

INTRODUCTION

Chapter 2: Trollskull Alley is the sandbox of **Waterdeep: Dragon Heist**. It's where you and the players get to set your own pace, create unique stories and forge a lasting relationship with Waterdeep and its residents. You could spend anywhere from half a session to ten sessions running this chapter, and neither would be too short or too long, if everyone's enjoying themselves. But, as is often the case, freedom can become overwhelming. What should you use from the chapter? How do you use it? When? For who?

The goal of this document is to help you find the answer to those questions and provide the tools to create a fun and manageable sandbox for your players. You'll find advice and embellishments on nearly everything that's described in the chapter, which will hopefully help you DM the chapter.

It is strongly recommended that you read through **Chapter 2: Trollskull Alley** before reading the resources included in this document. And remember: all advice is optional. You know best what works at your table.

Meeting the Neighbors. First, you'll find advice on how to handle Lif the Poltergeist, as well as two new optional sidequests that'll help you introduce and flesh out the other residents of Trollskull Alley.

Open for Business? Second, you'll find advice on how to make the tavern renovation more affordable - and some options for securing a loan, if your party needs it.

Joining Factions. Third, you'll be given reviews of each of the factions available to the players, so that you can choose the right factions for your party.

Downtime Options. Fourth, you'll find inspiration on how the downtime options presented in the Xanathar's Guide to Everything can be altered and flavored to fit with Waterdeep and the campaign.

Making a Plan. Lastly, everything is brought together and you'll be given general advice on how to plan and organize chapter 2, so that it's manageable and well-paced.

A QUICK WORD OF ADVICE

If you're in doubt about how to go ahead with this chapter, talking to your players about it might be the best way forward. After receiving the deed to Trollskull Manor, let them know what's about to happen: they're going to have a period of downtime, where you'll present them with opportunities for minor quests and scenarios, but it's otherwise up to themselves to decide what they're doing. If you have the books, you can show your players the various downtime options in the **DMG** and **XGtE** for inspiration. You can also tell them to let you know about places or people in the city they might want to visit, as well as factions or stuff from their background they want to explore.

The point is to get a headstart on the preparation, and it obviously works best if you end a session just before beginning on Chapter 2. This allows your players to tell you about the endeavors they'd like to pursue before you sit down at the next session. You can't always control when a chapter ends or begins, but it's worth keeping in mind.

Lastly, remember that this is first and foremost your players' sandbox. If you've planned for a specific character to be approached by a specific faction, but they suddenly want to go with another faction, let them make that choice for themselves. Also, don't overuse the sidequests. If your players have strong ideas about what they want to do, consider skipping some of the sidequests or missions you had planned for them. And, most importantly: have fun.

MEETING THE NEIGHBORS

Waterdeep: Dragon Heist has one of the best ideas of any 5E D&D Campaign so far: give the characters a base early. A place they can call home. The campaign book gives a lot to work with in the description of Trollskull Alley and its inhabitants in Chapter 2. Below, we'll elaborate and expand on this information, giving you additional tools to make Trollskull Alley a vibrant and exciting home for your players.

SPIRIT ON TAP

Before the characters can get on with anything else in this chapter, they'll first have to deal with Lif, the half-elf **poltergeist** (a variant **specter**, that is invisible and has other attacks) who haunts the Trollskull Tavern.

If you simply introduce Lif as a mute, invisible force of evil that throws plates, slams doors and writes rude messages on dusty surfaces, it's likely that the characters first notion will be to destroy him. That would be a shame, since having a ghostly bartender is honestly pretty awesome. So, if you want to steer the party towards keeping Lif around, you can have Volo warn the characters about the poltergeist (or accompany them on their first visit). The old chronicler might say something along these lines:

"Oh, yes, I almost forgot. There's supposedly a poltergeist living - eh, I mean 'residing' - in Trollskull Manor's taproom. As far as I've been able to gather, it's a former bartender, a half-elf named Lif. Half the reason I bought the place, really. You see, I'm writing a book on such spirits... Ah, well, that's neither here nor there. From what I've heard, Lif is quite possessive - no pun intended - but not malicious. Seems like he just misses his old job, is what I've been told. Perhaps fixing up the place is enough to get on his good side."

You can make the good advice more or less obvious, as you prefer. A variant of the above should at least ensure that the party considers keeping Lif around - and that they know what they're dealing with when they find Lif throwing chairs and writing 'Closing time!' on the grimy windows.

If the party does decide to fix up the tavern (see the 'Open for Business?' section of his document for more information on that), you can describe how Lif starts out hindering the efforts - toppling crates and smashing plates - but eventually helps the party with the renovation - hanging up paintings and fixing chairs - as the weeks progress. This is also a good opportunity to give Lif some personality. You can have him continually put up a particularly bad painting of an elven girl, even if the party takes it down, or have him roughly tear off the shoes of anyone who drags mud, rain or snow into the newly renovated tavern. A bit of personality goes a long way to becoming a dear member of the troupe.

STEEL AND WOOD

Disclaimer: This sidequest touches on topics of homophobia, loss and loneliness. If you think that any of your players are uncomfortable exploring these subjects, skip this one.

If you want to get your party more involved with their neighbors, you can use this small sidequest to draw them in.

