steed, Detect Object, Passwall, Forbiddance.
- Ring 6: Humans, Sylvans, Dragons, Aearee, Batrachi, Sarrukh

### SKILL CHALLENGE

**Goal:** To break into the vault in the Quartermaster's supply.

**Complexity:** 2 (6 successes before 3 failures; but see below)

**Primary Skills:** Thievery

**Supporting Skills:** Arcana, Dungeoneering, Heal, History, Nature, Religion

**Victory:** The PCs open the vault.

**Defeat:** The alarm sounds.

**Note:** Do not forget to apply the results of the challenges in Encounter 1 and 2.

To overcome this skill challenge the PCs must set each of the six rings to the proper setting then open the door. The party must turn the dials so that the entry on the sequence of a particular ring matches the number of the ring. Each ring shows a sequence of similar things that are sorted within that ring for a defining factor clockwise such as size of the tree (ring 1), lethality (ring 2) or rank (ring 4). Ring 1 must be set to the first selection in the sequence. Ring 2 must be set to the second selection, and so on. The correct answers are #1 - Helmthorn, #2 - Mummy Rot, #3 - Kuo-Toa, #4 - Geryon, #5 - Passwall, and #6 - Sarrukh.

The PCs can use skills to get hints, or they can use Thievery to bypass the lock. Using skills to get hints does not count toward success or failure in this skill challenge.

**Arcana DC 20/21** (0 successes, 1 maximum)

The character recognizes the selections on Ring 5 as arcane rituals. They seem to be in ascending order of power.

**Arcana DC 25/26** (trained only; 6 maximum)

The character can disable the lock. Each Arcana check sets one ring to the correct answer so the party can use this as a way to get hints to open the lock without an Arcana or Thievery check.

**Dungeoneering DC 20/21** (0 successes, 1 maximum)

The character recognizes that the selections on Ring 3 are all monsters of the Underdark. They are in order from those closest to the surface to the deepest.

**Heal DC 20/21** (0 successes, 1 maximum)

The character realizes that the selections on Ring 2 are all diseases. They are progressively more dangerous.

**History DC 20/21** (0 successes, 1 maximum)

The character recognizes the selections on Ring 6 are all creator races of Faerûn. Which one is older is the subject of much debate, but the Sarrukh is thought to be the oldest.

**Nature DC 20/21** (0 successes, 1 maximum)

The character recognizes that the names on Ring 1 are trees of Faerûn. They are progressively taller.

**Perception DC 15/16** (0 successes, 1 maximum)

The character finds a note wedged under the counter. It reads, "setting matches order." PCs can find this note using passive Perception.

**Religion DC 20/21** (0 successes, 1 maximum)

The character recognizes the names on Ring 4 as archdevils of the Nine Hells and each entry is the lord of a deeper pit, The list is out-of-date. The character knows that Geryon was replaced by Levistus while Moloch was replaced by Malagard who was in turn replaced by Glasya.

**Thievery DC 20/21** (trained only; 6 maximum)

The character can disable the lock. Each Thievery check sets one ring to the correct answer so the party can use this as a way to get hints to open the lock without a Thievery check.

## INSIDE THE VAULT

When the party gains access to the Vault they find a number of interesting things.

First, the Vault contains a large number of any mundane items from the *Players Handbook*. If it would be reasonable for a large military organization to have it, the Zhents do.

Second, the Vault contains a good number of low-level magic items, especially consumables. The Zhentarim rigorously tracks all these items. They know how many are on each shelf. Make it clear to the party that theft of the magic items is likely to be noticed by the Zhentarim. Stealing these lead to an automatic failure of this challenge (see below).

Third, with a DC 20/21 Arcana check (trained only), a character finds a magic item that the Zhentarim overlooked in the jumble bin (sort of a lost-and-found box). This item is not tracked by the Zhentarim and can be taken by the party. It is obvious that the Zhents have not attached any importance to the item.

Fourth, with a DC 15 Perception check, a character notices that the Zhents have crates of sunrods and everburning torches. There are literally hundreds of them in the vault. This is a clue that the Zhents are going to the Underdark.

## ENDING THE ENCOUNTER

**Success:** If the PCs successfully open the Vault and find the clues in the equipment therein, they gain 1 Infiltration Point.

**Failure:** If the PCs fail at this skill challenge, they are caught in the Quartermaster's Vault. They are flogged and lose one healing surge. They also gain one defeat on the Infiltration.

If a character steals from the vault, Rikla discovers that items are missing the next morning. After some investigative work by the Zhents, they uncover the character's theft and reclaim the item. The offending character is flogged severely and loses two healing surges. The party receives a defeat on the Infiltration. This does not counter the Victory gained for breaching the vault.

## EXPERIENCE POINTS

The PCs receive 140 / 200 xp each for overcoming the skill challenge.

## TREASURE

The PCs find a *summer growth totem* (low-level only) or a *spring renewal totem* in the jumble bin (high-level only).

## ENCOUNTER 6: SEARCHING THE ARCHIVES

**SKILL CHALLENGE LEVEL 8 / 10,  
COMPLEXITY 2 (700 / 1000 XP)**

### SETUP

The PCs may decide to gain information on what the Zhentarim is plotting by searching through the Archives.

### SKILL CHALLENGE

**Goal:** To search the Archives for clues of the Zhentarim's plot.

**Complexity:** 2 (6 successes before 3 failures).

**Victory:** The characters discover a clue in the archives.

**Defeat:** The characters are caught in the archives and punished.

**Note:** Do not forget to apply the results of the challenges in Encounter 1 and 2.

### STEP ONE: GETTING INTO THE ARCHIVES

At least two successes in this step are necessary to access the Step Two entry below.

**Primary Skills:** Bluff, Perception, Stealth

**Bluff DC 15/16** (1 success, 1 maximum)

The PCs convince Zhentarim patrols they have a right to be in the area or are honestly lost. The skill can be used to remove a failed Stealth roll.

**Intimidate DC 15/16** (1 success, 1 maximum)

The PCs convinces anybody they come across that they are on a task for higher ranking officer and that mentioning their presence is bad idea for that Zhentarim's career. The skill can be used to remove a failed Stealth check.

**Perception DC 20/21** (1 success, 1 maximum)

The PCs must wait until Varlosh and Nualla leave the office. As Varlosh rarely sleeps and does not eat with the others, this does not happen often.

**Stealth DC 15/16** (1 success, 1 maximum)

The PCs must sneak up to the office without being seen by the many Zhentarim patrolling the halls. If multiple PCs are sneaking around, the PC with the lowest Stealth skill check modifier must make the Stealth check.

### STEP TWO: OPENING THE DOOR

At least one success in this step is necessary to access the Step Three entry below.

**Primary Skills:** Arcana, Thievery

**Arcana DC 20/21** (1 success, 1 maximum)

The character skillfully unweaves the minor spell of binding that was used to seal the door.

**Thievery DC 20/21** (1 success, 1 maximum)

The character unlocks the door.

### STEP THREE: SEARCHING THE ARCHIVES

When the PCs gain entry to the Archives, they are confronted with a filing system that tracks hundreds of contracts and thousands of reports from Zhentarim agents throughout the Western Heartland. Two successes in this step are necessary to access the Step Four entry below.

**Primary Skills:** History, Insight, Perception

**History DC 15/16** (1 success, 1 maximum)

The character has had some experience with filing systems in his studies and uses this knowledge to find significant information on the Zhentarim's activities.

**Insight DC 20/21** (1 success, 1 maximum)

The character has some intuition as to how the office is organized and uses this insight to find significant information on the Zhentarim's activities.

**Perception DC 25/26** (1 success, 1 maximum)

The character notices an important file that contains significant information on the Zhentarim's activities.

### STEP FOUR: LEAVING THE OFFICE

After the PCs find what they need, they can leave the Archives.

**Primary Skills:** Bluff, Diplomacy, Intimidate

**Bluff DC 20/21** (1 success, 1 maximum)

The character makes up a convincing story to anyone witnessing them leave the office.

**Intimidate DC 20/21** (1 success, 1 maximum)

The character threaten anyone witnessing them leave the office.

**Stealth DC 20/21** (1 success, 1 maximum)

The character sneak out of the office.

## IN THE RECORDS

The party learns that the Zhentarim is in the middle of a complex negotiation with an unnamed party. The contract involves hundreds of Zhent mercenaries, along with supplies of food, and slaves. The odd thing about the food is that it is grains, vegetables, and fruit but no meat is being delivered. Nor is there any reference to horses and cavalry is almost always included with these numbers under normal circumstances. This is a hint that the Zhentarim is dealing with the drow.

## ENDING THE ENCOUNTER

**Success:** If the PCs succeed at this skill challenge, they gain information on Zhentarim activities. They gain 1 Infiltration Point.

**Failure:** If the PCs fail at this skill challenge, they are caught in the Archives. They are flogged and lose one healing surge. They also gain one defeat on the Infiltration.

## EXPERIENCE POINTS

The PCs receive 140 / 200 xp each for overcoming the skill challenge.

## TREASURE

The PCs find a ritual book with the rituals Clear the Path and Trailblaze in their search of the Archives. If played at high level they also find a scroll of Analyze Portal (Forgotten Realms Player's Guide) and Transfer Enchantment (Adventurers Vault) (high-level version only).

## ENCOUNTER 7: FREEING NUALLA

### SKILL CHALLENGE LEVEL 8 / 10, COMPLEXITY 2 (700 / 1000 XP)

#### SETUP

The PCs may decide to talk to Nualla A'Ashemmi or even try to free her from enslavement from the Zhentarim.

#### MEETING WITH NUALLA

Getting a chance to speak with Nualla is not easy. When she is in the Archives, she is chained to the desk with Varlosh. When she goes to the mess hall, she is surrounded by dozens of Zhents and there is no privacy. The best place to catch Nualla is when she is sleeping in the dungeons at night.

