



# CHARACTER SECRETS

## WATERDEEP: DRAGON HEIST

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## INTRODUCTION

Not everyone is an open book; most folk in this world are filled with shame and regret; player characters are no different. Some players even wish to embrace a checkered past when designing their character, but those details often have little to no relevance to the campaign, leaving it up to the Dungeon Master to incorporate or ignore those secrets. Cue Character Secrets: a lightweight system that enhances roleplaying and ties the past into the present with little work on the player or DM's part.

This supplement contains twenty-eight secrets tied to the events, characters, and factions of the *Waterdeep: Dragon Heist* campaign.

## WHAT ARE CHARACTER SECRETS?

First featured in *Icwind Dale: Rime of the Frostmaiden*, character secrets are meant to foment distrust and intrigue among player characters. These secrets are more than just background information; instead, they can, and should, factor into the campaign. Some secrets are benign or outright helpful, but most are shames or secret regrets that should color a character throughout the campaign.

Some character secrets are wholly narrative in nature, having a direct impact on the secret-bearer's development or the campaign itself. Some secrets also grant mechanical benefits to the secret-bearer, such as a language, skill, or even a cantrip, just as they do in *Icwind Dale: Rime of the Frostmaiden*.

## DRAWING CHARACTER SECRETS

Appendix A of this supplement contains a printer-friendly version of the character secret cards that you should print, cut out, and shuffle into a deck.

Before the campaign starts, you should determine how many of the player characters should have a secret. This number is left to you, but it is recommended that they all begin with one. A player draws a random card from the deck and decides whether to embrace the secret or reject it. However, a secret may not fit the character that that player wished to play, or that character might fail to meet the secret's prerequisites. If the secret is discarded, the player draws another card.

It is perfectly all right if not all players wish to adopt a secret; however, they should keep the card and inform you privately that they won't be playing with one, so that the other players don't just rule out the possibility.

Likewise, it's acceptable if a player character reveals their secret immediately, guards it forever, or waits for a later occasion to reveal it.

## ANATOMY OF A CHARACTER SECRET CARD

This supplement follows a formula for a character secret:

- **The Secret.** This section is for a player's eyes and briefly describes their secret. It is written in first person. This text is reprinted on the cards in Appendix A.
- **Additional Information.** A player can't help but retain details they glean; to prevent leaking too many secrets, some information is kept out of the player's hands until they commit to the secret that they drew. Not all secrets warrant extra information.
- **Using the Secret.** This section is for DM's; it describes how you can incorporate the secret in your campaign, be it by having certain NPCs react differently to the secret-bearer, by adding a twist, or allowing that person to bypass certain restrictions in the campaign.

## SECRETS IN DRAGON HEIST

In a campaign setting as diverse as Waterdeep, there's no limit to what secrets can be explored—the trick is in relating these secrets the campaign's preexisting events and characters.

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# CHARACTER SECRETS

The secrets are presented alphabetically:

## ALTER EGO

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*Prerequisite: You must have a good alignment. If you don't meet this prerequisite, draw a different secret card.*

When night falls, I slowly begin to take on a separate and evil personality who is opposite to my usual temperament. By midnight, I lose all self-control and fully morph into this alter ego. However, I can keep it at bay so long as I can force myself to sleep. By dawn, I have control again.

A spell of *greater restoration* cast upon me at midnight might just rid me of this alter ego altogether.

### USING THIS SECRET

This highly-personal secret can consistently factor into the campaign. Should the party infiltrate Gralhund Villa at night, they may be surprised at their comrade's sudden change in demeanor. Additionally, several individuals in Waterdeep capable of a *greater restoration* spell might offer their services in return for a favor:

- **Davil Starsong** will cast the spell if the secret-bearer has 4 or more renown with the Zhentarim or if they thwart Meloon Wardragon's attempt on his life.
- **Istrid Horn** will cast the spell for 1,000 gp—and if the secret-bearer cannot afford such a price, she offers a loan with a modest interest rate...
- Jeryth Phaulkon uses her divine powers to cast a *greater restoration* spell, but the secret-bearer must have 6 or more renown with the Emerald Enclave.
- **Laeral Silverhand** or **Vajra Safahr** will arrange for a cleric to cast the spell, free of charge, if the secret-bearer surrenders Neverember's gold or reaches 5 or more renown with the Lord's Alliance or Gray Hands.
- **Victoro Cassalanter** offers to rid the secret-bearer of their ailment should they deliver the cache of dragons into his custody, offering to arrange for a meeting with a cleric. If his affiliation with the Cult of Asmodeus is known, he can shed this veneer and offers to cast the spell himself.

## BLACKMAILED ADULTERER

---

*Prerequisite: You must be married. If you don't meet this prerequisite, draw a different secret card.*

My tryst has been discovered and my blackmailer has demanded weekly payments of 100 gp to keep quiet. My adultery must not come to light! My fortune, reputation, and way of life are all forfeit should the truth be known!

At any time outside of combat, I can decide who my secret lover is, choosing an NPC in Waterdeep. Once this choice has been made, it cannot be changed. The lover is friendly and sympathetic to my cause.

### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The secret-bearer must leave their payments in a dead-drop in the Trade Ward. They may or may not know their blackmailer, but can recognize their handwriting, which is delivered by *paper birds* (see Appendix A, *Waterdeep: Dragon Heist*).

### USING THIS SECRET

The secret-bearer's adultery may have been discovered by Vincent Trench, the **rakshasa** detective described in Chapter 2. Also, it is the Zhentarim's *modus operandi* to blackmail nobles and other influential individuals into sweeping Zhent business under the rug or moving their goods. The secret-bearer's blackmailer should be a Zhent, specifically any of the following individuals:

- **Urstul Floxin** on behalf of **Manshoon**.
- **Skeemo Weirdbottle** whose blackmailing schemes are unknown by the other Doom Raiders.
- Lady **Yalah Gralhund**, whose scheme to become a masked lord of Waterdeep requires influence and gold.

## BOUNTY HUNTER

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I am a fledgling bounty hunter working my first true case. My quarry is hiding out in the depths of Waterdeep. With 4,000 dragons on their head, I must be first to bag, tag, and deliver this troublesome fugitive lest others come for them as well.

### USING THIS SECRET

If another player character draws the Fugitive secret, it would be all too perfect for them to be the secret-bearer's quarry. If not, the secret-bearer's quarry is none other than Harko, an evil adventurer (**bandit captain**) that has come back to Waterdeep illegally. Harko was banished from the city for bribing a magistrate. The City Watch values him at 500 gp alive and 100 gp as a corpse. Jalester Silvermane of the Lord's Alliance wants Harko dead; see the 3rd-level Lord's Alliance mission for further details.

## BREGAN D'AERTHE HUNTER

---

*Prerequisite: You must be a drow raised in the Underdark. If you do not meet this prerequisite, draw a different secret card.*

I hunt Bregan D'aerthe, a company of male drow fools that have denounced the drow matriarchy. My orders are to bring these castaways and fugitives back to the Underdark where their insolence can be punished for all to see. My spymaster has alerted me to the possible arrival of Jarlaxle Baenre, leader of Bregan D'aerthe. To bring back this iconoclast is to ensure my ascension into the upper echelons of society; to fail is to lose everything. I must find Baenre, no matter where in Waterdeep he hides.

### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The secret-bearer knows that Jarlaxle is a man of many disguises and countless magical items. The iconoclast is fond of infiltrating other factions and has a vested interest in making Lantan, a pirate's den, into a legitimate nation.

### USING THIS SECRET

Jarlaxle and other Bregan D'aerthe are always on the lookout for new drow agents, although they're suspicious of female drow, who have everything to lose if equality is achieved in drow society. Throughout the campaign, he has his **drow gunslingers** investigate the secret-bearer.

Additionally, drow hunters are encouraged to collect trophies from the iconoclasts and fugitives they've hunt down. The hunter may have a mummified drow hand; this acts as a key for the Vault of Dragons in Chapter 4.

## DAGULT'S HAND

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I am a secret agent of Lord Dagult Neverember, who has ordered me to smuggle the gold out of the city. I must meet with my contact, Dalakhar, a rock gnome spy.

### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The secret-bearer also knows that Dalakhar has pilfered the "vault key" from the Palace of Waterdeep. They also know several other agents that can help move the embezzled gold out of the city—**spies** and **veterans** of mainly human descent.

### USING THIS SECRET

The secret-bearer finds an unmarked letter in a designated dead-drop from Dalakhar. The letter describes a meeting place where the spy will pass over the *stone of Golorr*; when Chapter 3 opens with the fireball event, the secret-bearer is at the meeting place (a café in Trollskull Alley). When the other adventurers arrive on the scene, hint that the secret-bearer was "nearby, enjoying a coffee" when the fireball consumed Trollskull Alley.

Additionally, the secret-bearer can call upon three other **spies** of Dagult, who can supply them with up to 250 gp and surveil targets of their choice. Communication is usually handled through dead-drops or *paper birds*.

## DEBTOR

---

I owe a hefty sum to an unforgiving and well-connected usurer by the name of Istrid Horn. I have two weeks left to present her with 1,650 gold pieces or I can say goodbye to my knees.

### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The secret-bearer also knows where to find Istrid Horn, and that she is a high-ranking member of the Zhentarim with impunity to conduct her affairs however she sees fit.

### USING THIS SECRET

To intimidate and remind the secret-bearer of their debt, Istrid Horn sends four **NE thugs** to rough up the secret-bearer. If the secret-bearer fails to pay up in two weeks, these same thugs come to abduct the secret-bearer and bring them to **Istrid Horn**, who cripples them.

During the *Bad Time to be a Zhent* event in Chapter 3, Istrid offers to cut 500 gp off the secret-bearer's debt if they allow her to lay low at Trollskull Manor.

## DEVIL IN DISGUISE

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To save the life of a loved one, I sold my soul to the Lord of the Nine Hells, Asmodeus. Per our infernal contract, I can reclaim my soul by paying half a million gold pieces before the new year. The gold must be sacrificed in an effigy devoted to the archdevil.