Talking with the Genasi. The quest starts when the party either visits Steam and Steel (T3) or Embric and Avi visit the party at Trollskull Manor to welcome them to the neighborhood. As the genasi couple speak with the party, Avi eventually leads the conversation to Talisolvana 'Tally' Fellbranch, the half-elf owner of the Bent Nail (T2).

"Have you met Tally yet? The owner of the Bent Nail?" the blue skinned water genasi asks. Before you can answer, Embric rolls his eyes and says: "By Kossus' flame, why can't you just let it go?". Avi sends a teasing glare his partner's way. "Don't flare up now, darling. I'm just making conversation with our new friends." He turns back to you. "I'm just wondering what your impression is of him. We've been trying to get into business with him, but it seems..." Once again, Embric interjects: "He doesn't like that we're together. Fine. We've faced ignorance before. It's nothing new - I won't waste any more of my time speaking of it!"

Embric storms off after this. After he's left, Avi explains that the couple invited Tally over for dinner a few weeks ago to discuss a business proposition: make products of steel and wood together, combining their efforts for the benefit of both shops. The dinner started well, but as the night progressed, Tally seemed uncomfortable at the displays of affection between the two genasi. In the end, he flatly rejected the offer and left before even finishing the exquisite Calishite chocolate-cake Embric had made! Tally has been cold and dismissive with them ever since, and while Embric says he doesn't care, Avi knows his feelings are hurt. The water genasi, however, isn't sure that Tally is actually a bigot. Avi asks the party to help him find out what offended Tally, and if there's any way to make the half-elf reconsider. As thanks, he offers a 20% discount on the Steam and Steel's inventory.

Talking with Tally. Tally can be found in his shop (T2), whittling away at a wooden cane. The middle-aged half-elf is friendly and courteous, but it'll take a DC 10 Charisma (Persuasion) check to get him to open up about the genasi.

Tally puts down the cane he's working on and sighs heavily. "I know they think it's because I don't like them being together, but it's not that... Or, well, in a way it is. You see, I used to be married. Her name was Isolla. The most brilliant and beautiful woman I've ever met. But she was human. We had many great years together, but while I just greyed a bit at the temples, she grew old and eventually... It's been several years now, and I thought I had moved on. But, seeing the two of them together, so happy and so perfect for each other, just hurts too much. If we went into business together, I'd have to see that everyday. I can't bear that. But how do you explain to someone that you can't be around them, because they're too happy? That's not fair either."

Resolution. Simply getting an explanation fulfills Avi's quest. But, the party might want to help solve the problem as well. If the characters have great ideas on their own, let them run with those. Otherwise, you can have a character with proficiency in Religion remember that the Temple of Sune, the goddess of beauty and love, regularly holds sermons where widowers can meet, mourn and mingle, often resulting in new, beautiful unions. You can also have Avi come up with the idea, when the party explains what Tally told them.

With a little persuasion (a compelling argument like: "I think that Isolla would want you to move on and be happy" should suffice), Tally will agree to attend one such sermon. You can put a sweet little bow on the whole ordeal by having Avi and Embric show up at the Manor with a smiling Tally and an elven woman a few weeks later - just to give thanks to the party before heading out for a couples' dinner!

PAPER PROBLEMS

Trollskull Alley is also home to two more magical shops: Corellon's Crown (T4), where the wood elf Fala Lefaliir sells potions and remedies, and Book Wyrms' Treasure (T5), where Rishaal the Page-Turner sells books and spellscrolls.

Fala's Protest. This small quest starts when the party one day finds the wood elf Fala protesting outside Rishaal's shop. Fala is holding up a sign that says "Duskwood paper = Murder!" while ranting at anyone who walks past the Book Wyrms' Treasure: "They use Duskwood for their spell scrolls here! Did you know that a tenth of all Duskwood trees are chopped down each year? Soon there'll be none left!"

If the party speaks to Fala, the wood elf fervently explains how they recently found out that Rishaal is using the rare Duskwood for his spell scrolls. Fala intends to remain in front of the shop until he stops. While the party's talking to Fala, Rishaal comes out the shop: "Please don't let this charade scare you away. Come inside - I could use your help!"

Talking to Rishaal. The gold dragonborn isn't big on the environment, but Fala's protests are beginning to hurt his business. If the characters come inside to speak with him, he laments the wood elf's protests: "I understand the concerns about Duskwood, but I don't have other options. It's the only paper I can get that is of high enough quality. My customers expect no less from me. Meanwhile, Fala's ruining my business. If you help make the protests stop, I'll let each of you pick out a book or scroll at half price!"

Changing Papers. The most obvious, non-violent way to make Fala's protest stop, is to find another sort of paper for Rishaal's scrolls. A character can make a DC 10 Intelligence (Arcana) check to remember that there are some quality alternatives to Duskwood. However, suppliers are few and far between - and only other wizards are likely to know one.

Depending on who they've met or which factions they've joined, the party may already know - or can be pointed toward - one of three notable wizards from **appendix B**: Skeemo Weirdbottle (Zhentarim), Remallia Haventree (Harpers) and Vajra Safahr (Force Grey). You can also have Volo suggest one of the three if they come to him for aid.

Meeting Skeemo. The party can meet Skeemo at his potion-shop 'Weirdbottles Concoctions'. The zhent deals mostly in potions, but does still buy shadowtop-paper for his personal use. He'll put Rishaal in contact with his supplier if Rishaal shares some of his more powerful spells with him. Rishaal is loathe to share magic with the disreputable Zhent, but will do it if the party recommends it.

