

A HEROIC TIER ADVENTURE

AGE 12+

# DUNGEONS & DRAGONS

## ENCOUNTERS™

### COUNCIL OF SPIDERS™



AN ADVENTURE FOR CHARACTERS OF 1<sup>ST</sup>-3<sup>RD</sup> LEVEL

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# INTRODUCTION

Welcome to DUNGEONS & DRAGONS ENCOUNTERS™, an exciting official DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® program. This adventure is a mini-campaign season designed to be played in one-encounter sessions once per week at your local Wizards Play Network location. Each week, players can earn in-game rewards for their characters and Renown Points toward special program-exclusive DUNGEONS & DRAGONS *Fortune Cards*™ that can be used in this and future seasons of DUNGEONS & DRAGONS ENCOUNTERS play.

## PREPARING FOR PLAY

The DUNGEONS & DRAGONS ENCOUNTERS play kit provides all you need to DM this adventure, including poster maps of encounter areas and a sheet of tokens to represent monsters, adventurers, and battlefield effects. Follow the steps below to prepare for play.

### Before you run Session 1:

- ◆ Read the **Adventure Background** and **Adventure Summary** for the flow of the story.
- ◆ Read **Session 1: Survivors**, page 9. If you are starting at another point, read the appropriate sections and summarize what has come before.

### At the table for Session 1:

- ◆ Ensure that each player has a character to play. Players can use one of the characters provided in the kit or can create their own personas using the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS rules.
- ◆ Give each player a D&D ENCOUNTERS Play Tracker. This sheet, found in the play kit, allows the players to track treasure, experience, worth, and Renown Points earned for each play session.
- ◆ Acquire a session tracking sheet from the organizer. Record all the players' WPN (or DCI™/RPGA®) numbers on it, along with your own number. If you or any of the players don't have a WPN number, ask the organizer for a membership card.

### During the session:

- ◆ Each session is one encounter. Run the encounter assigned for that week's session. Typical play time for a session is 90 minutes to 2 hours.
- ◆ Make decisions and adjudications that enhance the fun of the game. As the DM, you can adjust the adventure (see **A Changing Group** on the next page) to maximize the fun for the players.

### At the end of your first session:

- ◆ Have the adventurers take a short rest if they want, but remind them to track their daily abilities. Healing surges used, daily powers expended, and other daily resources do not refresh in between sessions, only at the end of each chapter. Make sure your players track this information on their D&D ENCOUNTERS Play Trackers.
- ◆ Give out treasure, worth, and experience points. Make sure the players write down rewards on their D&D ENCOUNTERS Play Trackers.
- ◆ Turn in your session tracking sheet to the organizer. Make sure you've recorded all the DCI/RPGA numbers on it, along with names and the date of the event.
- ◆ Report Renown Point totals earned for each player to the organizer. The organizer fills out the Renown Point Tracker for the location.
- ◆ Collect your special reward for providing your time as a DM to make the event happen. Your organizer has more details on this reward.

### At the end of each chapter:

- ◆ The adventurers take an extended rest, regaining all their healing surges, hit points, and daily powers. Also, their action points total resets to 1.
- ◆ Once you've been the DM for a few sessions, it's easy to prepare for your next session. Read the next session's material, and you're ready to go.

## A CHANGING GROUP

Since you can never tell who's going to show up to a DUNGEONS & DRAGONS ENCOUNTERS session, you might wind up with a different group of players from week to week. Some players might have missed a session or two, and others might have played sessions with a different DM. That's fine. Catch new players up with a summary of what has come before, and make sure that returning players have marked off resources they spent (healing surges, daily powers, and so on) since their last extended rest.

**Majority Rules:** If some element of the adventure plot hinges on the adventurers making a decision in a previous session, and the group is different during the current session, find out how the decision went down from the players. Go with the majority, and if it's an even split, side with the result that favors the adventuring party. For example, if three of five players' characters at your table slew the black dragon in a previous encounter and two didn't, the dragon is considered to be slain for your session this week.

## RENOWN POINTS

One of the great rewards for playing in a DUNGEONS & DRAGONS ENCOUNTERS season is the accumulation of Renown Points (RP), which are given out for player accomplishments during, and sometimes between, sessions. These Renown Points are tracked at the Wizards Play Network location, and reaching certain thresholds garners the player a tangible reward.

This season of D&D ENCOUNTERS uses a new set of DUNGEONS & DRAGONS Fortune Cards™ called *Drow Treachery*. This set of Fortune Cards features a new kind of card: Treachery cards. These work just like other Fortune Cards but tie in to the optional Worth system introduced in the *Menzoberranzan: City of Intrigue*™ supplement. Players can use these cards during the current DUNGEONS & DRAGONS ENCOUNTERS season, during subsequent seasons, or possibly during both. Each card provides a benefit, usually at the expense of allies, that is detailed on the card. Rules for using Drow Treachery Cards are found in booster packs or online at [www.DungeonsandDragons.com](http://www.DungeonsandDragons.com).

