

CORE2-8

ENEMY OF MY ENEMY

A DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® *LIVING
FORGOTTEN REALMS* ADVENTURE

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Even the most righteous churches are not without corruption. When a powerful Tormish traitor escapes into the Underdark, will you brave the depths of an ancient drow city to see that he is brought to justice? *A Living Forgotten Realms* adventure set in the Underdark city of Sshamath for characters levels 14-17. This adventure completes a Major Quest, and is a sequel to both *CORE2-1 Killing the Messenger* and *ADCP2-1 The Paladins' Plague*. Play of the prior adventures is recommended, but not required.

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

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OFFICIAL D&D PLAY

Most likely you ordered this adventure as part of an event, or you received it from your organizer. To play this adventure and receive rewards for it, you must schedule it as an event. This event could be as elaborate as a big convention, or as simple as a group of friends meeting at the DM's house.

To schedule a game for public play, you must be enrolled in the Wizards Play Network. Information on enrolling in the program can be found at www.wizards.com/wpn. If you are scheduling the game for private play, you do not need to be enrolled in the Wizards Play Network. The person who schedules the event, called the organizer, is in charge of making sure the event is scheduled before play, runs smoothly on the date scheduled, and gets reported back to Wizards in a timely manner. The person who runs the game is called the table Dungeon Master (or usually just DM). Sometimes (and almost all the time in the cases of home events) the organizer is also the table DM. You don't have to be enrolled in the Wizards Play Network to DM this adventure if you are not the organizer.

By scheduling and reporting this adventure you accomplish a couple of things. First, it is an official game, tracked under your play history. Second, DMs gain rewards for scheduled play if they are members of the DM REWARDS program. DMing this adventure is worth one (1) point.

To learn more about event scheduling and DM REWARDS, visit the D&D Events website at www.wizards.com/dnd and click on "Events."

PREPARING FOR PLAY

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

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

Along with this adventure, you'll find a session tracking sheet. If you're playing this adventure as part of an officially scheduled event, complete and turn in this sheet to your organizer directly after play.

READING MONSTER STAT BLOCKS

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

IMPORTANT DM INFORMATION

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

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

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

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

of running long or short. Adjust the pacing accordingly.

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

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

APPROPRIATE CHARACTER LEVELS

This adventure is designed for player characters (PCs) levels 14 - 17. Characters that fall outside of the level range may not participate in the adventure. Make certain to check the levels of the PCs before beginning play to ensure that they are the proper level.

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

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

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

FAILING TO DEFEAT AN ENCOUNTER

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

CHARACTER DEATH

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

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

MILESTONES

No matter if the characters succeed or fail in an encounter, they reach a milestone if it is the second encounter they've had since the start of the adventure or their last extended rest. **Encounters that do not give out experience points do not count for purposes of reaching a milestone.** Make certain to mention this information to the players when applicable, as it gives each PC another action point and affects how some magic item powers are used.

LASTING EFFECTS

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

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

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

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

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

The following background information on Sshamath and Vessen is a summary of the events from the adventures CORE2-1 *Killing the Messenger* and ADCP2-1 *The Paladins' Plague*. The Recent Events section covers the events that have transpired since ADCP2-1 but before the beginning of this adventure.

SSHAMATH

Sshamath was well known before the Spellplague as the City of Dark Weavings, a cosmopolitan place ruled by a conclave of wizards rather than the clergy of Lolth. Following the Spellplague, however, the city fell silent, and many thought it destroyed. While the city suffered greatly from the disaster, it was not destroyed, and a significant portion of their population survived. The Conclave, bereft of magic but not wisdom, kept their people hidden while seeking power through pacts with dark entities, spellscars, and other means. The Conclave of old splintered into four factions vying for power, the School of Darkness (mostly dark pact warlocks), the School of Blue Fire (mainly spellscarred drow), the School of Wizardry (the wizards of the city) and the School of Lolth (followers of Lolth).

Guided by the School of Darkness, the prevailing faction of the Conclave, Sshamath sought out an alliance with Netheril in order to gain protection from the Lolth-worshipping drow of the Northdark that would seek to subvert them. In CORE2-1 *Killing the Messenger*, adventurers employed by the High Observer of Elturgard infiltrated Sshamath and sabotaged the alliance, working with a Bregan D'aerthe mercenary, Izzyrr Mae'urden, who was hired by the Northdark drow for the same purpose.

VESSEN

Knight-Commander Vessen was a high-ranking member of the Tormish order that rules Elturgard, and a devout follower of Torm. Recently, while preparing to lead an operation to cleanse the plagueland that threatened the city of Elturel, Vessen was captured by the Order of Blue Fire, an organization that offers help to those affected by spellplague but whose true objective is to return the Spellplague to the world. The Order used false visions, supposedly from Torm, to lure Vessen into the plagueland. Fervently believing that Torm had chosen him for a special divine reward, Vessen made a pilgrimage to the edge of the plagueland where he was seized by the Order of Blue Fire and infected with a sharn symbiote, becoming an agent of the Order. Although this new creature acts and sounds like Vessen,

and has all of Vessen's memories and abilities, it is under the control of the sharn. Though the true Vessen is still in there somewhere, the paladin is helpless to do anything but watch as his body is used to perform terrible deeds.

In ADCP2-1 *The Paladins' Plague*, adventurers defended Elturel from a plaguechanged army mobilized by the Order of Blue Fire with the corrupted Vessen's assistance. Just as the heroes began to celebrate their victory, Vessen attempted to assassinate the High Observer, running him through with his sword. Before he could be caught, Vessen escaped through a portal to Sshamath, where a sharn pool located below the Stonestave, Sshamath's center of government, awaits him.

RECENT EVENTS

Drawn by the whirling consciousness of the sharn, Vessen arrived in Sshamath in secret and quickly searched for a way to reach the sharn pool located beneath the Stonestave's dungeons. Vessen's arrival, however, did not remain a secret for long.

Izzyrr Mae'urden remained in Sshamath following the events of CORE2-1 *Killing the Messenger*, and continues to work towards destabilizing Sshamath enough to fulfill his contract. A capable information broker, Izzyrr learned of Vessen's presence and decided to use it to his advantage.

The School of Darkness' failure in securing a Netherese alliance resulted in a shift in power within the Conclave. The School of Blue Fire now stands on equal footing with the School of Darkness, and Izzyrr calculates that a civil war between the two factions would weaken the city enough to serve his purposes. All he needs is a spark to ignite the flames of civil war, and Vessen is that spark.

Acting quickly, Izzyrr first leaked false information to Nurissa Vyllshan, leader of the School of Darkness that an ambassador from Ormpetarr, a city-state near a large pocket of Plagueland and a well-known destination for pilgrims seeking spellscars, arrived in the city to negotiate a secret alliance between the School of Blue Fire and the Order of Blue Fire. With Izzyrr's help, Nurissa Vyllshan's forces quickly found, seized, and imprisoned Vessen before he was able to reach his destination. Next, Izzyrr leaked false information to Molbelphyr Ilmtar, leader of the School of Blue Fire that a spellscarred pilgrim had arrived in the city peacefully and was seized without cause by the paranoid Nurissa Vyllshan's forces. When Nurissa refused Molbelphyr's requests to have Vessen released, the two factions began preparing for war.

Meanwhile, back in Elturel, Inquisitor Tellar and the High Observer have reached out to a group of capable adventurers to infiltrate Sshamath, find Vessen, and return him to face justice for his treason.

DM'S INTRODUCTION

This adventure is the conclusion to both a major quest begun at the end of CORE2-1 *Killing the Messenger* and the events that took place at the end of ADCP2-1 *The Paladins' Plague*. As such, it features many NPCs and story elements from both adventures. While it is important to provide an exciting stand-alone story for players that have played neither of these adventures, try to build up the story to an epic conclusion for the players that *have* played them.

Although this adventure references story awards from CORE2-1 and ADCP2-1, PCs may encounter NPCs that they had favorable or unfavorable interactions with in prior adventures that are not recorded in story awards. Feel free to take these interactions into account, taking the word of the players, and role-play accordingly. Players with **CORE39 Elturgardan Gratitude** from CORE2-1 have the chance to complete a major quest at the end of this adventure.

Additionally, PCs with any story award related to Tyrangal from the various SPEC2-1 adventures may receive additional treasure at the end of the adventure if they turn Vessen over to her.

Refer to Appendices 1 and 2 at the end of the adventure for more information regarding key NPCs and locations within Sshamath. Use this information to provide a rich experience for the players throughout the adventure. Also, be sure to read all of the Player Handouts yourself so that you are familiar with all of the information given to the PCs.

Remember that this is a mid-paragon adventure and the PCs have by now made a name for themselves. Even their enemies should respect their reputations and abilities.

The adventure begins with a mission briefing from Inquisitor Tellar and the High Observer himself. The PCs are tasked with finding the traitorous renegade paladin Vessen in Sshamath and bringing him back to Elturel to face justice.

The PCs are teleported into Sshamath via the Linked Portal ritual, where they immediately begin gathering information to discover Vessen's whereabouts. Upon learning of the brewing civil war and Vessen's imprisonment at the hands of Nurissa Vyllshan, the PCs may decide to strike a deal with one of the two opposing factions, offering military assistance in exchange for the

prisoner. If they do not want to aid either faction, they may instead choose to strike out on their own and find Vessen themselves. Izztyr Mae'urden, the Bregan D'aerthe mercenary, uses his guiles to try to sway the PCs' decision. However, if any PC has the story award **CORE40** from CORE2-1, Izztyr does not contact the characters.

After either negotiating with one of the factions and helping to defeat the other, or sneaking into the Stonestave's dungeons and dispatching the guards, the PCs find Vessen incarcerated in his cell. As they prepare to escort Vessen out of the dungeons, the PCs receive a telepathic negotiation demand from the sharn dwelling in the sharn pool beneath the dungeons, extorting the PCs to bring Vessen to its pool.

The PCs escort Vessen to the sharn pool and negotiate with the sharn, which offers to allow the PCs to merge with its consciousness, extolling the virtues of the experience. The PCs fight the corrupted Vessen, controlled by the sharn, and a pair of sharn symbiotes. Once the sharns have been defeated, the PCs decide Vessen's fate.

UNDEAD AND SPELLSCARRED PCs

This adventure begins and ends in the city of Elturel, which is constantly bathed in the light of the Companion, the divine "second sun" gifted by Amaunator. The touch of the Companion's light is quite uncomfortable to undead creatures. The light does not visibly burn or otherwise affect undead PCs, but it should still be taken into consideration during the roleplaying scenes that occur in the city. During the adventure ADCP2-1 *The Paladins' Plague*, the Companion's light may have been temporarily extinguished (depending on some decisions made by the players during each running of the event). For those who have witnessed the Companion going dark, they may want to know its current condition. As far as anyone can tell, the divine beacon seems none the worse for wear as a result of the previous events.

Also during ADCP2-1, the Companion's light may have been "redirected" to temporarily affect spellscarred creatures instead of undead creatures. Those effects are completely gone by the time this adventure takes place. However, the damage to the city of Elturel at the hands of an army of plaguechanged creatures has not been fully repaired, and many of the soldiers and citizens are now themselves spellscarred as a result of the storms of blue fire that washed over the city. Spellscarred PCs may thus receive a mixture of sympathetic treatment (there are now many others with a similar affliction) and scorn (from those who believe all spellscarred are a

threat and should be banished or killed) while traveling in the city and interacting with its people.

PLAYER'S INTRODUCTION

"He'll burn in the Nine Hells for his treason!" Inquisitor Tellar slams his fist down on the thick mahogany table.

The High Observer silences the Inquisitor with a subtle wave of his hand. "Do not be rash, Tellar. Knight-Commander Vessen will stand trial and answer for his actions."

Visibly trying to conceal a great deal of physical pain behind a veneer of composure, the High Observer of Elturgard looks upon your group. "I have asked you here personally to undertake a mission of great importance. Someone very close to us has turned traitor and nearly destroyed our city before fleeing into the Underdark. I seek dedicated heroes to hunt him down and see that he is returned to face Torm's justice. What say you?"

Ask the PCs if they accept the mission. If they do, read the following:

The High Observer nods in satisfaction and rises from his high-backed seat at the table. "You have my blessings and my thanks, heroes. Inquisitor Tellar will brief you on the details. Know that you walk the path of righteousness this day."

The High Observer turns and strides out of the chamber, favoring his left side with each step.

Give the players a moment to describe their characters to one another before proceeding to Encounter 1.

ENCOUNTER 1: MISSION BRIEFING

SETUP

Important NPCs: Inquisitor Tellar

The PCs are briefed on their mission to infiltrate Sshamath and hunt down Vessen by Inquisitor Tellar.

DM NOTE: PACING

The encounter should take no longer than 10 minutes.

It seems like hours ago that you entered the city of Elturel in amazement. How could a city so fortified, so secure have sustained so much damage? Rumors of a plaguechanged army's attack upon the city have spread throughout the Western Heartlands, but even those tales were insufficient to describe the extent of the destruction.

Inquisitor Tellar taps his foot impatiently on the white tiled floor of the Temple of Torm. "I'll be thorough, but don't make me repeat myself." He tosses a folder onto the table as he begins his briefing.

Tellar is a male human spymaster working for the High Observer of Torm, the ruler of Elturgard. He treats the PCs with respect, especially PCs that played CORE2-1 or ADCP2-1, unless they act inappropriately. He considered Vessen a close friend and has chosen to cope with his betrayal through anger.

Relate the following information to the players through conversation:

- The Tormish Order had been planning an expedition into the active plagueland near Elturel, but the plagueland attacked first.
- While the city suffered heavy casualties, the forces of Elturel, aided by brave adventurers from across the land, fought off the threat and struck at the heart of the plagueland itself, temporarily ending the threat.
- At the celebratory banquet following the battle, Knight-Commander Vessen, high ranking paladin of Torm and leader of the expedition, revealed himself to be in league with the invading forces. In a shocking act of betrayal, Vessen ran the High Observer through with his bastard sword.
- Before he could be seized, Vessen opened a portal to the Underdark and escaped. Monsters poured through that same portal, seeking to finish the High Observer, but the assembled adventurers were able to save his life.

- Tellar's intelligence network suggests that the portal Vessen used led to the drow city of Sshamath. Tellar is familiar with Sshamath, having recently (before Vessen's betrayal) sent a group of adventurers there for an important mission (this occurred in CORE2-1).
- Tellar does not know why Vessen would want to go to Sshamath, but it may have something to do with the many pockets of Spellplague that remain active within the city.
- Tellar had no inkling that Vessen was a traitor. Few are as devout as Vessen had appeared to be. However, there is no question in Tellar's mind that Vessen has betrayed everything he stood for.
- The folder contains Tellar's dossier on Sshamath as well as an old map of the city. He has circled a few high-value locations based on recent scouting reports. Distribute Handouts 1 and 2 and suggest that the players read them carefully.
- The PCs will be rewarded for their efforts with both gold and magic items.
- When the PCs are ready, Tellar will call a priest of Torm to cast the Linked Portal ritual. This will take the PCs to a teleportation circle just outside the city, near Sshamath's main gates. They can return to Elturel via this same route.
- The Dark Weavings Bazaar is an easy place to begin gathering information without drawing too much attention.
- While many of the drow in Sshamath are evil, the city has always remained neutral and is not believed to pose a threat to Elturgard or the surface world, despite its strategic location and proximity. That may very well change should the city fall into the hands of the Northdark drow.
- Tellar wants Vessen returned alive so that he can stand public trial and more importantly, so that the corrupted paladin's knowledge regarding the plagueland can be recovered.

When the PCs are ready to go to Sshamath, read the following:

Tellar escorts you to a small chamber. A rune-inscribed circle is carved into the floor. A priest of the Loyal Fury stands nearby, intoning the words of a ritual. A portal spirals open, revealing nothing but swirling darkness.

Tellar nods. "Good luck, heroes."

ENDING THE ENCOUNTER

Proceed to Encounter 2 when the PCs step through the portal.

ENCOUNTER 2: TROUBLE BREWING

SETUP

Important NPCs: Captain Nym Mlezziir, Tomias Palesun, Nurissa Vyllshan, Molbelphyr Ilmtar, Guldor Zau'viir, Matron Mother Zarylene Oussate

The PCs sneak into Sshamath and discover Vessen's whereabouts, as well as the current condition of the city.

DM NOTE: PACING

The encounter should take no longer than 30 minutes, with the majority of time spent within the Stonestave. If you find that the PCs have not made their way to the Stonestave after 20 minutes, consider creative methods for urging them along.

You emerge from the portal to find yourselves standing upon an unattended teleportation circle in a small cavernous alcove. Ahead, two black stone gates, forty feet tall and carved with ancient arcane sigils, stand partially open. The gates are guarded by a handful of armored drow. The guards don't appear to have noticed your arrival.

The PCs must act quickly to find their way into the city. They may sneak in or convince the guards to let them in. While the city does enjoy the prospect of outsiders bringing in new business, the guards are careful about whom they admit. Because PCs at this level should have no difficulty getting into the city, relevant skills and DCs are not provided here. Instead, play out the PCs' entry into the city and assign DCs at your discretion, keeping in mind that the PCs should have little to no trouble getting in.

GATHERING INFORMATION

Once inside the city, the PCs begin searching for Vessen. In a city this large with no inkling of where he might be, their only choice is to ask around. Over the course of this encounter, the PCs gain information vital to the continuation of the adventure. They can gain this information by visiting key locations on the map of Sshamath and speaking to various NPCs. The locations and NPCs provided are only a small sample, and offer the minimum amount of information that the PCs need. Feel free to improvise and provide additional flavor. Before running this encounter, make sure you have

reviewed the NPC descriptions in Appendix 1 and the key locations in Appendix 2.

In general, the PCs should obtain the following information during this encounter:

- The School of Darkness and School of Blue Fire are vying for control over the Conclave and tensions between the two factions are higher than ever.
- A spellscarred foreigner (Vessen) recently arrived in the city, but was quickly seized by the School of Darkness' forces.
- A foreign drow (Izztyrr Mae'urden) has been in the city for a while but his identity and motives remain a mystery.
- Nurissa Vyllshan, leader of the School of Darkness, believes Vessen to be an ambassador of the Order of Blue Fire, sent from Ormpetarr to negotiate an alliance with the School of Blue Fire.
- Molbelphyr Ilmtar, leader of the School of Blue Fire, believes Vessen to be a spellscarred pilgrim seeking refuge within the city.
- Molbelphyr is organizing his forces for a raid on the Stonestave to mount a rescue mission for Vessen.
- Nurissa has caught wind of Molbelphyr's planned assault and is organizing forces to surprise Molbelphyr in a counterattack.
- Particularly clever or resourceful PCs may discover that Izztyrr has spread false information to both Nurissa and Molbelphyr in order to spark an open conflict between the two factions. Izztyrr's goal is to further weaken Sshamath's security.

DARK WEAVINGS BAZAAR

Although much of the Dark Weavings Bazaar lies in ruins, dozens of tents crowd its center. Shops, taverns, and storehouses are built into the sides of its abundant stalagmites. Hundreds of merchants, customers, and vagabonds are here, but the space is large enough that the crowd is widely scattered. Vendors greet you cordially, offering lodging, magical items, and obscure antiques for sale.

The Dark Weavings Bazaar is a great place for the PCs to begin gathering information. While they won't be able to learn anything too specific, they should have no trouble getting a general idea of what has been going on in the city. Below is a sample of the information that the PCs can acquire:

- Nearly three hundred Zhent mercenaries are camped in the Darkwoods, There used to be more, but many left not long ago. Some say those who left were deserters.
- A spellscarred foreigner was skulking around last week. He was seized, but not easily: the man took down eight guards before Captain Nym finally restrained him. The Captain was talking about the incident at the Great Elixir just yesterday.
- Ever since the alliance with Netheril fell through, the School of Darkness has lost a lot of support. Nurissa Vyllshan is none too pleased.
- Rumor has it that there's a Bregan D'aerthe mercenary from the Northdark in the city.

THE GREAT ELIXIR

This infamous drinking establishment is located in a sheared-off stalagmite of Sshamath's great cavern. The tavern is nearly bursting with patrons. A sign on the wall promises 'ALL DRINKS AVAILABLE - FROM ABOVE OR BELOW' with a smaller sign below it: 'SEMBIAN BITTERDARK NOW ON DRAUGHT.'

The Great Elixir is the city's most prominent tavern. Here, the PCs can find all manner of patrons to speak with. Of particular interest might be Nym Mlezziir, the captain of the city watch, who is sharing a drink with a number of his subordinates. Below is a sample of the information that the PCs can acquire:

- Tensions between the School of Darkness and School of Blue Fire are higher than ever. Some say that the two factions are on the brink of a civil war.
- Captain Nym Mlezziir seized the spellscarred paladin here over a week ago. Nurissa gave Captain Nym orders to do so. Nym does not know where the prisoner is being held.

DARKWOODS

Dozens of Zhentarim gauntlets are camped in the Darkwoods, a petrified forest thick with natural columns, stalactites, and stalagmites. The sounds of metal ringing upon metal emanate from a makeshift training ground in a clearing within the camp's center.

What remains of the Zhentarim mercenaries hired by Sshamath that did not desert the city are camped within the Darkwoods. Since their failed attempt to form an alliance with Netheril, the Conclave has been too busy squabbling to do anything productive with the Zhentarim aside from the occasional use of a gauntlet or two to carry out personal vendettas. The atmosphere

within the Zhent camp is a combination of suspicion and boredom.