*The Zhentarim keep their prisoners in the dungeons below the castle. The Zhents keep dozens of prisoners in each of the vast chambers, shackling them to the walls. After some searching among the unfortunate souls trapped beneath Darkhold, you find Varlosh's slave. She is curled at the base of the wall. Her long, dark hair is a tangled mess. She might be pretty if she wasn't covered in grime and filth.*

Nualla is awake when the characters approach her. She has been hoping that they would seek her out ever since she saw them in the Archives. She could tell that they are not like the other petty bullies and tyrants in training here. She begs the party to free her.

If the party asks her for information about the Zhentarim plans, she admits that she knows some secrets, but refuses to tell them anything definite of the Zhentarim's plans until the party frees her. If absolutely necessary, she mentions that Varlosh is a vampire.

#### SKILL CHALLENGE

**Goal:** To free Nualla from the prison.

**Complexity:** 2 (6 successes before 3 failures).

**Victory:** The characters free Nualla.

**Defeat:** The characters are caught and punished.

**Note:** Do not forget to apply the results of the challenges in Encounter 1 and 2.

#### STEP ONE: BREAKING THE CHAINS

**Primary Skills:** Athletics, Bluff, Intimidate, Thievery

The party must obtain one success before going to Step Two.

**Athletics DC 20/21** (1 success, 1 maximum)

The character breaks the shackles. This also gives a -2 circumstance penalty to any Stealth checks in Step 2.

**Bluff DC 20/21** (1 success, 1 maximum)

The character convinces the guards to give the keys to Nualla's shackles with a plausible story, such as Varlosh sent them down to fetch her.

**Diplomacy DC -/-** (0 successes)

The party does not have authority to release any of the prisoners, so Diplomacy does not work here.

**Intimidate DC 20/21** (1 success, 1 maximum)

The character browbeats the guard until he hands over the key to Nualla's chains.

**Thievery DC 15/16** (1 success, 1 maximum)

The character picks the locks on Nualla's shackles. Alternatively, the character can steal the keys from the nearby guard post.

#### STEP TWO: CALMING THE OTHER PRISONERS

**Primary Skills:** Bluff, Intimidate, Stealth

Nualla is in a large dungeon chamber with several dozen other prisoners. If the prisoners see that the characters are releasing her, they demand to be released as well. The party must get one success here before going on to Step Three.

**Bluff DC 20/21** (1 success, 1 maximum)

The character makes up a story and mollifies the other prisoners. Promising to come back later to free them as well is very persuasive. Alternatively, the character could pretend to be carrying Nualla off for more punishment and servitude.

**Intimidate DC 15/16** (1 success, 1 maximum)

The character can threaten the other prisoners. Their spirits are broken, and they are easy to bully.

**Stealth DC 20/21** (1 success, 1 maximum)

The character sneaks Nualla out of the chamber without the other prisoners noticing. The character with the lowest Stealth modifier involved in the getting Nualla out must make the check.

#### STEP THREE: OUT OF THE DUNGEON

**Primary Skills:** Bluff, Intimidate, Perception, Stealth

The party must get Nualla past the guards and out of the dungeon. The party must obtain two successes to go to Step Four.

**Bluff DC 20/21** (1 success, 2 maximum)

The character weaves a plausible story as to why they have Nualla out of her chains. These are different guards than the one encountered in Step 1.

**Intimidate DC 20/21** (1 success, 2 maximum)

The character intimidates the guards into letting them pass with Nualla. These are different guards than the one encountered in Step 1.

**Perception DC 15/16** (0 successes, 2 maximum)

The character hears the guards approaching and warns the rest of the party and Nualla to hide. This grants a +2 circumstance bonus to the next Stealth check.

**Stealth DC 20/21** (2 maximum)

The character leads Nualla and the party through the dungeons and avoids the guards. The PC with the lowest Stealth modifier in the group must make this check.

**STEP FOUR: ESCAPE FROM DARKHOLD**

**Primary Skills:** Athletics, Perception, Stealth, Thievery  
Once out of the dungeons, the party must get Nualla out of Darkhold. At this point social skills become useless and any attempts to use them automatically fail. One successful Stealth check is necessary.

**Athletics DC 20/21** (1 successes, 1 maximum)

The character helps Nualla climb down the outside of the wall. Each character climbing down the walls must make a check. A failed check results in the loss of 1 healing surge and causes a racket.

**Nature DC 20/21** (1 success, 1 maximum)

The character calms one of the hippogriffs on the roof for Nualla to use to make her escape.

**Perception DC 15/16** (0 successes, 1 maximum)

The character hears the guards approaching and warns the rest of the party and Nualla to hide. This grants a +2 circumstance bonus to the Stealth check.

**Stealth DC 20/21** (1 success, 1 maximum)

The character helps Nualla and the party avoids the guards. The character with the lowest Stealth skill modifier present must make this check.

**Thievery DC 20/21** (1 maximum)

The character unlocks the postern gate to the keep, allowing Nualla to slip away into the mountains.

## WHAT NUALLA KNOWS

If the party is successful in getting her out of Darkhold, just before she departs, Nualla tells them what she knows. The Zhentarim are negotiating with a power that is not currently in play in the Western Heartland. She does not know the details, but she heard mentioning it was in an unusual environment that would make it easier for vampires to lead the mission. Hence she suspects something Underdark related. She also knows that Lady Avrez and Varlosh are both vampires. She suspects that many of the other the Zhentarim high-ranking officers are as well.

## ENDING THE ENCOUNTER

**Success:** If the PCs succeed at this skill challenge, they gain 1 Infiltration Point. After the party has freed Nualla, they cannot return to free the rest of the prisoners as the Zhentarim greatly increases the guard.

**Failure:** If the PCs fail at this skill challenge, they are caught freeing Nualla. They also gain one defeat on the Infiltration. They are flogged severely and lose two healing surges.

If the party is successful at the skill challenge, but were seen helping Nualla (such as getting keys to her shackles or escorting her out of the dungeon), they are blamed for her escape. They gain one defeat on the Infiltration (in addition to gaining one for freeing Nualla). They are flogged severely and lose two healing surges.

## EXPERIENCE POINTS

The PCs receive 140 / 200 xp each for overcoming the skill challenge.

## TREASURE

After the adventure, Nualla sends the characters a reward of a *hat of disguise*. The PCs also receive the story reward **QUES03 Zhentarim Liberator**.

## ENCOUNTER 8: FIGHTING ON THE WRONG SIDE

ENCOUNTER LEVEL 9 / 11 (2000 / 3000 XP)

### SETUP

This encounter includes the following creatures at the low tier:

**Jemathiele, eladrin twilight incanter (J)**  
**2 eladrin fey knights (K)**  
**2 quickling runners (level 8) (Q)**  
**1 satyr piper (P)**

This encounter includes the following creatures at the high tier:

**Jemathiele, eladrin twilight incanter (level 10) (J)**  
**2 eladrin fey knights (level 9) (K)**  
**2 quickling runners (level 11) (Q)**  
**1 satyr piper (level 10) (P)**

The party is assigned another task by their commanders.

*You are summoned to Hult's office. The scarred dwarf gives you a mission. "A merchant's hired the Zhentarim to guard his caravan from Daggerford to Westgate. You're to take the stretch between Iriaebor and Elversult. Make sure the merchant and his goods arrive intact. Screw this up and you'll be in a world of hurt."*

The PCs have just enough time to gather their gear before meeting with their guide - one of the Outriders. He and the party ride hippogriffs from Darkhold to Iriaebor. The guide pushes them hard and does not allow them to take extended rests. If the PCs are adamant about taking one, the guide leaves them and they fail this encounter.

### CARAVAN DUTY

When the PCs arrive in Iriaebor, read the following:

*A small caravan of four wagons is waiting for you at the caravan paddock outside of the East Gate of Iriaebor. As you land, the merchant who owns the caravan strolls over. He speaks with a Sembian drawl. "One thing I like about Zhentarim. They're punctual."*

The merchant's name is Whestramelar, and he is from Saerloon in Sembia. He makes his living dealing in cloth - shipping silk from the Inner Sea up to the North and

bringing back wool. He is secretly a member of the Cult of the Dragon and uses his caravans to transport goods important to the Cult.

Beside the party, Whestramelar has four teamsters to drive the wagons. They are not cultists and were hired solely to drive the wagons. The four wagons all hold bales of wool that are covered by a canvas to keep the rain off. The wool is just a cover for his true prize - a unicorn's head with the horn attached. The head will be used as a component in a Cultist ritual to create a dracolich and is hidden in a chest in a secret compartment in one of the wagons.

If a character searches the wagons, with a DC 23/25 Perception check, she notices the hidden cache under the wool bales. Opening the cache requires a DC 20/21 Thievery check. Opening it without being noticed requires a DC 22/23 Stealth check. Inside the cache, the character finds the unicorn's head.

If a character wishes to consider the economics of this trip, with a DC 20 History check, he understands that this is a heavily guarded caravan for its size. Whestramelar might make some profit on this trip, but it will not be worth the time and effort spent moving wool across half a continent.

If a character interacts with Whestramelar a DC 20 Insight check reveals that the merchant is bland. There is just nothing interesting about the man. No normal person is this bland. If a character searches his belongings, she finds nothing of interest.

As the caravan travels overland, Whestramelar and the party have bad dreams set on him by the fey. They dream that they are being hunted through a deep and ancient forest. They wake up screaming when they feel their own heads being sawed off. This interrupts the party and foils any attempts for an extended rest.

### THE AMBUSH

The cultist has made some powerful enemies in the High Forest for harvesting unicorn heads. Jemathiele, a moon elf (an eladrin), recruited several friends and called in favors from some quicklings to recover the head. They are laying in wait to ambush the caravan.

The fey are not interested in killing the PCs. They seek to retrieve the unicorn's head and make their escape. They use their abilities to pin the PCs down while the quicklings grab the head. While they attack, the fey shout: "Return what you have stolen!", "You will not profit from his death!", or "Black hearted villains! How could you kill something so pure?"