As the Dungeon Master, you award Renown Points at the end of a session of play. Unlike experience and treasure, Renown Points totals earned for each player must be reported to the organizer at the conclusion of the session when you turn in your session tracking sheet. The organizer can then tell you if any players have qualified for a card.

The Renown Point accomplishments, their frequency, and the point values of each are listed below.

### RENOWN POINT AWARDS

Accomplishment	Frequency	RP
Complete an encounter	Session	3
Bring a new player	Session	2
End with the highest Worth	Session	1
Moment of greatness	1/chapter	2
Deal 15+ damage to 1 enemy	1/chapter	2
Kill 3 minions with 1 attack	1/chapter	2
Take 50 enemy damage in 1 session	1/chapter	2
Create your own character	Season	5
Create a PC with Character Builder	Season	5
End with the highest Worth	Season	5
Survive 5+ sessions without dying	Season	5

**Bring a New Player:** Current players can earn this award for bringing a player who is a new participant in the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS ENCOUNTERS program (current and past seasons included).

**Moment of Greatness:** When a player does something inventive, daring, or just plain cool during a session, the DM can grant this optional award or allow the other players to vote on whether it should be awarded.

**Worth:** Playing *Drow Treachery* cards grants a character Worth, a measure of a drow's social standing. Ending

a session or the entire season with the highest Worth in the party earns Renown Points.

## RENOWN REWARDS

A player receives a DUNGEONS & DRAGONS *Drow Treachery* card called Hands Off! when he or she reaches 20 RP. A player receives Overextended for 40 RP and I See What You Did for 60 RP. These cards are awarded to the player immediately following the session in which the card is earned. Players can add these cards to their Fortune Card decks upon earning them. The organizer distributes these cards, and any questions regarding availability or quantities should be directed to the organizer.

## TREASURE

As the characters progress, they have the opportunity to gain treasure in the form of gold pieces, valuables, and magic items. Whenever characters discover treasure, follow the instructions provided in the adventure. Use the following rules to divide treasure among the characters. The magic items in this adventure come from *Heroes of the Fallen Lands*™, *Heroes of the Forgotten Kingdoms*™, and *Mordenkainen's Magnificent Emporium*™.

**Awarding Magic Items:** When the characters find a nonconsumable magic item, the players can decide which character receives it. Usually, these decisions are easy, since certain items are better suited for certain characters. If this is not the case, then you should assign the new item to a character who has no nonconsumable magic items. If two or more characters lack nonconsumable magic items, have each of those players roll a d20. The player with the highest roll receives the new item.

**Selling Items:** If none of the characters wants a particular magic item, the group can sell it at the end of the session, using the information on pages 277–278 of *Rules Compendium*™. Divide the gold pieces received evenly among the party members.

**When to Gear Up:** Characters can buy equipment at the start of each chapter.

## Random Items

Use the following table to determine unidentified magic items, or choose from it based on the adventuring group's needs. Numbers in parentheses indicate the source of the item, as noted below the table.

**TREASURE TABLE**

d20	Result
1	2 <i>potions of healing</i> (1, 2)
2	+1 <i>magic armor</i> (1, 2)
3	+1 <i>magic weapon</i> (1, 2)
4	+1 <i>amulet of protection</i> (1, 2)
5	+1 <i>magic wand, orb, or staff</i> (1, 2)
6	+1 <i>safewing amulet</i> (1)
7	<i>Shield of deflection</i> (1)
8	+1 <i>amulet of health</i> (2)
9	+1 <i>delver's armor</i> (2)
10	<i>Gloves of agility</i> (2)
11	+1 <i>warning weapon</i> (3)
12	2 <i>shiver-strike ammunition</i> (3)
13	+1 <i>lesser cloaked weapon</i> (3)
14	+1 <i>ebon armor</i> (3)
15	<i>Elixir of invisibility</i> (3)
16	<i>Eyes of charming</i> (3)
17	<i>Floating lantern</i> (3)
18	+1 <i>weapon of surrounding</i> (3)
19	+1 <i>wand of inevitability</i> (3)
20	Roll twice more (reroll if 20 comes up again)
1.	<i>Heroes of the Fallen Lands</i>
2.	<i>Heroes of the Forgotten Kingdoms</i>
3.	<i>Mordenkainen's Magnificent Emporium</i>

## TACTICAL PLACEMENT

This adventure provides a sample tactical setup for each encounter, including the location of the monsters and a start area for the characters. Tactical maps for each encounter present only one way to set up the encounter. If it doesn't make sense to place monster or adventurer tokens in the places indicated on the map, you can change the placement. The narrative of how your adventure is playing out should be the major mandate for character and creature placement. For example, if a character was sneaking around behind the monsters, then allow that player to place his or her token or miniature in an appropriate location.



# ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

You can read the following background to the players during the character creation session, or you can throw them right into the action and answer questions they have as they come up. All the text up to but not including “The Three Factions” is known to all the drow.

Menzoberranzan is known and feared among even the heartiest folk of the Savage Frontier and the Sword Coast. It may not be the greatest city of drow in Faerûn, but it might well be the most famous due to its activities in the surface world.

The city is a point of darkness even within the caverns of the Underdark. The dark elves revere the goddess Lolth, the Demon Queen of Spiders. To them, the other people of the Underdark are fit only to be slaves and sacrifices.

Hierarchy and political power mean everything to the nobles of Menzoberranzan. The highest political positions belong to the priestesses of Lolth, who are exclusively female. The ranks of wizards, rogues, and warriors are mostly filled by males, who hold a much lower social station. The most powerful male in Menzoberranzan will never wield more political clout than the most powerful female.

In that context, it's sort of amazing that three powerful drow are working together in uniting members of their houses in pursuit of common goals. You're all young drow nobles, assigned by your houses to work with this triumvirate. The three drow couldn't be more different. One is a wizard, a cousin of House Wizard Ravel Xorlarrin, named Hoshtar—a mysterious figure who covers his face with a red veil, following the tradition of his house. Then there's Priestess Ash'ala Melarn, third daughter of the first priestess of that house, who's proud and severe like most drow priestesses, draped in her robes of office. Next to these, the third member seems incongruous—a rakish fellow named Ro'kolor, a member of Bregan D'aerthe. As odd an assortment as they may be, they have pulled together an equally motley group of adventurers, and they have a single task for you.

## The Demon Weave

The word of Lolth commands all drow. Their societies are based on precepts that please the Queen of Spiders. But now Lolth's plans endanger the power structure of Menzoberranzan, and its leaders must decide whether to follow her dictates or cling to the power they have fought and schemed to attain.

For as long as drow societies have existed in their current hierarchy, Lolth has demanded that the priestesses who serve her remain in charge. The male warriors and mages serve her in lower stations, but

the priestesses must rule. Just recently, though, Lolth's ambition has made her covet a greater place in the pantheon of deities. She wants to command arcane magic, as the goddess Mystra did before her death, and spin a new Demon Weave to replace Mystra's Weave, unraveled during the Spellplague. She has sent a prophet, Danifae Yauntyr, to all the cities of the drow, expressing her ambition and commanding her followers to assist her efforts by channeling whatever remains of Mystra's power to Lolth.

Lolth's command threatens to upend the core beliefs of drow society, however, by elevating the wizards who draw on her new Demon Weave to a higher status, perhaps even equal to the priestesses. Will those who profess to follow her stay true to her commands, even if it means abdicating their positions of power? Or will they cling to their status and turn a deaf ear to Lolth's prophet Danifae, perhaps seeking to silence or discredit her? In Menzoberranzan, the social order stands balanced on a knife's edge.

## The Three Factions

There are fundamentally three possible outcomes to the social turmoil in Menzoberranzan: The priestesses could remain in power even as Lolth spins her Demon Weave, the wizards could rise to a place of greater prominence by drawing on the Demon Weave, or Menzoberranzan's society could collapse in ruin, perhaps even casting off the Way of Lolth entirely. Three factions within the city each strive toward a different outcome. By the end of the season, the adventurers will have to decide which faction they throw their support behind.

## The Council of Spiders

Arcane spellcasters within the city view the creation of the Demon Weave as an opportunity to elevate their social standing. A group of wizards drawn from several noble houses has dubbed itself the Council of Spiders, acknowledging the supremacy of Lolth even as it obliquely challenges the authority of the city's Ruling Council of priestesses. Their goal is to see wizards represented on the Ruling Council, overturning thousands of years of tradition—but remaining true to Lolth's will as she has expressed it through her prophet.

Various lesser wizards of House Xorlarrin and House Barrison Del'Armgo form the backbone of the Council of Spiders. These two houses are both known for the prominent role of their wizards, and Xorlarrin in particular scandalously grants its prominent males near-equality with the females. A number of wizards from other houses are involved in the Council as well, but as yet no House Wizards or masters of Sorcere have given their full support to the Council. A primary goal of the Council in this adventure is to persuade a



prominent wizard to join the Council and give it the weight it needs to achieve its larger goals.