The Zhentarim are particularly unfriendly towards outsiders in their camp. In order to gather information within the camp, the PCs must come up with a clever excuse for being inside the camp such as being disguised as Zhents or merchants. The QUES01 and QUES02 story awards from QUES1-1 *Black Cloaks and Bitter Rivalries* would certainly help, provided that the PCs stay away from high-ranking officers that may recognize them.

Here, the PCs can learn the following:

- The Zhent recruits are growing bored. Many are eager for action and plunder. They fervently hope that the rumors about a civil war brewing in the city are true.
- The Schools of Darkness and Blue Fire are evenly matched. Without interference, they would likely eradicate one another in a civil war, leaving Sshamath easy pickings for the Northdark drow - who would pose a far greater threat to the surface world.
- Both Nurissa and Molbelyphyr have tried to hire some of Tomias Palesun's men for their own personal vendettas. However, Tomias' company, the Grey Feathers, are staying out of it - Tomias doesn't trust the Conclave.

THE STONESTAVE

The Stonestave, a large stalactite hanging from the cavern roof shaped like a wizard's staff, is bustling with activity. Drow nobles, mercenaries, petitioners, and guards fill the halls of the city's seat of government. The grand entryway is guarded by a half-dozen heavily-armed drow.

The entrance to the Stonestave is guarded well to keep outsiders out of Conclave business. However, through stealth, bribery, or a quick tongue, the PCs should have little trouble getting past the guards and into the Stonestave. Once again, use role-playing rather than scripted skill rolls to facilitate this. When the PCs enter the Stonestave, read the following:

Small groups of well-dressed drow converse in hushed tones in the informal meeting hall of the Conclave.

While it is common knowledge within the Conclave that the School of Darkness and School of Blue Fire are preparing their forces for battle, the members of the Conclave avoid broaching the subject directly. The PCs should quickly discover the key members of the

Conclave and may speak to each at their leisure. They're likely to run into Guldor and Zarylene before encountering Molbelphyr or Nurissa. Here is a sample of the information that the PCs can acquire:

- Paranoid of a takeover by the School of Blue Fire, Nurissa believes the spellscarred prisoner to be an ambassador from Ormpetarr, here to negotiate an alliance between Molbelphyr and the Order of Blue Fire.
- Supposedly, Nurissa is holding the prisoner in the dungeons above the Stonestave. Those dungeons are rumored to be impossible to find unless you know the way.
- There are whispers that Molbelphyr will storm the Stonestave tonight and demand the paladin's release, claiming that the seizure of an innocent spellscarred pilgrim is an insult to the School of Blue Fire itself. The prisoner is merely an excuse for Molbelphyr to move against Nurissa.
- Rumor has it that a mysterious spy has the ear of both Molbelphyr and Nurissa.

Nurissa Vyllshan and Molbelphyr Ilmtar are currently much more popular amongst the Conclave and much more difficult to get a meeting with. Eventually, however, the PCs can and should be given an audience and a chance to speak to both Nurissa and Molbelphyr so that they may have the option of convincing one of them to hand over Vessen. Below is a sample of the information that the PCs can acquire:

- **Molbelphyr Ilmtar** - "Nurissa has brought enough danger into our city already! The Netherese ambassador's assassination nearly brought all of Netheril down upon us. Her carelessness and paranoia cannot remain unchecked any longer. If you are interested in discussing the matter further, please meet me in my chambers at four bells."
- **Nurissa Vyllshan** - "If that hedonist fop Molbelphyr thinks that spreading the same Spellplague that nearly destroyed this great city will do us any good, then he truly has gone mad. I am holding his ambassador as my guest merely so that I can get some straight answers about what he has planned. I would welcome the opportunity to discuss these matters with you further in my personal chambers. Attend me there at three bells."

ENDING THE ENCOUNTER

Proceed to Encounter 3, where the drow spy Izztyr Mae'urden approaches them about a third method of rescuing Vessen as soon as the PCs are finished gathering information (assuming they did not earn his disrespect in CORE2-1 - Izztyr does not approach the party if he is already on bad terms with them from the previous adventure).

At a minimum, the PCs need to learn that Vessen has been imprisoned, and by whom, as well as their options for reaching him.

ENCOUNTER 3: A TRICKSTER IN TRUE FORM

SETUP

Important NPC: Izztyrr Mae'urden

If any of the PCs earned the story award **CORE40 Bregan D'aerthe Disrespect** from CORE2-1, skip this encounter entirely. Proceed directly to the Ending the Encounter section to determine what happens next.

Otherwise, Izztyrr Mae'urden reveals himself to the PCs and offers them another alternative for finding Vessen.

Moments after you exit the Stonestave, a lithe, well-armed drow approaches. He greets you with palms open. "Excuse me, honored mercenaries, but we have business to discuss. I am Izztyrr Mae'urden, and we may be of use to one another."

If any of the PCs earned **CORE38 Bregan D'aerthe Respect** from CORE2-1, add the following:

Izztyrr gives you a knowing smile. "I am pleased to see that you have returned. Your past work was impressive, to say the least."

Izztyrr does not admit his business in the open, but merely asks the PCs to speak with him privately. He may whisper to the PCs that he knows who they are and why they are here.

If the PCs agree, he leads them to a private room in the Great Elixir. If the PCs refuse, Izztyrr simply acquiesces and disappears into the shadows. Any PCs that try to follow him eventually lose him in the crowds.

Assuming the PCs accepted Izztyrr's offer, once situated, Izztyrr explains the situation. Relate the following information to the PCs through conversation:

- Izztyrr is a member of the Bregan D'aerthe mercenary company. If asked why he is here, he replies that his business within Sshamath is his own. However, he knows why the PCs are here.
- A battle between the School of Darkness and School of Blue Fire is inevitable, and Izztyrr prefers that the PCs do not interfere with his "hard work" and upset the delicate balance of power between the two factions.
- Izztyrr knows of a relatively safe and secret path through the Stonestave to Vessen's cell. There is

a price for his information, which is for the PCs to stay neutral in the upcoming battle.

- If the PCs promise to avoid offering assistance to either School, then Izztyrr will not only show them this path, but also reward them.
- When asked who is paying for his services, Izztyrr winks and replies, "That of course is confidential." If the PCs bribe Izztyrr with a minimum of 1,000 gp, he gladly tells them his contract is with some of the leading noble houses of Menzoberranzan, in the Northdark. PCs may also be able to loosen his lips through other means, as you see fit.
- Izztyrr offers the PCs some time to consider his offer. If they accept, he tells them to meet him in the Dark Weavings Bazaar at five bells.
- If Izztyrr is asked how he knew of the PCs, he simply smiles and replies that his organization has contacts "even in the brightest of places."

PCs that succeed at a DC 20 History check know that the Bregan D'aerthe mercenary company is one of the most renowned and powerful mercenary companies in the Underdark. It is led by Jarlaxle Baenre. The company is a wild card in drow politics, known to have contacts and members ranging far and wide across Faerûn's surface as well as throughout the Underdark.

The players may wonder what Izztyrr stands to gain from his manipulation of the situation in Sshamath. While a vulnerable Sshamath means nothing more to Izztyrr than profit, it means grave danger to Elturgard and neighboring nations should the Northdark drow gain control over the territory, given its proximity to the surface. In role-playing Izztyrr, try to help the players realize that they are directly influencing Underdark politics that have an impact on Elturgard.

ENDING THE ENCOUNTER

When Izztyrr leaves, the PCs are faced with a decision. Proceed to the appropriate encounter:

- If the PCs decide to negotiate with Nurissa Vyllshan, proceed to Encounter 4a.
- If the PCs decide to negotiate with Molbelphyr Ilmtar, proceed to Encounter 4b.
- If the PCs wish to take Izztyrr up on his offer and find Vessen on their own, proceed to Encounter 4c.

The PCs can try to negotiate with multiple factions, but ultimately they need to pick one route. To be clear, the characters can only earn XP from one of the following three encounters. See the individual encounters for more details.

ENCOUNTER 4A: DARK DEALINGS

**SKILL CHALLENGE LEVEL 14/16,
COMPLEXITY 1 (1000/1400 XP)**

SETUP

Important NPC: Nurissa Vyllshan

The PCs meet with Nurissa Vyllshan in her audience chambers to negotiate an exchange for Vessen. This encounter does not pose a significant challenge and thus does not contribute towards a milestone.

DM NOTE: PACING

The encounter should take no longer than 30 minutes.

A cadre of drow guards clad in the livery of the School of Darkness escort you to Nurissa Vyllshan's private chambers. The thick stone doors open to reveal a lavishly furnished boudoir. Nurissa, having changed into a much more flattering gown, sits behind a large darkwood table; she has no doubt prepared for your arrival.

Use the PCs' conversation with Nurissa from the previous encounter to guide your roleplaying in this one. Nurissa's forces are already in place, ready to defend key sections of the Stonestave from a potential incursion of Molbelpyr's forces. Nurissa was informed of these "key sections" by Izztyrr. PCs may make a DC 15 Religion check to notice a subtle holy symbol of Shar worn around Nurissa's neck.

SKILL CHALLENGE: SERVICES RENDERED

Goal: The PCs must convince Nurissa Vyllshan to release Vessen into their custody.

Complexity: 1 (4 successes before 3 failures)

Primary Skills: Bluff, Diplomacy, Intimidate, Religion

Other Skills: History, Insight, others at your discretion

Victory: The PCs manage to convince Nurissa to release Vessen into their custody once the School of Blue Fire's forces have been defeated.

Defeat: The PCs fail to convince Nurissa to release Vessen into their custody.

When running the skill challenge, remember that strong points are more important than individual skill rolls. Encourage the players to come up with compelling arguments to convince Nurissa. A number of examples are provided below:

- Nurissa cannot defeat the School of Blue Fire's forces without the PCs' help.
- The PCs have valuable information regarding Molbelpyr's assault plan.
- Without the PCs' help, even if Nurissa wins the battle, Sshamath will be too weak to resist a potential incursion by the Northdark drow.
- The best way to keep Vessen away from Molbelpyr is to hand him over to adventurers or mercenaries to escort him out of the city.

PRIMARY SKILLS

Success with any of the following skills lends a success to the overall skill challenge. Each PC who speaks rolls the skill that best fits his or her apparent negotiation tactic. Nurissa is interested in hearing from all of the adventurers individually, to ensure that each can carry his or her own weight. Stress this during the skill challenge. Drow and warlock PCs gain a +2 bonus on all checks throughout the skill challenge, as Nurissa is favorably inclined towards them. On the other hand, PCs who have the enmity of Shar from a story award (such as from SPEC1-2) suffer a -5 penalty on all their skill checks in this encounter.

Players may find creative uses for primary skills not mentioned below, such as Arcana or History. Encourage creativity in finding ways to sway Nurissa.

Bluff/Diplomacy/Intimidate DC 21/22 (1 success, no maximum)

The PC uses a well-phrased lie, honeyed words, or a well-articulated argument or threat to sway her judgment.

Religion DC 21/22 (1 success; 1 maximum)

The PC impresses Nurissa with a thorough understanding of Shar's religious teachings.

SECONDARY SKILLS

Success or failure with any of the following skills provides the listed bonus or penalty to the use of a primary skill rather than contributing a success or failure to the overall skill challenge.

Insight DC 21/22 (not a success or failure)

By paying close attention to Nurissa's reactions, the PC is able to determine what might sway her the most. This skill must be attempted prior to a primary skill check being made. Success allows an ally to roll twice and take the higher of the two rolls on that primary check. Failure requires the ally to instead take the lower of the two rolls.

History DC 21/22 (not a success or failure)

By leveraging an understanding of drow politics or Underdark battle tactics, the PC helps strengthen an argument. This skill must be attempted prior to a primary skill check being made. Success provides a +2 bonus to that primary check. Failure provides a -2 penalty.

NURISSA'S REACTIONS

Negotiation is much more interesting when both sides make valid points. To better engage the players and help keep the encounter interesting, consider utilizing some of the points Nurissa might make below as PCs succeed or fail at skill checks:

- ***“The paladin is one of the few cards I have remaining to play against Molbelphyr. Why should I give that up?”***
- ***“What do you know of Underdark battle tactics?”***
- ***“How can I be sure that you’ll make as big a difference in the upcoming battle as you claim you will?”***

ENDING THE ENCOUNTER

Success: The PCs have successfully convinced Nurissa to accept their assistance in the coming battle and hand over Vessen in return. If the PCs wish to proceed with helping Nurissa, proceed to Encounter 5a. Alternatively, the PCs may change their mind and decide to accept an audience with Molbelphyr or follow Izztyrr’s advice. In such a case, proceed to Encounter 4b or 4c as appropriate. Keep adventure pacing in mind and remember that PCs cannot receive more than the maximum XP in the adventure.

Failure: The PCs have failed to convince Nurissa to accept their assistance. They must either take Izztyrr’s advice and sneak in on their own, or try to convince Molbelphyr to accept their assistance, if they have not spoken with him already. Proceed to Encounter 4b or 4c as appropriate. Keep adventure pacing in mind and remember that PCs cannot receive more than the maximum XP in the adventure.

EXPERIENCE POINTS

For successfully convincing Nurissa, each PC receives 200/280 experience points. This encounter does not contribute towards a milestone.

ENCOUNTER 4B: A TENUOUS UNION

**SKILL CHALLENGE LEVEL 14/16,
COMPLEXITY 1 (1000/1400 XP)**

SETUP

Important NPC: Molbelphyr Ilmtar

The PCs meet with Molbelphyr Ilmtar in his audience chambers to negotiate an exchange for Vessen. This encounter does not pose a significant challenge and thus does not contribute towards a milestone.

DM NOTE: PACING

The encounter should take no longer than 30 minutes.

A cadre of drow guards clad in the livery of the School of Blue Fire escort you to Molbelphyr Ilmtar's private chambers. The thick stone doors open to reveal a lavishly furnished chamber. Molbelphyr reclines on a large cushion, smoking from an ornate water pipe.

Use the PCs' conversation with Molbelphyr from the previous encounter to guide your roleplaying in this one. Molbelphyr's forces are already in place, ready to storm the Stonestave in an attempt to reach the prison block where Vessen is held.

SKILL CHALLENGE: SERVICES RENDERED

Goal: The PCs must convince Molbelphyr Ilmtar to release Vessen into their custody.

Complexity: 1 (4 successes before 3 failures)

Primary Skills: Arcana, Bluff, Diplomacy, Intimidate

Other Skills: History, Insight, others at your discretion

Victory: The PCs manage to convince Molbelphyr to release Vessen into their custody once the School of Darkness' forces have been defeated.

Defeat: The PCs fail to convince Molbelphyr to release Vessen into their custody.

When running the skill challenge, remember that strong points are more important than individual skill rolls. Encourage the players to come up with compelling arguments to convince Molbelphyr. A number of examples are provided below:

- Molbelphyr cannot defeat the School of Darkness's forces without the PCs' help.

- The PCs have valuable information regarding Nurissa's assault plan.
- Without the PCs' help, even if Molbelphyr wins the battle, Sshamath will be too weak to resist a potential incursion by the Northdark drow.
- Vessen is not who Molbelphyr thinks he is - he is a threat to the School of Blue Fire in some way.

PRIMARY SKILLS

Success in each of the following skills lends a success to the overall skill challenge. Each PC who speaks rolls the skill that best fits his or her apparent negotiation tactic. Molbelphyr is interested in hearing from all of the adventurers individually, to ensure that each can carry his or her own weight. Stress this during the skill challenge. Award a +2 bonus to all checks made by bards or spellscarred PCs throughout the skill challenge. Characters that have the enmity of the Order of Blue Fire (through various story objects, likely including those from ADCP2-1) suffer a -5 penalty on all skill checks in this encounter.

Players may find creative uses for primary skills not mentioned below. Encourage creativity in finding ways to sway Molbelphyr.

Arcana DC 21/22 (1 success; 1 maximum)

The PC impresses Molbelphyr with detailed knowledge of the Spellplague and its effects.

Bluff/Diplomacy/Intimidate DC 21/22 (1 success, no maximum)

The PC uses a well-phrased lie, honeyed words, or a well-articulated argument or threat to sway his judgment.

SECONDARY SKILLS

Success or failure with the following skills provides the listed bonus or penalty to the use of a primary skill rather than contributing a success or failure to the overall skill challenge.

Insight DC 21/22 (not a success or failure)

By paying close attention to Molbelphyr's reactions, the PC is able to determine what might sway him the most. This skill must be attempted prior to a primary skill check being made. Success allows an ally to roll twice and take the higher of the two rolls on that primary check. Failure requires the ally to instead take the lower of the two rolls.

History DC 21/22 (not a success or failure)

By leveraging an understanding of drow politics or Underdark battle tactics, the PC helps strengthen an

argument. This skill must be attempted prior to a primary skill check being made. Success provides a +2 bonus to that primary check. Failure provides a -2 penalty.

MOLBELPHYR'S REACTIONS

Negotiation is much more interesting when both sides make valid points. To better engage the players and help keep the encounter interesting, consider utilizing some of the points Molbelphyr might make below as PCs succeed or fail at skill checks:

- ***“I am sympathetic to all those blessed by the Spellplague. How can I be sure that you will not harm the paladin?”***
- ***“What do you know of Underdark battle tactics?”***
- ***“How can I be sure that you’ll make as big a difference as you claim you will?”***

ENDING THE ENCOUNTER

Success: The PCs have successfully convinced Molbelphyr to accept their assistance in the coming battle and hand over Vessen in return. If the PCs wish to proceed with helping Molbelphyr, proceed to Encounter 5a. Alternatively, the PCs may change their mind and decide to accept an audience with Molbelphyr or follow Izzyrr’s advice. In such a case, proceed to Encounter 4a or 4c as appropriate. Keep adventure pacing in mind and remember that PCs cannot receive more than the maximum XP in the adventure.

Failure: The PCs have failed to convince Molbelphyr to accept their assistance. They must either take Izzyrr’s advice and sneak in on their own, or try to convince Nurissa to accept their assistance, if they have not spoken with her already. Proceed to Encounter 4a or 4c as appropriate. Keep adventure pacing in mind and remember that PCs cannot receive more than the maximum XP in the adventure.

EXPERIENCE POINTS

For successfully convincing Molbelphyr, each PC receives 200/280 experience points. This encounter does not contribute towards a milestone.

ENCOUNTER 4C: SKIRTING THE FRAY

SKILL CHALLENGE LEVEL 14/16, COMPLEXITY 1 (1000/1400 XP)

SETUP

Important NPC: Izztyrr Mae'urden

The PCs sneak past the battles fought between the two schools within the Stonestave in order to reach the prison block where Vessen is being held. As a reward for choosing this option, Izztyrr hands the PCs an *assassin's cloak* +4 before the encounter begins. This encounter does not pose a significant challenge and thus does not contribute towards a milestone.

DM NOTE: PACING

The encounter should take no longer than 30 minutes.

According to Izztyrr, this path to the prison block where Vessen is being held should help you avoid some of the battles within the Stonestave. The route isn't without its dangers, however. The enigmatic drow's final words still echo in your mind: "Go, adventurers, while both sides are still distracted with the battle."

The PCs can enter the Stonestave uncontested, as the guards have been drawn into the various battles taking place within. The skill challenge begins as soon as the PCs head into the Stonestave.

Do not forget to give the PCs the *assassin's cloak* +4 if they follow Izztyrr's advice. (To be clear, Izztyrr does not accompany the PCs; he has other business to take care of.)

SKILL CHALLENGE: SKIRTING THE FRAY

Goal: Sneak through the Stonestave and reach Vessen's prison block without being detected.

Complexity: 1 (special)

Primary Skills: Acrobatics, Athletics, Bluff, Diplomacy, Dungeoneering, Endurance, Intimidate, Stealth

Other Skills: None

Victory: The PCs reach the prison block where Vessen is held without alerting his guards.

Defeat: The PCs reach the prison block where Vessen is held but his guards have been alerted and have had time to prepare.

The PCs undertake parts of this skill challenge individually and parts as a group. During each scene marked as [Group], the PCs contribute either 1 success or 1 failure towards the overall skill challenge by each trying to contribute. However, unlike a typical group skill check, the PCs do not all have to use the same skill. Each character has to attempt a check, but the individual players may choose skills for their characters that are appropriate to the scene. Success or failure on these group skill checks is still determined by the overall number of individual successes vs. individual failures - everyone must attempt a check, and the group must score half or more individual successes in order for the scene or interlude to be considered a success.

If a PC wishes to use a skill not listed below, or a class feature, power, or ritual that accomplishes the same goal, feel free to improvise at your discretion, using the same DCs.

Note that this skill challenge has special failure conditions. The 3 overall failures are for calculating XP only; if the PCs accumulate 3 failures but have not yet completed the skill challenge, continue until they have made it through. Each scene has its own special failure conditions unrelated to XP awards.

SCENE 1: FIND THE PATH (1 SUCCESS)

Izztyrr only quickly described the corridors that the PCs need to take upon entering the Stonestave. Finding the correct path is another matter entirely.

The spiraling corridors of the Stonestave prove to be very confusing and Izztyrr's directions are difficult to follow. It will take some intuition and keen dungeon sense to find the correct path.

Dungeoneering/Perception DC 23/24 (1 success, 1 maximum)

With either a strong familiarity with underground passages or a keen sense of direction, the PC is able to intuit the correct path. Failure here results in a -2 penalty on all skill checks made in the next scene due to a poorly timed arrival.

SCENE 2: THICK OF BATTLE (2 SUCCESSES) [GROUP]

The PCs' path skirts a large battle taking place within the Stonestave. The PCs will need to sneak past. Improvise two scenes in which the PCs need to make it through the battle. Encourage each PC to try various skills by providing interesting scenarios (for example, try to avoid allowing the same PC to roll two Stealth checks, or two Endurance checks). Encourage teamwork and creative thinking.