Because I sold my soul to Asmodeus, I can read, write, and speak Infernal. Additionally, I count as a fiend for the purposes of a *detect evil and good* spell or similar magic.

### USING THIS SECRET

The secret-bearer at ends with the Cassalanter, who also need half a million gold to save the souls of their children. Asmodeus, being the mischievous creature he is, may tell Victorio Cassalanter to seek out the secret-bearer—while neglecting to mention their own predicament. Victorio can patronize the adventurers, fronting the cost for Trollskull Manor's repairs. Once the Cassalanter learn of the secret-bearer's plight, they send four **spined devils** to send him or her to an early grave, thereby removing a potential foe.

## DISGRACED WATCHMAN

---

I was a City Watchman but was dismissed for misconduct. I know most members of the City Watch. At any time outside of combat, I can choose a City Watch NPC and decide if our history is favorable, granting me advantage on Charisma checks to influence them. The DM, in turn, can choose two NPCs that view me unfavorably, which imposes disadvantage on any Charisma checks made to influence them. Once these choices have been made, they cannot be changed.

**Details.** Work with your DM to determine why you were fired from the City Watch, such as past brutality, insubordination, or law-breaking. The reason ought to be something shameful.

### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The secret-bearer is aware of the City Watch's influential members, such as Captain Hyustus Staget, Sergeant Saeth Cromley, and even Barnibus Blastwind of the Watchful Order of Magists and Protectors.

### USING THIS SECRET

This secret colors the secret-bearer's interactions with the City Watch throughout the campaign. The watchmen may be sympathetic to the secret-bearer, if they were dismissed for less vile crimes, or are outright hostile. As crimes are committed throughout Waterdeep, some officers may pay the secret-bearer a visit to threaten, question, or accuse them of foul play.

## DOUBLE AGENT

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I am a secret agent of the Zhentarim. My orders are to infiltrate the Harpers, an organization fiercely opposed to the Zhentarim. As a Zhent, I know thieves' cant.

### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The secret-bearer also knows that Renaer Neverember, the son of the disgraced Lord Dagult Neverember, is a secret Harper agent. By worming their way into his good graces, they might secure an invitation to the Harpers.

Additionally, the secret-bearer is aware of a growing rift in the Zhentarim, with the two camps being led by Davil Starsong and Urstul Floxin—an unforgiving and sadistic gangster that does not tolerate failure.

### USING THIS SECRET

During the events at Gralhund Villa in Chapter 3, Urstul Floxin recognizes the secret-bearer and believes they are here to help him.

Should the Harpers become aware of the secret-bearer's true affiliation, they use their connections to have this Zhent imprisoned alongside Davil Starsong and other agents.

## DRACONIC DESCENDANT

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*Prerequisite:* You must be either a gold dragonborn or a gold draconic sorcerer. If you do not meet this prerequisite, draw a different secret card.

My bloodline begins with the mighty Aurinax, an ancient gold dragon who, if the legends are to be believed, came to Waterdeep at the behest of a mortal friend. I know not where my ancestor hides, or if he even still lives, but I must find him, nonetheless. Aurinax's favor promises great honor and even greater power that I might wield for my own purposes.

### USING THIS SECRET

During Chapter 4, Aurinax recognizes the secret-bearer as a descendant of his—either through facial features or the ambient magic surrounding the individual—and can be convinced to part with Neverember's cache of gold with a successful DC 18 Charisma (Persuasion) check (made with advantage).

Additionally, if the secret-bearer is a gold dragonborn, have one of their scales open the Vault of Dragons, rather than a bronze dragon scale (see Chapter 4, *Vault Keys*).

## EX-CULTIST

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I once belonged to a devil cult devoted to Asmodeus that practices in the shadows of Waterdeep. We were required to bring our friends, family, or lovers into the fold—and those who did not accept the "Good Word" were ruined or outright sacrificed. To my great shame, I delivered someone dear to my heart into that black abattoir.

**Details.** If you possess this secret, work with the DM to establish who this loved one was and whether they were sacrificed to the cult or are now one of its zealots.

### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The secret-bearer knows that many nobles and powerful merchants belong to the infernal cult but knows not who. They do know three cultists: Vaelle Luval, a florist, her boyfriend Holiver Tornrudder, and Arn Xalrondar. All three are human. These cultists are met in the Summer Encounter chain of Chapter 4.

### USING THIS SECRET

If the Cult of Asmodeus learns that the secret-bearer is working against the Cassalanters, two **cultists** and a **cult fanatic** are sent to intimidate, silence or kill the ex-cultist (these cultists may be any of the three individuals above). Should the secret-bearer continue, four **spined devils** are dispatched to eliminate them.

Additionally, the secret-bearer can recall that there is an entrance to the Temple of Asmodeus located in the Mud Flats. The nebulous caverns eventually lead to Area A9.

## **FAILED ADEPT**

---

I was once offered a trial to join the esteemed Order of the Gauntlet but failed—miserably. I was laughed out of the order hall and warned never to return, lest I bring shame upon myself and the order itself.

### **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

The secret-bearer has met Savra Belabranta, the order's recruiter, who refuses to give them a second chance.