Whestramelar and the teamsters hide under one of the wagons during the attack. If the PCs seem interested

in talking with the fey, Whestramelar orders them to kill the attackers and opposes any deal.

A character can try to talk to the fey, but the fey are disinclined to listen to Zhentarim agents (the PCs are in uniform) who are consorting with unicorn butcherers. If a character makes convincing pleas (a DC 20/21 Diplomacy check), the fey parley. They want the head returned and do not accept any excuses. Whestramelar, on the other hand, is unwilling to give the head to the fey and demands that the characters kill them. At your option, the party can trick Whestramelar and give the head to the fey. Treat this as a level 9/11 skill challenge with complexity 5 (12 successes before 3 failures). Count the Diplomacy check to convince the fey to parley as one of the successes. Pick the primary and support skills that you feel are appropriate.

If the party fails the skill challenge, either the fey attack (if no head is forthcoming), or Whestramelar reports their disloyalty to the Zhentarim (if the party gives the fey the head).

## FEATURES OF THE AREA

**Illumination:** The entire field is brightly lit. Due to the constant rain, visibility is reduced to 15 squares. Within this range everything is considered lightly obscured for ranged and reach attacks.

**Boulders:** Squares with large boulders in them count as blocking terrain. A DC 20 Athletics check (or DC 10 Athletics check with a running start) allows a character to jump on top of the boulders and occupy that square.

**Pond:** The pond is relatively shallow. All pond squares count as difficult terrain, costing 2 squares of movement. The bottom is really muddy. Characters entering or starting their turn in the pool must make a DC 15/16 Athletics check or they are considered grappled. Getting out requires a DC 15/16 Acrobatics or Athletics check.

**Stream:** This quickly moving stream counts as difficult terrain and costs 3 squares of movement.

**Trees:** Any square that contains mostly foliage in it counts as covering terrain. The center square of the big trees (where the trunk is located) counts as blocking terrain.

**Wagon:** The wagons count as blocking terrain. A DC 20 Athletics check (or DC 10 Athletics check with a running start) allows a character to jump on top of the wagon and occupy that square. One of the wagons (marked with an H) has the unicorn head in it. The wagon can be used to attack people. It requires a DC 15/16 Nature check to direct the horses. It moves with a speed of 4. Creatures in its path are attacked with a +10

vs. Reflex. On a hit it deals 2d6 + 5 damage and knocks the target prone. On a miss the creature is pushed 1 out of the way of the wagon.

## TACTICS

The fey are hiding in the underbrush some distance from the trail. Have them take 10 on their Stealth checks. If the PCs see the fey with their passive Perception, the fey do not get a surprise round.

The quickling runners delay until the eladrin engage the party. They then weave through the PCs and get to the wagon hiding the head. It takes a runner one standard action to unbury the secret compartment, a second standard action to unlock the secret compartment, and a third standard action to open the cache and a minor action to withdraw the head. Additional runners do not shorten this time, but one runner can pick up where another left off.

Once the runners have the head, they flee back into the woods where they started. The quickling carrying the head has his hands full and cannot attack. Handing the head to another quickling is a minor action. The head can be tossed 2 squares as a standard action. Picking up the unicorn's head is a minor action.

The eladrin fey knights use *feywild challenge* on the party's strikers and *stab of the entangling wild* to keep characters off the quickling runners. One fey knight remains close to Jemathiele and uses *harvest's sorrow* to absorb attacks on her. The other one follows after the quicklings and absorbs attacks on them (grumbling under his breath about protecting quicklings as he does so).

Jemathiele uses her *blinding bolt* to immobilize and isolate characters and her teleporting bolt to move them to the far side of the wagon train where they must run around the wagons. If she can catch a group of PCs together, she uses *dazzling blast*.

The satyr piper uses his wooden pipes to play dazing melody to daze as many of the PCs as possible. He uses the leaping stag dance and song of freedom to get the quicklings closer to their prize.

If the fey retrieve the head and get past the stream, they escape.

Note that Jemathiele (the eladrin twilight incanter) is wearing a *cloak of survival* +2. While this has no impact on her defenses, it does grant her the following:

**Resist** 5 cold, 5 poison

## SCALING THE ENCOUNTER

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

**Four PCs:** Remove the satyr piper.

**Six PCs:** Add another satyr piper.

## WHESTRAMELAR TIPS HIS HAND

If the fey escape with the head or the party gives the head to the fey, Whestramelar is so wroth that he loses reason and reveals his affiliation.

*Whestramelar clamors out from under the wagon. “You idiots! Do you know how far you’ve set us back? That horn would have created a new dracolich. You’ve made a powerful enemy, you thick-headed goons. The Cult remembers those who cross us!”*

The party can do with Whestramelar as they see fit. They can easily overwhelm him. The cultist screams and insults them the entire time. If they let him escape, he complains bitterly to the Zhentarim that the party did not protect him or his caravan. If Whestramelar does not arrive at the next rendezvous point at Elversult, the Zhentarim blames the party.

## ENDING THE ENCOUNTER

**Success:** If the PCs defend the caravan, they gain the confidence of the Zhentarim and 1 Infiltration Point.

**Failure:** If the head is lost or the party returns the unicorn’s head to the fey, this counts as a defeat on the Infiltration. They are given the worst jobs in the keep, and the characters lose 1 healing surge.

## EXPERIENCE POINTS

The PCs receive 400 / 600 xp each for overcoming the fey.

## TREASURE

If the party delivers the horn, Whestramelar pays them 50 gp each. If the party defeats the fey, they find a *cloak of survival* +2 on Jemathiele.

## ENCOUNTER 8: FIGHTING ON THE WRONG SIDE STATISTICS (LOW LEVEL)

Eladrin Fey Knight	Level 7 Soldier (Leader)
Medium fey humanoid	XP 300
<b>Initiative</b> +11 <b>Senses</b> Perception +4; low-light vision	
<b>Feywild Tactics</b> aura 10; fey creatures in the aura score a critical hit on a roll of 19 or 20 (a roll of 19 is not an automatic hit, however).	
<b>HP</b> 77; <b>Bloodied</b> 38	
<b>AC</b> 23; <b>Fortitude</b> 17, <b>Reflex</b> 19, <b>Will</b> 17	
<b>Saving Throws</b> +5 against charm effects	
<b>Speed</b> 5; see also <i>fey step</i>	
m <b>Longsword</b> (standard; at-will) ♦ <b>Weapon</b>	
+12 vs. AC; 1d8 + 4 damage.	
M <b>Stab of the Entangling Wild</b> (standard or opportunity attack; recharge 5-6) ♦ <b>Weapon</b>	
Requires longsword; +12 vs. AC; 3d8 + 4 damage, and the target is restrained until the end of the eladrin fey knight's next turn. The eladrin fey knight cannot attack with its longsword while the target is restrained.	
R <b>Feywild Challenge</b> (standard; encounter) ♦ <b>Weapon</b>	
Ranged 10; the target is marked until the end of the encounter or until the eladrin fey knight dies, taking 4 damage each round it does not attack the eladrin fey knight.	
<b>Fey Step</b> (move; encounter)	
The eladrin fey knight can teleport 5 squares.	
<b>Harvest's Sorrow</b> (immediate reaction, when an ally within 5 squares of the eladrin fey knight is damaged; at will)	
Half the attack's damage is negated, and the eladrin fey knight takes the other half.	
<b>Alignment</b> Unaligned	<b>Languages</b> Common, Elven
<b>Skills</b> Athletics +12, Arcana +7, History +7, Nature +9	
<b>Str</b> 18 (+7)	<b>Dex</b> 22 (+9) <b>Wis</b> 13 (+4)
<b>Con</b> 13 (+4)	<b>Int</b> 14 (+5) <b>Cha</b> 16 (+6)
<b>Equipment</b> chainmail, light shield, longsword	

Quickling Runner (level 8)	Level 8 Skirmisher
Small fey humanoid	XP 350
<b>Initiative</b> +13 <b>Senses</b> Perception +7; low-light vision	
<b>HP</b> 88; <b>Bloodied</b> 44	
<b>AC</b> 23 (27 against opportunity attacks); <b>Fortitude</b> 19, <b>Reflex</b> 23, <b>Will</b> 19	
<b>Speed</b> 12; climb 6; see also <i>fey shift</i> and <i>quick cuts</i>	
m <b>Short Sword</b> (standard; at-will) ♦ <b>Weapon</b>	
+13 vs. AC; 1d6 + 7 damage.	
M <b>Quick Cuts</b> (standard; at-will) ♦ <b>Weapon</b>	
The quickling runner moves its speed. At any two points during its move, the quickling runner makes a melee basic attack at a -2 penalty. The quickling runner cannot use this power while immobilized or slowed.	
<b>Fey Shift</b> (standard; encounter)	
The quickling runner shifts 10 squares.	
<b>Maintain Mobility</b> (minor; recharge 4-6)	
An immobilized quickling runner is no longer immobilized.	
<b>Alignment</b> Evil	<b>Languages</b> Elven
<b>Skills</b> Acrobatics +21, Bluff +9, Stealth +16	
<b>Str</b> 9 (+3)	<b>Dex</b> 24 (+11) <b>Wis</b> 17 (+3)
<b>Con</b> 16 (+7)	<b>Int</b> 14 (+6) <b>Cha</b> 10 (+4)