Your path brings you to a large chamber with circling corridors in which groups of drow battle one another. Making it past this melee without getting drawn into the fray could be tricky.

Stealth/Bluff DC 21/22 (1 success, 1 maximum)

With either stealth or a strong disguise, the PC manages to sneak past the fighting unnoticed. Failure results in the loss of a healing surge as the PC sustains some attacks as he runs by.

Acrobatics/Athletics/Endurance DC 21/22 (1 success, 1 maximum)

With either a quick burst of speed or the ability to ignore minor wounds, the PC manages to make it through the fighting relatively unharmed. Failure results in the loss of a healing surge as the PC sustains some attacks as he runs by.

SCENE 3: PORTCULLIS (1 SUCCESS)

The path eventually leads to a portcullis that separates Vessen's prison block from the tunnels. Nurissa has placed a number of guards here to alert the prison guards (in Encounter 5c) in case the battle goes poorly for her forces.

As your path leads deeper into the Stonestave, your progress is blocked by a thick portcullis guarded by a handful of drow guards.

Bluff/Diplomacy/Intimidate DC 21/22 (1 success, 1 maximum)

With a sharp tongue, soothing words, or a quick subterfuge, the PC is able to convince the guards to back down. Failure here results in the drow shouting into the prison and alerting the grimlock guards (in Encounter 5c) so that they may prepare.

ENDING THE ENCOUNTER

Success: The PCs have successfully made it to the prison block where Vessen is held without alerting the grimlock guards. Proceed to Encounter 5c.

Failure: The PCs still reach the prison block where Vessen is held, but have sustained injuries or worse, alerted the guards to their arrival. Proceed to Encounter 5c.

EXPERIENCE POINTS

For successfully reaching the prison block, each PC receives 200/280 experience points. This encounter does not contribute towards a milestone.

TREASURE

At the beginning of the encounter, Izztyrr gives the PCs an *assassin's cloak* +4 as a reward for acquiescing to his wishes.

ENCOUNTER 5A: DEFENDING THE DARK

ENCOUNTER LEVEL 17/19 (9400/13200 XP)

SETUP

This encounter includes the following creatures and traps at the low tier:

- 1 Krondorl, drow sorcerer (level 16) (K)
- 2 Sshamath blue fire guard (level 15) (G)
- 4 spellfire wisp (level 16) (W)
- 1 Izztyrr Mae'urden (level 16) (Z)

This encounter includes the following creatures and traps at the high tier:

- 1 Krondorl, drow sorcerer (K)
- 2 Sshamath blue fire guard (level 16) (G)
- 4 spellfire wisp (level 18) (W)
- 1 Izztyrr Mae'urden (level 18) (Z)

Run this encounter if PCs agree to help the School of Darkness defend the Stonestave against an assault by the School of Blue Fire. Nurissa Vyllshan promises to hand Vessen over to the PCs if they defend a key chokepoint within the Stonestave.

DM NOTE: PACING

The encounter should take no longer than 1 hour and 15 minutes. If the encounter begins to drag on and the PCs clearly have the upper hand, consider having the remaining enemies flee.

While short, the battles thus far have been intense to say the least. The hit and run tactics of these drow have taken some getting used to and they've proven to be relentless combatants. You find yourselves holding a key chokepoint, waiting for the remainder of the School of Blue Fire's forces to break through...

The PCs may position themselves anywhere on the map. The combat begins after 10 minutes of waiting, although the PCs do not know this. They may make any preparations they would like, though they have no idea which way their opponents will come from. It is recommended that you ask the players if they would like to do anything to prepare at the start of the 10 minutes, and then again after 5 minutes have passed. Use your discretion in adjusting for their preparations.

When the School of Blue Fire forces attack, roll initiative. The NPC starting positions are only recommendations. Feel free to improvise as necessary based on where the PCs have positioned themselves. Krondorl activates *avatars of blue fire* at the start of combat, with each image appearing near each of the four doors - represented by each "K" on the map. A wisp arrives through each doorway. The blue fire guards arrive via stairwell (descending down to the combat).

Izztyrr, angry that the PCs are upsetting the balance between the two factions, appears on the second round of combat on his initiative and joins the fray against the PCs.

Note that because all creatures except Izztyrr are spellscarred, the spellscarred susceptibility and spellplague sense features kick in for any PCs that are also spellscarred. Spellscarred PCs can sense the presence of other spellscarred or plaguechanged creatures within 5 squares, and suffer a -2 penalty to all defenses and saving throws against one another.

EXTRA CHALLENGE OPTION

The options in this section are provided for you to use in order to provide an adequate challenge for players who seek it. Use your best judgment in deciding which (if any) of these options to include:

- The guards deal an additional 1[W] damage with their weapon attacks.
- Four more wisps arrive on the third round of combat.
- Izztyrr sends his opponent's weapon through a gap in the floor to the level below when using *flash disarm*.
- Izztyrr uses Sneak Attack regardless of whether or not his opponent has **CORE38 Bregan D'aerthe Respect**, and performs a coup de grace on any PC that has **CORE40 Bregan D'aerthe Disrespect**.

FEATURES OF THE AREA

Arrow Slits: Arrow slits grant a target standing within 10 feet (2 squares) behind them superior cover. Creatures cannot gain line of effect through an arrow slit against a target more than 10 feet (2 squares) behind it. A creature attacking from 10 feet (2 squares) behind an arrow slit suffers a cover penalty on attacks, but does not suffer this penalty if standing adjacent to it. Creatures may use area bursts against targets behind arrow slits with no penalty.

Walls: The corridor walls (marked by bold black lines) are blocking terrain. Creatures cannot gain line of effect through them except via arrow slits (see above).

Guard Tower: The guard tower is 20 feet (4 squares) above the ground. The stairs are considered difficult terrain (it costs 8 squares of movement to reach the top of the tower from the doorway once the door is opened).

Steps: The wide stone steps that ascend and descend from the chamber are normal terrain, but PCs must succeed on a DC 18 Acrobatics check to avoid falling prone when attempting to run or charge on them.

Dark Areas: The dark square areas on the map reflect the next level (above and below). They do not have any significance in the encounter and are merely used to show where the stairs end.

Gaps: The open sections in the map represent gaps in the floor. These gaps are a 20 foot (4 square) drop. The PCs can reach the floor below via the descending stairs or the spiral stairwell within the guard tower (assume it continues downward indefinitely with an exit every 20 feet).

Light: The chamber is dimly illuminated.

Ceiling: The ceiling in this chamber is 20 feet (4 squares) high.

TACTICS

Krondorl occupies whichever image offers him the best line of effect to attack as many PCs as possible for as long as the effects of *avatars of blue fire* last. Note that his aura extends from the images created by this power as though they were him. He focuses on attacking as many PCs as possible. He uses *slaad's gambit* to escape potentially devastating melee or area attacks.

The blue fire guards tie up any potentially dangerous strikers and defend Krondorl. The spellfire wisps try and push PCs through the gaps, forcing them to fall to the ground below. The wisps are able to fly through arrow slits and do so if necessary to attack their targets.

Izztyrr is a cunning opponent who specializes in assassination. He avoids using his *sneak attack* feature against any PC that has **CORE38 Bregan D'aerthe Respect**. When given the opportunity, he uses *flashy disarm* to disarm his opponent, but does not throw a PCs' weapon or implement through the gap to the floor below (unless you are using the extra challenge option). If this proves too frustrating for the players, try to use this tactic in moderation (although giving a swordmage the opportunity to use *sword bond* or a wizard to use *mage hand* to retrieve a disarmed weapon would be a rewarding use of the power). Izztyrr tries to escape when reduced to one-quarter of his hit points. If he manages to make it past the top or bottom of either stairwell, assume he makes his escape.

SCALING THE ENCOUNTER

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

Four PCs: Remove a blue fire guard.

Six PCs: Add another blue fire guard.

ENDING THE ENCOUNTER

Once the PCs defeat the drow, Nurissa keeps her word and sends the PCs to the prison block where Vessen is being held, escorted by a handful of drow guards. Proceed to Encounter 6.

EXPERIENCE POINTS

The characters receive 1880/2640 experience points each for defeating the drow.

TREASURE

The PCs find *tactician's armor* +4 on the fallen drow and Nurissa rewards the PCs with a suit of *shadow warlock's armor* +4. If they managed to kill Izztyrr, they find an *assassin's cloak* +4 on his person.

ENCOUNTER 5A: DEFENDING THE DARK STATISTICS (LOW LEVEL)

Krondorl, Drow Sorcerer (level 16)	Level 16 Elite Artillery
Medium fey humanoid (drow, spellscarred)	XP 2,800
Initiative +17 Senses Perception +15; darkvision	
Noble Authority aura sight; drow and spellscarred allies in the aura gain a +2 bonus to attack and damage rolls.	
HP 262; Bloodied 131	
AC 30; Fortitude 25, Reflex 27, Will 32	
Resist 10 fire, 10 force	
Saving Throws +2	
Speed 7	
Action Points 1	
m Staff (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon	
+21 vs. AC; 1d8 + 8 damage.	
R Blue Fire Web (standard; at-will) ♦ Fire, Force	
Ranged 5; +20 vs. Reflex; 1d10 + 13 fire damage, and the target is immobilized and gains vulnerable 5 force (save ends both).	
R Darkfire (minor; encounter)	
Ranged 10; +20 vs. Reflex; until the end of Krondorl's next turn, the target grants combat advantage to all attacks, and the target cannot benefit from invisibility or concealment.	
A Wrath of Blue Fire (standard; recharge 6) ♦ Fire, Force	
Area burst 2 within 10; targets enemies; +20 vs. Will; 4d10 + 13 fire and force damage and the target is blinded (save ends).	
C Spellfire Flare (standard; recharge 5-6) ♦ Force	
Close burst 5; targets enemies; +20 vs. Fortitude; 3d8 + 13 force damage and the target is dazed (save ends). Spellscarred allies in the burst gain 10 hit points.	
A Plagueburst (standard; encounter) ♦ Fire, Force	
Area burst 1 within 10; +20 vs. Reflex; 2d8 + 13 force damage, and the target is knocked prone. A target in the origin square of the burst also takes 3d8 fire damage.	
Avatars of Blue Fire (minor; daily) ♦ Fire, Force	
Krondorl conjures 4 images within 10 squares and disappears from the world. Each image acts as a minion in all respects and lasts until the end of the encounter or until destroyed. At the start of each of his turns, Krondorl occupies one image of his choice, allowing him to act normally. When an image that Krondorl occupies is destroyed, he may move to another image as a free action. While occupying an image, Krondorl gains a +1 bonus to attack rolls with fire or force powers. When all images are destroyed, Krondorl reappears in a square of his choosing.	
R Slaad's Gambit (immediate interrupt, when hit by an attack; encounter) ♦ Psychic, Teleportation	
Ranged 10; before the attack, Krondorl teleports 7 squares; +20 vs. Will; 2d10 + 13 psychic damage.	
Plaguetouched Soul (immediate interrupt, when hit by an attack; encounter)	
Krondorl loses all resistances until the end of the encounter and gains a +4 bonus to all defenses until the end of his next turn.	
Alignment Evil Languages Common, Elven, Deep Speech	
Skills Arcana +15, Bluff +19, Insight +15, Stealth +20	
Str 12 (+9) Dex 20 (+13) Wis 14 (+10)	
Con 12 (+9) Int 15 (+10) Cha 22 (+14)	
Equipment robes, staff	

Note: Drow noble (*Revenge of the Giants*) with sorcerer class template, reflavored as spellscarred (energy keywords changed to fire and force).

Sshamath Blue Fire Guard (level 15)	Level 15 Soldier
Medium fey humanoid (drow, spellscarred)	XP 1,200
Initiative +11 Senses Perception +13	
HP 155; Bloodied 77	
AC 31; Fortitude 29, Reflex 24, Will 27	
Speed 5	
m Scimitar (standard; at-will) ♦ Force, Weapon	
+22 vs. AC; 1d8 + 8 damage plus 6 force damage (critical 2d8 + 17 plus 6 force), and the target is marked until the end of the blue fire guard's next turn.	
r Longbow (standard; at-will) ♦ Force, Weapon	
Ranged 20/40; +20 vs. AC; 1d10 + 3 damage plus 6 force damage, and the target is marked until the end of the blue fire guard's next turn.	
Blue Fire Spike (minor; recharge 3-6) ♦ Force	
Until the start of the blue fire guard's next turn, his weapons become energy, attacking the target's Reflex instead of AC and dealing an extra 1d12 force damage.	
C Cloud of Darkness (minor; encounter)	
Close burst 1; this power creates a zone of darkness that remains in place until the end of the drow's next turn. The zone blocks line of sight for all creatures except drow.	
Knight's Eye (immediate interrupt, when an adjacent enemy shifts or an adjacent enemy marked by the blue fire guard attacks an ally; at-will) ♦ Force, Weapon	
The blue fire guard makes a basic attack against the enemy.	
Forceful Critical	
On a critical hit with any attack, the target also slides 2 squares.	
Alignment Evil Languages Common, Elven, Deep Speech	
Skills Athletics +16, Stealth +14	
Str 22 (+13) Dex 15 (+9) Wis 20 (+12)	
Con 19 (+11) Int 11 (+7) Cha 18 (+11)	
Equipment scale armor, heavy shield, scimitar, longbow, 20 arrows	
Note: Knight Accordant (FRCG), reflavored as drow, based on Knight Accordant from ADCP2-1.	

Spellfire Wisp (level 16)	Level 16 Minion
Small elemental humanoid (air, demon)	XP 350
Initiative +15 Senses Perception +13; darkvision	
Buffeting Winds aura 2; each creature within the aura takes a -2 penalty to attack rolls with ranged and area attacks.	
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.	
AC 30; Fortitude 28, Reflex 30, Will 26	
Speed fly 6	
m Wind and Spellfire (standard; at-will)	
+20 vs. Fortitude; 8 damage plus 4 force damage, and the spellfire wisp slides the target 3 squares. The spellfire wisp can then shift 1 square or move 3 squares as a free action.	
Alignment Unaligned Languages Common	
Str 18 (+12) Dex 24 (+15) Wis 20 (+13)	
Con 20 (+10) Int 14 (+10) Cha 17 (+11)	
Note: Dust Wisp (<i>Plane Below</i>), reflavored as spellplague-related.	

ENCOUNTER 5A: DEFENDING THE DARK STATISTICS (LOW LEVEL)

Izzyrr Mae'urden (level 16)	Level 16 Elite Skirmisher
Medium fey humanoid (drow)	XP 2,800
Initiative +18 Senses Perception +16; darkvision	
HP 310; Bloodied 155	
AC 34; Fortitude 29, Reflex 33, Will 30	
Saving Throws +2	
Speed 8	
Action Points 1	
m Dagger (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon	
+22 vs. AC; 2d4 + 12 damage (crit 4d6 + 20).	
r Thrown Dagger (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon	
Ranged 5/10; +22 vs. AC; 2d4 + 12 damage (crit 4d6 + 20).	
Ambidextrous Fencer (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon	
Izzyrr makes two dagger attacks, or one dagger attack and one thrown dagger attack. If both attacks hit the same target, that target is dazed until the end of Izzyrr's next turn.	
M Flashy Disarm (standard; recharge 5-6) ♦ Weapon	
+22 vs. Reflex; 6d4 + 12 damage (crit 4d6 + 36), and the target drops one weapon or implement it is holding. It lands in a square of Izzyrr's choice up to 6 squares away.	
R No Escape (immediate interrupt, when an enemy leaves an adjacent square or enters a square where it has cover or concealment against Izzyrr; recharge 5-6) ♦ Weapon	
Ranged 5/10; +22 vs. AC; 4d4 + 12 damage (crit 4d6 + 28), and the target is knocked prone.	
R Darkfire (minor; encounter)	
Ranged 10; +20 vs. Reflex; until the end of Izzyrr's next turn, the target grants combat advantage to all attacks, and the target cannot benefit from concealment or invisibility.	
C Cloud of Darkness (minor; encounter)	
Close burst 1; this power creates a zone of darkness that remains in place until the end of Izzyrr's next turn. The zone blocks line of sight for all creatures except Izzyrr.	
Whirling Evasion (immediate interrupt, when hit by a melee attack; encounter)	
Izzyrr shifts up to 6 squares.	
Sneak Attack	
Once per round, when Izzyrr hits a target that is granting him combat advantage, he deals an additional 3d8 damage.	
Alignment Unaligned Languages Common, Elven, Deep Speech	
Skills Acrobatics +21, Bluff +19, Insight +16, Stealth +23	
Str 15 (+10) Dex 26 (+16) Wis 16 (+11)	
Con 19 (+12) Int 16 (+11) Cha 22 (+14)	
Equipment +4 dagger, dagger x3, drowmesh armor, crossbow	
Note: Jarlaxle Baenre (FRCG), rapier exchanged for dagger, magic item power replaced with Rogue power.	

ENCOUNTER 5A: DEFENDING THE DARK STATISTICS (HIGH LEVEL)

Kronдорl, Drow Sorcerer	Level 18 Elite Artillery
Medium fey humanoid (drow, spellscarred)	XP 4,000
Initiative +18 Senses Perception +16; darkvision	
Noble Authority aura sight; drow and spellscarred allies in the aura gain a +2 bonus to attack and damage rolls	
HP 286; Bloodied 143	
AC 32; Fortitude 28, Reflex 29, Will 34	
Resist 10 fire, 10 force	
Saving Throws +2	
Speed 7	
Action Points 1	
m Staff (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon	
+23 vs. AC; 1d8 + 9 damage.	
R Blue Fire Web (standard; at-will) ♦ Fire, Force	
Ranged 5; +22 vs. Reflex; 1d10 + 14 fire damage, and the target is immobilized and gains vulnerable 5 force (save ends both).	
R Darkfire (minor; encounter)	
Ranged 10; +22 vs. Reflex; until the end of Kronдорl's next turn, the target grants combat advantage to all attacks, and the target cannot benefit from invisibility or concealment.	
A Wrath of Blue Fire (standard; recharge 6) ♦ Fire, Force	
Area burst 2 within 10; targets enemies; +22 vs. Will; 4d10 + 14 fire and force damage and the target is blinded (save ends).	
C Spellfire Flare (standard; recharge 5-6) ♦ Force	
Close burst 5; targets enemies; +22 vs. Fortitude; 3d8 + 14 force damage and the target is dazed (save ends). Spellscarred allies in the burst gain 10 hit points.	
A Plagueburst (standard; encounter) ♦ Fire, Force	
Area burst 1 within 10; +22 vs. Reflex; 2d8 + 14 force damage, and the target is knocked prone. A target in the origin square of the burst also takes 3d8 fire damage.	
Avatars of Blue Fire (minor; daily) ♦ Fire, Force	
Kronдорl conjures 4 images within 10 squares and disappears from the world. Each image acts as a minion in all respects and lasts until the end of the encounter or until destroyed. At the start of each of his turns, Kronдорl occupies one image of his choice, allowing him to act normally. When an image that Kronдорl occupies is destroyed, he may move to another image as a free action. While occupying an image, Kronдорl gains a +1 bonus to attack rolls with fire or force powers. When all images are destroyed, Kronдорl reappears in a square of his choosing.	
R Slaad's Gambit (immediate interrupt, when hit by an attack; encounter) ♦ Psychic, Teleportation	
Ranged 10; before the attack, Kronдорl teleports 7 squares; +22 vs. Will; 2d10 + 14 psychic damage.	
Plaguetouched Soul (immediate interrupt, when hit by an attack; encounter)	
Kronдорl loses all resistances until the end of the encounter and gains a +4 bonus to all defenses until the end of his next turn.	
Alignment Evil	Languages Common, Elven, Deep Speech
Skills Arcana +16, Bluff +20, Insight +15, Stealth +21	
Str 12 (+9)	Dex 21 (+13) Wis 15 (+10)
Con 12 (+9)	Int 15 (+10) Cha 22 (+14)
Equipment robes, staff	

Note: Drow noble (*Revenge of the Giants*) with sorcerer class template, reflavored as spellscarred (energy keywords changed to fire and force).

Sshamath Blue Fire Guard (level 16)	Level 16 Soldier
Medium fey humanoid (drow, spellscarred)	XP 1,400
Initiative +12 Senses Perception +14	
HP 155; Bloodied 77	
AC 32; Fortitude 30, Reflex 25, Will 28	
Speed 5	
m Scimitar (standard; at-will) ♦ Force, Weapon	
+23 vs. AC; 1d8 + 9 damage plus 6 force damage (critical 2d8 + 17 plus 6 force), and the target is marked until the end of the blue fire guard's next turn.	
r Longbow (standard; at-will) ♦ Force, Weapon	
Ranged 20/40; +21 vs. AC; 1d10 + 4 damage plus 6 force damage, and the target is marked until the end of the blue fire guard's next turn.	
Blue Fire Spike (minor; recharge 3-6) ♦ Force	
Until the start of the blue fire guard's next turn, his weapons become energy, attacking the target's Reflex instead of AC and dealing an extra 1d12 force damage.	
C Cloud of Darkness (minor; encounter)	
Close burst 1; this power creates a zone of darkness that remains in place until the end of the drow's next turn. The zone blocks line of sight for all creatures except drow.	
Knight's Eye (immediate interrupt, when an adjacent enemy shifts or an adjacent enemy marked by the blue fire guard attacks an ally; at-will) ♦ Force, Weapon	
The blue fire guard makes a basic attack against the enemy.	
Forceful Critical	
On a critical hit with any attack, the target also slides 2 squares.	
Alignment Evil	Languages Common, Elven, Deep Speech
Skills Athletics +17, Stealth +15	
Str 22 (+14)	Dex 15 (+10) Wis 20 (+13)
Con 19 (+12)	Int 11 (+8) Cha 18 (+12)
Equipment scale armor, heavy shield, scimitar, longbow, 20 arrows	

Note: Knight Accordant (*FRCG*), reflavored as drow, based on Knight Accordant from ADCP2-1.