### **USING THIS SECRET**

If the adventurers visit **Hlam** at Mount Waterdeep, as part of the first Force Grey (Gray Hands) quest, the hermit sees redemption in the secret-bearer. He mentions that their past mistakes need not govern who they are in the future.

## **FIRESTARTER**

---

I have the power to spark flames. This power manifests at the worst opportunities, often when I'm panicked, upset, or enraged. The DM can, at any moment while I'm awake, call for a DC 10 Charisma saving throw. On a failure, my touch ignites a flammable object.

As an action, I can touch a flammable object that isn't being worn or carried and ignite it.

### **USING THIS SECRET**

This secret can be used heavily throughout the campaign as comedic relief, an unorthodox solution, and as a twist to the campaign's events. Suggestions include:

- During Ch. 1, the secret-bearer accidentally sets the troll in the Yawning Portal on fire, arresting its regeneration.
- During Ch. 1, the secret-bearer accidentally ignites the Zhentarim Hideout.
- The adventurers might initially blame the secret-bearer for the fires that spread during Chapter 3.
- The secret-bearer may be charged with arson by two City Watch **veterans**.
- **Barnibus Blastwind** tries to teach the secret-bearer how to control their pyromancy.

## **FUGITIVE**

---

I am a fugitive who was meant to be delivered to Revel's End, a remote prison located in the Far North. After the ship wrecked off the Sword Coast, I managed to make it to Waterdeep. With enough gold, my crimes can be forgiven—or at least forgotten. Until then, I must be wary of bounty hunters or past acquaintances that may have moved to Waterdeep in my absence.

## **USING THIS SECRET**

At some point during the campaign, a bounty hunter by the name of Gren'ys finds and pursues the secret-bearer. He is a LN half-orc **veteran** with the following changes to his statistics:

- He speaks Orcish, Elvish, Dwarvish and Common.
- Once per long rest, when he is reduced to 0 hit points, Gren'ys can be reduced to 1 hit point instead.
- He has an Intelligence score of 16 and Wisdom of 17.
- He has proficiency (+2) in Investigation and Perception checks.
- He has a passive Perception score of 15.

Additionally, if the character's secret is discovered, they are blackmailed (or worse, captured) by a Zhent: **Istrid Horn**, **Skeemo Weirdbottle**, or Vevette Blackwater (a CE human **swashbuckler**) of the Rogue Zhentarim.

## **GRAVEROBBER**

---

In bleaker times, I turned to less scrupulous work to make ends meet. In the darkest hour, I agreed to exhume corpses for a local necromancer.

### **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

The secret-bearer knows that their former employer is a halfling whose first name is Losser. They also know his two other usual graverobbers: two humans named Volkarr and Urlaster. The two share an apartment in South Ward, which the secret-bearer sheltered at one night when they were almost discovered exhuming bodies.

### **USING THIS SECRET**

This secret can play into the Emerald Enclave faction quest or the Dragon Season chapter:

- Jeryth Phaulkon of the Emerald Enclave sends its agents to rendezvous with Sir Ambrose Everdawn in the City of the Dead. Unless the character deceives Sir Ambrose (DC 14), the **knight** recognizes him as one of the necromancer's graverobbers, having crossed paths with him in the dead of night long ago.
- The Spring Encounter chain features Losser Mirklav, the necromancer involved in this secret. If they confront the necromancer, the secret-bearer has advantage on any Charisma checks made to influence the **mage**. See Encounters 10 and 9 (Spring) in Chapter 4 for details.

## INTELLECT DEVOURER

---

You are an intellect devourer, an aberration that devours the brain of its victims. The ordinary person whose mind you devoured and replaced is gone; they are but a husk under your control.

As an intellect devourer, you gain these benefits:

- You can understand Deep Speech but can't speak it.
- You have telepathy out to a range of 30 feet.
- You can be sensed by a *detect evil and good* spell and similar magic.

Although you are an intellect devourer, you have all the statistics of the character whose brain you replaced, including the languages they spoke. Work with the DM to determine what orders your distant master telepathically issues to you. You are unyieldingly loyal to your creator.

### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The secret-bearer knows its creator is Nihiloor, a **mind flayer** working for the Xanathar Guild.

### USING THIS SECRET

The secret-bearer telepathically receives orders from its master, Nihiloor, the **mind flayer** working for Xanathar. The illithid can be met during Chapter 1, Chapter 5, and the 5th-level Force Grey mission. It may order the secret-bearer to betray the adventurers and it later demands the death of **Davil Starsong**.

For all intents and purposes, the intellect devourer uses the statistics of the adventurer that that player created. If this host is slain, and there is no chance for the party to resurrect the character, the **intellect devourer** teleports out of their skull and can be seen by the party. It is then an NPC under the DM's control.

## NECROMANCER'S APPRENTICE

---

*Prerequisite: You must be an artificer, sorcerer, warlock or wizard. If you do not meet this prerequisite, draw a different secret card.*

I apprenticed under a necromancer who taught me the dark arts of raising the dead and ravaging souls. I know the *chill touch* cantrip, but to cast it would reveal my sins.

### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The secret-bearer knows the identity of the necromancer: a halfling named Losser Mirklav who already has two other apprentices named Kreela and Retchyn. The magi lair in a cellar complex under the Trades Ward. The lair's entrance is found in the basement of Retchyn's wig shop, Dandymops.

## USING THIS SECRET

Losser Mirklav is featured in the Spring Encounter chain of Chapter 4, and he is also the unseen antagonist of the 3rd-level Emerald Enclave mission. As noted above, the secret-bearer already knows how to find Losser's lair. Additionally, they have advantage on one Charisma check made to deceive or persuade Losser.

## NEVEREMBER BASTARD

---

*Prerequisite: You must be a human, half-elf, or half-orc to have this secret. If you don't meet this prerequisite, draw a different secret card.*

I am the bastard child of Lord Dagult Neverember, the former Open Lord of Waterdeep who was voted out of office by his political rivals. My half-brother, Renaer, still lives in Waterdeep, at his deceased mother's estate. As far as I know, he is unaware of my existence—and there's no telling how he'll react to another potential heir.

### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The secret-bearer knows that Renaer is in his mid-thirties and has given up his life of adventuring. Renaer's mother was Lady Brandath and has been dead for many years.

### USING THIS SECRET

Renaer (and thereby Floon Blagmaar) both have a striking resemblance to the secret-bearer, but he is oblivious to this fact until they reveal their kinship. Renaer rejoices at the idea of having a sibling—unless the secret-bearer idolizes their father, in which case Renaer grows cold and distant. Still, Renaer invites his new sibling to stay at the family estate and quietly judges whether they are fit to join the Harpers.

Additionally, if a faction attempts to steal Renaer *again*, they might mistake the secret-bearer for him, especially if the kidnapping goes off at night.

## POLYMORPHED DRAGON

---

*Prerequisite: You must have an evil alignment. If you do not meet this prerequisite, draw another card.*

My true form is that of a chromatic dragon, but it was twisted into this feeble body by a nefarious wizard. I have heard of a mystical staff hidden in this "Waterdeep" that holds sway over true dragons. Perhaps it can restore me to my all-powerful form.

I retain my class features, alignment, and racial traits for the race I have been polymorphed into, but I do not have a background. In addition, I have the following benefits:

- I can read, write, and speak Draconic.
- I have proficiency in two skills of my choice.

### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The secret-bearer is aware of Waterdeep's dragonward but can enter the city in this form. They are also aware of the *dragonstaff of Ahghairon*, which can restore them to their true form. If restored, the secret-bearer becomes an adult dragon NPC under the DM's control once the campaign concludes. The character loses any racial traits and class features that they had while polymorphed.

### USING THIS SECRET

Thanks to the *true polymorph* spell cast upon them, the secret-bearer can still enter Waterdeep, despite its wards. The wizard that reduced the dragon to this new form was **Manshoon** himself. The secret-bearer recognizes him by sight and voice.

In Chapter 4, **Aurinax** detects that the secret-bearer is a polymorphed dragon and offers his sympathies—and then fiercely guards the gold from this chromatic hoarder, never realizing that the secret-bearer hungers for the *dragonstaff of Ahghairon*.

**Dragonstaff.** To enable the secret-bearer's restoration, add the following trait to the *dragonstaff of Ahghairon*:

**Restoration.** While holding the staff, you can use an action to expend 10 of its charges to target a dragon that has shapeshifted into another creature, ending the effect as if you had cast the *wish* spell. The dragon is restored to its true form.

## PYROMANIAC

---

My fetish for fire accidentally cost the lives of several innocent vagrants squatting in the run-down apartment that I burned down. I still hear their agonized wails in the flames of a nearby torch or hearth.

### USING THIS SECRET

The events of Chapter 3 become a harrowing ordeal for the secret-bearer. Additionally, if their arson is known to the City Watch, **Sergeant Saeth Cromley** suspects the secret-bearer of a relapse.

## SLIMY LAWYER

---

I am a criminal defense attorney who has represented a cornucopia of scumbags, Zhents, and petty thieves. My ability to stretch the truth and pervert the letter of the law has made me a popular lawyer in the criminal underworld. It has also earned me the disrespect or outright loathing by the City Watch and much of the local judiciary.

As an attorney, I have advantage on Intelligence and Charisma checks to persuade magistrates and jurors. I can also count upon a past client owes me for keeping them out of jail. At one point in the campaign, I can call upon a past client who owes me for keeping them from jail.

### USING THIS SECRET

This secret can be used to turn up leads when the party's search for the *stone of Golorr* runs dry. Alternatively, if the adventurers require an obscure vault key in Chapter 4, the secret-bearer can call upon their past client, who has the statistics of a **master thief**.

## STRANDED SAILOR

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I crewed aboard *Wavestrider*, a ship that now lies at the bottom of Deepwater Harbor. Stricken with scurvy, we had no choice but to make port in Waterdeep. Alas, our delirious captain ran us right into another ship. Most of our crew drowned in the chaos.

In my haste to evacuate the ship, I left a hidden treasure behind. To brave the depths and recover it will require great magic. Hiding a treasure from one's crewmates is a great sin on the high seas; should my surviving crewmates learn of this prize, they will surely demand compensation or justice.

### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The treasure was acquired through less-than-scrupulous means and was hidden from the secret-bearer's crew—a grave crime on the high seas. It is one of the items below:

- An adamantine bar worth 1,000 gp.
- A fire ruby worth 1,500 gp.
- A golden tiara worth 2,500 gp, gifted by the queen of a far-off land.
- A **flying sword** loyal to whomever wears its scabbard on their belt. When reduced to 0 hit points, it becomes a nonmagical longsword.



## USING THIS SECRET

When the sailor delves into the wreck of *Wavestrider*, the **young bronze dragon** Zelifarn is already combing it for treasure. With a successful DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion) check, the dragon can be convinced into allowing the secret-bearer a chance to gather their belongings from the wreck. On a failure, Zelifarn insists that seafloor-found treasure is first come, first serve; he will not allow the sailor inside until he's finished his search.

To make matters worse, a surviving crewmate sees the secret-bearer surface from Deepwater Harbor with the treasure. This crewmate, a LE human **gladiator** named Erykus Maxinis, confronts the secret-bearer, demanding his "fair share" of what was squirreled away.

Erykus is without a shield when he first confronts the secret-bearer, (reducing his AC to 14 and depriving him of his Shield Bash ability) but he can use a fishing spear as a regular spear. Erykus fights until he is reduced to 28 hit points or fewer. Thereafter, he begs for mercy. If left to his own devices, Erykus rallies three other surviving crewmates (LE **bandits**) and attacks the secret-bearer two days later.

**Vault Key.** The treasure happens to be eligible as one of the vault keys needed to open the Vault of Dragons in Chapter 4. It satisfies one of the requirements below:

- *Adamantine Bar*
- *Animated Construct*
- *Gems Worth 1,000 gp or more*
- *Gift from a Queen*

## TROLLSKULL SURVIVOR

*Prerequisite: You must be an orphan. If you do not meet this prerequisite, draw a different secret card.*

I am a survivor of the carnage that consumed Trollskull Orphanage. Mama Esther, a secret hag, reared children only to cook and eat them. We all partook of her meals, never knowing that the remains of those who "ran off" were in the bowls of soup we so greedily ate from. Mama Esther was slain by adventurers long ago, but her shadow still haunts my nightmares.

## USING THIS SECRET

The secret-bearer is intimately familiar with Trollskull Manor and is haunted by distant wails of children long-dead. Through a successful DC 19 Charisma (Persuasion) check, the secret-bearer can appease Lif the **poltergeist** (see Chapter 2) by asserting their own claim on the manor.

## UNDERCOVER JOURNALIST

I am an investigative journalist working for *The Targe*, a vitriolic broadsheet fond of publishing rants and saucy exposés. Always looking for the next big scoop, I must take great pains to keep my affiliation secret.

I have proficiency in the Investigation and Insight skills.

## USING THIS SECRET

The secret-bearer has a caustic relationship with Shan Chien, the imperious editor of *The Targe* who is captured by Amath Sercent in the Winter encounter chain of Ch. 4. See Encounter 7: Old Tower for more details.

Although their relationship is rocky, Shan trusts the secret-bearer's word and allows them to use *The Targe* as their mouthpiece—so long as what they print will sell.

## VOLO FAN

I'm a rabid fan of the Sword Coast's most esteemed and insightful author, Volothamp Geddarn. I've even met him! More than once! He knows me by sight, if not by name. Unfortunately, Volo—and the magistrates—have decided that it's better if we maintain a respectable distance. I'm technically not allowed within a hundred yards of Volo, but at least I can still collect his autograph!

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The secret-bearer has one of the following items:

- A signed copy of *Volo's Guide to Monsters* worth 50 gp.
- A leaked draft of *Volo's Guide to Spirits and Specters* worth 250 gp to an interested publisher.
- A personal memento of Volo's, such as a sock or a lock of his hair.
- A framed copy of your restraining order.

## USING THIS SECRET

At the start of the campaign, Volo is distressed when he sees the secret-bearer in the Yawning Portal. Through a forced smile, he welcomes them by name but does his best to disentangle himself from the situation.

## WANDRUNNER

I was involved in the illegal arms trade, selling or crafting *wands of magic missile* that were used to slaughter goons and innocents alike. Although I was removed from this bloodshed, many would feel that I am culpable for the crimes committed with my merchandise.

**Item.** I've kept one *wand of magic missiles* for myself.

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The secret-bearer's wares were often bought by **Tashlyn Yafeera**, a human Zhentarim arms dealer, and the dwarf **Noska Ur'gray**, Xanathar's enforcer. The secret-bearer is aware of both individuals but has never met either.

## USING THIS SECRET

As more bystanders are caught in the crossfire between the Xanathar Guild and Zhentarim, the secret-bearer finds and recognizes discarded or dropped *wands of magic missile* that they crafted or peddled. Every wand bears an icon somewhere on the shaft that identifies it as their work.

**Barnibus Blastwind** might link the wands to the secret-bearer. If so, he and **Sergeant Saeth Cromley** bring the character in for questioning.

If this secret is drawn, equip many of the Xanathar and Zhentarim goons in the campaign with *wands of magic missile*, which are fantasy analogues for tommy guns.