Meeting Remallia. Remallia welcomes the party to her manor. She'll gladly share her laspar-supplier with Rishaal, but expects him to report to her if anyone buys powerful magic from his shop. Rishaal is reluctant to agree to this, but of the three options this one is the most palpable to him.

Meeting Vajra. Vajra speaks with the party inside the blackstaff tower. She'll put Rishaal in contact with her zalantar-supplier only if he promises he won't sell magic to known Xanathar Guild members. Rishaal will reluctantly agree, although he'll miss the Xanathar's gold.

Resolution. How much or how little the party is involved in the negotiations is up to them - maybe they'll just put Rishaal in contact with the other wizards, or maybe they'll get offers from each and broker a deal. Maybe they'll find another creative solution. The most important thing is that they meet the neighbors and perhaps other important NPCs. If they manage to get Rishaal to switch papers, Fala stops the protest and is, like Rishaal, grateful for the party's aid, offering permanent or temporary discounts on their wares.

OPEN FOR BUSINESS?

One of the more interesting aspects of Chapter 2: Trollskull Alley is the opportunity for the party to refurbish and run the Trollskull Tavern. However, there are some issues with this - as well as some points that can be enhanced and improved.

RENOVATING THE TAVERN

So, following the 'Tavern Keeping Expenses'-sidebar in Chapter 2, you'll find that renovating the tavern takes 12 days and costs a hefty 1,250 gold pieces, including guild payments.

First off, there's the time. 12 days is a weird number of days, when nearly all other downtime activities is handled in five- or ten-day-increments. If you want to make things nice and simple, you can shorten the renovation period to 10 days.

Secondly, there's the costs. 1,250 gp is a huge sum for 2nd level adventurers. Unless your party ransomed Xanathar's goldfish or mugged Durnan during chapter 1, they're not likely to have that kind of coin. If you don't want that detail to stop your party from living their dreams, we've outlined some ways the party can acquire the necessary funds below.

REDUCING THE COSTS

If the party wants to renovate the tavern, and you want to enable them, but they don't have the funds, you can first try to cut down the costs. For each player helping out in the renovation, have them roll an ability check for each 5 days they spend renovating the tavern. Here are some examples:

- **Strength (Athletics)** - The character moves furniture, clears debris and repairs stuff.
- **Dexterity (Sleight of Hand or Stealth)** - The character steals silverware, spirits and other stuff for the tavern.
- **Charisma (Deception, Intimidation or Persuasion)** - The character bargains better deals for provisions.
- **Spellcasting Ability Check** - The character uses magic to assist with the renovation.

If a character wants to cast specific spells to aid the effort (such as using *mending* to repair stuff or *charm person* on suppliers), refer them to the Spellcasting Ability Check, unless you feel an idea is good enough to warrant an automatic success or a more specific result. For each check, lower the cost of the renovation by 10 gp for a result 10 or higher, by 25 gp for a result of 15 or higher, and by 50 gp for a result of 20 or higher, as you describe how the characters' efforts aid the process.

BORROWING THE MONEY

Even with lowered costs, the party still might not be able to afford the renovation. Luckily, a city as large of Waterdeep has plenty of people who'll be able to lend the party what they need. Including - but not limited to - Mirt 'the Moneylender' and Istrid Horn of the Doom Raider Zhentarim - both described in the sidebar.

If you want to make sure the party realize they have this option, have both Renaer and Volo accompany them when they first visit their property in Trollskull Alley. Both to quickly gauge the cost of the renovation - "likely more than a 1,000 dragons, all in all!" - and to suggest Mirt and Istrid Horn respectively. You can also use other wealthy and notable NPCs, such as Vajra Safahr, Jarlaxle or even the Cassalanthers, if you think it'll fit your campaign. Allow the party to first find out the final cost of the renovation before deciding the precise amount they'll borrow (as in, their lender just ponies up the amount of gold needed when the renovation is done).

Mirt 'The Moneylender'

As his nickname reveals, this retired adventurer is no stranger to lending people money.

Meeting Mirt. The party might've already met Mirt, if you used him as suggested in our product covering [Chapter 1: A Friend in Need](#). If not - or if the characters don't think of him - he'll be Renaer Neverembers first suggestion. When the party meets Mirt in his sprawling manor, he'll greet them in his usual flamboyant and braggadocious manner. When he hears about the tavern, he'll exclaim: "Ever since that lazy dullard Durnan bought the Yawning Portal, I've been wanting to have my own tavern. Now you're telling me I can own one without any of the glass-cleaning and chair-stacking that old fool is spending his days with? Well, count me in!"

Lending Money. Mirt doesn't want to lend money - he wants to invest. He'll take a 5% share of the tavern's profits for each 100 gp he gives the party (with a complete repayment of his investment after a year, if the profits aren't coming in fast enough to his liking). A successful DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion) check can get him down to 2,5% per 100 gp - a character affiliated with the Harpers has advantage on this check.

Developments. If the party gets into business with Mirt, he'll regularly 'check in' to see how 'his tavern' is doing, making outrageous suggestions or bringing gifts ("You really should see about mounting a dragon's head over the fireplace - that would draw in crowds!" or "Well, is it *really* a tavern if you can't enjoy an Illithid's Kiss?").