Eladrin Twilight Incanter	Level 8 Controller
Medium fey humanoid	XP 350
<b>Initiative</b> +7 <b>Senses</b> Perception +5; low-light vision	
<b>HP</b> 82; <b>Bloodied</b> 41	
<b>AC</b> 22; <b>Fortitude</b> 19, <b>Reflex</b> 21, <b>Will</b> 21	
<b>Saving Throws</b> +5 against charm effects	
<b>Speed</b> 5; see also <i>fey step</i>	
m <b>Spear</b> (standard; at-will) ♦ <b>Weapon</b>	
+10 vs. AC; 1d8 + 1 damage, and the target is slowed until the end of the eladrin twilight incanter's next turn.	
R <b>Binding Bolt</b> (standard; at-will)	
Ranged 10; +12 Reflex; 1d8 + 3 damage, and the target is immobilized until the end of the eladrin twilight incanter's next turn.	
R <b>Teleporting Bolt</b> (standard; at-will) ♦ <b>Teleportation</b>	
Ranged 10; +12 Reflex; 1d8 + 2 damage, and the target is teleported up to 3 squares. The target cannot be teleported into an unsafe space.	
C <b>Dazzling Blast</b> (standard; recharge 5-6) ♦ <b>Radiant</b>	
Close blast 3; +9 vs. Reflex; 1d8 + 2 damage, and the target is blinded until the end of the eladrin twilight incanter's next turn.	
<b>Fey Step</b> (move; encounter)	
The eladrin twilight incanter can teleport 5 squares.	
<b>Alignment</b> Unaligned	<b>Languages</b> Common, Elven
<b>Skills</b> Arcana +16, History +16, Nature +10	
<b>Str</b> 12 (+5)	<b>Dex</b> 16 (+7) <b>Wis</b> 12 (+5)
<b>Con</b> 10 (+4)	<b>Int</b> 20 (+9) <b>Cha</b> 16 (+7)
<b>Equipment</b> robes, spear	

Satyr Piper	Level 8 Controller
Medium fey humanoid	XP 350
<b>Initiative</b> +8 <b>Senses</b> Perception +10; low-light vision	
<b>HP</b> 86; <b>Bloodied</b> 43	
<b>AC</b> 22; <b>Fortitude</b> 18, <b>Reflex</b> 20, <b>Will</b> 21	
<b>Speed</b> 6	
m <b>Gore</b> (standard; at-will)	
+11 vs. AC; 1d8 damage, and the target is knocked prone.	
r <b>Longbow</b> (standard; at-will) ♦ <b>Weapon</b>	
Ranged 20/40; +12 vs. AC; 1d10 + 4 damage.	
C <b>Wooden Pipes</b> (standard; sustain standard; at-will)	
Close burst 5; deafened creature are immune; the satyr piper plays on of the following tunes on its pipes.	
<b>Dazing Melody (Charm):</b> Targets enemies; +11 vs. Will; the target is dazed until the end of the satyr piper's next turn. The piper must make a new attack roll when it sustains this effect.	
<b>Feral Overture:</b> Allies in the burst gain a +1 to attack rolls and a +2 bonus to damage rolls until the end of the satyr piper's next turn.	
<b>Leaping Stag Dance:</b> Allies in the burst can shift 2squares immediately.	
<b>Song of Freedom:</b> Allies in the burst can each make a free saving throw against an effect that a save can end.	
<b>Alignment</b> Unaligned	<b>Languages</b> Elven
<b>Skills</b> Bluff +14, Nature +10, Stealth +13	
<b>Str</b> 10 (+4)	<b>Dex</b> 18 (+8) <b>Wis</b> 13 (+5)
<b>Con</b> 14 (+6)	<b>Int</b> 13 (+5) <b>Cha</b> 20 (+9)
<b>Equipment</b> longbow, quiver of 30 arrows, wooden pipes	

# ENCOUNTER 8: FIGHTING ON THE WRONG SIDE STATISTICS (HIGH LEVEL)

<b>Eladrin Fey Knight (level 9)</b>	<b>Level 9 Soldier (Leader)</b>
Medium fey humanoid	XP 400
<b>Initiative</b> +12 <b>Senses</b> Perception +5; low-light vision	
<b>Feywild Tactics</b> aura 10; fey creatures in the aura score a critical hit on a roll of 19 or 20 (a roll of 19 is not an automatic hit, however). <b>HP</b> 93; <b>Bloodied</b> 46	
<b>AC</b> 25; <b>Fortitude</b> 19, <b>Reflex</b> 21, <b>Will</b> 19	
<b>Saving Throws</b> +5 against charm effects	
<b>Speed</b> 5; see also <i>fey step</i>	
m <b>Longsword</b> (standard; at-will) ♦ <b>Weapon</b>	
+14 vs. AC; 1d8 + 5 damage.	
M <b>Stab of the Entangling Wild</b> (standard or opportunity attack; recharge 5-6) ♦ <b>Weapon</b>	
Requires longsword; +14 vs. AC; 3d8 + 5 damage, and the target is restrained until the end of the eladrin fey knight's next turn. The eladrin fey knight cannot attack with its longsword while the target is restrained.	
R <b>Feywild Challenge</b> (standard; encounter) ♦ <b>Weapon</b>	
Ranged 10; the target is marked until the end of the encounter or until the eladrin fey knight dies, taking 5 damage each round it does not attack the eladrin fey knight.	
<b>Fey Step</b> (move; encounter)	
The eladrin fey knight can teleport 5 squares.	
<b>Harvest's Sorrow</b> (immediate reaction, when an ally within 5 squares of the eladrin fey knight is damaged; at will)	
Half the attack's damage is negated, and the eladrin fey knight takes the other half.	
<b>Alignment</b> Unaligned	<b>Languages</b> Common, Elven
<b>Skills</b> Athletics +13, Arcana +8, History +8, Nature +10	
<b>Str</b> 18 (+8)	<b>Dex</b> 22 (+10) <b>Wis</b> 13 (+5)
<b>Con</b> 13 (+5)	<b>Int</b> 14 (+6) <b>Cha</b> 16 (+7)
<b>Equipment</b> chainmail, light shield, longsword	

<b>Quickling Runner (level 11)</b>	<b>Level 11 Skirmisher</b>
Small fey humanoid	XP 600
<b>Initiative</b> +14 <b>Senses</b> Perception +8; low-light vision	
<b>HP</b> 112; <b>Bloodied</b> 56	
<b>AC</b> 26 (30 against opportunity attacks); <b>Fortitude</b> 22, <b>Reflex</b> 26, <b>Will</b> 22	
<b>Speed</b> 12; climb 6; see also <i>fey shift</i> and <i>quick cuts</i>	
m <b>Short Sword</b> (standard; at-will) ♦ <b>Weapon</b>	
+16 vs. AC; 1d6 + 8 damage.	
M <b>Quick Cuts</b> (standard; at-will) ♦ <b>Weapon</b>	
The quickling runner moves its speed. At any two points during its move, the quickling runner makes a melee basic attack at a -2 penalty. The quickling runner cannot use this power while immobilized or slowed.	
<b>Fey Shift</b> (standard; encounter)	
The quickling runner shifts 10 squares.	
<b>Maintain Mobility</b> (minor; recharge 4-6)	
An immobilized quickling runner is no longer immobilized.	
<b>Alignment</b> Evil	<b>Languages</b> Elven
<b>Skills</b> Acrobatics +22, Bluff +10, Stealth +17	
<b>Str</b> 9 (+4)	<b>Dex</b> 24 (+12) <b>Wis</b> 17 (+4)
<b>Con</b> 16 (+8)	<b>Int</b> 14 (+7) <b>Cha</b> 10 (+5)

<b>Eladrin Twilight Incanter (level 10)</b>	<b>level 10 Controller</b>
Medium fey humanoid	XP 500
<b>Initiative</b> +8 <b>Senses</b> Perception +6; low-light vision	
<b>HP</b> 98; <b>Bloodied</b> 49	
<b>AC</b> 24; <b>Fortitude</b> 21, <b>Reflex</b> 23, <b>Will</b> 23	
<b>Saving Throws</b> +5 against charm effects	
<b>Speed</b> 5; see also <i>fey step</i>	
m <b>Spear</b> (standard; at-will) ♦ <b>Weapon</b>	
+12 vs. AC; 1d8 + 2 damage, and the target is slowed until the end of the eladrin twilight incanter's next turn.	
R <b>Binding Bolt</b> (standard; at-will)	
Ranged 10; +14 Reflex; 1d8 + 4 damage, and the target is immobilized until the end of the eladrin twilight incanter's next turn.	
R <b>Teleporting Bolt</b> (standard; at-will) ♦ <b>Teleportation</b>	
Ranged 10; +14 Reflex; 1d8 + 3 damage, and the target is teleported up to 3 squares. The target cannot be teleported into an unsafe space.	
C <b>Dazzling Blast</b> (standard; recharge 5-6) ♦ <b>Radiant</b>	
Close blast 3; +11 vs. Reflex; 1d8 + 3 damage, and the target is blinded until the end of the eladrin twilight incanter's next turn.	
<b>Fey Step</b> (move; encounter)	
The eladrin twilight incanter can teleport 5 squares.	
<b>Alignment</b> Unaligned	<b>Languages</b> Common, Elven
<b>Skills</b> Arcana +17, History +17, Nature +11	
<b>Str</b> 12 (+6)	<b>Dex</b> 16 (+8) <b>Wis</b> 12 (+6)
<b>Con</b> 10 (+5)	<b>Int</b> 20 (+10) <b>Cha</b> 16 (+8)
<b>Equipment</b> robes, spear	