## The Defiant Priestesses

The female clergy holds the loftiest social station in Menzoberranzan. For centuries, Lolth's priestesses have remained in control, dictating the will of their demon goddess to the people of the city. In the wake of Lolth's pronouncements, her priestesses are alarmed at the possibility of mere males challenging that power. Of course, few priestesses are willing to act directly and overtly in a way that might be seen as disobeying Lolth's will. Most priestesses, including the matron mothers and the first priestesses of all the major houses, are watching and waiting, avoiding action until they can be sure of the results.

A few lesser priestesses, however, are willing to act more directly to oppose the Council of Spiders—though mostly through their pawns, who have less to lose. They undermine the Council's attempts to bring artifacts from the surface and channel their power to Lolth, preferring to serve a weaker goddess than admit males as their equals.

## The Jaezred Chaulssin

This secret society of assassins claims descent from shadow dragons, and its members' mastery of shadow magic supports that claim. The Jaezred Chaulssin seek to save the drow from the madness and tyranny of Lolth, and the only way they can see to do so is to shatter the structure of drow society as it exists. Lolth's desire to spin the Demon Weave is the perfect opportunity, in their mind, to overthrow the Way of Lolth, by feeding the tension between wizards and priestesses until it erupts into civil war. The Jaezred Chaulssin are a sinister force in the shadows throughout this adventure, trying to use the player characters in an effort to play the other factions against each other.

**Valan Jaelre:** A short time ago, Valan of House Jaelre led an attack by the drow underneath Shadowdale in an attempt to steal the *Pendant of Ashaba*. His goal was apparently to demolish the wards protecting Shadowdale, but his real efforts were directed toward acquiring the *Pendant of Ashaba*, a powerful artifact that would have given Lolth more arcane power to fuel her ascent. (Valan's plot is introduced in the sixth DUNGEONS & DRAGONS ENCOUNTERS season, *Web of the Spider Queen*.)

However, Valan is not what he appears. In *Web of the Spider Queen*, he appeared to both the player characters and the drow under his command as a fervent follower of Lolth, intent on securing a powerful artifact to help spin the Demon Weave. In fact, he is a member of the Jaezred Chaulssin, determined to return to House Jaelre's ancestral home of Menzoberranzan and overthrow

the social order that forced his family's expulsion from the city more than a century ago.

Valan Jaelre did not actually lead his raid on the surface world. He sent a simulacrum of himself made of spiders as a decoy, while he traveled to Menzoberranzan. He mingled with the downtrodden humanoids and outcast drow in the dismal neighborhood called the Braeryn (or "Stenchstreets") and launched the next phase of his plan—a plan to ignite civil war in Menzoberranzan and clear the way for the Jaezred Chaulssin to establish a new order.

## ADVENTURE SUMMARY

Throughout the adventure, the characters do the bidding of three drow leaders who are working together: Priestess Ash'ala Melarn (the third daughter of Kynill Melarn), a wizard named Hoshtar Xorlarrin (a cousin of House Wizard Ravel Xorlarrin), and Ro'kolor, an agent of Bregan D'aerthe.

## Chapter 1

Under the orders of these three leaders, the adventurers undertake a journey to a long-abandoned drow outpost said to be located on a site charged with primordial energy—a kind of power that can feed Lolth's Demon Weave.

**Session 1:** The adventurers battle Underdark monsters on their way to the lost outpost. They also encounter the badly injured survivors of the last party sent to the outpost, who reveal that one of their number betrayed them and left them for dead.

**Session 2:** A group of svirfneblin ambush the adventurers, and the gnomes reveal that they were forewarned of the characters' approach.

**Session 3:** The adventurers reach the outpost and find the treacherous drow who betrayed her allies and warned the svirfneblin about the characters. She is a priestess of House Faen Tlabbar, but also an unwitting pawn of the Jaezred Chaulssin, attempting to sabotage the efforts to claim the site's power for Lolth.

## Chapter 2

While promising to investigate the treacherous priestess, the triumvirate sends the adventurers on a new task. They have learned that a group of rebellious wizards is holding Hoshtar Xorlarrin, one of the adventurers' patrons, captive in the ruins of the House Srune'Lett compound, and they send the characters to help.

**Session 4:** The adventurers reach the Srune'Lett ruins and find the building where the wizard is being held. They're greeted by young members of the Council of Spiders, who attack upon realizing the characters are a threat to the council.



**Session 5:** The adventurers reach the inner chamber of the council's compound, where they learn that the Council of Spiders has been deceived. Hoshtar Xorlarrin is indeed a captive, held by a shadowy assassin who has killed two other, more senior members of the Council. The assassin thanks the characters for starting the war in earnest, but they kill or drive him off and free Hoshtar. Hoshtar explains what the Council of Spiders is and what the assassin was up to.

## Interlude

At this point, the characters have learned three key facts:

- ◆ A group of defiant priestesses (represented by the Faen Tlabbar priestess in the Shobalar outpost) seeks to undermine all attempts to create the Demon Weave in order to hold on to their own power.
- ◆ The Council of Spiders seeks male representation on the Ruling Council.
- ◆ Somebody (represented by the assassin) is trying to provoke this tension into open civil war.