Istrid Horn

The shield-dwarf Istrid Horn is the Master of Trade and Coin for the Zhentarim Doom Raiders.

Meeting Istrid. If the party have had dealings with the Zhentarim, they might find their way to Istrid on their own. Otherwise, Volo will suggest talking to Istrid Horn about securing a loan. The characters can find her in a heavily guarded warehouse on the docks, where the dwarf will shrewdly assess the party's business plan.

Lending Money. Istrid Horn will loan up to 2,500 gp at 10% interest per tenday. The first failure to meet a payment adds 10% to the amount owed. "The second failure? Well, let's just hope that ye don't have to find out, eh?". She won't budge on these terms, except if a character is a Zhentarim member or signs up to be one, in which case she'll only demand 5% interest per tenday.

Developments. If the party gets into business with Istrid, she'll send a couple of her goons down to the tavern at the end of each tenday to collect her dues. If the party fails to pay her twice, the goons will start breaking stuff and taking valuable inventory. If the characters are foolish enough to fight back, the Doom Raiders themselves might get involved...

RUNNING THE TAVERN

So, the party manages to get the necessary gold and can call themselves owners of a tavern in the fanciest part of town. So how does that work? We get some help from the campaign book, which describes the following:

- The regular expenses are 60 gp per tenday.
- At the end of each tenday, the party rolls 1d100 + 10 on the 'Running a Business'-table in the DMG (p. 129) to determine losses or profits.
- The party can increase the roll by 1 for each 1 gp they spend on promoting their business during that tenday.

First, a quick look at the math for this. Rolling 1d100 + 10 on the table each tenday comes out to an average of 6.5 gp of profits per tenday, or a whopping 6 sp and 5 cp per day. Not exactly a booming business. Investing in promotion increases the returns a bit. The sweet spot is around 30 gp, which makes the average profit soar to almost 20 gp per tenday. It's better, but let's still not hope the party were thinking they could pay Istrid Horn back solely with coin from the tavern!

While these rules are functional, they could be more flexible, inspiring, and - to be perfectly honest - lucrative. It's also important to note that the way it's described in the chapter, it seems like the party gets to roll on the table whether they actively spent downtime overseeing business with the tavern or not. That's probably good, since the party won't always be around to keep it running. However, we're not told what happens if the characters actually spend their downtime working in the tavern.

So, let's take a look at how we could change and enhance these rules.

A RISKY PROMOTION

With the current style of promotion, you simply add 1 to your roll for each gp spent, resulting in around 30 gp always being the optimal investment. And, while 30 gp increases average profits, it actually decreases the maximum potential profits in a given tenday (because while you are more likely to roll 91+, you still only get 3d10 x 5 out of it, when you do).

If you want a variant that instead increases the potential risk as well as the potential reward, you can use the following rule for promotion:

- For each 10 gp spent on promotion, increase the profit multiplier by 1, to a maximum of 10. Gold spent this way is counted as part of the regular expenses.

When handling promotion this way, you can potentially double the maximum gold the tavern can earn in a tenday (by increasing the number you multiply with when rolling 61 or higher on the 'Running a Business'-table). But remember, because the promotion costs are a part of the regular expenses, they are also multiplied if you roll poorly.

Now, this way of using promotion actually comes out to a little less average profit than the regular method, but it gives a much bigger variance. To really maximize gold spent on promotion and create a truly successful business, the characters will have to get involved themselves...

PUTTING IN WORK

As mentioned above, the rules we're given in the chapter don't specify how the party can help make their tavern successful (except for spending gold on promotion). Below we'll present some rules for handling that.

After the party has decided how much coin to pour into promotion, each character that spends their downtime on the tavern can make a skill check related to the job they're doing for each 5 days spent working. Examples include:

- **Bartending:** Dexterity (Sleight of Hand), Charisma (Performance/Persuasion), Wisdom (Insight)
- **Management:** Intelligence (Investigation), Charisma (Deception/Intimidation/Persuasion), Wisdom (Insight)
- **Entertainment:** Charisma (Deception/Performance), Dexterity (Acrobatics/Sleight of Hand)
- **Promotion:** Intelligence (Investigation), Charisma (Performance/Persuasion), Wisdom (Insight)
- **Security:** Strength (Athletics), Charisma/Strength (Intimidation), Charisma (Persuasion).

Allow the players to be creative with their jobs and the skillchecks they use, as long as it makes sense. If they use magic to aid them in performing their job, they can make a spellcaster ability check in place of a skill check. If you want to, you can also require that a character who works at the same job for an entire tenday must choose two different skill checks to perform.

When the players have decided on which jobs they're performing and what skill checks they're making, they roll the skill checks. Depending on their roll, they'll get a bonus when they roll to determine the losses or profits for the tavern.

Skill Check Result	Bonus
10-14	+3
15-19	+5
20+	+10

When the bonuses for each character's skill checks have been tallied up, this combined bonus is added to the 1d100 + 10 the players roll on the 'Running a Business'-table at the end of the tenday. So, for example, if two character's each spend a tenday of downtime working on the tavern, they roll two skill checks each. One character rolls 8 (+0) and 17 (+5), while the other rolls 12 (+3) and 22 (+10), for a combined bonus of +18. So instead of only 1d100 + 10, the party rolls 1d100 + 28 on the 'Running a Business'-table when determining the tavern's profits or losses at the end of the tenday.