## WERERAT VICTIM

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Last month, just after the full moon, I was infected by a wererat. If I do not find a healer by the next full moon, my curse will become permanent—and with it goes both my soul and self-control. All scholars I've consulted say I must acquire the blood of my dark sire, which must be used in the purification ritual.

Thanks to my growing infection, I have a +1 bonus to my AC and advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on smell.

## USING THIS SECRET

The **wererat** that infected the secret-bearer is Dasher Sno-beedle, a halfling member of the Shard Shunners, who are described in the 4th-level Order of the Gauntlet mission. The Shard Shunners also do the Xanathar Guild's bidding.

Additionally, the victim counts as a shape-changer for the purposes of opening the Vault of Dragons in Chapter 4 (see the *Shapechanger* key).

If the secret-bearer is not cured by the next full moon, they become an NPC under the DM's control.

## XANATHAR OUTCAST

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During harder times, I found employment in the Xanathar Guild, a cutthroat gaggle of monsters and rough men. When I failed a mission, my bedfellows tried to murder me—for it is the orders of every goon to off those that aren't up to task. I fought off my treacherous brethren but still live in constant fear that I will be found again by the All-Seeing Eye of Xanathar.

## USING THIS SECRET

If the secret-bearer runs afoul of the Xanathar Guild, they come under fire from three **bugbears**, a CE human **thug**, and an **orc** who might advance upwards for slaying such a failure. Additionally, should their past be learned by the City Watch, the secret-bearer is likely to rot in prison.

Additionally, the secret-bearer knows how to reach Xanathar's lair.

## APPENDIX A: CHARACTER SECRET CARDS

You can print off the following simple cards for your players:

### ALTER EGO

*Prerequisite: You must have a good alignment. If you don't meet this prerequisite, draw a different secret card.*

When night falls, I slowly begin to take on a separate and evil personality who is opposite to my usual temperament. By midnight, I lose all self-control and fully morph into this alter ego. However, I can keep it at bay so long as I can force myself to sleep. By dawn, I have control again.

A spell of *greater restoration* cast upon me at midnight might just rid me of this alter ego altogether.

### BLACKMAILED ADULTERER

*Prerequisite: You must be married. If you don't meet this prerequisite, draw a different secret card.*

My tryst has been discovered and my blackmailer has demanded weekly payments of 100 gp to keep quiet. My adultery must not come to light! My fortune, reputation, and way of life are all forfeit should the truth be known!

At any time outside of combat, I can decide who my secret lover is, choosing an NPC in Waterdeep. Once this choice has been made, it cannot be changed. The lover is friendly and sympathetic to my cause.

### BOUNTY HUNTER

I am a fledgling bounty hunter working my first true case. My quarry is hiding out in the depths of Waterdeep. With 4,000 dragons on their head, I must be first to bag, tag, and deliver this troublesome fugitive lest others come for them as well.

### BREGAN D'AERTHE

*Prerequisite: You must be a drow raised in the Underdark. If you do not meet this prerequisite, draw a different secret card.*

I hunt Bregan D'aerthe, a company of male drow fools that have denounced the drow matriarchy. My orders are to bring these castaways and fugitives back to the Underdark where their insolence can be punished. My spymaster has alerted me to the possible arrival of Jarlaxle Baenre, leader of Bregan D'aerthe. To bring back this iconoclast is to ensure my ascension into the upper echelons of society; to fail is to lose everything. I must find Baenre, no matter where in Waterdeep he hides.

### DAGULT'S HAND

I am a secret agent of Lord Dagult Neverember, who has ordered me to smuggle the gold out of the city. I must meet with my contact, Dalakhar, a rock gnome spy.

### DEBTOR

I owe a hefty sum to an unforgiving and well-connected usurer by the name of Istrid Horn. I have two weeks left to present her with 1,650 gold pieces or I can say goodbye to my knees.

### DEVIL IN DISGUISE

To save the life of a loved one, I sold my soul to the Lord of the Nine Hells, Asmodeus. Per our infernal contract, I can reclaim my soul by paying half a million gold pieces before the new year. The gold must be sacrificed in an effigy devoted to the archdevil.

Because I sold my soul to Asmodeus, I can read, write, and speak Infernal. Additionally, I count as a fiend for the purposes of a *detect evil and good* spell or similar magic.

### DISGRACED WATCHMAN

I was a City Watchman but was dismissed for misconduct. I know most members of the City Watch. At any time outside of combat, I can choose a City Watch NPC and decide if our history is favorable, granting me advantage on Charisma checks to influence them. The DM, in turn, can choose two NPCs that view me unfavorably, which imposes disadvantage on any Charisma checks made to influence them. Once these choices have been made, they cannot be changed.

**Details.** Work with your DM to determine why you were fired from the City Watch, such as past brutality, insubordination, or law-breaking. The reason ought to be something shameful.

### DOUBLE AGENT

I am a secret agent of the Zhentarim. My orders are to infiltrate the Harpers, an organization fiercely opposed to the Zhentarim. As a Zhent, I know thieves' cant.