**Session 6:** The characters meet with the three drow leaders and help each one decide what position House Melarn, House Xorlarrin, and Bregan D'aerthe should advocate and support. All three groups might lean one way, or the groups—and the characters who belong to them—might fracture. In any event, the threat of the assassins and the possible outbreak of war is the top priority.

## Chapter 3

Depending on the outcome of the previous session, the characters might still be operating as a group (if all three leaders chose the same direction) or separately, but they are all going after Valan Jaelre. The factions all want to see him brought down, but each also has a secondary goal that will prevent the characters from wholly cooperating.

**Session 7:** The adventurers enter the cellar complex where Valan Jaelre is thought to be hiding, and they face another priestess manipulated by the Jaezred Chaulssin. Depending on the outcome of the previous session, they might enter separately or together.

**Session 8:** In the innermost part of the complex, the characters finally confront Valan Jaelre and other shadowy minions of the Jaezred Chaulssin. They must determine among themselves how to achieve their secondary goals.

# SESSION 0: CHARACTER CREATION

The initial session of this DUNGEONS & DRAGONS ENCOUNTERS season is intended to allow players to create characters. While they do, they should also learn the background of the mini-campaign, from the start of the **Adventure Background** up to but not including the "The Three Factions" section. Walk the players through the character creation process, using questions to help guide their decisions.

For this season, players can use a limited pool of materials drawn from *Heroes of the Fallen Lands*, *Heroes of the Forgotten Kingdoms*, *Into the Unknown: The Dungeon Survival Handbook™*, and *Menzoberranzan: City of Intrigue* to create their characters. In addition, players can use rules presented in *Dragon®* magazine in support of this D&D ENCOUNTERS season, including the character themes from *Dragon* 413.

A player who misses this session can create a character elsewhere (with the same restrictions as everybody else) or use one of the pregenerated adventurers provided in the play kit. Each player is responsible for bringing his or her character to each play session.

## Races

Most characters in this season should be drow who hail from Menzoberranzan, using the race statistics from *Heroes of the Forgotten Kingdoms*. A player can instead play a slave of the drow and choose from dwarf, goblin, half-orc, human, kobold, and svirfneblin. (Goblin, kobold, and svirfneblin appear in *Into the Unknown: The Dungeon Survival Handbook*; human and dwarf appear in *Heroes of the Fallen Lands*.) No more than two players per table should choose a non-drow race.

## Alignment and Religion

Most drow are evil in alignment. At their nicest, they're unaligned and hiding it. Slaves could have other alignments. Drow worship Lolth, although you might want to make an exception for an unusual character concept. Even so, the character needs to pretend to worship Lolth or face death at the hands of devout drow.

Some players take the evil alignment as a license to behave badly and an excuse to cause mischief at the table. Explain to the group that, although their characters are evil, they should cooperate. At their social station, they can't yet afford a reputation for betrayal. For instance, a character might forgo his or her house's goal (see "Goals," page 7) to help another character accomplish a goal. Of course, the generous character might expect a return of the favor later.



That said, the *DUNGEONS & DRAGONS Drow Treachery* cards assume a certain amount of backbiting among the characters, reflecting the opportunities presented in the course of adventuring to claim a small amount of personal Worth at the expense of one's allies. Encourage the players to use these cards as part of a friendly competition, not an all-out war.

Playing an evil adventurer offers a chance to explore the dark side: to be the ruthless killer, to steal without remorse, and to bargain with terrible powers. Not all players are comfortable with such actions, though. Before play begins, it's a good idea to discuss with the group what events they want to avoid and what subjects they'd rather not explore. Respecting these limits ensures that the game remains fun for everyone.

## Classes

Players can choose any class from *Heroes of the Fallen Lands* and *Heroes of the Forgotten Kingdoms*. Use the following questions to help guide their decisions.

### 1. Are you playing a slave instead of a drow?

If yes, suggest the slayer fighter or thief rogue from *Heroes of the Fallen Lands*, or the hunter or scout ranger from *Heroes of the Forgotten Kingdoms*.

If no, go to the next question.

### 2. Do you prefer to play a class with a major political and social role in drow society?

If yes, suggest the warpriest cleric or the mage wizard from *Heroes of the Fallen Lands*. Remind the player that clerics in Menzoberranzan are always female, and wizards and warlocks are usually male.

If no, suggest the thief rogue, the knight or slayer fighter, the hunter or scout ranger, or the hexblade warlock (from *Heroes of the Forgotten Kingdoms*).