Combining these rules with the 'A Risky Promotion'-rules, you get some more dynamic rules, with higher risks, but also a much higher potential reward for the players, whenever they involve themselves in running the tavern.

VARIANT RULES - SUMMARY

To summarize, the variant rules are:

- The regular expenses are 60 gp per tenday.
- Promotion can be added to the regular expenses. For each 10 gp spent, the profit multiplier increases by 1 (max 10).
- If a character spends downtime working on the tavern, they roll a skillcheck for each 5 days of downtime spent. Each check gives a bonus to the on the 'Runnin a Business'-table (10-14 = +3, 15-19 = +5, 20+ = +10).
- At the end of each tenday, the party rolls 1d100 + 10 (+ the bonus from characters who spent downtime working) on the 'Running a Business'-table in the DMG (p. 129) to determine losses or profits.

JOINING FACTIONS

One of the most entertaining aspects of this chapter is the opportunity for your characters to get involved with various factions. Use this to strengthen their bonds with important NPCs and get them more involved with events in Waterdeep. But, deciding which of the factions to use can be difficult, so on the following pages you'll find a brief description and evaluation of each faction your players can join up with.

Be aware that most of the combat encounters in the faction missions are very easy if the entire party is tagging along. To keep things entertaining, you can scale things up or down depending on how many characters are along for a mission.

BREGAN D'AERTHE

Bregan D'aerthe is a company of mercenaries led by the dastardly Jarlaxle Baenre. They are scrupulous and ruthless as they work to grow their influence on the surface. If Bregan D'aerthe had an alignment, it'd probably be chaotic neutral.

ESTABLISHING CONTACT

If you go by the book, Bregan D'aerthe only makes contact if drow characters spot the mercenary band surveilling them. Then Jarlaxle shows up in a disguise and gives the missions. This presents some issues, however.

First, Bregan D'aerthe will only approach drow characters, preferably male. So, if there's no drow in the party, there's no Bregan D'aerthe. However, over the centuries Jarlaxle has made several exceptions to this rule, allowing several humans and dwarves to become members. It wouldn't be too outlandish for Jarlaxle to select a non-drow character with panache and questionable morals for membership.

Second, an almost impossible 18 passive perception is needed to spot the surveillance. Instead, you can allow a character to make a DC 18 Perception check for each of three days of surveillance (without explaining why), and have Jarlaxle show up even if the surveillance isn't spotted.

Third, the book doesn't mention what the 'haberdasher J.B. Nevercott' tells the party, that would make them perform dubious missions for an unknown entity. It's also a bit disappointing to not actually use the real Jarlaxle, when he's such a fun character. You can have him meet the rest of the party in disguise, but drop it in front of any prospects, before informing them what Bregan D'aerthe is and offering membership. To protect his cover, he'll deliver a thinly veiled threat: "We value discretion highly. That goes for my own person as well - best to just know me as J.B. Nevercott. People who speak too loudly of us have a habit of going... silent."

BREGAN D'AERTHE MISSIONS

The first three missions given by Jarlaxle are quite simple. But the fourth mission is one of the most daring and exciting of any faction: an assassination inside the Xanathar's lair!

None of the missions require a huge amount of work on your part, since the missions that involve combat already have maps and descriptions in the book. The missions are also compatible with all factions except the Xanathar's Guild.

SHOULD YOU USE THIS FACTION?

If you have drow or half-drow in the party, or a non-good character who hasn't thrown their lot in with the Zhentarim, using Bregan D'aerthe is a good bet. It's a fun faction, albeit only the later quests have meat on them. Remember, however, things could get awkward (not necessarily in a bad way) if you also choose Jarlaxle as the main antagonist!

EMERALD ENCLAVE

The Emerald Enclave is a loosely organized network of druids, rangers and other nature-lovers, who work to preserve the natural balance. If the Emerald Enclave had an alignment, it'd probably be true neutral.

ESTABLISHING CONTACT

The Emerald Enclave is fairly straight forward about establishing contact. A white cat slips by with an address, the prospects meets with a half-elf groundskeeper and a disembodied demigod, and they're good to go.

EMERALD ENCLAVE MISSIONS

The Emerald Enclave missions are all centered around confronting and destroying unnatural beings, so it's quite thematically strong, although not too tied to the story. It's not the most compelling missions in terms of encounters and actual roleplaying. All the encounters are also weak for their level, so you could consider beefing them up a bit.

The missions will require a bit of work on your part, especially if you prefer to use maps for your encounters. They are, however, compatible with all other factions, except for the Xanathar's Guild.

SHOULD YOU USE THIS FACTION?

Using this faction can feel a bit forced, since Waterdeep: Dragon Heist is an urban adventure. However, if you have a character that fits the bill or who has expressed an interest in joining the Emerald Enclave, you should of course give them the chance to do so. But you won't miss much in terms of story or content if you don't use the Emerald Enclave.

FORCE GREY/GRAY HANDS

This faction is local to Waterdeep and works to protect Waterdeep from threats the City Watch and City Guard aren't suited to handle. If Force Grey had an alignment, it'd probably be lawful or neutral good.