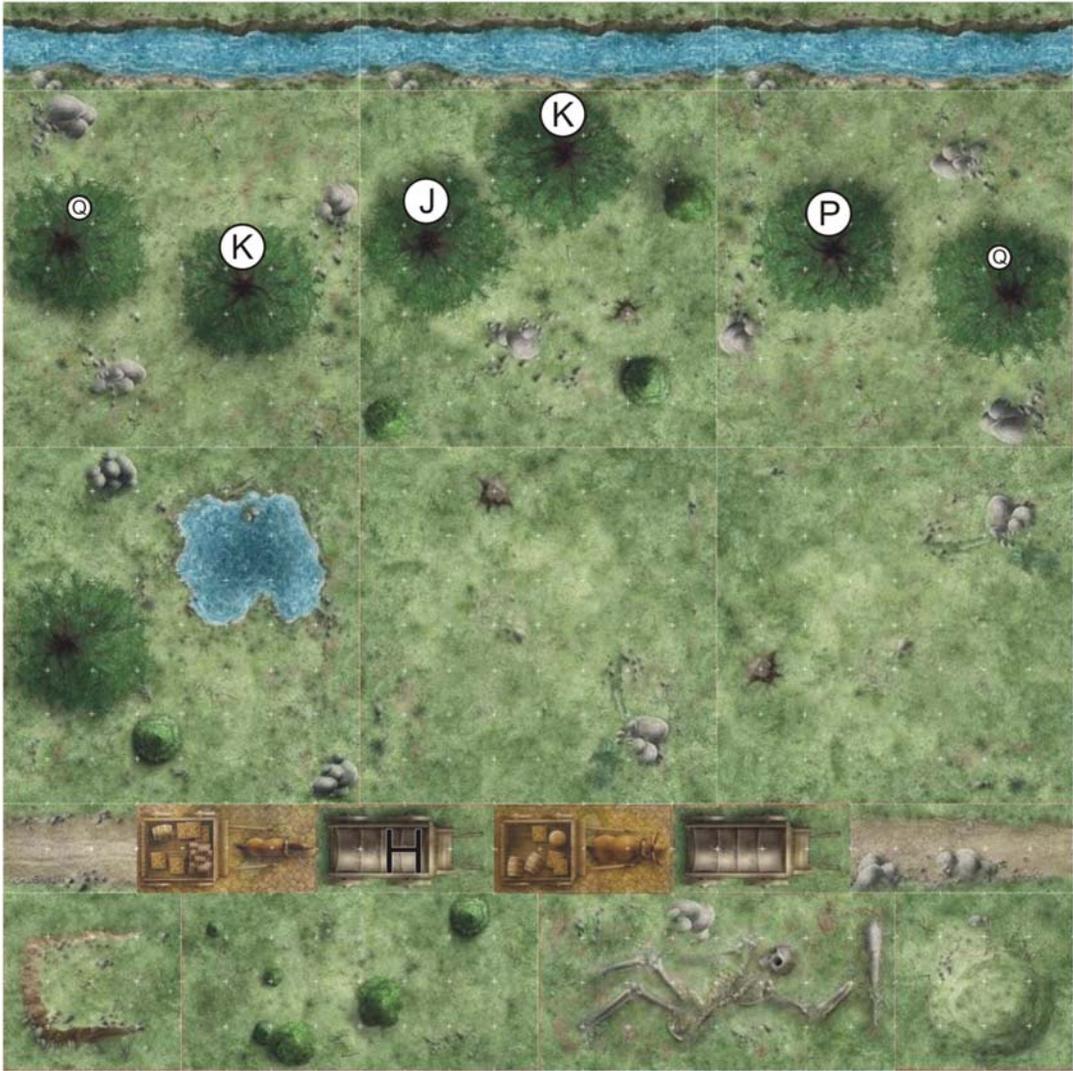
<b>Satyr Piper (level 10)</b>	<b>Level 10 Controller</b>
Medium fey humanoid	XP 500
<b>Initiative</b> +9 <b>Senses</b> Perception +11; low-light vision	
<b>HP</b> 102; <b>Bloodied</b> 51	
<b>AC</b> 24; <b>Fortitude</b> 20, <b>Reflex</b> 22, <b>Will</b> 23	
<b>Speed</b> 6	
m <b>Gore</b> (standard; at-will)	
+13 vs. AC; 1d8+1 damage, and the target is knocked prone.	
r <b>Longbow</b> (standard; at-will) ♦ <b>Weapon</b>	
Ranged 20/40; +14 vs. AC; 1d10 + 5 damage.	
C <b>Wooden Pipes</b> (standard; sustain standard; at-will)	
Close burst 5; deafened creature are immune; the satyr piper plays on of the following tunes on its pipes.	
<b>Dazing Melody (Charm):</b> Targets enemies; +13 vs. Will; the target is dazed until the end of the satyr piper's next turn. The piper must make a new attack roll when it sustains this effect.	
<b>Feral Overture:</b> Allies in the burst gain a +1 to attack rolls and a +2 bonus to damage rolls until the end of the satyr piper's next turn.	
<b>Leaping Stag Dance:</b> Allies in the burst can shift 2 squares immediately.	
<b>Song of Freedom:</b> Allies in the burst can each make a free saving throw against an effect that a save can end.	
<b>Alignment</b> Unaligned	<b>Languages</b> Elven
<b>Skills</b> Bluff +15, Nature +11, Stealth +14	
<b>Str</b> 10 (+5)	<b>Dex</b> 18 (+9) <b>Wis</b> 13 (+6)
<b>Con</b> 14 (+7)	<b>Int</b> 13 (+6) <b>Cha</b> 20 (+10)
<b>Equipment</b> longbow, quiver of 30 arrows, wooden pipes	

# ENCOUNTER 8: FIGHTING ON THE WRONG SIDE MAP

**TILE SETS NEEDED**

*Ruins of the Wild* x2

*Streets of Shadow* x1



## ENCOUNTER 9: DANGEROUS LIAISONS

MAJOR QUEST REWARD (350 / 500  
XP)

### SETUP

Regardless of whether the PCs were successful at the infiltration, Hult Irontoe summons the PCs into his office and tells them that they've been making a name for themselves. The Zhentarim needs some of their best for a mission, and Lady Avrezt, the Castellan of Darkhold and Tolak of the Zhentarim, has asked for the party specifically. They are to gather their gear and be ready to depart at nightfall.

*You gather in the courtyard of Darkhold as the sun slips below the western horizon. You are joined by Taalor Darkhope and a woman you've never seen before. She is a dark, brooding beauty and carries an undeniable aura of command. She looks you over with an imperious eye. "You are to do as I say during this negotiation. Keep your mouth closed and your eyes open. Do not fail me." Her eyes burn into you and instinctual terror creeps up your spine. The woman turns to Taalor. and says, "Take us there."*

*"As you command, Lady Avrezt," he replies.*

Avrezt is one of the Tolak that lead the Zhentarim. She commands the three elite corps quartered at Darkhold and oversees the training of much of the Zhentarim. Since Manshoon rarely leaves Stormwatch, Avrezt has near complete autonomy.

Avrezt just made a successful Intimidate check against the PCs. With a successful DC 15 Insight Check, the PCs realize that she is significantly more powerful than any of them (upper Paragon tier). If the party seems inclined to attack her, make it clear to the players that doing so would be suicide. If they persist despite the warning, kill them.

*Taalor raises his hands and beings to incant a ritual. Shadows stretch until they drape over everything as you step sideways and let the shadows lengthen your stride. The journey down the mountainside from Darkhold takes minutes. The leagues swirl past you, lost in shadow.*

Characters with Arcana can recognize that Taalor cast the ritual Shadow Walk

*After several hours of walking through shadow, you see the ruins of a town ahead of you. The walls are crumbling and the streets are deserted. You see the name "Hluthvar" crop up with regularity.*

With a successful DC 15 History check, characters recognize the name Hluthvar. It was a small walled town in the southern Sunset Vale on the Dusk Road. It once held the front-line against the Zhentarim. It fell into ruin when Helm died and the clerics at the temple at the center of town lost their power.

*At the center of the town is a temple that resembles a small keep. The sides of its dry moat have eroded to a gentle slope and, and its spiked iron fence has rusted away to nothing. The temple itself is nothing more than a hollow shell with a missing roof and gaping holes in the wall. Laying on the ground, you see a sculpture of a massive sword with an unblinking eye in its pommel.*

With a successful DC 20 Religion check, characters recognize the sword with an eye in the pommel as a symbol of the dead god Helm (a god of guardians and vigilance).

Once in the ruined temple, Taalor releases the Shadow Walk ritual and the group slips out of the shadows. Taalor orders the characters to take up defensive positions and to report if they see anyone or anything coming.

About an hour after the group arrives, the characters may make DC 25 Perception checks. If successful, they see a contingent of drow slipping through the night-time ruined streets. If the characters fail, the drow arrive unannounced. Avrezt is annoyed at the characters' failure, but she has other concerns at the moment.

*A dozen drow enter the ruined temple but more lurk in the shadows beyond. Their blue-black skin blends well into the night. Only their white hair makes it possible to tell where they are. Most are lightly armed warriors, but the drow in command is dressed in arcane robes. They come to a stop some ten paces from your group.*

*"Did you bring your counter-offer?" the drow wizard asks.*

*"We have," Avrezt replies and gestures to Taalor who walks over and gives a folded piece of parchment to the drow. The dark elf unfolds it and looks up at Avrezt with a raised eyebrow. She replies, "It is a fair*

*price for 500 Zhentarim mercenaries permanently at your disposal in the Underdark. Then factor in the monthly shipments of food and slaves. You'll not get a better offer."*

*"It is acceptable," the drow says and scratches his fingernail on the parchment while chanting softly. He looks up at Avrezt. "You will be rich beyond your wildest dreams, and Sshamath will rise more powerful than ever."*

With a DC 20 Dungeoneering check, a character recognizes Sshamath as a drow city under the Sunset Mountains. Before the Spellplague, the city was ruled by an oligarchy of wizards. The city has been very quiet since the Spellplague and many thought it had been destroyed in the resulting chaos of Mystra's death.

The PCs should stand there quietly and observe. If the PCs interrupt, Taalor motions for them to be silent. If the PCs continue talking, Avrezt uses her Intimidate ability to silence them.

## ENDING THE ENCOUNTER

**Success:** Once the negotiation is complete, the drow vanish back into the darkness. Taalor casts Shadow Walk again and the party returns to Darkhold.

**Failure:** If the party failed to infiltrate the Zhentarim, then after the negotiation, Avrezt says.

*"To seal our contract, I've brought you these spies of the surface-land powers who wish to see your people wiped from Faerûn. You may do with them as you please." Taalor casts a spell, and the two Zhent leaders vanish, leaving you surrounded by many very angry drow.*

The drow capture them and bring them back to their city where they will be sacrificed to Lolth. The party is outmatched at this point and they have no possibility of success.