Spellfire Wisp (Level 18)	Level 18 Minion
Small elemental humanoid (air, demon)	XP 500
Initiative +16 Senses Perception +14; darkvision	
Buffeting Winds aura 2; each creature within the aura takes a -2 penalty to attack rolls with ranged and area attacks.	
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.	
AC 32; Fortitude 30, Reflex 32, Will 28	
Speed fly 6	
m Wind and Spellfire (standard; at-will)	
+22 vs. Fortitude; 9 damage plus 4 force damage, and the spellfire wisp slides the target 3 squares. The spellfire wisp can then shift 1 square or move 3 squares as a free action.	
Alignment Unaligned	Languages Common
Str 19 (+13)	Dex 25 (+16) Wis 20 (+14)
Con 20 (+14)	Int 14 (+11) Cha 17 (+12)

Note: Dust Wisp (*Plane Below*), reflavored as spellplague-related.

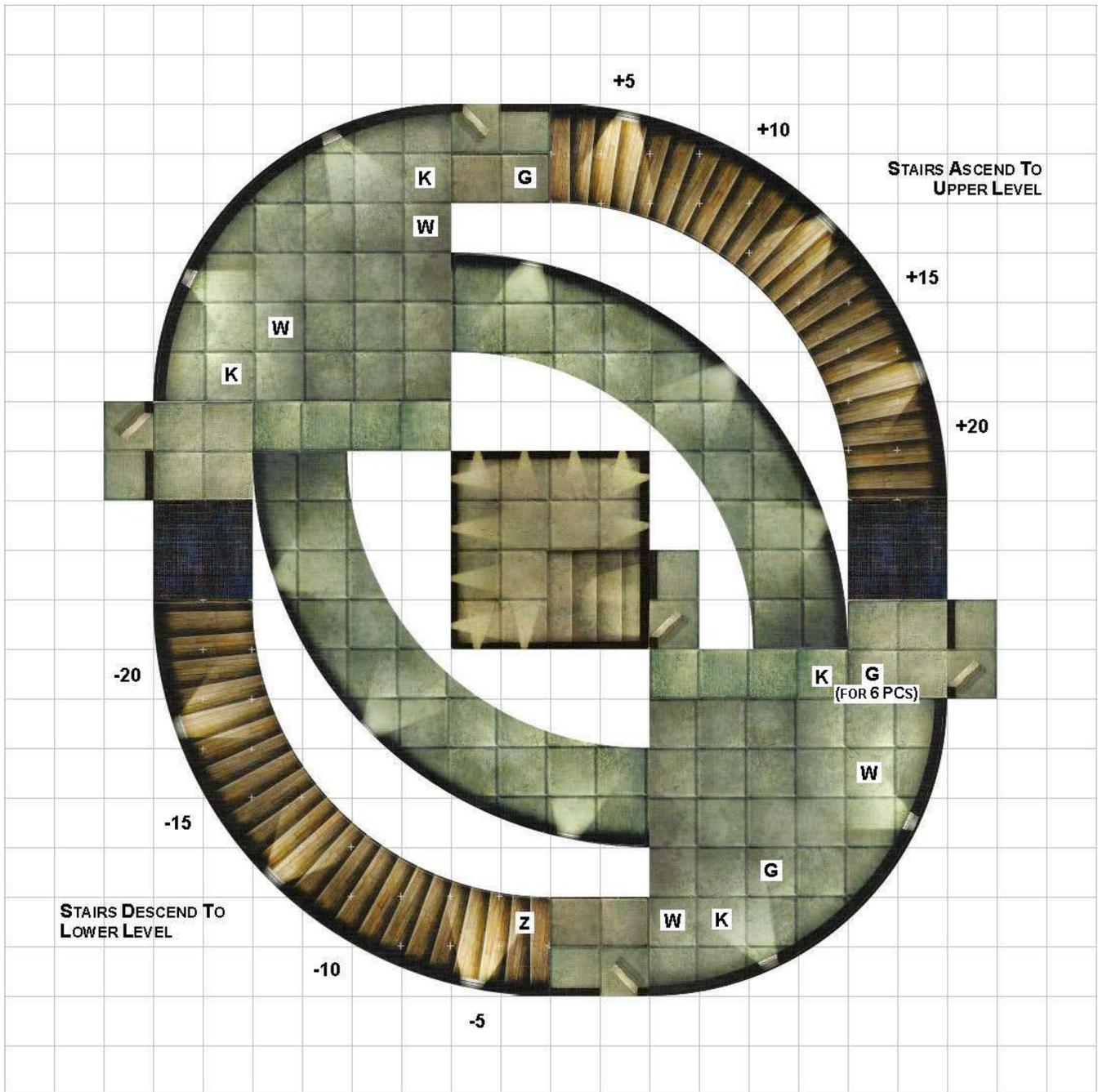
ENCOUNTER 5A: DEFENDING THE DARK STATISTICS (HIGH LEVEL)

Izzyrr Mae'urden (level 18)	Level 18 Elite Skirmisher
Medium fey humanoid (drow)	XP 4,000
Initiative +19 Senses Perception +17; darkvision	
HP 344; Bloodied 172	
AC 36; Fortitude 31, Reflex 35, Will 32	
Saving Throws +2	
Speed 8	
Action Points 1	
m Dagger (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon	
+24 vs. AC; 2d4 + 13 damage (crit 4d6 + 21).	
r Thrown Dagger (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon	
Ranged 5/10; +24 vs. AC; 2d4 + 13 damage (crit 4d6 + 21).	
Ambidextrous Fencer (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon	
Izzyrr makes two dagger attacks, or one dagger attack and one thrown dagger attack. If both attacks hit the same target, that target is dazed until the end of Izzyrr's next turn.	
M Flashy Disarm (standard; recharge 5-6) ♦ Weapon	
+24 vs. Reflex; 6d4 +13 damage (crit 4d6 + 37), and the target drops one weapon or implement it is holding. It lands in a square of Izzyrr's choice up to 6 squares away.	
R No Escape (immediate interrupt, when an enemy leaves an adjacent square or enters a square where it has cover or concealment against Izzyrr; recharge 5-6) ♦ Weapon	
Ranged 5/10; +24 vs. AC; 4d4 + 13 damage (crit 4d6 + 29), and the target is knocked prone.	
R Darkfire (minor; encounter)	
Ranged 10; +22 vs. Reflex; until the end of Izzyrr's next turn, the target grants combat advantage to all attacks, and the target cannot benefit from concealment or invisibility.	
C Cloud of Darkness (minor; encounter)	
Close burst 1; this power creates a zone of darkness that remains in place until the end of Izzyrr's next turn. The zone blocks line of sight for all creatures except Izzyrr.	
Whirling Evasion (immediate interrupt, when hit by a melee attack; encounter)	
Izzyrr shifts up to 6 squares.	
Sneak Attack	
Once per round, when Izzyrr hits a target that is granting him combat advantage, he deals an additional 3d8 damage.	
Alignment Unaligned Languages Common, Elven, Deep Speech	
Skills Acrobatics +22, Bluff +20, Insight +17, Stealth +24	
Str 15 (+11)	Dex 27 (+17) Wis 16 (+12)
Con 20 (+14)	Int 16 (+12) Cha 22 (+15)
Equipment +4 dagger, dagger x3, drowmesh armor, crossbow	
Note: Jarlaxle Baenre (FRCG), rapier exchanged for dagger, magic item power replaced with Rogue power.	

ENCOUNTER 5A: DEFENDING THE DARK MAP

TILE SETS NEEDED

Arcane Towers x2, Halls of the Giant Kings x2



ENCOUNTER 5B: BLUE FIRE ASSAULT

ENCOUNTER LEVEL 17/19 (9400/13200 XP)

SETUP

This encounter includes the following creatures and traps at the low tier:

- 1 Felyndiira, drow warlock (level 16) (F)
- 2 Sshamath dark guard (level 15) (G)
- 4 dark pact wisp (level 16) (W)
- 1 Izztyrr Mae'urden (level 16) (Z)

This encounter includes the following creatures and traps at the high tier:

- 1 Felyndiira, drow warlock (F)
- 2 Sshamath dark guard (level 16) (G)
- 4 dark pact wisp (level 18) (W)
- 1 Izztyrr Mae'urden (level 18) (Z)

Run this encounter if the PCs agree to help the School of Blue Fire assault the School of Darkness in an attempt to capture the Stonespire. Molbelpyr promises to hand Vessen over to the PCs if they help him defeat Nurissa's forces.

DM NOTE: PACING

The encounter should take no longer than 1 hour and 15 minutes. If the encounter begins to drag on and the PCs clearly have the upper hand, consider having the remaining enemies flee.

While short, the battles thus far have been intense to say the least. The hit and run tactics of these drow have taken some getting used to and they've proven to be relentless combatants. You find yourselves approaching a key chokepoint where the remainder of the School of Darkness' forces have prepared to make a stand...

The PCs arrive on the map via the stairwell descending into the chamber. Roll initiative immediately when the PCs place themselves on the map. The NPC starting positions are only recommendations.

Izztyrr, angry that the PCs are upsetting the balance between the two factions, appears on the second round of combat on his initiative and joins the fray against the PCs.

FEATURES OF THE AREA

Arrow Slits: Arrow slits grant a target standing within 10 feet (2 squares) behind them superior cover. Creatures cannot gain line of effect through an arrow slit against a target more than 10 feet (2 squares) behind it. A creature attacking from 10 feet (2 squares) behind an arrow slit suffers a cover penalty on attacks, but does not suffer this penalty if standing adjacent to it. Creatures may use area bursts against targets behind arrow slits with no penalty.

Walls: The corridor walls (marked by bold black lines) are blocking terrain. Creatures cannot gain line of effect through them except via arrow slits (see above).

Guard Tower: The guard tower is 20 feet (4 squares) above the ground. The stairs are considered difficult terrain (it costs 8 squares of movement to reach the top of the tower from the doorway once the door is opened). The door that leads into the guard tower is closed but not locked.

Steps: The wide stone steps that ascend and descend from the chamber are normal terrain, but PCs must succeed on a DC 18 Acrobatics check to avoid falling prone when attempting to run or charge on them.

Dark Areas: The dark square areas on the map reflect the next level (above and below). They do not have any significance in the encounter and are merely used to show where the stairs end.

Gaps: The open sections in the map represent gaps in the floor. These gaps are a 20 foot (4 square) drop. The PCs can reach the floor below via the descending stairs or the spiral stairwell within the guard tower (assume it continues downward indefinitely with an exit every 20 feet).

Light: The chamber is dimly illuminated.

Ceiling: The ceiling in this chamber is 20 feet (4 squares) high.

EXTRA CHALLENGE OPTION

The options in this section are provided for you to use in order to provide an adequate challenge for players who seek it. Use your best judgment in deciding which of these options (if any) to include:

- The guards deal an additional 1[W] damage with their weapon attacks.
- Four more wisps arrive on the third round of combat.
- Izztyrr sends his opponent's weapon through a gap in the floor to the level below when using *flash disarm*.
- Izztyrr uses Sneak Attack regardless of whether or not his opponent has **CORE38 Bregan D'aerthe Respect**, and performs a coup de grace

on any PC that has **CORE40 Bregan D'aerthe Disrespect**.

tactician's armor +4. If they managed to kill Izztyrr, they find an *assassin's cloak* +4 on his person.

TACTICS

Felyndiira sets up a defensive position within the guard tower and attacks the PCs through the arrow slits. She focuses on attacking as many PCs as possible. She uses *infuriating elusiveness* to escape from potentially devastating melee-focused opponents.

The blue fire guards tie up any potentially dangerous strikers and defend Felyndiira. The spellfire wisps try and push PCs through the gaps, forcing them to fall to the ground below. The wisps are able to fly through arrow slits and do so if necessary to attack their targets.

Izztyrr is a cunning opponent who specializes in assassination. He avoids using his *sneak attack* feature against any PC that has **CORE38 Bregan D'aerthe Respect**. When given the opportunity, he uses *flashy disarm* to disarm his opponent, but does not throw a PCs' weapon or implement through the gap to the floor below (unless you are using the extra challenge option). If this proves too frustrating for the players, try to use this tactic in moderation (although giving a swordmage the opportunity to use *sword bond* or a wizard to use *mage hand* to retrieve a disarmed weapon would be a rewarding use of the power). Izztyrr tries to escape when reduced to one-quarter of his hit points. If he manages to make it past the top or bottom of either stairwell, assume he makes his escape.

SCALING THE ENCOUNTER

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

Four PCs: Remove a dark guard.

Six PCs: Add another dark guard.

ENDING THE ENCOUNTER

Once the PCs defeat the drow, Molbelphyr keeps his word and sends the PCs to the prison block where Vessen is being held, escorted by a handful of drow guards. Proceed to Encounter 6.

EXPERIENCE POINTS

The characters receive 1880/2640 experience points each for defeating the drow.

TREASURE

The PCs find *shadow warlock's armor* +4 on the fallen drow and Molbelphyr rewards the PCs with a suit of

ENCOUNTER 5B: BLUE FIRE ASSAULT STATISTICS (LOW LEVEL)

Felyndiira, Drow Warlock (level 16) Level 16 Elite Artillery	
Medium fey humanoid (drow)	XP 2,800
Initiative +14 Senses Perception +15; darkvision	
Noble Authority aura sight; drow and spider allies in the aura gain a +2 bonus to attack and damage rolls	
HP 296; Bloodied 148	
AC 30; Fortitude 26, Reflex 27, Will 31	
Saving Throws +2	
Speed 7	
Action Points 1	
m Barbed Rod (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon	
+21 vs. AC; 1d8 + 8 damage.	
R Psychic Web (standard; at-will) ♦ Psychic	
Ranged 5; +20 vs. Will; 1d10 + 13 psychic damage, and the target is immobilized and gains vulnerable 5 psychic (save ends both).	
R Darkfire (minor; encounter)	
Ranged 10; +20 vs. Reflex; until the end of Felyndiira's next turn, the target grants combat advantage to all attacks, and the target cannot benefit from invisibility or concealment.	
A Shadow Wrath (standard; recharge 6) ♦ Necrotic	
Area burst 2 within 10; targets enemies; +20 vs. Will; 4d10 + 8 necrotic damage and the target is blinded (save ends).	
C Maddening Oratory (standard; recharge 5-6) ♦ Psychic	
Close burst 5; targets enemies; +20 vs. Will; 3d8 + 8 psychic damage and the target is dazed (save ends). Drow allies in the burst gain 10 hit points.	
A Force of Nature (standard; encounter)	
Ranged 10; +20 vs. Fortitude; 6d10 + 8 damage, and the target is knocked prone and pushed 5 squares. <i>Miss</i> : Half damage and the target is pushed 1 square.	
Infuriating Elusiveness (move; recharge 4-6)	
Felyndiira teleports 4 squares and becomes invisible until the start of her next turn.	
R Dark Reach of Xevut (immediate reaction, when an enemy within 10 squares saves against an effect; encounter) ♦ Psychic	
Ranged 10; triggering enemy; +20 vs. Will; 2d8 + 8 psychic damage. One enemy within 3 squares of the target gains the effect that the target saved against and Felyndiira gains a +5 bonus on saving throws until the end of her next turn.	
Warlock's Curse (minor action; 1/round; at-will)	
Felyndiira places a Warlock's Curse on the nearest enemy that she can see. Once per round, Felyndiira gains a +2d6 bonus to a single damage roll against a cursed enemy.	
Alignment Evil	Languages Common, Elven, Deep Speech
Skills Arcana +18, Bluff +19, Insight +15, Stealth +17	
Str 12 (+9)	Dex 15 (+10) Wis 14 (+10)
Con 12 (+9)	Int 20 (+13) Cha 22 (+14)
Equipment robes, staff	

Note: Drow noble (*Revenge of the Giants*) with warlock class template, utility power set to recharge for simplicity.

Sshamath Dark Guard (level 15) Level 15 Soldier	
Medium fey humanoid (drow)	XP 1,200
Initiative +11 Senses Perception +13	
HP 143; Bloodied 71	
AC 31; Fortitude 29, Reflex 24, Will 27	
Speed 5	
m Scimitar (standard; at-will) ♦ Psychic, Weapon	
+22 vs. AC; 1d8 + 8 damage plus 6 psychic damage (critical 2d8 + 17 plus 6 psychic), and the target is marked until the end of the dark guard's next turn.	
r Longbow (standard; at-will) ♦ Psychic, Weapon	
Ranged 20/40; +20 vs. AC; 1d10 + 3 damage plus 6 psychic damage, and the target is marked until the end of the dark guard's next turn.	
Dark Spike (minor; recharge 3-6) ♦ Force	
Until the start of the dark guard's next turn, his weapons become dark energy, attacking the target's Reflex instead of AC and dealing an extra 1d12 psychic damage.	
C Cloud of Darkness (minor; encounter)	
Close burst 1; this power creates a zone of darkness that remains in place until the end of the drow's next turn. The zone blocks line of sight for all creatures except drow.	
Knight's Eye (immediate interrupt, when an adjacent enemy shifts or an adjacent enemy marked by the dark guard attacks an ally; at-will) ♦ Force, Weapon	
The dark guard makes a basic attack against the enemy.	
Forceful Critical	
On a critical hit with any attack, the target also slides 2 squares.	
Alignment Evil	Languages Common, Elven, Deep Speech
Skills Athletics +16, Stealth +14	
Str 22 (+13)	Dex 15 (+9) Wis 20 (+12)
Con 19 (+11)	Int 11 (+7) Cha 18 (+11)
Equipment scale armor, heavy shield, scimitar, longbow, 20 arrows	
Note: Knight Accordant (FRCG), reflavored as drow, based on Knight Accordant from ADGP2-1.	

Dark Pact Wisp (level 16) Level 16 Minion	
Small elemental humanoid (air, demon)	XP 350
Initiative +15 Senses Perception +13; darkvision	
Buffeting Winds aura 2; each creature within the aura takes a -2 penalty to attack rolls with ranged and area attacks.	
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.	
AC 30; Fortitude 28, Reflex 30, Will 26	
Speed fly 6	
m Wind and Darkness (standard; at-will)	
+20 vs. Fortitude; 8 damage plus 4 necrotic damage, and the dark pact wisp slides the target 3 squares. The dark pact wisp can then shift 1 square or move 3 squares as a free action.	
Alignment Unaligned Languages Common	
Skills	
Str 18 (+12)	Dex 24 (+9) Wis 20 (+9)
Con 20 (+10)	Int 14 (+8) Cha 17 (+10)
Note: Dust Wisp (<i>Plane Below</i>), reflavored as dark pact-related.	

ENCOUNTER 5B: BLUE FIRE ASSAULT STATISTICS (LOW LEVEL)

Izzyrr Mae'urden (level 16)	Level 16 Elite Skirmisher
Medium fey humanoid (drow)	XP 2,800
Initiative +18 Senses Perception +16; darkvision	
HP 310; Bloodied 155	
AC 34; Fortitude 29, Reflex 33, Will 30	
Saving Throws +2	
Speed 8	
Action Points 1	
m Dagger (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon	
+22 vs. AC; 2d4 + 12 damage (crit 4d6 + 20).	
r Thrown Dagger (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon	
Ranged 5/10; +22 vs. AC; 2d4 + 12 damage (crit 4d6 + 20).	
Ambidextrous Fencer (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon	
Izzyrr makes two dagger attacks, or one dagger attack and one thrown dagger attack. If both attacks hit the same target, that target is dazed until the end of Izzyrr's next turn.	
M Flashy Disarm (standard; recharge 5-6) ♦ Weapon	
+22 vs. Reflex; 6d4 +12 damage (crit 4d6 + 36), and the target drops one weapon or implement it is holding. It lands in a square of Izzyrr's choice up to 6 squares away.	
R No Escape (immediate interrupt, when an enemy leaves an adjacent square or enters a square where it has cover or concealment against Izzyrr; recharge 5-6) ♦ Weapon	
Ranged 5/10; +22 vs. AC; 4d4 + 12 damage (crit 4d6 + 28), and the target is knocked prone.	
R Darkfire (minor; encounter)	
Ranged 10; +20 vs. Reflex; until the end of Izzyrr's next turn, the target grants combat advantage to all attacks, and the target cannot benefit from concealment or invisibility.	
C Cloud of Darkness (minor; encounter)	
Close burst 1; this power creates a zone of darkness that remains in place until the end of Izzyrr's next turn. The zone blocks line of sight for all creatures except Izzyrr.	
Whirling Evasion (immediate interrupt, when hit by a melee attack; encounter)	
Izzyrr shifts up to 6 squares.	
Sneak Attack	
Once per round, when Izzyrr hits a target that is granting him combat advantage, he deals an additional 3d8 damage.	
Alignment Unaligned	Languages Common, Elven, Deep Speech
Skills Acrobatics +21, Bluff +19, Insight +16, Stealth +23	
Str 15 (+10)	Dex 26 (+16) Wis 16 (+11)
Con 19 (+12)	Int 16 (+11) Cha 22 (+14)
Equipment +4 dagger, dagger x3, drowmesh armor, crossbow	
Note: Jarlaxle Baenre (FRCG), rapier exchanged for dagger, magic item power replaced with Rogue power.	