ESTABLISHING CONTACT

Vajra Safahr doesn't mess about. Why ask, when you can order. She's straight forward and insistent, which is refreshing. Not much to think about here. The book doesn't mention, but it seems fitting that Vajra Safahr would single out arcane spellcasters or soldier/guard-types to be prospects for the Gray Hands.

FORCE GREY/GRAY HANDS MISSIONS

The Force Grey missions are great fun and thematically fitting. The first three involve diplomacy and investigation, while the fourth mission is a foray into the Xanathar's lair!

To really make the missions good and entertaining will require some work on your part. You'll probably want to flesh out a fun conversation with a bronze dragon and maybe put some extra steps into the investigation of Meloon Wardragon's behavior. Once again, the missions are compatible with all factions except the Xanathar's Guild.

SHOULD YOU USE THIS FACTION?

In most cases, yes. It's the perfect faction for any character that might not fit perfectly into other factions - or even for the entire party, if you only want to use a single faction. It's not heavy on combat, but the quests are fun little excursions and the rewards are very nice. It's also a big plus that the faction is local to Waterdeep and thus more entrenched with the adventure as a whole.

HARPERS

The Harpers are a loosely organized network of bards, wizards and good-aligned folk, who work to protect common folk from tyrants and oppressors. If the Harpers had an alignment, it'd probably be neutral or chaotic good.

ESTABLISHING CONTACT

This is a fun one. Mirt is excellent if played to his strengths and a meeting at an opera is very Bond'esque. You probably won't have to force the characters to attend this meeting.

HARPER MISSIONS

The Harper missions vary greatly. From talking to a spying horse to exposing Jarlaxle at a party. Be aware that the first quest is somewhat incongruent with everything else we know about the Zhentarim (Yagra Stonefist and Davil Starsong are opposed to Manshoon's faction of the Zhentarim precisely because they don't want a fight with the Xanathar's Guild). Instead, you can have the horse overhear the two talking about the return of Manshoon - or replace them with Urstul Floxin. Second, the DC 24 Insight check needed to complete the fourth mission is nearly impossible at 5th level.

The missions are fairly detailed, but will require some work on your part - especially in creating a house party, if you want it to be entertaining. The Harper missions also play badly with both the Zhentarim (1st mission) and Bregan D'aerthe (4th mission).

SHOULD YOU USE THIS FACTION?

If you've read any Forgotten Realms novels, you've probably run into the Harpers more times than any other faction. They're a great, fun and varied faction. Mirt is a fun character too, being an rotund drunkard with a big mouth and the resume (and skills!) to back up his boasts. However, because the missions step on the toes of other factions, you may want to either alter or replace some of them, so you don't cause strife with characters aligned with those factions.

LORD'S ALLIANCE

This confederation of cities and towns in northern Faerun work to protect the interests of its members and ensure free and unhindered trade. If the Lord's Alliance had an alignment, it'd probably be lawful neutral.

ESTABLISHING CONTACT

The book doesn't really say how Jalester Silvermane establishes contact, so you'll have to decide for yourself. It can be as easy as him just showing up at the front door.

LORD'S ALLIANCE MISSIONS

The first two missions involve some fairly easy combat encounters, while the third is a more interesting (and potentially deadly) scenario, and the fourth is a simple investigation handled with dice rolls.

The missions will require some work on your part, mainly when it comes to the combat encounters. The second mission pits the party against Xanathar's Guild, while the third and fourth mission creates problems with the Zhentarim.

SHOULD YOU USE THIS FACTION?

The missions are decent - especially the third one - but the faction is otherwise pretty bland. It meshes badly with the Black Network, so you're probably best off skipping this one if another character has already joined up with the Zhentarim.

ORDER OF THE GAUNTLET

This order of clerics, monks, paladins and other pious people work to destroy evil anywhere they find it. If the Order of the Gauntlet had an alignment, it'd probably be lawful good.

ESTABLISHING CONTACT

Savra Belabranta is an interesting character, and while her approach is straight forward - showing up and asking potential prospects to follow her to the temple - the ceremony is more than most other factions require.

ORDER OF THE GAUNTLET MISSIONS

The missions are interesting. From stopping fights to chasing spined devils. Most interestingly, they also get the party acquainted with the Cassalanter, as one of the only factions.

They will require some work on your part, especially when it comes to making maps, but aren't the most intensive. They also don't step on the toes of other factions.

SHOULD YOU USE THIS FACTION?

This faction is pretty select when it comes to choosing members - Helm, Torm or Tyr worshipers, paladins, lawful clerics and so on - so it makes little sense using them without any of those in your party. If you are going with the Cassalanter as the main villains, the Order of the Gauntlet becomes an even better choice, since the missions will mesh well with the story.

ZHENTARIM

A faction divided in Waterdeep, the Black Network is a widespread shadow organization involved in many legitimate and less-than-legitimate businesses across the north. If the Zhentarim had an alignment, it'd probably be lawful evil.

ESTABLISHING CONTACT

A flying snake and a meeting at the Yawning Portal. It's likely the party has already had some interaction with the Zhentarim, and the Doom Raiders specifically (the very first encounter involves Yagra Stonefist, so it's nearly unavoidable), so Davil Starsong and his buddies have had a good chance to pick out the right prospects.