*The drow turn on you and attack in a vicious frenzy. You fight back valiantly, but there are too many of them. One-by-one, you fall unconscious whether from wounds or poison. You are barely conscious as the drow shackle you and carry you off into the night.*

*Time and distance are a hazy blur. You think you might have gone underground but you're blindfolded and probably drugged. Maybe you're above ground again. You can see hints of light around the blindfolds. There are screams and the din of combat. Then all goes silent. Your blindfold is pulled off and you blink until your eyes gain focus on Yazeth Cobb.*

*"Now you owe me one," he says with a smile.*

If the character has **SPEC03 A Promise Fulfilled**, the character has just spent this favor. If the character does not have this favor, then it is spent when the character receives it.

## EXPERIENCE POINTS

If the PCs successfully infiltrate the Zhentarim they receive 350 / 500 xp for completing a major quest.

## CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

After the party has successfully infiltrated the Zhentarim and learned that the Zhentarim is helping the drow rebuild Sshamath, they should make plans to leave Darkhold as quickly as possible. The characters can use any reasonable method to escape from Darkhold.

If a character tries to steal additional magic from the Zhentarim vault, the Zhents have figured out that someone was in the vault without permission, and they have posted a heavy guard in the quartermaster's supply.

The party should return to Yazeth Cobb in Berdusk and tell him what the Zhentarim are plotting.

*Yazeth listens attentively as you describe the Zhentarim contract to assist the drow in rebuilding Sshamath. When you are done, he says, "You have done all I have asked of you, and brought me strange tidings. I thought the Zhents would be trying to free Cyric or bleeding the Cult of the Dragon of their wealth. But the drow? Curious. I shall have to consider this further."*

## TREASURE

True to his word, Yazeth rewards the party with 50 / 100 gp each. They receive this even if they failed the Infiltration as they report the alliance with the drow of Sshamath to Yazeth. If they were successful in infiltrating the Zhentarim, Yazeth also provides them with a magical armor of their choice of the character's level +1 or lower and the characters receive the story reward **QUES01 Zhentarim Infiltrator**.

If the PCs assisted the Zhentarim in capturing the ettin and guarded the unicorn's horn from the fey (allowing the Cult of the Dragon to raise a dracolich), they receive the story reward **QUES02 Zhentarim Agent**. This replaces **QUES01**, if the PCs earned that reward. If the character assisted with one mission but not the other, cross out the one that does not apply.

## REWARDS SUMMARY

At the conclusion of the adventure, the PCs earn experience points, treasure, and possibly story awards. All totals listed here are per PC. A number before the slash is the low-level value; after the slash is the high-level value.

### EXPERIENCE POINTS

Give PCs a full award for each encounter they successfully completed, and a half award if they were unsuccessful. Give no award if the characters did not play the encounter at all.

**Encounter 1: Recruitment**

140 / 200 XP

**Encounter 2: Orientation**

140 / 200 XP

**Encounter 4: Kidnapping a Monster**

340 / 480 XP

**Encounter 5: Breaching the Vault**

140 / 200 XP

**Encounter 6: Freeing Nualla**

140 / 200 XP

**Encounter 7: Searching the Archives**

140 / 200 XP

**Encounter 8: Fighting on the Wrong Side**

400 / 600 XP

**Major Quest: Infiltrated the Zhentarim**

350 / 500 XP

**Note:** The total possible XP is higher than the maximum XP the PCs can earn. This is because the PCs only need to successfully complete a number of encounters to reach the end of the adventure.

**Total Possible Experience**

1470 / 2100 XP

**Gold per PC**

150 / 200 gp

(Encounter 4: 50 / 50 gp, Encounter 7: 50 / 50 gp; Conclusion 50 / 100 gp)

### TREASURE

Each PC receives treasure in the form of gold pieces as well as one share from a treasure bundle. The treasure bundle may give the PC more gold, a magic item, or something else of value. Each player makes one and only one selection for their character; players may choose the same treasure bundle. Note that it is possible

(and likely) that some characters will not select a bundle for each session of play.

If characters buy or sell magic items or other gear during the adventure (or pay for services) add or subtract that amount from the total gold the PC receives at the end of the adventure. If a player selects an option that gives their character more gold, add that amount to that character's base gold award. It is possible and permissible for a character who spends more gold than he or she earns to have a negative total for the adventure. PCs receive 20% of the item's market price when they sell any magic item or consumable. They receive 50% of the market price for ritual books and alchemical formulas.

If a player selects a magic weapon or suit of armor for their PC that is not specific on the type of item listed, they must select the exact item at the time they choose that bundle. For example, if a *duelist's weapon +1* is listed as a choice in a bundle, a player selects the form of the weapon amongst the choices possible for that magic item (light blades). If the player selects the item as a *+1 duelist's dagger*, the player writes that information down on the PC's adventure log and the item is forever after that specific weapon.

An asterisk next to a magic item means that it is an item that appears in the **New Rules** section.

**EACH PC SELECTS ONE OF THE FOLLOWING BUNDLES:**

**Bundle A:** *summer growth totem\** (low-level version only) (8th level; Player's Handbook 2)  
Found in Encounter 5

**Bundle B:** *spring renewal totem\** (high-level version only) (10th level; Player's Handbook 2)  
Found in Encounter 5

**Bundle C:** A magical armor of the player's choice of the PC's level +1 or lower from *Player's Handbook*, *Player's Handbook 2*, or *Adventurer's Vault*.  
Found in Conclusion

**Bundle D:** *belt of vigor* (12th level)  
Found in Encounter 4

**Bundle E:** *hat of disguise\** (10th level; *Adventurer's Vault*)  
Found in Encounter 6

**Bundle F:** *cloak of survival +2* (9th level; *Player's Handbook*)  
Found in Encounter 8

**Bundle G:** Ritual book of Clear the Path\* and Trailblaze\* (Forgotten Realms Player's Guide)  
Found in Encounter 7

**Bundle H:** Scroll of Analyze Portal\* (Forgotten Realms Player's Guide) and Transfer Enchantment\* (Adventurers Vault) (high-level version only)  
Found in Encounter 7

**Consumable plus Gold:** If a player doesn't want to select one of the bundles listed above for their character, they can choose to add a *potion of clarity* plus 150 / 300 gp to their rewards from this adventure. The player should write the consumable gained on their adventure log. That character (and only that character) then receives the consumable plus the listed amount of gold (if any) instead of any other treasure bundle. Consumable items obtained in this fashion do not take up found magic item slots.

**More Gold:** If a player doesn't want to select one of the bundles listed above for their character, they can choose to add 350 / 500 gp to their rewards from this adventure. That character (and only that character) receives more gold instead of any other treasure bundle.

## STORY AWARDS

Award these if the PC completes the condition for the award in the adventure. Pass out certificates to the players for their story awards. Normally, if a PC earns three awards, they may only have 2 of them and must pick which two they want before ending the session (exceptions to this will be noted in the story award text).

### QUES01 Zhentarim Infiltrator

You have infiltrated the ranks of the Zhentarim and learned many of their secrets. Your cunning and resourcefulness have earned you an excellent reputation among those who oppose the Black Network. The Zhentarim considers you a traitor and will lash out at you at every opportunity.

### QUES02 Zhentarim Agent

Through your actions in service of the Black Network, you have gained a reputation as an agent of the Zhentarim. The Zhentarim released an ettin on an unsuspecting village that killed several dozen people before it was slain. The Cult of the Dragon used a unicorn's horn as the final ingredient to raise a new dracolich that is terrorizing the road between Elturgard and Waterdeep.

### QUES03 Zhentarim Liberator

You have freed Nualla A'Ashemmi from her imprisonment in Darkhold. The half-elf is waging a private war against the Zhentarim on behalf of her family who have been greatly wronged by the Zhentarim. She remembers your kindness and courage and may seek you out in the future.

## ADVENTURE QUESTIONS

Mark the answers to the following adventure questions on the tracking form.

### 1. Did the PCs impress the Zhent officers?

- a. Yes.
- b. No.
- c. Never tried

### 2. Did the PCs break into the vault?

- a. Yes.
- b. Failed.
- c. Never tried.

### 3. Did the PCs search the archives?

- a. Yes.
- b. Failed.
- c. Never tried.

### 4. What was the fate of Nualla A'Ashemmi?

- a. The party rescued Nualla from the Zhentarim.
- b. The party attempted to rescue Nualla but were foiled by the Zhentarim.
- c. The party did not try to rescue Nualla.
- d. None of the above.

### 5. What did the PCs do with the ettin?

- a. Nothing, the PCs refused the mission.
- b. The party killed the ettin.
- c. The stirges killed the ettin.
- d. The party captured the ettin.
- e. None of the above.

### 6. What did the PCs do with the unicorn head?

- a. The party never knew it existed.
- b. The party let Whestramelar keep the unicorn head.
- c. The fey escaped with the head despite the party's efforts.
- d. The party gave the unicorn's head to the fey.
- e. None of the above.

## NEW RULES

### HAT OF DISGUISE

**Level:** 10

**Price:** 5,000 gp

**Item Slot:** Head

**Property:** While using this item's power, gain a +5 item bonus to Bluff checks to pass off a disguise.

**Power (At-Will Illusion):** Standard Action. You gain the appearance of any humanoid race of the same size category as you. Your clothing and equipment alter appearance to reflect this change. The illusion does not alter sound or texture, so a creature listening to you or touching you might detect the illusion.

**Reference:** *Adventurer's Vault*.

### POTION OF CLARITY

**Level:** 10

**Price:** 200 gp

**Potion**

**Power (Consumable):** Minor Action. Drink this potion and spend a healing surge. You do not regain hit points as normal. Instead, once during this encounter as a free action, you can reroll a d20 roll you just made, gaining a +2 bonus on the reroll. You must use the result of the reroll.