## House

Each character in *Council of Spiders* either belongs to one of two drow houses or is a member of the Bregan D'aerthe mercenary group. Read the names and summaries below, or pass them around for the players to read. Explain to the group that drow have to obey commands from houses of a higher station than their own, but that this rule rarely stops drow from betraying one another by working against other houses in secret.

**Xorlarrin (Third House):** The nobles of House Xorlarrin wear masks and loose clothes to conceal their identities and genders. These paranoid wizards possess the strongest magical ability of all the houses, and those who can't perform arcane magic don't live to adulthood. House Xorlarrin is dedicated to aiding Lolth in the creation of the Demon Weave.

**Melarn (Seventh House):** The priestesses of House Melarn have appointed themselves the inquisitors of Lolth, rooting out any secret betrayal of the Way of

Lolth or the worship of other deities among the members of other noble houses. Melarn is a militant house, ready to repel an attack from the other houses—most of which despise the overzealous and self-righteous Melarn priestesses. House Melarn's primary concern is ensuring that Lolth's will is enacted at any cost.

**Bregan D'aerthe:** This mercenary company, led by Jarlaxle Baenre, operates outside the law and works for the highest bidder. It's not a noble house, but rather a federation of assassins and spies whose members are in it for the money. Bregan D'aerthe is a wild card, and it might end up on either side of the conflict. An adventurer can start as a member of this faction, but nothing forces him or her to side with its other members.

In this adventure, Bregan D'aerthe is the proxy of House Baenre, the First House of Menzoberranzan. The First House can't afford to pick sides in these conflicts until the circumstances are clearer, so Bregan D'aerthe acts on Baenre's behalf without ever saying as much.

Use the following questions to help guide the players' choice of houses, but if the players want to ignore these guidelines—for example, by creating characters who all belong to the same house—don't discourage them.

### 1. Is your character a priestess?

If yes, suggest House Melarn.

If no, go to question 2.

### 2. Is your character a wizard or a warlock?

If yes, suggest House Xorlarrin.

If no, go to question 3.

### 3. Is your character a thief or a mercenary?

If yes, suggest Bregan D'aerthe.

If no, suggest House Xorlarrin.

## Goals

For most of this adventure, House Xorlarrin, House Melarn, and Bregan D'aerthe are working together and sending the player characters on specific missions that all three groups want to see fulfilled. However, each of these groups has its own goals as well, and in each chapter, adventurers belonging to these groups have goals beyond the stated mission of the chapter.

At the start of each chapter, give the players the goals associated with their houses. Encourage them to keep these goals secret from the members of other houses. Emphasize that accomplishing the group's and their own goals is more important than slaying monsters. The players should know that, in some encounters especially, getting out alive is more important than killing every creature.

Accomplishing a goal earns characters 3 Worth points (see "Worth," below).

## Worth

A drow's station determines his or her place in the society of Menzoberranzan. One way this station is reflected is through a character's Worth score.

Characters in this adventure start with a Worth score of 0, modified according to the following table.

### STARTING WORTH

Condition	Worth Modifier
Female	+5
Male	-5
Member of House Xorlarrin or House Melarn	+1
Priestess	+5
Wizard	+3
Fighter	+1

Over the course of the adventure, characters' worth is modified by three factors: playing Treachery cards, completing house goals, and miscellaneous actions.

Worth gains from playing Treachery cards are shown on the cards themselves. Each time a player uses a Treachery card, that player's character gains or loses the Worth shown in the upper right-hand corner of the card.

Each time the adventurers complete a house goal (including a goal of Bregan D'aerthe), the members of that house gain +3 Worth.

Finally, the following actions taken in the course of the adventure can modify a character's Worth, as shown on the table below.

### WORTH MODIFIERS

Action	Worth Modifier
Survive an ambush	+2
Gain a level	+1
Back down from a conflict	-2
Display a weak emotion (love, kindness)	-2
Show mercy	-3
Disobey a priestess of Lolth	-4
Speak ill of Lolth	-4
Strike a drow female	-4

Some of these modifiers are almost inevitable in the course of the adventure, and are noted in individual encounters.

As characters pass certain thresholds of Worth, they gain minor benefits of drow society. These benefits are not detailed in this adventure, but you can consult *Menzoberranzan: City of Intrigue* if you want to incorporate them.

Worth is most relevant in the adventure in characters' interactions with each other (characters whose Worth is higher than other characters' shouldn't hesitate to remind them of that fact when disagreements arise) and in determining Renown Points (see page 2).

## Advancement

At the end of each session, you award experience points, treasure, worth, and Renown Points. The "Reward" section at the end of each session indicates how many XP to award the characters. The point total includes the encounter reward plus exploration and story awards. Each character receives the same amount of XP. Players record their rewards on their D&D ENCOUNTERS Play Trackers, and you report the Renown Points each player earns to the organizer.