ZHENTARIM MISSIONS

All four Zhentarim missions are surprisingly benign. Or maybe not surprisingly, considering we're told that Davil Starsong's Zhentarim pursues more legitimate avenues than Manshoon's more murderous branch of the organization. Either way, stopping a renegade drow gunslinger, delivering a bit of poison (alright, that one is morally questionable), finding a noble halfling-turned-wererat and killing a traitor isn't *that* bad. And, they're all pretty fun to boot - the last could even take the characters into Kolat Towers.

The first and last mission will require a bit of work, but otherwise the missions are fairly straight forward. Additionally, they won't - also surprisingly - run the party afoul of any other organizations. Even the drow being hunted is a renegade, so Jarlaxle probably wouldn't mind.

SHOULD YOU USE THIS FACTION?

Sure. While the Black Network has a bad reputation, this band of Zhentarim are far from the worst Waterdeep has to offer. It'll work with other factions and even if there's good-aligned characters in the party. Plus, the Zhentarim are in the center of the adventure, regardless of how you play it, so getting the party involved with them is not a bad idea.

DOWNTIME OPTIONS

Since downtime activities are very likely to become a factor in this chapter of Waterdeep: Dragon Heist, we'll give a brief overview and evaluation of each downtime activity presented in the **Xanathar's Guide to Everything** (p. 123), as well as advice on how to fit them to Waterdeep and your party.

BUYING A MAGIC ITEM

In a city as large as Waterdeep, this is an obvious option. However, a 2nd-level party probably isn't rolling in funds, so you shouldn't be too worried about what they can dig up.

There are plenty of different places to buy magic items in Waterdeep, but if you want to make it interesting and tie it to the story - and perhaps foreshadow some of the later content - consider Skeemo Weirdbottle, the Gralhunds, the Cassalanter, Jarlaxle (in disguise), Nihiloor (through a brain-washed proxy), or even Vajra Safahr as potential sellers and roleplay the meeting. Consider the same for rivals, if a character rolls a complication.

CAROUSING

This is a fun option, and an opportunity for you and your players to plant seeds for later in the campaign.

You can tie the contacts the party makes to the story by using names from within Manshoon's Zhentarim (low-level goons include Sidra Romeir, Manafret Cherryport and Yorn the Terror), the Xanathar's Guild (low-level goons include Samara Strongbones, Flutterfoot Zipswiggle and Ott Steeltoes) or the Cassalanter, if the party are partying with the upper class (low-level goons include Jandar Chergoba, Tissina Khyret and Laiba "Nana" Rosse). Having a contact within a faction doesn't mean that person will do anything to aid the character, but it might come in handy if the party meets them during the later stages of the adventure.

CRAFTING AN ITEM

This option may come into play, but remember that crafting magical items - which, let's be honest, is probably what the characters will want to do - requires a face-off with a sizeable monster. If a player expresses interest in doing this and you want to put some effort into it, it's a good way to create a mini-sidequest for the party, where they face a dangerous monster like a **displacer beast** in the sewers, or something similar, to that they can create an awesome magical item.

CRIME

Now this is a fun one. And, potentially a very rewarding one. Or a very punishing one. Either way, a fun one!

To make it fit with the party, you can try to think about who the target could be (or have the character decide themselves!). A struggling merchant? Could be Emmek Frewn (see the Business Rival section in Chapter 2). A prosperous merchant? Could be Durnan (owner of the Yawning Portal) or even one of the neighbors from Trollskull Alley! A noble? Why not the Gralhunds, the Cassalanter or the Rosznars (the Black Viper's family, see Appendix B)? One of the richest people in town? Could be Mirt or Remallia Haventree!

GAMBLING

This is also a player favorite. Put gold up - get gold back (or lose it, but let's not talk about that). Gambling is also readily available in Waterdeep.

So, where does one gamble in Waterdeep? There are some interesting options, which you - or the player - can choose to enhance the experience. If it's for a smaller amount, it could be down on the docks (perhaps back at the Skewered Dragon), or if it's for larger amounts, it could be aboard one of Jarlaxle's carnival ships or at [Tymora's Fancy](#), a gambling den run by the infamous elf Elaith Craulnobar.

PIT FIGHTING

A fighter or barbarian's dream, pit fighting - which is organized, non-lethal forms of combat for prize money - is also readily available in Waterdeep.

There are many places a person can fight for money in Waterdeep, yet none mentioned by name in Volo's Enchiridion. Consider unsanctioned fights in bars and taverns (which the city watch usually ignore) or celebrated bouts of boxing or wrestling in the Temple of Tempus.

RELAXATION

For those who don't know what to do - or who really just wants to relax. Enhance it by letting them pick the parks, monuments and spectacles they get to see from Volo's Enchiridion, while they enjoy some rest in Waterdeep.

RELIGIOUS SERVICE

There are many prominent temples in Waterdeep, where a character can offer religious service and earn favors for later. You can find each temple in Volo's Waterdeep Enchiridion under the 'Castle Ward'-section.

RESEARCH

Research in Waterdeep likely takes place in The Font of Knowledge - a temple to Oghma - or other minor libraries. Specific research might take place with the aid of specialists like the Blackstaff Vajra Safahr or other notable figures.

SCRIBING A SPELL SCROLL

This one is quite simple and is also solitary work, that doesn't require much explanation. You can, however, use it as a way to get the character introduced with the Book Wyrm's Treasure and Rishaal if you want to.