ENCOUNTER 5B: BLUE FIRE ASSAULT STATISTICS (HIGH LEVEL)

Felyndiira, Drow Warlock	Level 18 Elite Artillery
Medium fey humanoid (drow)	XP 4,000
Initiative +16 Senses Perception +16; darkvision	
Noble Authority aura sight; drow and spider allies in the aura gain a +2 bonus to attack and damage rolls	
HP 328; Bloodied 164	
AC 32; Fortitude 28, Reflex 29, Will 33	
Saving Throws +2	
Speed 7	
Action Points 1	
m Barbed Rod (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon	
+23 vs. AC; 1d8 + 9 damage.	
R Psychic Web (standard; at-will) ♦ Psychic	
Ranged 5; +22 vs. Will; 1d10 + 14 psychic damage, and the target is immobilized and gains vulnerable 5 psychic (save ends both).	
R Darkfire (minor; encounter)	
Ranged 10; +22 vs. Reflex; until the end of Felyndiira's next turn, the target grants combat advantage to all attacks, and the target cannot benefit from invisibility or concealment.	
A Shadow Wrath (standard; recharge 6) ♦ Necrotic	
Area burst 2 within 10; targets enemies; +22 vs. Will; 4d10 + 9 necrotic damage and the target is blinded (save ends).	
C Maddening Oratory (standard; recharge 5-6) ♦ Psychic	
Close burst 5; targets enemies; +22 vs. Will; 3d8 + 9 psychic damage and the target is dazed (save ends). Drow allies in the burst gain 10 hit points.	
A Force of Nature (standard; encounter)	
Ranged 10; +22 vs. Fortitude; 6d10 + 9 damage, and the target is knocked prone and pushed 5 squares. <i>Miss</i> : Half damage and the target is pushed 1 square.	
Infuriating Elusiveness (move; recharge 4-6)	
Felyndiira teleports 4 squares and becomes invisible until the start of her next turn.	
R Dark Reach of Xevut (immediate reaction, when an enemy within 10 squares saves against an effect; encounter) ♦ Psychic	
Ranged 10; triggering enemy; +22 vs. Will; 2d8 + 9 psychic damage. One enemy within 3 squares of the target gains the effect that the target saved against and Felyndiira gains a +5 bonus on saving throws until the end of her next turn.	
Warlock's Curse (minor action; 1/round; at-will)	
Felyndiira places a Warlock's Curse on the nearest enemy that she can see. Once per round, Felyndiira gains a +2d6 bonus to a single damage roll against a cursed enemy.	
Alignment Evil	Languages Common, Elven, Deep Speech
Skills Arcana +19, Bluff +20, Insight +16, Stealth +19	
Str 12 (+10)	Dex 16 (+12) Wis 14 (+11)
Con 12 (+10)	Int 20 (+14) Cha 23 (+15)
Equipment robes, staff	

Note: Drow noble (*Revenge of the Giants*) with warlock class template, utility power set to recharge for simplicity.

Sshamath Dark Guard (level 16)	Level 16 Soldier
Medium fey humanoid (drow)	XP 1,600
Initiative +12 Senses Perception +14	
HP 155; Bloodied 71	
AC 32; Fortitude 30, Reflex 25, Will 28	
Speed 5	
m Scimitar (standard; at-will) ♦ Psychic, Weapon	
+23 vs. AC; 1d8 + 9 damage plus 6 psychic damage (critical 2d8 + 17 plus 6 psychic), and the target is marked until the end of the dark guard's next turn.	
r Longbow (standard; at-will) ♦ Psychic, Weapon	
Ranged 20/40; +21 vs. AC; 1d10 + 4 damage plus 6 psychic damage, and the target is marked until the end of the dark guard's next turn.	
Dark Spike (minor; recharge 3-6) ♦ Force	
Until the start of the dark guard's next turn, his weapons become dark energy, attacking the target's Reflex instead of AC and dealing an extra 1d12 psychic damage.	
C Cloud of Darkness (minor; encounter)	
Close burst 1; this power creates a zone of darkness that remains in place until the end of the drow's next turn. The zone blocks line of sight for all creatures except drow.	
Knight's Eye (immediate interrupt, when an adjacent enemy shifts or an adjacent enemy marked by the dark guard attacks an ally; at-will) ♦ Force, Weapon	
The dark guard makes a basic attack against the enemy.	
Forceful Critical	
On a critical hit with any attack, the target also slides 2 squares.	
Alignment Evil	Languages Common, Elven, Deep Speech
Skills Athletics +17, Stealth +15	
Str 22 (+14)	Dex 15 (+10) Wis 20 (+13)
Con 19 (+12)	Int 11 (+8) Cha 18 (+12)
Equipment scale armor, heavy shield, scimitar, longbow, 20 arrows	
Note: Knight Accordant (FRCG), reflavored as drow, based on Knight Accordant from ADCP2-1.	

Dark Pact Wisp (level 18)	Level 18 Minion
Small elemental humanoid (air, demon)	XP 500
Initiative +16 Senses Perception +14; darkvision	
Buffeting Winds aura 2; each creature within the aura takes a -2 penalty to attack rolls with ranged and area attacks.	
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.	
AC 32; Fortitude 30, Reflex 32, Will 28	
Speed fly 6	
m Wind and Darkness (standard; at-will)	
+22 vs. Fortitude; 9 damage plus 4 necrotic damage, and the spellfire wisp slides the target 3 squares. The spellfire wisp can then shift 1 square or move 3 squares as a free action.	
Alignment Unaligned Languages Common	
Str 19 (+13)	Dex 25 (+16) Wis 20 (+14)
Con 20 (+14)	Int 14 (+11) Cha 17 (+12)
Note: Dust Wisp (<i>Plane Below</i>), reflavored as dark pact-related.	

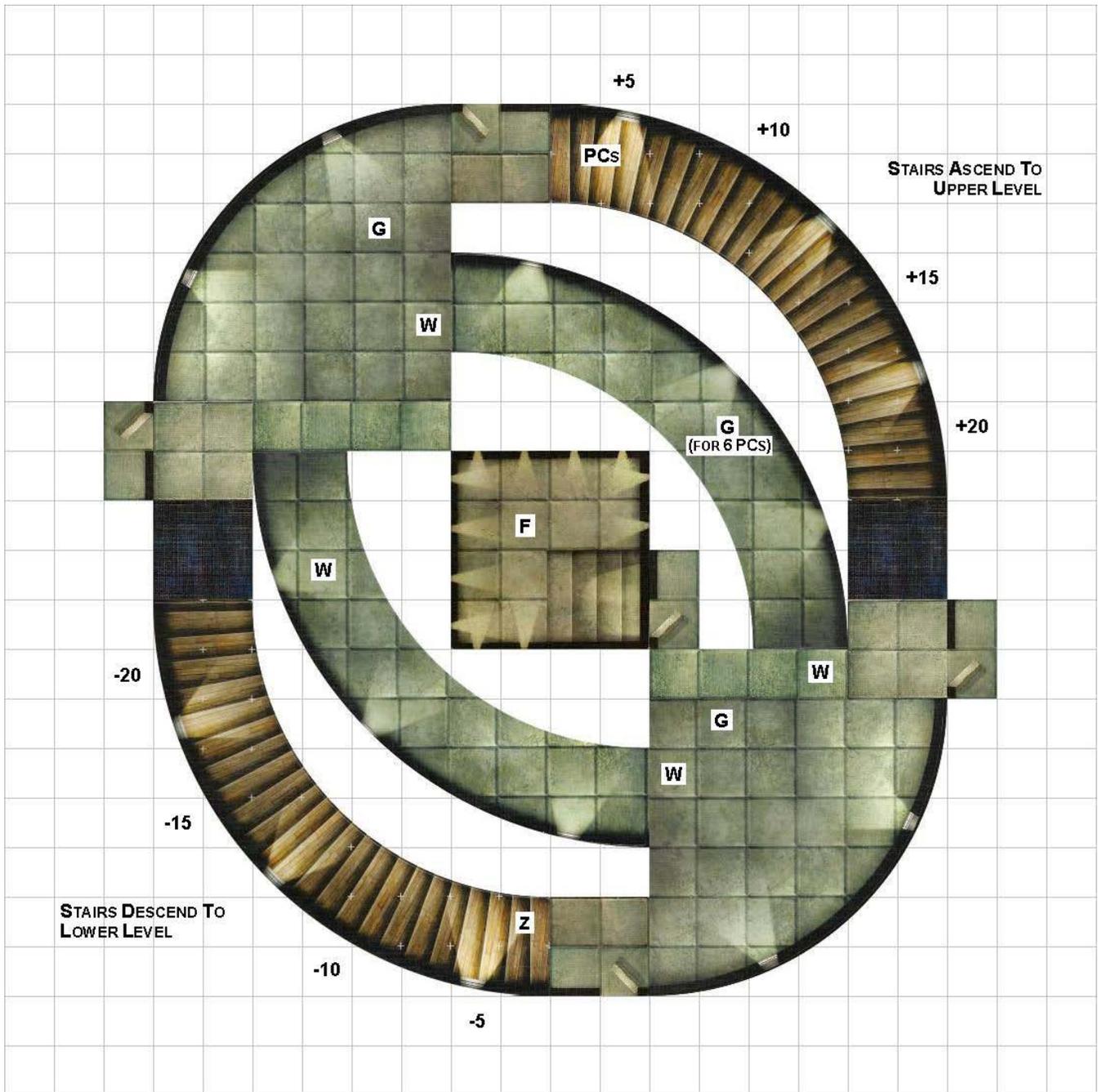
ENCOUNTER 5B: BLUE FIRE ASSAULT STATISTICS (HIGH LEVEL)

Izzyrr Mae'urden (level 18)	Level 18 Elite Skirmisher
Medium fey humanoid (drow)	XP 4,000
Initiative +19 Senses Perception +17; darkvision HP 344; Bloodied 172 AC 36; Fortitude 31, Reflex 35, Will 32 Saving Throws +2 Speed 8 Action Points 1	
m Dagger (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon +24 vs. AC; 2d4 + 13 damage (crit 4d6 + 21).	
r Thrown Dagger (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon Ranged 5/10; +24 vs. AC; 2d4 + 13 damage (crit 4d6 + 21).	
Ambidextrous Fencer (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon Izzyrr makes two dagger attacks, or one dagger attack and one thrown dagger attack. If both attacks hit the same target, that target is dazed until the end of Izzyrr's next turn.	
M Flashy Disarm (standard; recharge 5-6) ♦ Weapon +24 vs. Reflex; 6d4 +13 damage (crit 4d6 + 37), and the target drops one weapon or implement it is holding. It lands in a square of Izzyrr's choice up to 6 squares away.	
R No Escape (immediate interrupt, when an enemy leaves an adjacent square or enters a square where it has cover or concealment against Izzyrr; recharge 5-6) ♦ Weapon Ranged 5/10; +24 vs. AC; 4d4 + 13 damage (crit 4d6 + 29), and the target is knocked prone.	
R Darkfire (minor; encounter) Ranged 10; +22 vs. Reflex; until the end of Izzyrr's next turn, the target grants combat advantage to all attacks, and the target cannot benefit from concealment or invisibility.	
C Cloud of Darkness (minor; encounter) Close burst 1; this power creates a zone of darkness that remains in place until the end of Izzyrr's next turn. The zone blocks line of sight for all creatures except Izzyrr.	
Whirling Evasion (immediate interrupt, when hit by a melee attack; encounter) Izzyrr shifts up to 6 squares.	
Sneak Attack Once per round, when Izzyrr hits a target that is granting him combat advantage, he deals an additional 3d8 damage.	
Alignment Unaligned Languages Common, Elven, Deep Speech Skills Acrobatics +22, Bluff +20, Insight +17, Stealth +24 Str 15 (+11) Dex 27 (+17) Wis 16 (+12) Con 20 (+14) Int 16 (+12) Cha 22 (+15)	
Equipment +4 dagger, dagger x3, drowmesh armor, crossbow Note: Jarlaxle Baenre (FRCG), rapier exchanged for dagger, magic item power replaced with Rogue power.	

ENCOUNTER 5B: BLUE FIRE ASSAULT MAP

TILE SETS NEEDED

Arcane Towers x2, Halls of the Giant Kings x2



ENCOUNTER 5c: IN DARKNESS REMAIN

ENCOUNTER LEVEL 17/19 (9400/13200 XP)

SETUP

This encounter includes the following creatures and traps at the low tier:

- 1 Assurer of Darkness (level 16) (A)
- 2 grimlock bodyguard (level 15) (B)
- 1 grimlock hulk (G)
- 1 adolescent shadow hulk (level 16) (H)

This encounter includes the following creatures and traps at the high tier:

- 1 Assurer of Darkness (level 18) (A)
- 2 grimlock bodyguard (level 16) (B)
- 1 grimlock hulk (level 18) (G)
- 1 adolescent shadow hulk (level 18) (H)

Run this encounter if the PCs did not ally with either faction and took Izzyrr's advice instead. The PCs have skirted past the battle between the School of Darkness and the School of Blue Fire, and have arrived at the prison block where Vessen is being held. The prison is guarded by a group of Grimlocks, devoted to Nurissa Vyllshan, and their pet.

DM NOTE: PACING

The encounter should take no longer than 1 hour and 15 minutes. If the encounter begins to drag on and the PCs clearly have the upper hand, consider calling the combat in the PCs' favor.

Light sources play an important role in this encounter, as the chamber has no light sources whatsoever. If the PCs do not have a light source, describe the chamber as being pitch black. Once they produce some sort of light, read the following:

The portcullis opens into a large, cavernous chamber broken up by wide stalagmites. Wrought-iron trap doors are scattered throughout, welded into the cavern floor. Ahead, an armored grimlock shouts a few guttural words as he prepares to attack. Responses to his cries can be heard reverberating through the chamber from the darkness beyond.

The grimlocks attack immediately as the PCs enter the chamber. Note that the grimlocks, having blindsight, are unaffected by the darkness of the chamber.

If the PCs earned a failure during Scene 3 of Skirting the Fray skill challenge in Encounter 4c, award a +4 bonus to the grimlocks' initiative checks as they have been warned of the PCs' arrival.

Note that the shadow hulk's gaze attack only functions against creatures that can see it. This means that not only are the grimlocks immune, but also that blind PCs are also immune. A PC may choose to close his eyes as a free action at the start of his turn, which renders him blind until the start of his next turn. If the PCs still struggle with the hulk's gaze attack, encourage them to use the stalagmites for cover.

EXTRA CHALLENGE OPTION

The options in this section are provided for you to use in order to provide an adequate challenge for players who seek it. Use your best judgment in deciding which of these options (if any) to include:

- The grimlocks deal an additional 1[W] damage with their weapon attacks.
- The Assurer of Darkness gains concealment until the end of his next turn if he moves three or more squares on his turn.
- PCs affected by the shadow hulk's gaze must attack their nearest ally, rather than their nearest target.

FEATURES OF THE AREA

Ledges: All ledges are 10 feet (2 squares) high.

Cell Doors: The cell doors in the ground are difficult terrain.

Rage Stone: The ground surrounding each cell door is rage stone (this includes the cell door squares and all squares adjacent to them). A character that begins his turn on rage stone takes 10 psychic damage at the end of his turn if he did not make a melee attack on his turn.

Blood Rock: The bloodstained squares (or those containing bodies) are blood rock - any character standing in such a square scores a critical hit on an attack roll of 19-20.

Light: There is no illumination in the chamber; PCs without darkvision must provide their own illumination in order to be able to see.

Ceiling: The ceiling in this chamber is 20 feet (4 squares) high.

TACTICS

The Assurer of Darkness focuses fire with his allies and keeps himself out of danger as much as possible. He uses *under cover of darkness* to escape dangerous situations. The bodyguards strive to defend the Assurer of Darkness while the hulks seek to deal as much damage as possible to the most vulnerable PCs.

The shadow hulk begins combat burrowed (its hole is represented on the map). On its initiative, it burrows out from the rock and begins attacking.

SCALING THE ENCOUNTER

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

Four PCs: Remove one grimlock bodyguard.

Six PCs: Add another grimlock hulk.

ENDING THE ENCOUNTER

Once the PCs defeat the grimlocks, they may search the prison cells for Vessen, releasing any other prisoners that they may find (use your imagination). Proceed with Encounter 6.

EXPERIENCE POINTS

The characters receive 1880/2640 experience points each for defeating the grimlocks.

TREASURE

The PCs find *shadow warlock's armor +4* on the Assurer of Darkness and *tactician's armor +4* in one of the prison cells.

ENCOUNTER 5C: IN DARKNESS REMAIN STATISTICS (LOW LEVEL)

Assurer of Darkness (level 16)	Level 16 Elite Artillery
Medium natural humanoid (grimlock)	XP 2,800
Initiative +12	Senses Perception +16; blindsight
Choking Darkness aura 5; any enemy within the aura takes a -2 penalty to attack rolls.	
HP 284; Bloodied 142	
AC 28; Fortitude 28; Reflex 30; Will 30	
Immune gaze	
Saving Throws +2	
Speed 6	
Action Points 1	
m Pact Blade (standard; at-will) ♦ Necrotic, Weapon	
+23 vs. AC; 2d4 + 4 damage plus 2d6 necrotic damage (4d6 + 12 damage +12 necrotic damage on a critical hit).	
r Distilled Black (standard; at-will) ♦ Necrotic	
Ranged 15; +21 vs. Will; 2d8 + 5 necrotic damage (4d6 + 21 necrotic damage on a critical hit), and the target is immobilized (save ends).	
M/R Double Attack (standard; at-will)	
The Assurer of Darkness makes either two pact blade or two distilled black attacks.	
Assurer's Curse (minor; at-will) ♦ Necrotic	
Targets closest enemy; the curse remains in effect until the end of the encounter. Once per round, the Assurer of Darkness can deal an extra 4d6 necrotic damage to a cursed target he hits with an attack. Cursed targets that make an attack against the Assurer of Darkness take 5 necrotic damage.	
Under Cover of Darkness (minor; recharge 5-6) ♦ Necrotic, Teleportation	
The Assurer of Darkness teleports 8 squares and becomes insubstantial until the end of his next turn. He can teleport into a space occupied by an ally or a cursed target, switching places with that target. A cursed enemy takes 10 necrotic damage from this switch.	
Alignment Evil	Languages Common, Deep Speech
Skills Arcana +20, Bluff +20, Religion +20, Stealth +17	
Str 17 (+11)	Dex 18 (+12) Wis 16 (+11)
Con 20 (+13)	Int 24 (+15) Cha 24 (+15)
Equipment leather armor, <i>pact blade dagger</i> +4	
Note: Uganon (E1 <i>Death's Reach</i>) reflavored as a grimlock.	
Grimlock Hulk	Level 16 Brute
Medium natural humanoid (grimlock)	XP 1,400
Initiative +12	Senses Perception +12; blindsight
HP 190; Bloodied 95	
AC 28; Fortitude 30, Reflex 27, Will 27	
Immune gaze	
Speed 6	
m Morningstar (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon	
+19 vs. AC; 2d10 + 7 damage and the target is knocked prone.	
C Reaping Star (standard; recharge 4-6) ♦ Weapon	
Close burst 1; targets enemies; +19 vs. AC; 2d10 + 7 damage, and the target is pushed 1 square and knocked prone.	
Bloody Wrath	
A grimlock hulk's weapon attacks deal 1d10 extra damage against bloodied targets.	
Alignment Evil	Languages Common, Deep Speech
Str 24 (+15)	Dex 19 (+12) Wis 19 (+12)
Con 20 (+13)	Int 7 (+6) Cha 9 (+7)
Equipment morningstar	

Adolescent Shadow Hulk (level 16)	Level 16 Elite Soldier
Huge aberrant magical beast	XP 2,800
Initiative +14	Senses Perception +16; darkvision, tremorsense
HP 384; Bloodied 192	
AC 34; Fortitude 35; Reflex 28; Will 27	
Saving Throws +2	
Speed 6, Burrow 4; phasing	
Action Points 1	
m Claw (standard; at-will)	
Reach 3; +22 vs. AC; 3d6 + 11 damage	
M Grabbing Attack (standard; at-will)	
The shadow hulk makes two claw attacks. If both claw attacks hit the same target, the target is grabbed (until escape). A grabbed target takes ongoing 15 damage from the shadow hulk's mandibles until it escapes. The shadow hulk cannot make any other claw attacks while grabbing a creature.	
C Claw Frenzy (standard, usable only while bloodied; recharge 6)	
Close burst 3; +22 vs. AC; 3d6 + 11 damage	
C Maddening Gaze (minor 1/round; at-will) ♦ Gaze, Psychic	
Close blast 5; targets enemies; +20 vs. Will; the target does nothing on its turn except attack its nearest target, moving if necessary (save ends). A target makes only basic attacks while under this effect.	
Alignment Unaligned	
Languages -	
Str 32 (+19)	Dex 18 (+12) Wis 16 (+11)
Con 28 (+17)	Int 5 (+5) Cha 13 (+9)

Grimlock Bodyguard (level 15)	Level 15 Soldier
Medium natural humanoid	XP 1,200
Initiative +14	Senses Perception +11; blindsight
HP 143; Bloodied 71	
AC 31; Fortitude 28, Reflex 27, Will 26	
Immune gaze	
Speed 6	
m Greatsword (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon	
+22 vs. AC; 2d10 + 4 damage, and the target is slowed (save ends).	
M Stick and Shift (standard; at-will)	
The grimlock bodyguard makes a greatsword attack and then shifts 1 square. See also bodyguard shift.	
C Mindlash (immediate interrupt, when any enemy marked by the grimlock bodyguard within 5 squares of it makes an attack that does not include the bodyguard; at-will) ♦ Psychic	
Close burst 5; targets the triggering enemy; no attack roll; 10 psychic damage.	
Bodyguard Shift	
When a grimlock bodyguard shifts, it can shift into a square occupied by an enemy marked by it. The bodyguard slides that enemy 1 square as a free action and ends its shift in a square the enemy vacated.	
Guarded Mark	
Any enemy adjacent to the grimlock bodyguard at the end of its turn is marked by the bodyguard until the end of the enemy's next turn. An enemy marked by a grimlock bodyguard does not gain combat advantage while flanking any grimlock bodyguard.	
Alignment Evil	
Languages Common, Deep Speech	
Str 23 (+13)	Dex 20 (+12) Wis 19 (+11)
Con 19 (+11)	Int 11 (+7) Cha 11 (+7)
Equipment greatsword	

ENCOUNTER 5c: IN DARKNESS REMAIN STATISTICS (HIGH LEVEL)

Assurer of Darkness (level 18)	Level 18 Elite Artillery
Medium natural humanoid (grimlock) XP 4,000	
Initiative +13	Senses Perception +17; blindsight
Choking Darkness aura 5; any enemy within the aura takes a -2 penalty to attack rolls.	
HP 308; Bloodied 154	
AC 30; Fortitude 30; Reflex 32; Will 32	
Immune gaze	
Saving Throws +2	
Speed 6	
Action Points 1	
m Pact Blade (standard; at-will) ♦ Necrotic, Weapon	
+25 vs. AC; 2d4 + 5 damage plus 2d6 necrotic damage (4d6 + 13 damage +12 necrotic damage on a critical hit).	
r Distilled Black (standard; at-will) ♦ Necrotic	
Ranged 15; +23 vs. Will; 2d8 + 6 necrotic damage (4d6 + 22 necrotic damage on a critical hit), and the target is immobilized (save ends).	
M/R Double Attack (standard; at-will)	
The Assurer of Darkness makes either two pact blade or two distilled black attacks.	
Assurer's Curse (minor; at-will) ♦ Necrotic	
Targets closest enemy; the curse remains in effect until the end of the encounter. Once per round, the Assurer of Darkness can deal an extra 4d6 necrotic damage to a cursed target he hits with an attack. Cursed targets that make an attack against the Assurer of Darkness take 5 necrotic damage.	
Under Cover of Darkness (minor; recharge 5-6) ♦ Necrotic, Teleportation	
The Assurer of Darkness teleports 8 squares and becomes insubstantial until the end of his next turn. He can teleport into a space occupied by an ally or a cursed target, switching places with that target. A cursed enemy takes 10 necrotic damage from this switch.	
Alignment Evil	Languages Common, Deep Speech
Skills Arcana +21, Bluff +21, Religion +21, Stealth +18	
Str 18 (+13)	Dex 19 (+13) Wis 16 (+12)
Con 20 (+14)	Int 24 (+16) Cha 24 (+17)
Equipment leather armor, <i>pact blade dagger</i> +4	
Note: Uganon (E1 <i>Death's Reach</i>) reflavored as a grimlock.	