**Leveling:** DUNGEONS & DRAGONS ENCOUNTERS play uses an accelerated XP award system to allow players to experience their characters at a succession of levels. If a player attends every session, his or her character advances to level 2 at the start of Chapter 2 and to level 3 at the start of Chapter 3.

## Changing Characters

Players can switch characters during the season. If a player wants to do so, he or she can bring a new character with experience points equal to those of the character he or she previously played in the season. However, the new character cannot keep treasure, items, or worth from the previous character.

## Character Death

If a character dies during a session, the player has two choices. He or she can bring the same character back at the beginning of the next session, with four fewer healing surges, or start a new level-appropriate character. If a character dies and has fewer than four healing surges remaining, that character loses all his or her remaining healing surges and can return next session with full hit points. No other penalty exists for death, except the potential of failing to gain the Renown Points for surviving five or more sessions without dying.



# CHAPTER 1

The characters travel into the Dark Dominion to find a lost outpost of House Shobalar, thought to hold stored energy from a dead primordial. They encounter wandering monsters and treachery along the way.

## SESSION 1: SURVIVORS

On the way to the Shobalar outpost, the characters battle Underdark monsters and find the battered survivors of the first expedition that searched for the outpost—victims of treachery from within their own ranks.

### To start, read:

*The three drow whose coalition has united you—Priestess Ash'ala Melarn, Hoshtar Xorlarrin, and Ro'kolor of Bregan D'aerthe—meet you in a small cavern in the Eastways that lead out from Menzoberranzan to the region known as the Fardrimm. It's a private place for a meeting, where you can be relatively sure no one is eavesdropping.*

*"You might have heard of House Shobalar," the priestess begins without preamble. "They were destroyed during the war a century ago—punished for the distortion of the Way of Lolth that they practiced in elevating the arcane arts among their women."*

*"The reason for their destruction is beyond our knowing," Hoshtar interjects, "and immaterial to your mission. Before the war, House Shobalar maintained a small outpost called Sezz'ia, where they conducted arcane research. Sezz'ia has been lost for a hundred years, the tunnel leading to it sealed."*

*"And we want you to find it," Ro'kolor says with a smirk.*

*"House Faen Tlabbar found the tunnel," Hoshtar says, "and sent one party to explore it. They have not yet returned."*

*"You will follow their course," the priestess says, glaring around at you all. "House Faen Tlabbar's intentions for the site might not be all that the Goddess desires. You will see that Lolth's will is done. Find the altar in Sezz'ia and drain its energy for the Goddess."*

*Hoshtar hands one of you a scroll. "Recite the words of this ritual before the altar. It will drain the magical energy from the place and deliver it to the Spider Queen, helping her spin her Demon Weave."*

*"We believe that energy comes from an ancient primordial," Ash'ala explains, "and it will be very potent. There might be some danger to you, but the benefit to the Goddess outweighs the risk."*

If necessary, prompt each player to introduce his or her character, describing his or her house, gender, class, and appearance. Allow the players to roleplay character interactions if they wish.

After the initial briefing, each member of the triumvirate delivers special goals to affiliated characters, as described below under "House Goals."

If the characters ask what they should do if they encounter the first expedition, Ash'ala shrugs. "Do as you wish," she says. "Just ensure that the ritual is properly performed."

## House Goals

At the start of each chapter, each character receives a new goal from his or her house or organization. Distribute the goals to the players, keeping the goal of each house secret from players whose characters are associated with other houses. You can pass out notes to the players, or take the players aside in groups (by house) to describe the houses' goals.

**House Xorlarrin:** Hoshtar Xorlarrin pulls aside any Xorlarrin characters in the group and asks them to retrieve a letter that was carried by a member of the first expedition sent to the Shobalar outpost. They shouldn't read the message, and they shouldn't let the rest of their party know of its existence.

**House Melarn:** After briefing the entire party, Priestess Ash'ala keeps the Melarn characters behind. She gives each of them a vial of unholy water and tells them that before performing the ritual at the Shobalar outpost, they must rinse the altar and its implement with the water. Doing this will guard against any taint the altar might have acquired from the Xorlarrin or Bregan D'aerthe drow. If any of the other party members object, she wants the characters to inform her of that fact.

**Bregan D'aerthe:** Ro'kolor informs characters who are members of Bregan D'aerthe that he suspects treachery within the first expedition. He wants the characters to capture the traitor alive and bring him or her back. The traitor might have valuable information that can be sold off.

### After everyone is prepared to depart, read:

*"If you'll follow me," Ro'kolor says, "I'll show you the way."*

*The rogue leads you a short distance, past a few branches to a narrow, straight tunnel leading due east.*

*"Follow this tunnel until you get there. Good luck."*

*The tunnel leading past the collapse haven't seen much use in decades, with the exception of the previous expedition. After running straight for a while, the tunnel winds, rises, and falls. Fortunately, you don't come to any branches, or you might never have found your way.*

*The first day of travel passes uneventfully. You see signs of the first expedition's passage, including a campsite.*

Continue with the **Monster Cave** encounter, page 10.