**Reference:** *Adventurer's Vault*.

### SPRING RENEWAL TOTEM

**Level:** 10

**Price:** 5,000 gp

**Implement (Totem)**

**Enhancement:** +2 attack rolls and damage rolls

**Critical:** +2d6 damage

**Property:** On a critical hit one ally within 5 squares of you regains hit points equal to twice the totem's enhancement bonus.

**Power (Daily Healing):** Free Action. Trigger. You hit an enemy with a primal attack power using this totem.

*Effect:* One ally within 5 squares of you gains regeneration equal to twice the totem's enhancement bonus until the end of the encounter.

**Reference:** *Player's Handbook 2*.

### SUMMER GROWTH TOTEM

**Level:** 8

**Price:** 3,400 gp

**Implement (Totem)**

**Enhancement:** +2 attack rolls and damage rolls

**Critical:** +2d6 damage

**Property:** On a critical hit the target is restrained until the end of your next turn.

**Power (Daily):** Minor Action. Each square within 5 squares of you is difficult terrain for your enemies until the end of your next turn.

**Reference:** *Player's Handbook 2*.

### ANALYZE PORTAL

**Component Cost:** 250 gp

**Market Price:** 800 gp

**Key Skill:** Arcana

**Level:** 8

**Category:** Divination

**Time:** 1 hour

**Duration:** Instantaneous

When you perform this ritual, choose a specific active and permanent portal you can clearly see. Analyze Portal causes the portal to erupt with faint lights that flicker and spin, letting you learn a great deal about its destination and function. Its most basic effect is to reveal the portal's destination. Although a portal usually displays what its destination looks like, this ritual reveals the destination's name and its general location in the world or the plane on which it is located.

When you learn the origin and type of the last creature to use the portal, you also learn any keywords associated with that creature.

Analyze Portal can also reveal the identity of the creature that created the portal. If no creature created it, you learn of the event that created it.

Arcana Check Result	Information Learned
29 or lower	The name of the portal's destination
30 or higher	The origin and type of the creature to use it last
30 + 1/2 creator's level	Identity of the creature that created it, if any

**Reference:** *Forgotten Realms Player's Guide*.

### CLEAR THE PATH

**Component Cost:** 70 gp

**Market Price:** 150 gp

**Key Skill:** Nature (no check)

**Level:** 6

**Category:** Exploration

**Time:** 30 minutes

**Duration:** Permanent

You target an area burst 3 within 10 squares. Debris, rubble, and other detritus flattens to the ground, shifts out of the way, or otherwise ceases to be an obstacle. This ritual does not affect solid earth or rock; thus, it can be used to clear the wreckage of a collapsed tunnel, but

not to create such a passage where one did not already exist. Its most common use is to flatten or smooth a path so as to eliminate difficult terrain. It does not affect manufactured walls, floors, or ceilings, traps, or magical barriers.

**Reference:** *Forgotten Realms Player's Guide*.

#### TRAILBLAZE

**Component Cost:** 200 gp

**Market Price:** 500 gp

**Key Skill:** Nature (no check)

**Level:** 10

**Category:** Exploration

**Time:** 10 minutes

**Duration:** 8 hours

Natural wilderness moves aside so that you can pass, creating a clear path 4 squares wide that extends 10 squares ahead and behind you. As you travel, you ignore natural obstacles that would slow your overland speed. The natural terrain returns to normal once you pass, and the Perception check DC to track your party increases by 5 as though you had obscured your tracks.

**Reference:** *Forgotten Realms Player's Guide*.

#### TRANSFER ENCHANTMENT

**Component Cost:** 25 gp

**Market Price:** 175 gp

**Key Skill:** Arcana (no check)

**Level:** 4

**Category:** Creation

**Time:** 1 hour

**Duration:** Permanent

You transfer the magical qualities (properties, powers, and enhancement bonus) of an enchanted item into another object. You must maintain physical contact with both items for the duration of the ritual. The receiving item must occupy the same magic item slot (head, waist, armor, and so on) and be the same type (wand, rod, weapon, and so on) as the original item. The enchantment to be moved must be valid for the receiving item, so that you cannot transfer ranged weapon properties to melee weapons, cloth-only armor properties to chainmail, and so on.

You can transfer an enchantment to an item that already contains a lower-level enchantment, but the receiving item's previous magic is lost. For example, the enhancement bonus and power of a suit of +1 barkskin hide (5th level) could be placed into a suit of +1 curseforged scale (3rd level), but the scale armor's existing power is lost in doing so. You cannot transfer an enchantment to an item that already has a higher-level enchantment.

**Reference:** *Adventurer's Vault*.

# APPENDIX 1: THE ZHENTARIM

## THE ZHENTARIM

Known also as the Black Network, the Zhentarim include priests, soldiers, wizards, and worse. Zhents, as the mercenaries are known, will hire on to most any job if the money's right, regardless of moral considerations. They offer "protection" to merchants and arrange attacks against those who don't pay up. Criminal activities ranging from petty smuggling to open murder to elaborate extortion schemes are all within their purview. Zhents have even been caught manipulating, aiding, and even leading monsters to threaten peaceful settlements. They have various reasons for this. Sometimes they are simply drumming up business (they bring a monster to the area and then get paid to drive the creature off). Other times they are furthering some political scheme, hoping to again be feared and potent as they once were.

**Streetwise DC 15:** Zhent sellswords are most prominent on the Dragon Coast near Westgate and the southern Sword Coast region. Commissions they take bring trouble to the lands near those regions, such as Cormyr and even Luruar. A significant number of Zhent bases, boltholes, and strongholds are also scattered around the northwestern part of Faerûn.

**Streetwise DC 20:** Manshoon has reassumed control of the organization he founded and currently leads the Zhentarim from his citadel of Stormwatch. However, the Zhentarim's largest base is Darkhold. Before the Spellplague, the Zhentarim had nearly one thousand Zhentilar stationed at Darkhold. Now, that number has more than doubled as a vast majority of recruits are sent to Darkhold for training where they are instructed in the ways of battle and indoctrinated into the merciless Zhent regimen.

**Religion DC 20:** When Bane's faithful suffered their serious defeat at the hands of the Netherese, the Banites bowed out of the Zhentarim. A strong following of the god Cyric existed in Darkhold, which suddenly became the most prominent fortress of the Black Network. The Cyricists quickly gained a hold in the mercenary group that remains, and the Zhents are prominently allied with the Church of Cyric. However, Cyric's hold on the Zhentarim is far from solid. Fzoul Chembryl's hatred for the Netherese has earned him some admirers and followers among the Zhents. Although Bane's church isn't formally allied with the Zhentarim any more, the two groups often find a common purpose and end up working together. A thread of respect for and even worship of Bane still exists in the Zhentarim - a thread that Cyric's devotees would like to cut.

**History DC 15:** The Zhentarim was once organized into cells. While this term is still used to describe the semi-independent hierarchy of the Zhentarim, the mercenary commanders have altered the structure slightly to reflect its new martial focus. The basic unit is a Gauntlet - composed of five mercenaries commanded by a Jack. Gauntlets are grouped into corps, commanded by a powerful wizard or other arcanist known as a Black Cloak. Corps are semi-autonomous with Black Cloaks appointing their own Jacks, deciding which contracts to take, and furthering their own plots. The Black Cloaks coordinate with each other to a limited degree, mostly by spreading out and claiming particularly territories. The Black Cloaks answer to the Tolak, who are the primary officers of the Zhentarim and the lieutenants of Manshoon.

**History DC 25:** Manshoon, the wizard ruler of Zhentil Keep, founded the Black Network. He created a huge network that included evil churches, primarily Bane's. The ambitious Fzoul Chembryl eventually wrested control from Manshoon. Under Fzoul's leadership the Zhentarim controlled as much as half the Moonsea region. They even made a military bid to conquer the Dalelands and destroy Myth Drannor. This attempt failed, and Fzoul ultimately made an alliance with the phaerimms, which led to the Zhentarim's undoing. Shade needed little provocation to want to destroy the Black Network. The Netherese had long pursued a pogrom against the phaerimms, and they quickly learned of the alliance with the Zhents. The Empire of Shade then laid waste to Zhentil keep and the Citadel of the Raven, a blow from which the Zhentarim have yet to recover, and they now hate the Netherese above all others.