Grimlock Hulk (level 18)	Level 18 Brute
Medium natural humanoid (grimlock) XP 1,800	
Initiative +13	Senses Perception +13; blindsight
HP 210; Bloodied 105	
AC 30; Fortitude 32, Reflex 29, Will 29	
Immune gaze	
Speed 6	
m Morningstar (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon	
+21 vs. AC; 2d10 + 8 damage and the target is knocked prone.	
C Reaping Star (standard; recharge 4-6) ♦ Weapon	
Close burst 1; targets enemies; +21 vs. AC; 2d10 + 8 damage, and the target is pushed 1 square and knocked prone.	
Bloody Wrath	
A grimlock hulk's weapon attacks deal 1d10 extra damage against bloodied targets.	
Alignment Evil	Languages Common, Deep Speech
Str 25 (+16)	Dex 19 (+13) Wis 19 (+13)
Con 20 (+14)	Int 7 (+7) Cha 9 (+8)
Equipment morningstar	

Adolescent Shadow Hulk (level 18)	Level 18 Elite Soldier
Huge aberrant magical beast XP 4,000	
Initiative +15	Senses Perception +17; darkvision, tremorsense
HP 416; Bloodied 208	
AC 36; Fortitude 37; Reflex 30; Will 29	
Saving Throws +2	
Speed 6, Burrow 4; phasing	
Action Points 1	
m Claw (standard; at-will)	
Reach 3; +24 vs. AC; 3d6 + 12 damage	
M Grabbing Attack (standard; at-will)	
The shadow hulk makes two claw attacks. If both claw attacks hit the same target, the target is grabbed (until escape). A grabbed target takes ongoing 15 damage from the shadow hulk's mandibles until it escapes. The shadow hulk cannot make any other claw attacks while grabbing a creature.	
C Claw Frenzy (standard, usable only while bloodied; recharge 6)	
Close burst 3; +24 vs. AC; 3d6 + 12 damage	
C Maddening Gaze (minor 1/round; at-will) ♦ Gaze, Psychic	
Close blast 5; targets enemies; +22 vs. Will; the target does nothing on its turn except attack its nearest target, moving if necessary (save ends). A target makes only basic attacks while under this effect.	
Alignment Unaligned	Languages -
Str 32 (+20)	Dex 18 (+13) Wis 16 (+12)
Con 28 (+18)	Int 5 (+6) Cha 13 (+10)

Grimlock Bodyguard (level 16)	Level 16 Soldier
Medium natural humanoid XP 1,400	
Initiative +15	Senses Perception +12; blindsight
HP 155; Bloodied 77	
AC 32; Fortitude 29, Reflex 28, Will 28	
Immune gaze	
Speed 6	
m Greatsword (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon	
+23 vs. AC; 2d10 + 5 damage, and the target is slowed (save ends).	
M Stick and Shift (standard; at-will)	
The grimlock bodyguard makes a greatsword attack and then shifts 1 square. See also bodyguard shift.	
C Mindlash (immediate interrupt, when any enemy marked by the grimlock bodyguard within 5 squares of it makes an attack that does not include the bodyguard; at-will) ♦ Psychic	
Close burst 5; targets the triggering enemy; no attack roll; 10 psychic damage.	
Bodyguard Shift	
When a grimlock bodyguard shifts, it can shift into a square occupied by an enemy marked by it. The bodyguard slides that enemy 1 square as a free action and ends its shift in a square the enemy vacated.	
Guarded Mark	
Any enemy adjacent to the grimlock bodyguard at the end of its turn is marked by the bodyguard until the end of the enemy's next turn. An enemy marked by a grimlock bodyguard does not gain combat advantage while flanking any grimlock bodyguard.	
Alignment Evil	Languages Common, Deep Speech
Str 23 (+14)	Dex 20 (+13) Wis 19 (+12)
Con 19 (+12)	Int 11 (+8) Cha 11 (+8)
Equipment greatsword	

ENCOUNTER 6: MEET THE MASTERS

SETUP

Important NPCs: Knight-Commander Vessen

The PCs arrive at Vessen's cell. As they prepare to free him, they discover that his masters have other plans.

DM NOTE: PACING

The encounter should take no longer than 10 minutes.

If the PCs completed Encounter 5a or 5b, read the following:

The air thickens with moisture as your escorts lead you deeper beneath the Stonestave, beyond a guarded portcullis, into a large prison block.

If the PCs completed Encounter 5a or 5b, read the description of the chamber from Encounter 5c. In this case, the grimlock jailers have either been defeated (if the PCs allied with the School of Blue Fire) or reassigned to some other purpose (if the PCs allied with the School of Darkness).

Vessen is held in one of the numerous "pit cells," wearing *dimensional shackles* that prevent him from being able to teleport away. Continue with the following:

Vessen's "cell" is nothing more than a deep hole carved into the cavern floor with a wrought-iron trap door preventing escape. The foul odors of sweat and human waste assault your nostrils as you open the latch. Vessen leans weakly against the wall of the pit, his plate armor hanging from his gaunt form. His arms are shackled behind his back in a pair of glowing blue manacles.

Although still under the control of the sharn symbiote, Vessen's sense of justice and moral clarity is powerful. The sharn are unaccustomed to integrating such forceful personalities, and the hold a symbiote has on its host can weaken from time to time. Vessen has learned how to exert his will long enough to regain control of his own body for brief periods. This is one of those periods.

The PCs quickly find that Vessen is severely weakened and dehydrated. Judging by the look in his eyes, he appears to be slipping into insanity. If the PCs try to speak with Vessen, role-play the conversation. Vessen can provide some information. Read the

following as Vessen struggles to exert control over the symbiote so that he may speak freely:

Vessen's eyes roll back into his skull as his muscles seize and convulse. He seems to be speaking to himself in low murmurs. Suddenly, he drops to one knee as though lacking the strength to even stand. He looks up at you, a hint of sanity shining through the despair in his brown eyes.

- A few weeks before the plagueland's attack on Etlurel, Vessen received what he thought to be an image from Torm himself that called him to the plagueland - as he now realizes, this must have been a trick.
- Within the plagueland, he recalls a vision of swirling blue fire before losing consciousness. Ever since then, he has been under the control of the Order of Blue Fire. He can feel the presence of another creature dwelling within his own body.
- Vessen's actions during the battle against the Plagueland were not his own - he was forced to watch helplessly as the Order of Blue Fire took control over his body and set a trap for Etlurgard's forces.
- In an attempt to save lives, Vessen gave the command for the plagueland's forces to attack Etlurgard, so that the Etlurgardans could have a significant terrain advantage, rather than be wiped out during an assault on the plagueland itself.
- It is nearly impossible to exert control over his own body, but Vessen is able to do so from time to time - however, his actions are always known by his masters.
- Vessen can feel the presence of his masters deeper beneath Sshamath and instinctively knows how to reach them. His fate is connected to that of his masters.
- Vessen does not believe that the PCs can defeat his masters. He has accepted his fate, and begs the PCs to set him free by killing him.

At some point during the conversation with Vessen, or if the PCs take steps to escape with Vessen, they receive a mental communication from the sharns beneath Sshamath. Read the following:

Suddenly, the sound of dozens of alien voices all speaking as one pierces your mind, accompanied by an image of swirling blue fire. "We have much to discuss, mortal. Your so-called traitor is under our control.

Bring him to us, or we will end his life where he stands and you will never know the limitless power we have to offer. We await you below - your captive knows the way.”

With a DC 20 Arcana check, the PCs can identify the creature as alien in nature, and can determine that this was not a ritual of any sort - this was an innate ability of the creature, which must be quite powerful.

PCs that use Insight to discern whether or not this creature appears to be bluffing find that it very much believes that it can do as it has said. If the PCs refuse to obey or try to leave with Vessen, he drops dead. The adventure is over if this happens - although the PCs can still return to Elturel with Vessen's body, they will not have the opportunity to confront the true originator of the plot.

From a metagame standpoint, this setup forces the players to do something that their characters may or may not want to do, so give the players an unambiguous warning before Vessen dies. Make it clear that they have to follow the sharn's instructions if they want to have any hope of taking him out alive. For example, if they simply ignore the sharn's communication and start towards the door, Vessen drops to the ground, screaming in agony and clutching his head. He is unable to continue. A DC 15 Heal check is sufficient to ascertain that he will surely die if the pain continues at that intensity.

ENDING THE ENCOUNTER

When the PCs agree to escort Vessen deeper underground, proceed to Encounter 7.

ENCOUNTER 7: FINAL SHOWDOWN

ENCOUNTER LEVEL 17/19 (8800/12000 XP)

SETUP

This encounter includes the following creatures and traps at the low tier:

Vessen, the Corrupted (level 15) (V)
2 sharn symbiotes (level 16) (S)

This encounter includes the following creatures and traps at the high tier:

Vessen, the Corrupted (V)
2 sharn symbiotes (level 18) (S)

The PCs escort Vessen to the sharn pool beneath Sshamath and negotiate briefly with the sharns. Assuming they refuse the sharns' offer, the sharns grant Vessen the strength to defeat the PCs and a number of allies to aid him.

DM NOTE: PACING

The encounter should take no longer than 1 hour and 15 minutes.

The tunnel descends slowly into the dark, spiraling steadily. Vessen quickens his step as he leads you into a large chamber containing nothing but a large, bubbling pool of oily blue ichor, writhing with cobalt radiance.

As you enter the chamber, a glistening, bulbous shape swells from the pool, studded with tiny eyes, ending in three eel-like heads with large, gaping maws filled with rows of razor-sharp teeth. Familiar alien voices pierce your mind once again.

The sharn welcomes the PCs to "their" pool (it always refers to itself as "we" and "us"). It admits that Vessen has already served his purpose, and was commanded to withdraw here so that he could be merged with the collective consciousness of the sharns. However, after watching the PCs for some time, the collective has become interested in their capabilities and offers them the chance to merge with the collective consciousness of the sharns - extolling the virtues of the arrangement, such as knowledge, power and the preservation of the PC's own experiences forever.

"Step into the pool and draw upon our collective consciousness, and you will know our true power."

Describe the experience to any who accept as a sensory overload, full of both exquisite rapture and unbearable pain. Those that agree are treated as though they tapped into the collective consciousness of the sharn (see sharn pool description below). However, as the sharn attempts to merge with their consciousness, a powerful psychic feedback reverberates between the sharn and the PCs, severing the link - as though fate has chosen something else for the heroes. Note that this impacts Vessen's resist all (see sharn pool description below).

If the PCs refuse, or when the sharn becomes aware that the PCs are special and cannot merge, it uses Vessen as a vessel through which to attack the PCs and two symbiotes emerge from the pool to join the fight. The symbiotes are not visible (and PCs cannot gain line of effect to them), until their initiative at which point they rise up from anywhere in the pool (your preference) and attack. Read the following and roll initiative:

The frustration and anger of the being is almost palpable. Vessen's manacles fall from his arms as he is teleported to the pool's center. The being envelops him and disappears. The man standing before you, if man he is, hardly resembles the Vessen that brought you here. He stands tall and strong, hefting a glowing bastard sword and shield that were nowhere to be seen just moments before. The energy from the pool surrounds the fallen paladin, seemingly offering him some degree of protection. His inky black eyes burn with blue fire.

Note that because Vessen and the symbiotes are related to the Spellplague, the spellscarred susceptibility and spellplague sense features kick in for any PCs that are also spellscarred. Spellscarred PCs can sense the presence of other spellscarred or plaguechanged creatures within 5 squares, and suffer a -2 penalty to all defenses and saving throws against one another.

Before beginning combat, be sure to provide hints to the players about how they can interact with the sharn pool (described below) and what might happen if they do. Whether by providing free knowledge checks or by simply describing the mechanics, how you do this is up to you.

SHARN POOL

The sharn pool is a unique terrain feature. By being in contact with the pool, the PCs can tap into the collective consciousness of the sharns for power, but that power

comes at a price. Any PC that starts his turn in a square containing the pool may make an Arcana or Dungeoneering check as a minor action to gain a benefit depending on his check result. A spellscarred PC gains a +4 bonus to this roll:

- **1-10** - No benefit
- **11-20** - +2 to all saving throws until start of next turn
- **21-25** - May spend a healing surge (if the PC has any left) to regain hit points
- **26-30** - Make a saving throw against one effect that a save can end
- **31+** - Regain an expended encounter power

This benefit comes at a cost, however. A PC that makes the above check must also make an Endurance check to resist giving up some of his or her own consciousness to the sharn. This causes the character to suffer a penalty depending on the check result. A spellscarred PC gains a -2 penalty to this roll:

- **1-10** - Dominated until start of next turn
- **11-20** - Restrained until start of next turn
- **21-25** - Lose a healing surge (or suffer damage equal to the character's surge value if no surges remaining)
- **26-30** - -2 penalty to all saving throws until start of next turn
- **31+** - No effect

Unconscious and dying PCs may attempt these checks without spending an action. If a dying PC manages to spend a healing surge to regain hit points, he may act as normal on his turn. (The checks are optional for dying characters, and are made in addition to the death saving throw, which is not optional.)

A PC that taps into the pool's power can ignore the pool's *grasping bog* feature until the start of his or her next turn (including the difficult terrain aspects), as the character momentarily becomes one with the chaos of the pool.

The lure of this power is difficult to resist. Any PC that starts his or her turn in a square containing the pool and refuses to tap into its power must make a saving throw. On a failed saving throw, the PC suffers a -2 penalty on all attacks and defenses until the start of his or her next turn.

Tapping into the power of the sharns in this way draws some power away from Vessen. Each time a PC uses this option, Vessen's resist all is reduced by 5. Vessen's resist all cannot drop below 0 from this.

EXTRA CHALLENGE OPTION

The options in this section are provided for you to use in order to provide an adequate challenge for players who seek it. Use your best judgment in deciding which of these options (if any) to include:

- Two rounds after all sharn symbiotes are defeated, two more emerge from the pool on the same initiative.
- Vessen gains a +2 bonus to all defenses.

FEATURES OF THE AREA

This area has a few important features.

Sharn Pool: The sharn pool is only a few feet deep, but is highly morphic. The pool functions as a *grasping bog* - it is difficult terrain and any character that is knocked prone is restrained (save ends).

Rage Stone: The ground everywhere except within the sharn pool is rage stone. A character that begins his or her turn on rage stone takes 10 psychic damage at the end of the turn if the character took actions but did not make a melee attack. (Characters that cannot take actions are unaffected.)

Light: The chamber is dimly illuminated by the sharn pool.

Ceiling: The ceiling in this chamber is 20 feet (4 squares) high.

TACTICS

Vessen attacks intelligently, using *hex portals* and his *hex step* power to his advantage. He uses his *hex portals* in such a way that he can threaten numerous squares throughout the map at once in order to punish ranged attackers that don't fight within the pool (he can take opportunity attacks through the portals). For as long as the sharn symbiotes are alive, he tries to defend them by keeping as many PCs marked as possible. If any PC uses a potentially devastating attack on a symbiote, he uses *knightly intercession* to become the target of the attack. He prefers to do this to ranged striker or controller PCs so as to pull them into melee. Remember that he acts twice a round and that effects that don't grant saving throws wear off at the end of each of his turns. If Vessen's two initiative results are very close together, have him delay his second turn so that his turns are more spread out throughout the round.

The symbiotes wait to attack until Vessen has marked at least a few targets, using the delay action if necessary. The symbiotes are cunning opponents that immediately grab PCs that appear to be easy to attack or utilize ranged attacks. Their first priority is to dominate grabbed PCs. Once a PC is grabbed, the symbiote uses *host before symbiote* to defend itself and once a PC is

dominated, it uses *psychic feast* to attack its dominated host.

SCALING THE ENCOUNTER

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

Four PCs: Reduce Vessen's defenses and attacks by 1, his hit points by 40, and his resistance by 5.

Six PCs: Increase Vessen's defenses, attacks, and damage by 1, his hit points by 40, his resistance by 5, and add another sharn symbiote.

ENDING THE ENCOUNTER

Once the PCs defeat Vessen and the sharns, they may escape Sshamath with his dead or unconscious body. Whether they teleport or escape on foot, escape is automatic. Be sure to note whether or not the PCs killed Vessen.

EXPERIENCE POINTS

The characters receive 1760/2400 experience points each for defeating Vessen and the sharns.

TREASURE

The PCs may recover Vessen's sword, a +4 *planesplitter bastard sword*. The PCs also find a pair of *planestrider greaves* in the sharn pool.

ENCOUNTER 7: FINAL SHOWDOWN STATISTICS (LOW LEVEL)

Vessen, the Corrupted (level 15)	Level 15 Solo Soldier
Medium aberrant humanoid (human, spellscar)	XP 6,000
Initiative +14 Senses Perception +12; blindsight 10	
HP 740; Bloodied 370	
Regeneration 10	
AC 32; Fortitude 29, Reflex 29, Will 30	
Resist 25 all (special, see sharn pool description)	
Immune petrification, polymorph	
Saving Throws +5 (+8 vs. fear effects, and against conditions that hinder movement)	
Speed 5	
Action Points 2	
m Bastard Sword (standard; at-will) ♦ Force, Weapon	
+23 vs. AC; 2d10 + 9 damage plus 1d6 force damage (crit 4d12 + 29 + 6 force), and the target gains vulnerable 5 force (save ends).	
R Bolt Barrage (standard; at-will) ♦ Force	
Vessen makes two attacks against the same target; ranged 10; +20 vs. Reflex; 2d8 + 9 force damage per attack. If both attacks hit, the target and all enemies adjacent to the target are knocked prone.	
Independent Action (standard; at-will)	
Vessen makes two melee basic attacks. If both hit the same target, that target is also dazed (save ends).	
M Terrifying Smite (standard; recharge 4-6) ♦ Fear, Force, Weapon	
+23 vs. AC; 6d10 + 9 damage plus 1d6 force damage (crit 4d12 + 69 + 6 force), and the target is pushed 7 squares. The target can't move nearer to Vessen on its next turn.	
C Knightly Intercession (immediate interrupt, when an enemy within 10 squares hits an ally with a melee or ranged attack; recharge 6) ♦ Force, Weapon	
The triggering attack hits Vessen instead of his ally and Vessen pulls the target to an adjacent square, then makes the following attack: +23 vs. AC; 4d10 + 9 damage plus 1d6 force damage (crit 4d12 + 49 + 6 force), and the target is marked until the end of the encounter.	
C Column of Spellfire (free, when first bloodied; encounter) ♦ Fire, Force	
Close burst 2; +20 vs. Reflex; 3d10 + 9 fire and force damage, and the target is blinded (save ends).	
R Hex Portal (minor; sustain minor; at-will) ♦ Conjuration	
Ranged 5; Vessen creates a hexagonal window of light in an unoccupied square that he can attack through as if in that portal's space. As a minor action, he can move one portal 4 squares. Portals don't block line of sight, line of effect, or enemy movement. Vessen can sustain up to three such portals at a time with a single minor action; he can close any number with a free action.	
Hex Step (move, when adjacent to hex portal; at-will) ♦ Teleportation	
Vessen teleports to any unoccupied square adjacent to a hex portal he has created.	
Corrupted Challenge	
Any target that Vessen attacks is marked (save ends).	
Any creature marked by Vessen that makes an attack that does not include Vessen as a target suffers 19 force damage.	
A creature may only be subjected to this damage once per round.	