SELLING A MAGICAL ITEM

Run this like you'd run Buying a Magical Item - except the other way around, of course. Introduce the character to some of the prominent characters from the adventure, as described earlier.

TRAINING

This one is also fun, but keep in mind that depending on how long your downtime period is, a character might not have time to undergo training at all.

MAKING A PLAN

Now that we've gone over the different aspects of the chapter, it's time to put it all together. Create a rough outline of how the chapter could play out. How many days should it cover? Which factions make contact? What sidequests do you want to put in front of the party?

Of course, this is simply a guideline to follow - something that'll help you structure and manage what happens when. Like with all plans, you should be ready to alter it or discard it in its entirety, the second your players figure something more fun out for themselves.

PLANNING DOWNTIME

The downtime activities will be the main factor in determining how many days of in-game time the party spends between saving Floon Blagmaar at the end of Chapter 1 and the fireball in Trollskull Alley at the start of Chapter 3.

Trollskull Tavern. If your party wants to rebuild and run the Trollskull Tavern, it'll likely be the biggest time sink in the chapter. It's a 10 or 12-day-endavor to fix the tavern, and running it is handled in 10-day-increments. If the characters want to renovate, give them at least a month of downtime, so they'll be able to fix the tavern and run it for a while.

Other Downtime Activities. If you've planned ahead, your party have maybe informed you of the downtime activities they want to pursue, or have some ideas ready at the start of the session. Since most downtime activities can be divided into 5 or 10-day-increments, it's handy to break all downtime into chunks of 5 or 10 days. This saves you from keeping close tabs on exactly how many days this or that character have used on their downtime, while also allowing your faction missions and sidequests to be evenly spaced between chunks. Use 10-day-increments if you want the downtime to cover more in-game time.

PLANNING SIDEQUESTS

While the downtime activities are the frame of this chapter, the faction missions and sidequests act as intermissions. If your players are interested, it's recommended that you try to pair each character up with a faction, while giving them the option to decline or go with other factions, as they wish.

Faction Missions. Most of the 2nd-level faction missions take up only a few hours of in-game time, and can be completed by a single character. Use them - and the meetings with factions agents - as small 'breaks' from downtime. If the whole party isn't involved in a mission, try to resolve it quickly so other players don't get bored. Remember, it's up to you if the faction contact says 'handle this mission alone' or 'bring your friends' when giving the mission. Also, keep in mind that some factions don't go well together.

Meeting the Neighbors. Your players will probably also want to meet Lif and meet the neighbors - either by roaming freely or through the 'Steel and Wood' or 'Paper Problems' sidequests. Allow them the time to do this, preferably earlier in the chapter, so they get to know their way around Trollskull Alley.

Guilds and Rivals. Lastly, you have the various guild representatives and the business rival Emmek Frewn, who are all described at the end of Chapter 2 in the campaign book and who can drop in from time to time. These represent the more mundane challenges of running a business - use them if you think your players will enjoy that.

SO HOW MUCH DOWNTIME?

Whether you think your players will love the content in this chapter or not, 30 days of downtime is a good round number to start with. It's enough time to repair the tavern and run it for two tendays, while still leaving time for other downtime activities and a handful of sidequests. If - at the end of the 30 days - the party is still hungry for more, you can extend the downtime as long as you like. And, if your players seem overwhelmed, bored or aimless - or you already know that they dislike downtime before going in - cut it down to 10 or 20 days.

EXAMPLE OUTLINE

Let's take a look at how Chapter 2 could be outlined.

We have a party consisting of a rogue, bard, wizard and fighter. The entire party wants to rebuild the tavern. The rogue and the bard also want to carouse and gamble, the fighter wants to do some pit fighting and the wizard wants to do research, as well as scribing and selling magical scrolls. Each will also take turns tending the Trollskull Alley Tavern.

With a base of downtime established, we can sprinkle in various sidequests, missions and distractions. The rogue and the fighter are interested in working with the Zhentarim, while the drow bard has been singled out by Bregan D'aerthe. Lastly, the wizard is a good candidate for the Gray Hands. They also have to deal with Lif and the neighbors who come calling, wanting help with their various issues.

The final outline of the chapter looks like this (an X noting that a character participates in an event):

Days	Rogue	Fighter	Bard	Wizard
Getting a loan	X	X	X	X
1-5	Rebuilding	Rebuilding	Rebuilding	Rebuilding
Steel and Wood	X	X	X	X
6-10	Rebuilding	Rebuilding	Rebuilding	Rebuilding
Paper Problems	X	X	X	X
11-15	Gambling	Fighting	Gambling	Bartending
Bregan D'aerthe	—	—	X	—
16-20	Gambling	Fighting	Bartending	Research
Gray Hands	—	—	—	X
21-25	Carousing	Bartending	Carousing	Scribing
Zhentarim	X	X	—	—
26-30	Bartending	Fighting	Carousing	Sell Scrolls

Of course, this doesn't mean that something only happens every five days, or that the characters are very strict about carousing or tending the bar for exactly 5 days at a time. It's simply a way to alternate between rolling for downtime and going into actual roleplay when something happens, so you keep a nice and varied pace. In reality, the carousing days are probably interspersed between days of bartending, and the factions or neighbors drop in from time-to-time during the month.