### DRACONIC DESCENDANT

*Prerequisite: You must be either a gold dragonborn or a gold draconic sorcerer. If you do not meet this prerequisite, draw a different secret card.*

My bloodline begins with the mighty Aurinax, an ancient gold dragon who, if the legends are to be believed, came to Waterdeep at the behest of a mortal friend. I know not where my ancestor hides, or if he even still lives, but I must find him, nonetheless. Aurinax's favor promises great honor and even greater power that I might wield for my own purposes.

### EX-CULTIST

I once belonged to a devil cult devoted to Asmodeus that practices in the shadows of Waterdeep. We were required to bring our friends, family, or lovers into the fold—and those who did not accept the "Good Word" were ruined or outright sacrificed. To my great shame, I delivered someone dear to my heart into that black abattoir.

*Details.* If you possess this secret, work with the DM to establish who this loved one was and whether they were sacrificed to the cult or are now one of its zealots.

### FAILED ADEPT

I was once offered a trial to join the esteemed Order of the Gauntlet but failed—miserably. I was laughed out of the order hall and warned never to return, lest I bring shame upon myself and the order itself.

### FIRESTARTER

I have the power to spark flames. This power manifests at the worst opportunities, often when I'm panicked, upset, or enraged. The DM can, at any moment while I'm awake, call for a DC 10 Charisma saving throw. On a failure, my touch ignites a flammable object.

As an action, I can touch a flammable object that isn't being worn or carried and ignite it.

### FUGITIVE

I am a fugitive who was meant to be delivered to Revel's End, a remote prison located in the Far North. After the ship wrecked off the Sword Coast, I managed to make it to Waterdeep. With enough gold, my crimes can be forgiven—or at least forgotten. Until then, I must be wary of bounty hunters or past acquaintances that may have moved to Waterdeep in my absence.

### GRAVEROBBER

In bleaker times, I turned to less scrupulous work to make ends meet. In the darkest hour, I agreed to exhume corpses for a local necromancer.

### INTELLECT DEVOURER

You are an intellect devourer, an aberration that devours the brain of its victims. The ordinary person whose mind you devoured and replaced is gone; they are but a husk under your control. As an intellect devourer, you gain these benefits:

- You can understand Deep Speech but can't speak it.
- You have telepathy out to a range of 30 feet.
- You can be sensed by a *detect evil and good* spell and similar magic.

Although you are an intellect devourer, you have all the statistics of the character whose brain you replaced, including the languages they spoke. You are loyal to your creator.

### NECROMANCER'S APPRENTICE

*Prerequisite: You must be an artificer, sorcerer, warlock or wizard. If you do not meet this prerequisite, draw a different secret card.*

I apprenticed under a necromancer who taught me the dark arts of raising the dead and ravaging souls. I know the *chill touch* cantrip, but to cast it would reveal my sins.

### NEVEREMBER BASTARD

*Prerequisite: You must be a human, half-elf, or half-orc to have this secret. If you don't meet this prerequisite, draw a different secret card.*

I am the bastard child of Lord Dagult Neverember, the former Open Lord of Waterdeep who was voted out of office by his political rivals. My half-brother, Renaer, still lives in Waterdeep, at his deceased mother's estate. As far as I know, he is unaware of my existence—and there's no telling how he'll react to another potential heir.

### POLYMORPHED DRAGON

*Prerequisite: You must have an evil alignment. If you do not meet this prerequisite, draw another card.*

My true form is that of a chromatic dragon, but it was twisted into this feeble body by a nefarious wizard. I have heard of a mystical staff hidden in this "Waterdeep" that holds sway over true dragons. Perhaps it can restore me to my all-powerful form.

I retain my class features, alignment, and racial traits for the race I have been polymorphed into, but I do not have a background. In addition, I have the following benefits:

- I can read, write, and speak Draconic.
- I have proficiency in two skills of my choice.

### PYROMANIAC

My fetish for fire accidentally cost the lives of several innocent vagrants squatting in the run-down apartment that I burned down. I still hear their agonized wails in the flames of a nearby torch or hearth.

### SLIMY LAWYER

I am a criminal defense attorney who represented a cornucopia of scumbags, Zhents, and petty thieves. My ability to stretch the truth and pervert the letter of the law has made me a popular lawyer in the criminal underworld. It has also earned me the disrespect or outright loathing by the City Watch and much of the local judiciary.

As an attorney, I have advantage on Intelligence and Charisma checks to persuade magistrates and jurors. I can also count upon a past client owes me for keeping them out of jail. At one point in the campaign, I can call upon a past client who owes me for keeping them from jail.

### STRANDED SAILOR

I crewed aboard *Wavestrider*, a ship that now lies at the bottom of Deepwater Harbor. Stricken with scurvy, we had no choice but to make port in Waterdeep. Alas, our delirious captain ran us right into another ship. Most of our crew drowned in the chaos.

In my haste to evacuate the ship, I left a hidden treasure behind. To brave the depths and recover it will require great magic. Hiding a treasure from one's crewmates is a great sin on the high seas; should my surviving crewmates learn of this prize, they will surely demand compensation or justice.

### TROLLSKULL SURVIVOR

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