Corrupted Weapon
Vessen scores a critical hit on a roll of 18-20 with weapon attacks against any target vulnerable to force damage.
Double Actions
Vessen rolls initiative twice, gets two turns during a round, and has a full set of actions (standard, move, minor) on each turn. Vessen's ability to take immediate actions refreshes on each of his turns. However, his regeneration only functions on his first turn each round.
Independent Consciousness
All effects on Vessen that cannot be ended by a saving throw automatically end at the end of Vessen's turn.
Alignment Unaligned Languages Common, Deep Speech
Skills Athletics +18, Insight +17, Religion +17
Str 23 (+13) Dex 17 (+10) Wis 20 (+12)
Con 20 (+12) Int 20 (+12) Cha 24 (+14)
Equipment +4 <i>planesplitter bastard sword</i> , plate armor, heavy shield
Note: Custom solo created by leveraging elements of the paladin class template and various Sharn powers.

Sharn Symbiote (level 16)	Level 16 Lurker	
Large aberrant magical beast (blind, ooze)	XP 1,400	
Initiative +18 Senses Perception +7; blindsight, tremorsense 10		
HP 125; Bloodied 62		
AC 30; Fortitude 28, Reflex 28, Will 29		
Immune gaze, petrification, polymorph		
Speed 6		
m Slam (standard; at-will)		
+21 vs. AC; 2d10 + 5 damage.		
M Seize Host (standard; at-will) ♦ Psychic		
+19 (+21 vs. immobilized creatures) vs. Reflex; ongoing 10 psychic damage (save ends) and the target is grabbed.		
M Assimilate (standard; at-will)		
Targets a creature a sharn symbiote has grabbed; +19 vs. Will; the target is dominated (save ends).		
M Psychic Feast (standard; at-will) ♦ Psychic		
Targets a creature a sharn symbiote has grabbed; +19 vs. Will; 3d8 + 10 damage, and the sharn symbiote regains 10 hit points.		
C Psychic Slam (standard; at-will)		
Close blast 5; +19 vs. Will; the target is immobilized until the end of the sharn symbiote's next turn.		
Host Before Symbiote (immediate interrupt, when targeted by a melee or ranged attack; at-will)		
Requires a grabbed creature; the attack that triggered this interrupt targets a creature the sharn symbiote has grabbed instead.		
Symbiotic Link		
If a creature the sharn symbiote has grabbed is reduced to 0 hit points by either the <i>psychic feast</i> power or the ongoing damage from <i>seize host</i> , the creature regains 10 hit points and is dominated by the sharn symbiote (a condition that can be ended only by the Remove Affliction ritual).		
Alignment Unaligned Languages -		
Skills Arcana +18, Insight +12, Religion +18		
Str 21 (+13)	Dex 23 (+14)	Wis 8 (+7)
Con 23 (+14)	Int 21 (+13)	Cha 24 (+15)

ENCOUNTER 7: FINAL SHOWDOWN STATISTICS (HIGH LEVEL)

Vessen, the Corrupted	Level 17 Solo Soldier
Medium aberrant humanoid (human, spellscar)	XP 8,000
Initiative +15 Senses Perception +13; blindsight 10	
HP 804; Bloodied 402	
Regeneration 10	
AC 34; Fortitude 31, Reflex 31, Will 32	
Resist 25 all (special, see sharn pool description)	
Immune petrification, polymorph	
Saving Throws +5 (+8 vs. fear effects, and against conditions that hinder movement)	
Speed 5	
Action Points 2	
m Bastard Sword (standard; at-will) ♦ Force, Weapon	
+25 vs. AC; 2d10 + 10 damage plus 1d6 force damage (crit 4d12 + 30 + 6 force), and the target gains vulnerable 5 force (save ends).	
R Bolt Barrage (standard; at-will) ♦ Force	
Vessen makes two attacks against the same target; ranged 10; +22 vs. Reflex; 2d8 + 10 force damage per attack. If both attacks hit, the target and all enemies adjacent to the target are knocked prone.	
Independent Action (standard; at-will)	
Vessen makes two melee basic attacks. If both hit the same target, that target is also dazed (save ends).	
M Terrifying Smite (standard; recharge 4-6) ♦ Fear, Force, Weapon	
+25 vs. AC; 6d10 + 10 damage plus 1d6 force damage (crit 4d12 + 70 + 6 force on critical hit), and the target is pushed 7 squares. The target can't move nearer to Vessen on its next turn.	
C Knightly Intercession (immediate interrupt, when an enemy within 10 squares hits an ally with a melee or ranged attack; recharge 6) ♦ Force, Weapon	
The triggering attack hits Vessen instead of his ally and Vessen pulls the target to an adjacent square; +25 vs. AC; 4d10 + 10 damage plus 1d6 force damage (crit 4d12 + 50 + 6 force), and the target is marked until the end of the encounter.	
C Column of Spellfire (free, when first bloodied; encounter) ♦ Fire, Force	
Close burst 2; +22 vs. Reflex; 3d10 + 10 fire and force damage, and the target is blinded (save ends).	
R Hex Portal (minor; sustain minor; at-will) ♦ Conjuration	
Ranged 5; Vessen creates a hexagonal window of light in an unoccupied square that he can attack through as if in that portal's space. As a minor action, he can move one portal 4 squares. Portals don't block line of sight, line of effect, or enemy movement. Vessen can sustain up to three such portals at a time with a single minor action; he can close any number with a free action.	
Hex Step (move, when adjacent to hex portal; at-will) ♦ Teleportation	
Vessen teleports to any unoccupied square adjacent to a hex portal he has created.	
Corrupted Challenge	
Any target that Vessen attacks is marked (save ends). Any creature marked by Vessen that makes an attack that does not include Vessen as a target suffers 19 force damage. A creature may only be subjected to this damage once per round.	

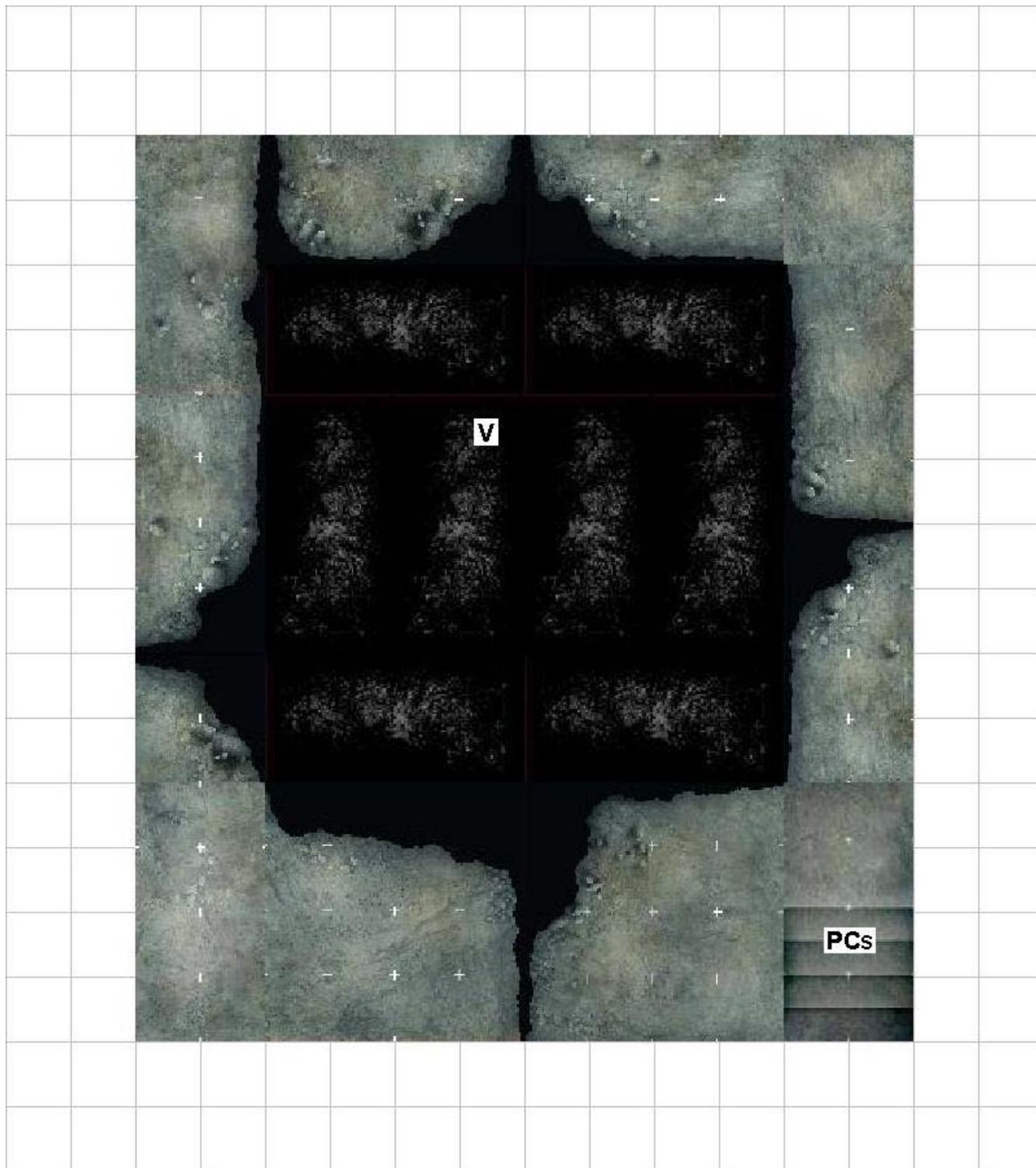
Corrupted Weapon
Vessen scores a critical hit on 18-20 with weapon attacks against any target vulnerable to force damage.
Double Actions
Vessen rolls initiative twice, gets two turns during a round, and has a full set of actions (standard, move, minor) on each turn. Vessen's ability to take immediate actions refreshes on each of his turns. However, his regeneration only functions on his first turn each round.
Independent Consciousness
All effects on Vessen that cannot be ended by a saving throw automatically end at the end of Vessen's turn.
Alignment Unaligned Languages Common, Deep Speech
Skills Athletics +19, Insight +18, Religion +18
Str 23 (+14) Dex 17 (+11) Wis 20 (+13)
Con 20 (+13) Int 20 (+13) Cha 24 (+15)
Equipment +4 <i>planesplitter</i> bastard sword, plate armor, heavy shield
Note: Custom solo created by leveraging elements of the paladin class template and various Sharn powers.

Sharn Symbiote (level 18)	Level 18 Lurker
Large aberrant magical beast (blind, ooze)	XP 2,000
Initiative +20 Senses Perception +8; blindsight, tremorsense 10	
HP 137; Bloodied 68	
AC 32; Fortitude 30, Reflex 30, Will 31	
Immune gaze, petrification, polymorph	
Speed 6	
m Slam (standard; at-will)	
+23 vs. AC; 2d10 + 6 damage.	
M Seize Host (standard; at-will) ♦ Psychic	
+21 (+23 vs. immobilized creatures) vs. Reflex; ongoing 10 psychic damage (save ends) and the target is grabbed.	
M Assimilate (standard; at-will)	
Targets a creature a sharn symbiote has grabbed; +21 vs. Will; the target is dominated (save ends).	
M Psychic Feast (standard; at-will) ♦ Psychic	
Targets a creature a sharn symbiote has grabbed; +21 vs. Will; 3d8 + 11 damage, and the sharn symbiote regains 10 hit points.	
C Psychic Slam (standard; at-will)	
Close blast 5; +21 vs. Will; the target is immobilized until the end of the sharn symbiote's next turn.	
Host Before Symbiote (immediate interrupt, when targeted by a melee or ranged attack; at-will)	
Requires a grabbed creature; the attack that triggered this interrupt targets a creature the sharn symbiote has grabbed instead.	
Symbiotic Link	
If a creature the sharn symbiote has grabbed is reduced to 0 hit points by either the <i>psychic feast</i> power or the ongoing damage from <i>seize host</i> , the creature regains 10 hit points and is dominated by the sharn symbiote (a condition that can be ended only by the Remove Affliction ritual).	
Alignment Unaligned Languages -	
Skills Arcana +19, Insight +13, Religion +19	
Str 21 (+14) Dex 23 (+15) Wis 8 (+8)	
Con 23 (+15) Int 21 (+12) Cha 24 (+16)	

ENCOUNTER 7: FINAL SHOWDOWN MAP

TILE SETS NEEDED

Arcane Corridors x3, Lost Caverns of the Underdark x3



ENCOUNTER 8: CONCLUSION

SETUP

Important NPCs: Tyrangal, Inquisitor Tellar

TYRANGAL

Assume the PCs have made it back to Elturel, one way or another. If Vessen is still alive, the copper dragon Tyrangal intercepts the PCs at some point during their return. Tyrangal is a stalwart foe of the Order of Blue Fire and all things connected to the Spellplague, and the PCs may have met her in previous adventures. A wise and resourceful being, she will only hint at the extent of her knowledge, answering most questions indirectly. Tyrangal appears shapechanged into an eladrin, as she often does.

If Vessen is dead, skip this section and proceed to the Facing Justice section.

As you make your way back to the Church of Torm in Elturel, a young female eladrin approaches suddenly and silently from a nearby alley. She seems unusually tall, with copper-colored skin and metallic auburn hair that reaches well below her waist. Her rust-red robes whisper as she moves in your direction, her golden eyes intent on your group.

PCs that have encountered Tyrangal in the past recognize her immediately. Allow the PCs to react to Tyrangal. If they ask, PCs may make the following knowledge checks to learn more about Tyrangal:

- **Arcana DC 20:** Tyrangal looks distinctly different from most eladrin (known as moon or sun elves) you have met in your travels through Faerun, but she may be native to the Feywild.
- **Arcana DC 35:** A shapechange might explain Tyrangal's appearance.
- **Insight DC 20:** Tyrangal seems trustworthy and is not attempting to deceive you.
- **History DC 35:** A copper dragon named Gaulauntyr lost her mind and caused great devastation during the Rage of Dragons (1373 DR). It is said the dragon recovered and returned after Mystra's death, using the name Tyrangal instead. She involves herself in many affairs but primarily those involving the Spellplague. Her motives are cloaked in mystery and she often acts through intermediaries.

Tyrangal acknowledges any PCs she has met previously before speaking:

"I know of your mission to return Vessen to the Church of Torm. I act in the interest of not only Elturgard, but of all Faerûn when I ask that you instead place him in my care. There will be a time for Vessen to face justice for what has transpired here, but for now, he must serve a greater purpose. I can cleanse Vessen of the symbiote that has claimed his body as host. With his experience as a direct servant of the Masters of Absolute Accord, he would become a powerful servant in my campaign to oppose the Order of Blue Fire. I will reward you for your services appropriately. The decision, however, is yours to make."

Tyrangal does not disclose any more information even if asked. If the PCs accept, proceed to Concluding the Adventure. PCs with **CORE39 Elturgardan Gratitude** have failed the major quest. However, do not void the story award; they may have the chance to complete it again in the future.

If the PCs refuse her offer, Tyrangal promptly takes her leave. If any PCs are affected by a *symbiotic link* from the previous encounter, Tyrangal provides a free Remove Affliction ritual to remove the effects.

TREASURE

Tyrangal offers the PCs 5500/12500 gp and any ring of the PC's level + 1 or less from any player-legal source. PCs with a positive favor from Tyrangal (such as from one of the **SPEC2-1** adventures) may instead receive any ring of the PC's level + 2 or less from any player-legal source.

FACING JUSTICE

Inquisitor Tellar thanks the PCs for their efforts and sees that they are rewarded appropriately. Bracketed sections are for PCs that have completed prior work for Tellar. Adjust this appropriately if Vessen is dead.

"Very well done, adventurers. Elturgard and the Western Heartlands are [once again] in your debt. This treacherous dog shall face justice for his deeds. Please take your reward with my thanks." Tellar drops a sizeable bag of gold on the table in front of each of you.

Any PCs that return Vessen to Inquisitor Tellar, alive or dead, have successfully completed the major quest begun in **CORE2-1**, **CORE39 Elturgardan Gratitude**.

TREASURE

If the PCs return Vessen alive, Inquisitor Tellar offers the PCs 5500/12500 gp and any weapon or implement of the PC's level + 1 or less from any player-legal source. PCs with **CORE39 Elturgardan Gratitude** from CORE2-1 may instead receive any weapon or implement of the PC's level + 2 or less from any player-legal source. The PCs receive half the gold and no item if they return Vessen dead.

The High Observer himself offers to bestow a divine boon (*Torm's Protective Ward*) upon any PCs that also have **CORE39 Elturgardan Gratitude**. This must be chosen as the character's treasure bundle for the adventure, and occupies one of the character's found item slots.

STORY AWARDS

Regardless of their success or failure, all PCs receive **CORE60 Knight-Commander Vessen's Fate**. Please make sure to circle the appropriate options on the story award based on whether Vessen was returned alive, returned dead, left with the sharn (presumably because the PCs failed to defeat Encounter 7), and to whom the PCs gave him (Elturel, Tyrangal, a third party, or left with the sharn).

Those PCs who voluntarily drew on the power of the sharn pool during Encounter 7 were touched by the collective consciousness of the sharn. These characters (only) receive **CORE61 E Pluribus Unum**.

Any PCs who began the adventure with **CORE39 Elturgardan Gratitude** and successfully completed the Major Quest in this adventure receive **CORE62 Elturgardan Deliverance**. A PC does not have to choose the divine boon as his or her treasure bundle in order to receive the story award, but strike through the text of the boon for those who do not accept it.

Earning this award requires the PCs to turn Vessen over, either alive or dead, to the authorities in Elturel. If they give him to Tyrangal, or failed to retrieve him, or handed him over to some third party, they do not complete the quest. (If the PCs rescue him alive and try to give him his freedom, Vessen refuses -- he is consumed by grief for what happened, and turns himself over to the High Observer to face Torm's justice. However, the PCs do not receive credit for returning him to Elturel in this case.)

REWARDS SUMMARY

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

IMPORTANT DM INFORMATION

It is critical that you enter the PC rewards accurately on the tracking form, and ensure that the information is reported and entered online in a timely manner. While players can and should track their character's information on paper, the online information serves as an important backup and verification of play. Ask the players for their RPGA numbers and character numbers (usually a single digit) when you begin to fill out the tracking form.

EXPERIENCE POINTS

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

Encounter 4a: Dark Dealings

200 / 280 XP

Encounter 4b: A Tenuous Union

200 / 280 XP

Encounter 4c: Skirting the Fray

200 / 280 XP

Encounter 5a: Defending the Dark

1880 / 2640 XP

- OR - Encounter 5b: Blue Fire Assault

1880 / 2640 XP

- OR - Encounter 5c: In Darkness Remain

1880 / 2640 XP

Encounter 7: Final Showdown

1760 / 2400 XP

Major Quest: Elturgardan Gratitude

1200 / 1600 XP

Total Possible Experience

5040 / 6720 XP

***Note:** At high tier, the encounter experience adds up to 200 XP more than the listed total. The PCs cannot gain more than the maximum XP listed above.

Gold per PC

2200 / 6000 gp

(Encounter 8: 2200 / 6000 gp)

TREASURE

Each PC receives treasure in the form of gold pieces as well as one share from a treasure bundle. The treasure bundle may give the PC more gold, a magic item, or something else of value. Each player makes one and only one selection for their character; players may choose the same treasure bundle. Mark the one-letter bundle ID on the tracking form next to any character that selects a bundle; note that it is possible (and likely) that some characters will not select a bundle for each session of play.

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

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

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

EACH PC SELECTS ONE OF THE FOLLOWING BUNDLES:

Bundle A: *tactician's armor +4** (level 20; AV)

Found in Encounter 5a, 5b, or 5c

Bundle B: *+4 planesplitter bastard sword** (level 19; MoP)

Found in Encounter 7

Bundle C: *assassin's cloak +4** (level 19; AV2)

Found in Encounter 4c, 5a, or 5b

Bundle D: *shadow warlock's armor +4** (level 20, AV2)

Found in Encounter 5a, 5b, or 5c

Bundle E: *planestrider greaves** (level 18; MoP)

Found in Encounter 7

Bundle F: *Bahamut's [Torm's] Protective Ward** (level 18; DMG2) (Replace Bahamut with Torm) - Major Quest Reward Only

Found in Encounter 8

Bundle G: any weapon or implement from any player-legal source of the PC's level + 1 or less (+2 or less for those who completed the Major Quest; see Encounter 8) (only for handing Vessen over to Inquisitor Tellar)

Found in Encounter 8

Bundle H: any ring from any player-legal source of the PC's level + 1 or less (or +2 for those who have an existing favor of Tyrangal; see Encounter 8) (only for handing Vessen over to Tyrangal)

Found in Encounter 8

Consumable plus Gold: If a player doesn't want to select one of the bundles listed above for their character, they can choose to add an *elixir of invisibility* plus 1500 / 4700 gp to their rewards from this adventure. The player should write the consumable gained on their adventure log. That character (and only that character) then receives the consumable plus the listed amount of gold (if any) instead of any other treasure bundle. Consumable items obtained in this fashion do not take up found magic item slots.