## APPENDIX 2: NPCs AT DARKHOLD

Avrezt	Castellan of Darkhold
Avrezt commands the three elite corps quartered at Darkhold and oversees the training. Since Manshoon rarely leaves Stormwatch, Avrezt has near complete autonomy.	The party does not meet Avrezt until Encounter 9, and have no opportunity to impress her.
Fzain Nerist	Banite Emissary from Mulmaster
<p>Fzain Nerist is the representative of the High Imperceptor in Mulmaster to the Zhentarim.</p> <p>She is a strong-willed woman and a brilliant speaker who is able to sway crowds. This, combined with her good looks, has made her popular among the sellswords at Darkhold.</p> <p>She has occasional liaisons with Tomias, but she has her eye on Taalor.</p>	<p><b>Bluff DC 15/16</b> (1 maximum): The character announces reverence for Bane and urges other Zhentarim to attend services to the Black Hand.</p> <p><b>Diplomacy DC 20/21</b> (1 maximum): The character can convince Taalor that Fzain would be a powerful ally and encourage him to meet with her.</p> <p><b>Insight DC 15/16</b> (0 successes, 1 maximum): The character understands that Fzain is interested in spreading Bane's influence through Darkhold.</p> <p><b>Insight DC 15/16</b> (0 successes, 1 maximum): The character notices that Thaelmand stiffens when Fzain approaches. He is obviously uncomfortable around her. Thaelmand is a follower of Cyric and finds Fzain intimidating.</p> <p><b>Intimidate DC 20/21</b> (1 maximum): The character can bully other Zhentarim into attending Banite services.</p>
Gron	Captain of the Storm Watch
<p>Gron left his homeland of Tymanther for reasons that have never been specified. Because of Gron's horrible temper, it is commonly believed that he murdered someone important during one of his rages and had to flee the country.</p> <p>Gron is a devout follower of Cyric and revels in the strife of physical combat.</p> <p>He has little respect for Tomias and believes him to be a two-faced cad. If he finds out that Tomias is passing information to Fzain, Gron will kill him.</p>	<p><b>Athletics DC 15/16</b> (1 maximum): Gron respects strength and challenges the strongest looking character to a match during the tour. If a character shows skill in a physical competition (such as a wrestling bout or a spar), they get his respect. If they beat the DC of the check by 10 or more they beat him, granting 1 extra success or removing 1 failure.</p> <p><b>Bluff DC 20/21</b> (1 maximum): PCs could play to his devotion to Cyric and claim to also be followers of the Dark Sun.</p> <p><b>Diplomacy DC 20/21</b> (1 maximum): Gron is suspicious of lickspittles and this check automatically fails with one exception. If the characters tell him about Tomias' spying for Fzain, they may make a Diplomacy check to convince Gron of its truth. If they succeed, they have Gron's respect, and Gron kills Tomias within a day.</p> <p><b>Insight DC 19/21</b> (0 successes, 1 maximum): A character gleans that Diplomacy and Intimidate are of limited use here.</p> <p><b>Intimidate DC -/-</b>: Gron does not respond well to any sort of intimidation by the PCs. Use of this skill does not grant a success or failure.</p> <p><b>Perception DC 15/16</b> (0 successes, 1 maximum): A character notices that Gron is tattooed with the skull and dark burst that is the symbol of Cyric.</p>

<b>Hult Irontoe</b>	<b>Master of Recruits</b>
<p>Hult Irontoe is a dangerous and aggressive dwarf, a bully.</p> <p>The position suits Hult fine as he likes hurting people and his rank gives him plenty of opportunity to do so.</p>	<p>Hult must be impressed in Encounter 1. Description of skills that are useful to impress him are given there.</p>

<b>Jesym Drein</b>	<b>Captain of the Outriders</b>
<p>Jesym Drein, a halfling, intends to build up her cult of personality among the Zhents of Darkhold until she has enough support to split from the Zhentarim and form her own mercenary band.</p>	<p><b>Bluff DC 20/21</b> (1 maximum): Jesym is receptive to promises to join her mercenary band or to back her in her rise to power.</p> <p><b>Insight DC 20/21</b> (0 successes, 1 maximum): A character realizes how ambitious Jesym is. She won't be satisfied until she controls her own fate</p> <p><b>Intimidate DC 20/21</b> (1 maximum): If the party learns about her hand in killing the former captain of the Outriders, they can attempt an Intimidate check against her.</p>

<b>Lerilenaniel</b>	<b>Beast Tamer of Darkhold</b>
<p>Lerilenaniel is quiet and doesn't like people very much.</p> <p>Lerilenaniel has a deep and lasting hatred of the High Observer of Torm who rules Elturgard over his barricading of the Reaching Woods. She uses monsters to kill or harass the paladins of Elturgard, even though Avrezt has ordered her not to provoke the city.</p>	<p><b>Bluff DC 20/21</b> (1 maximum): If the PCs express their hatred of Elturgard, they can impress Lerilenaniel.</p> <p><b>History DC 15/16</b> (1 maximum): If the PCs recount atrocities committed by the paladins of Elturgard (especially that of barricading of the Reaching Woods), they can win the copper elf's favor.</p> <p><b>Insight DC 15/16</b> (0 successes, 1 maximum): The character gets the feeling that a lot of rage lurks below the surface of Lerilenaniel's coolness.</p> <p><b>Insight DC 20/21</b> (0 successes, 1 maximum): The character notices the passion that Lerilenaniel has for the monsters kept by the Zhentarim.</p> <p><b>Nature DC 20/21</b> (1 maximum): Lerilenaniel loves to talk about monsters - the more dangerous the better. However, the character must be able to discuss obscure monsters to win her respect.</p>

<b>Nombrail Calist</b>	<b>Watchful Skull of Cyric</b>
<p>Nombrail Calist is the high cleric of Cyric at Darkhold and spreads the word of the Black Sun through the Zhentarim.</p> <p>A treacherous weasel of a man who delights in abusing his underlings, he despises Fzain and longs for the day that Avrezt gives him leave to crush the hated Banite. Until then, he taunts and provokes her at every opportunity.</p>	<p><b>Bluff DC 15/16</b> (1 maximum): The character spreads nasty rumors about Fzain through the Zhentarim at Darkhold or shows great devotion to Cyric.</p> <p><b>Insight DC 15/16</b> (0 successes, 1 maximum): The character understands that Nombrail is a murderous sociopath and is obsessed with destroying Fzain.</p> <p><b>Stealth DC 20/21</b> (1 maximum): A character can plant incriminating evidence in Fzain's room, such as false orders or goods stolen from the Zhentarim.</p> <p><b>Thievery DC 20/21</b> (1 maximum): A character steals Fzain's holy symbol and gives it to Nombrail.</p>

<b>Rikla Ulgrym</b>	<b>Quartermaster of Darkhold</b>
<p>Rikla Ulgrym is harried by the constant requests for supplies.</p> <p>Rikla is particularly angry at Jesym as the old captain of the Outriders was her embezzlement partner.</p> <p>Hult Irontoe has taken an instant dislike to Rikla and considers her weak and therefore a target. Rikla has to actively avoid the dwarf or suffer his beatings.</p>	<p>Rikla cannot be impressed by the party in Encounter 2. However, they can break into the vault when she is not in the quartermaster's supply.</p> <p><b>Perception DC 15/16</b> (0 successes, 1 maximum): The character notices the large vault in the back room. The vault door is open, and Rikla and her assistants constantly go in and out with supplies.</p> <p><b>Perception DC 20/21</b> (0 successes, 1 maximum): The character notices that the shelves are stacked with mundane gear and consumables, but the character cannot see everything in the vault.</p> <p><b>Perception DC 24/25</b> (0 successes, 1 maximum): The character notices a large combination lock on the front side of the vault. Because of the way the door is angled, the character cannot see the combination.</p>

<b>Taalor Darkhope</b>	<b>Senior Black Cloak of Darkhold</b>
<p>Taalor Darkhope is an incredibly intelligent man with eclectic tastes in literature and is widely read.</p> <p>Taalor is often called "The Binder" because of his expertise in summoning creatures and binding them to his will. He has created helmed horrors and homunculi.</p> <p>Taalor is particularly concerned about the recently arrived cleric of Bane and her designs upon him.</p>	<p><b>Arcana DC 15/16</b> (1 maximum): Taalor is impressed by scholarly discussions of arcane topics.</p> <p><b>Dungeoneering DC 20/21</b> (1 maximum): Taalor is impressed by scholarly discussions of the Underdark.</p> <p><b>History DC 15/16</b> (1 maximum): Taalor is impressed by scholarly discussions of historical events, especially if they mention an interest in military interest.</p> <p><b>Insight DC 15/16</b> (0 successes, 1 maximum): The character understands that Taalor is embarrassed that Nombrail noticed Fzain's pursuit of him.</p> <p><b>Insight DC 20/21</b> (0 successes, 1 maximum): The character learns that Taalor respects knowledge and Intimidate is of no value.</p> <p><b>Insight DC 25/26</b> (0 successes, 1 maximum): The character realizes that Taalor does like the idea that Fzain is pursuing him.</p> <p><b>Religion DC 20/21</b> (1 maximum): Taalor is impressed by scholarly discussions of the faiths of Faerûn.</p>

<b>Tomias Palesun</b>	<b>Captain of the Grey Feathers</b>
<p>Tomias Palesun is a seemingly easygoing man with a quick wit and many jokes, but he has the cold eyes of a killer.</p> <p>Tomias is a firm supporter of Bane, and is having a liaison with the cleric of Bane. During their trysts, he feeds information to Fzain about Zhentarim activities.</p>	<p><b>Diplomacy DC 15/16</b> (1 maximum): Tomias likes to play cards. He proposes a game during the tour. A character can impress him by joining him for a game and losing often.</p> <p><b>Insight DC 15/16</b> (0 successes, 1 maximum): With a successful Insight check, a character notices that there is a lot of tension between Gron and Tomias.</p> <p><b>Intimidate DC 24/25</b> (1 maximum): If the PCs learn about Tomias' relationship with Fzain, they can attempt an Intimidate check against him. Otherwise, the check automatically fails.</p> <p><b>Perception DC 20/21</b> (0 successes, 1 maximum): A character notices that Tomias carries a symbol of Bane on a chain around his neck. He appears to be hiding the symbol. It opens up the use of Religion.</p> <p><b>Religion DC 15/16</b> (1 maximum): By subtly playing on Tomias' religious loyalty, the PC impresses him. Tomias subtly mentions Fzain (see Scene 4), and tells that if the PCs mention his name if they acquire her help. This grants them a +2 bonus on Bluff and Diplomacy checks when dealing with Fzain.</p> <p>On the other hand, openly expressing any interest in Bane, causes Gron to treat the PCs with suspicion (-2 penalty on social checks in interaction with Gron) and causes Tomias to grow cold, earning 1 automatic failure.</p>

<b>Varlosh</b>	<b>Archivist of Darkhold</b>
<p>Varlosh is a vampire and follower of Shar. He is disliked by many Black Cloaks as he keeps close tabs on the amount of income they are supposed to be reporting.</p>	<p>Varlosh cannot be impressed by the party. However, they can search his archives when he is not present.</p> <p><b>Insight DC 20/21</b> (0 successes, 1 maximum): A character notices that Nualla is staring right at him. There is still a spark of resistance in her eyes.</p> <p><b>Perception DC 15/16</b> (0 successes, 1 maximum): A character notices that Nualla has a necklace with the stars and eyes of Selûne around her neck.</p>