More Gold: If a player doesn't want to select one of the bundles listed above for their character, they can choose to add 3300 / 6500 gp to their rewards from this adventure. That character (and only that character) receives more gold instead of any other treasure bundle.

STORY AWARDS

Award these if the PC completes the condition for the award in the adventure. Pass out certificates to the players for their story awards. It is permissible for a character to earn all three story awards from this adventure, if the character meets the criteria for each award specified at the end of Encounter 8.

CORE60 *Knight-Commander Vessen's Fate*

At the behest of the High Observer of Torm, you journeyed from the city of Eturel to the drow enclave of Sshamath, in an attempt to bring the traitorous Knight-Commander Vessen to justice. His fate was ultimately in

your hands. Circle the answers to the following questions:

What was Vessen's status at the end of the adventure?

Alive - Dead - "Merged" - Unknown

To whom, if anyone, did you deliver Vessen (or his body)?

Eturel - Tyrangal - Did not Recover - Other

CORE61 *E Pluribus Unum*

For a brief moment, you merged your own consciousness with that of the sharn collective. You experienced both the terrifying sensation of having your every thought and memory instantly examined and catalogued, along with the exhilarating feeling of joining a single great being composed of thousands upon thousands of individual minds.

What effect this experience may have on you is for you to decide from a roleplaying perspective. Any sharn, sharn symbiote, or accordant of the Order of Blue Fire will immediately recognize the touch upon you and will treat you with respect as a potential ally (outside of combat) or attempt to strike you down with particular fervor as a betrayer (during combat).

CORE62 *Elturgardan Deliverance*

You undertook a dangerous mission on behalf of the nation of Eturel and succeeded. This story award commemorates the completion of the Major Quest that began with **CORE39 Eturel's Gratitude**.

The High Observer of Torm has offered to grant you a divine boon in the name of the Loyal Fury. This counts as a treasure bundle and occupies one of your found magic item slots, should you choose to accept it. If you decline the boon, strike through this paragraph (but you still receive the Major Quest XP award).

Torm's Protective Ward

Level 18

Torm grants his boon to heroes who shield the weak from the strong. Individuals who fight in Torm's name are beacons of justice.

Lvl 18 (no market value / cannot be sold)

Divine Boon

Property: Gain a +2 item bonus to opportunity attack rolls.

Power (Daily): Minor Action. Until the end of your next turn, enemies adjacent to you provoke opportunity attacks from you if they make attacks that do not include you as a target.

Reference: *Dungeon Master's Guide 2*

NEW RULES

Assassin's Cloak +4

Level 19

This voluminous cloak swallows you up, deadening the sounds you make and concealing your movements.

Lvl 19 +4 105,000 gp

Item Slot: Neck

Enhancement: Fortitude, Reflex, and Will

Property: When you make a Stealth check, you roll twice and use either result.

Power (Daily ♦ Illusion): Minor action. Make an attack: Close burst 2; Charisma + 4 vs. Will; on a hit, you're invisible to the target (save ends).

Reference: *Adventurer's Vault 2*

Bahamut's Protective Ward

Level 18

Bahamut grants his boon to heroes who shield the weak from the strong. Individuals who fight in Bahamut's name are beacons of hope and protection.

Lvl 18 105,000 gp

Divine Boon

Property: Gain a +2 item bonus to opportunity attack rolls.

Power (Daily): Minor Action. Until the end of your next turn, enemies adjacent to you provoke opportunity attacks from you if they make attacks that do not include you as a target.

Reference: *Dungeon Master's Guide 2*

Planesplitter Weapon

Level 19

The edge of this weapon is so sharp that it seems to cut through the unseen forces separating the planes.

Lvl 19 +4 105,000 gp

Weapon: Axe, Heavy Blade

Enhancement: Attack rolls and damage rolls

Critical: +1d12 damage per plus

Property: While wielding this weapon, you can perform the Planar Portal ritual (Player's Handbook, page 311).

Power (Encounter): Free Action. Use this power when you make a melee attack using this weapon. The weapon's reach increases by 2 squares.

Power (Daily ♦ Teleportation): Minor Action. You create a dimensional rift connecting two squares within 10 squares of each other that lasts until the end of your next turn. A creature that enters one of the squares can move to the other square as if it were adjacent to that square. A creature cannot pass through the rift if either square is occupied by another creature.

Reference: *Manual of the Planes*

Planestrider Boots

Level 18

These boots allow you to teleport around corners and to places you might not see from your current point of view.

Item Slot: Feet 85,000 gp

Property: When you use a power to teleport, you can instead teleport twice as the same action. The total distance you travel with both teleports cannot exceed the distance you could have traveled with the original teleport. You could, for example, teleport to a corner, establish a new line of sight, and teleport to a square not visible from your starting location, so long as the maximum number of squares teleported does not exceed the teleport power's allotted movement.

Power (Encounter ♦ Teleportation): Move Action. Teleport 10 squares.

Reference: *Manual of the Planes*

Shadow Warlock Armor +4

Level 20

While wearing this suit of black leather, you can cloud the mind of a cursed enemy so that your attack strikes true.

Lvl 20 +4 125,000 gp

Armor: Leather

Enhancement: AC

Property: While you have concealment from your Shadow Walk class feature, any creature affected by your Warlock's Curse grants combat advantage to you.

Reference: *Adventurer's Vault 2*

Tactician's Armor Level +4

Level 20

In battle, strength of mind is as important as strength of the body, and this armor ensures that you have both.

Lvl 20 +4 125,000 gp

Armor: Chain, Scale, Plate

Enhancement: AC

Property: When a power or class feature calls on your Intelligence modifier to determine a value other than your attack bonus, add 1 to that value. This does not change your Intelligence modifier for any other purpose.

Reference: *Adventurer's Vault*

APPENDIX 1: KEY NPCs AND FACTIONS

ELTURGARDANS

Knight-Commander Vessen - Paladin of Torm and high-ranking member of the Tormish Order that rules Elturgard. Vessen betrayed his nation and his faith during a recent battle against a plaguechanged army. He has been infected with a sharn symbiote and now unwillingly serves the Order of Blue Fire.

Inquisitor Tellar - Avenger of Torm and spymaster for the High Observer of Elturgard. Tellar is both proud and forceful, and still angry over the betrayal of his once friend, Vessen.

SSHAMATH FACTIONS

The School of Darkness - These dark pact warlocks had the most influence over the Conclave for decades but lost much of their influence when the treaty with Netheril fell through. Nurissa Vyllshan leads the School of Darkness.

The School of Blue Fire - These spellscarred and radical drow view their powers as Mystra's last gift to them; many still worship her or have membership in the Order of Blue Fire. They currently stand on equal footing with the School of Darkness within the Conclave. Molbelphyr Ilmtar leads the School of Blue Fire.

The School of Wizardry - These drow wizards look down upon their rivals for their actions in turning to other power sources. They most resemble the old Conclave, and wish to have the city run in the traditional fashion. Guldor Zau'viir leads the School of Wizardry.

The School of Lolth - This group pushes for the city's forced conversion to Lolth and is currently the weakest major faction in the city. This also makes them the most desperate and eager to try new things. Zarylene Oussate leads the School of Lolth.

SSHAMATH NPCs

Nurissa Vyllshan - Female drow dark-pact warlock. Although attractive, she is both cold and calculating. Nurissa is responsible for the imprisonment of Vessen in Sshamath and is preparing for civil war with the School of Blue Fire.

Molbelphyr Ilmtar - Male drow spellscarred bard and self-proclaimed worshipper of blue fire as the remnant of Mystra. Molbelphyr is whimsical and arrogant. He respects people like himself: outgoing hedonists and libertines. He is preparing for civil war with the School of Darkness for refusing to release Vessen.

Guldor Zau'viir - Male drow wizard. Guldor is conservative, cautious, and patriotic. He respects wizards above all others and feels shamed by the wizards' loss of political power in the city. Guldor feels the Conclave's acceptance of warlocks and other non-wizards is a blow to the strength and purpose of Sshamath, and he is one of Nurissa's most powerful opponents.

Matron Zarylene Oussate - Female drow priestess of Lolth. Zarylene is spiteful and cautious to the point of being a coward. She is currently out of favor with Lolth and clings to the shred of hope that Lolth will someday return her clerical power. Zarylene looks down on drow males, and severely dislikes surface-dwellers, especially elves and eladrin, but she is pragmatic enough to look for opportunity when it presents itself.

Nym Mlezziir - Male drow swordmage and legendary leader of the city watch.

Tomias Palesun - Male human Zhentarim mercenary and Captain of the Grey Feathers. A firm supporter of Bane, Tomias is a seemingly easygoing man with a quick wit and many jokes, but he has the cold eyes of a killer.

Izzyrr Mae'urden - Male drow rogue. Izzyrr is a member of the Bregan D'aerthe mercenary company, contracted by Menzoberranzan to gather information on Sshamath and cause chaos. Izzyrr spread misinformation to both Nurissa Vyllshan and Molbelphyr Ilmtar regarding Vessen in order to incite open conflict between the two factions.

OTHER

Tyrangal - Copper dragon who often takes the form of an eladrin. The enigmatic Tyrangal is a wise and resourceful being but her motives are often difficult to understand. Tyrangal seems strongly opposed to the Spellplague in general and the Order of Blue Fire in particular.

APPENDIX 2: SSHAMATH LOCATIONS

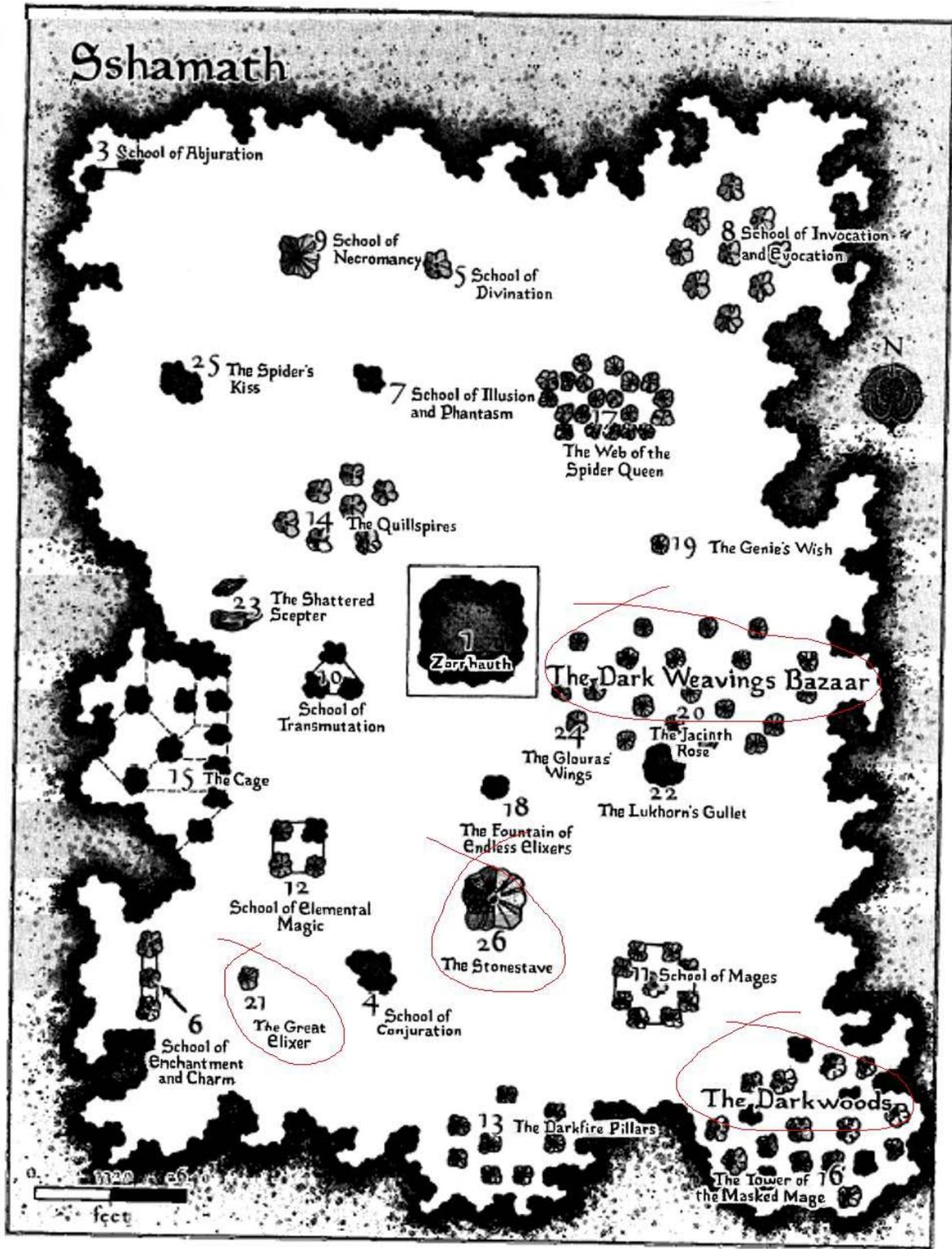
The outdated map provided by Inquisitor Tellar is still mostly accurate. The original pillar Z'orr'bauth fell upon the Web of the Spider Queen which was completely destroyed. Many of the previous wizard towers that were the strongholds of the various schools of magic were destroyed or are too dangerous to use now, but most other damage to the city was due to scattered debris falling from the cavern ceiling. Numerous small, active plaguelands dot the city. The main cavern is warded against long-distance teleportation; if the PCs wish to use the Linked Portal ritual, they must do so outside the city limits.

The following is a list of important locations in this adventure.

- **Exit to Varalla's Passage** - Northeast of the Dark Weavings Bazaar, the exit is protected by a large gatehouse.
- **The Darkwoods** - Petrified forest of stalagmites in the southeastern portion of the city. The Darkwoods is an undeveloped area only recently cleared out of dark ones under the direction of the School of Darkness.
- **Dark Weavings Bazaar** - Near the exit to Varalla's Passage in the eastern section of the city, the bazaar is the area where least attention is paid to outsiders.
- **Z'orr'bauth** - Though the original Z'orr'bauth was indeed destroyed in the Spellplague, the wizards of the city recently conjured a replacement in a massive ritual, which retains the original's name. This huge column has spiraling stairs and magically powered elevators that take the city's residents to the cavern ceiling or floor, and numerous bridges already connect the column to stalactites where many of the wealthier citizens reside.
- **The Darkfire Pillars** - The center of the industrial district of the city, spewing odd colored smoke into the air from numerous forges. The area is relatively quiet as the city is just beginning to trade again and industry is weak from years of inactivity.
- **The Cage** - An area of columns walled off by magical walls of electricity. The area was traditionally used by the Breeder's guild for holding, breeding, and training various creatures for sale.
- **The Stonestave** - A stalactite shaped like a wizard's staff hanging from the cavern ceiling that serves as the center of government for the Conclave, the ruling oligarchy of Sshamath.

PLAYER HANDOUT 1 - OLD MAP OF SSSHAMATH

Map of Sshamath acquired by Inquisitor Tellar that is over 120 years old:



Map Source: *Drizzt Do'Urden's Guide to the Underdark* by Eric Boyd © 1999 TSR/WOTC

PLAYER HANDOUT 2 – BRIEFING ON SSHAMATH

- Sshamath is known as the City of Dark Weavings and lies some thirty miles south of Darkhold and several miles down. It was once home to 32,000 drow, but its current population is estimated at 25,000, with another 5,000 or so slaves.
- Unlike most drow cities, the city did not follow the way of Lolth. Though some Lolth worship did exist, it was in the minority and had little sway over the city's dealings.
- The city was ruled by the Conclave, an oligarchy of wizards representing the different schools of magic.
- Sshamath was considered the most cosmopolitan city of the Underdark; all races significantly capable of wizardry were considered free, if not citizens, and arcane spellcasters from all over Faerûn above and below journeyed to its Dark Weavings Bazaar, where one could purportedly find any magical item for sale, or pay for its acquisition for a very large fee. Even surface adventurers were commonplace.
- Religious leanings varied greatly, but many citizens disdained religion, seeing it as a crutch for those too weak-willed or too stupid to be wizards. Arcane magic was revered above all.
- In a critical area at the nexus of several trade routes between various Underdark regions, Sshamath's location is strategic for both military and trading purposes.
- The city was protected by a multitude of magical wards and traps. Furthermore, Sshamath was said to be without the Faезress, the magical radiation that pervades most of the Underdark and scrambles divination and teleportation magic.
- Sshamath went silent after the Spellplague. Rumor was that Z'orr'bauth, the great stone column that held up the two-mile-wide cavern, collapsed and the city caved in. While most assumed that Sshamath was destroyed from the backlash of the Spellplague, in fact the city itself survived. The Conclave splintered into four factions vying for power and the city has spent the better part of the last century rebuilding. Each of the four factions consists of one of the following: Dark Pact warlocks, spellscarred drow, wizards, and Lolth worshippers.
- Recently, the Conclave sought an alliance with Netheril to ensure protection from the Northdark drow in exchange for the promise of military assistance to the Netherese. The alliance was sabotaged by an intrepid group of adventurers.
- Sshamath's vulnerable state is of great concern to Elturgard. Should the Northdark drow take over the city, they could pose a significant threat to the city of Elturel from a very strategic position.
- The Church of Torm can access Sshamath via the Linked Portal ritual, thanks to reconnaissance performed by a group of adventurers. Alternatively, the city can be reached from the surface via Varalla's Passage, a route discovered by the same adventurers posing as Zhentarim mercenaries.

DUNGEONS & DRAGONS LIVING FORGOTTEN REALMS

(character name)

HAS RECEIVED STORY AWARDS FROM:
(cross out those not received)

CORE2~8 ENEMY OF MY ENEMY

CORE60 Knight-Commander Vessen's Fate

At the behest of the High Observer of Torm, you journeyed from the city of Elturel to the drow enclave of Sshamath, in an attempt to bring the traitorous Knight-Commander Vessen to justice. His fate was ultimately in your hands.

What was Vessen's status at the end of the adventure?

Alive - Dead - "Merged" - Unknown

To whom, if anyone, did you deliver Vessen (or his body)?

Elturel - Tyrangal - Did not recover Vessen - Other

CORE61 E Pluribus Unum

For a brief moment, you merged your own consciousness with that of the sharn collective. You experienced both the terrifying sensation of having your every thought and memory instantly examined and catalogued, along with the exhilarating feeling of joining a single great being composed of thousands upon thousands of individual minds.

What effect this experience may have on you is for you to decide from a roleplaying perspective. Any sharn, sharn symbiote, or loremaster of the Order of Blue Fire will immediately recognize the touch upon you and will treat you with respect as a potential ally (outside of combat) or attempt to strike you down with particular fervor as a betrayer (during combat).

CORE62 Elturgardan Deliverance

You were true to your word and have delivered justice to the people of Elturel. This award concludes the Major Quest that began with **CORE39 Elturgardan Gratitude**.

The High Observer of Torm has offered to grant you a divine boon in the name of the Loyal Fury. This counts as a treasure bundle and occupies one of your found magic item slots, should you choose to accept it. If you decline the boon, strike through this paragraph (but you still receive the Major Quest XP award).

Torm's Protective Ward **Divine Boon** Lvl 18 (no market value / cannot be sold)

Torm grants his boon to heroes who shield the weak from the strong. Individuals who fight in Torm's name are beacons of justice.

Property: Gain a +2 item bonus to opportunity attack rolls.

Power (Daily): Minor Action. Until the end of your next turn, enemies adjacent to you provoke opportunity attacks from you if they make attacks that do not include you as a target.

Reference: *Dungeon Master's Guide 2 [Bahamut's Protective Ward]*

DUNGEONS & DRAGONS LIVING FORGOTTEN REALMS

(character name)

HAS RECEIVED STORY AWARDS FROM:
(cross out those not received)

CORE2~8 ENEMY OF MY ENEMY

CORE60 Knight-Commander Vessen's Fate

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Reference: *Dungeon Master's Guide 2 [Bahamut's Protective Ward]*

Event Name: _____ Event Code: _____
(This number was given to the organizer when the event was scheduled)

Adventure Title: _____ Session Number: _____
(For administrative use only)

Date of Play: / /
Month Day Year

Start Time: :
Hour Minute

Give hour in military time standard (p.m. hours = hour +12). Don't record the exact minute the adventure played. Instead list the closest 30-minute interval the game was scheduled to start at (30 or 00).

A legal table has no less than four players, and no more than six players.

Player Name	RPGA/DCI Number
1	<input type="text"/>
2	<input type="text"/>
3	<input type="text"/>
4	<input type="text"/>
5	<input type="text"/>
6	<input type="text"/>

DUNGEON MASTER

DM Name: _____

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Event Name: _____ Event Code: _____
(This number was given to the organizer when the event was scheduled)

Adventure Title: _____ Session Number: _____
(For administrative use only)

Date of Play: / /
Month Day Year

Start Time: :
Hour Minute

Give hour in military time standard (p.m. hours = hour +12). Don't record the exact minute the adventure played. Instead list the closest 30-minute interval the game was scheduled to start at (30 or 00).

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Player Name	RPGA/DCI Number
1	<input type="text"/>
2	<input type="text"/>
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4	<input type="text"/>
5	<input type="text"/>
6	<input type="text"/>

DUNGEON MASTER

DM Name: _____

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