# MONSTER CAVE

## Encounter Level 1

### Setup

1 cave fisher angler (C)

1 ochre jelly (O)

4 cave fisher spawn (S)

The monsters in this cavern claimed the lives of most members of the first expedition.

### When the adventurers enter the tunnel, read:

Early on the second day, the tunnel widens into a two-tiered cavern. The floor is covered with big patches of mushrooms, and water drips down from stalactites on the ceiling.

The cavern is crawling with monsters. An amorphous, brownish-yellow blob lurches across the floor. Several multi-legged creatures creep among the stalactites on the low ceiling. They have long proboscises and thin carapaces.

The bodies of several drow lie about the room.

**Perception DC 18:** A larger creature of the same sort lurks near the ceiling on the far side of the cavern.

Once the characters are aware of all the monsters, any character who has training in Dungeoneering or Nature knows that the creatures here pose a significant threat. A fighting withdrawal might be preferable to a drawn-out battle.

Cave Fisher Angler (C)	Level 3 Lurker
Medium natural beast	
HP 37; Bloodied 18	Initiative +7
AC 18, Fortitude 16, Reflex 15, Will 14	Perception +7
Speed 6, climb 5 (spider climb)	Darkvision
<b>TRAITS</b>	
<b>Sniper</b>	
Whenever the angler is hidden and misses with a ranged attack, it remains hidden.	
<b>STANDARD ACTIONS</b>	
⚔ <b>Pincers</b> ♦ At-Will	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +8 vs. AC	
Hit: 1d10 + 6 damage.	
🕸 <b>Filament Strangle</b> ♦ At-Will	
Attack: Ranged 5 (one creature); +7 vs. Reflex	
Hit: 1d6 + 4 damage, and the angler pulls the target 3 squares.	
The target is restrained (save ends). The effect also ends if the target teleports or if the target or another creature hits the filament in the target's square. The filament uses the angler's defenses. An attack against the filament deals no damage or effects to the angler. Only one creature can be restrained by this attack at a time. The angler can pull the target vertically, and the target can end the pull suspended in air.	
Sustain Standard: The target takes 1d6 + 4 damage, and the angler pulls the target 3 squares.	
Skills Stealth +8	
Str 16 (+4)	Dex 15 (+3) Wis 12 (+2)
Con 13 (+2)	Int 2 (-3) Cha 5 (-2)
Alignment unaligned Languages –	

Ochre Jelly (O)	Level 3 Elite Brute
Large natural beast (blind, ooze)	
HP 102; Bloodied 51	Initiative +0
AC 15, Fortitude 16, Reflex 14, Will 14	Perception +2
Speed 4, climb 4	Blindsight 10
Immune blinded, gaze effects; Resist 5 acid	
Saving Throws +2; Action Points 1	
<b>TRAITS</b>	
<b>Ooze</b>	
While squeezing, the ooze moves at full speed rather than half speed, it doesn't take the -5 penalty to attack rolls, and it doesn't grant combat advantage for squeezing.	
<b>STANDARD ACTIONS</b>	
⚔ <b>Slam</b> (acid) ♦ At-Will	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +8 vs. AC	
Hit: 2d6 + 1 damage, and ongoing 5 acid damage (save ends).	
<b>MOVE ACTIONS</b>	
🌊 <b>Flowing Form</b> ♦ At-Will	
Effect: The ochre jelly shifts up to 4 squares.	
<b>TRIGGERED ACTIONS</b>	
Split ♦ Encounter	
Trigger: The ochre jelly becomes bloodied.	
Effect (No Action): The jelly splits into two creatures, each with hit points equal to half its current hit points. Effects on the original ochre jelly do not apply to the second one.	
Str 13 (+2)	Dex 8 (+0) Wis 12 (+2)
Con 11 (+1)	Int 1 (-4) Cha 1 (-4)
Alignment unaligned Languages –	

4 Cave Fisher Spawn (S)	Level 2 Minion Brute
Small natural beast	
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.	Initiative +2
AC 15, Fortitude 13, Reflex 14, Will 12	Perception +0
Speed 5, climb 4 (spider climb)	Darkvision
<b>STANDARD ACTIONS</b>	
⚔ <b>Pincers</b> ♦ At-Will	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +5 vs. AC	
Hit: 6 damage, or 9 against an immobilized, restrained, or helpless target.	
Str 11 (+1)	Dex 13 (+2) Wis 8 (+0)
Con 11 (+1)	Int 2 (-3) Cha 5 (-2)
Alignment unaligned Languages –	

## Tactics

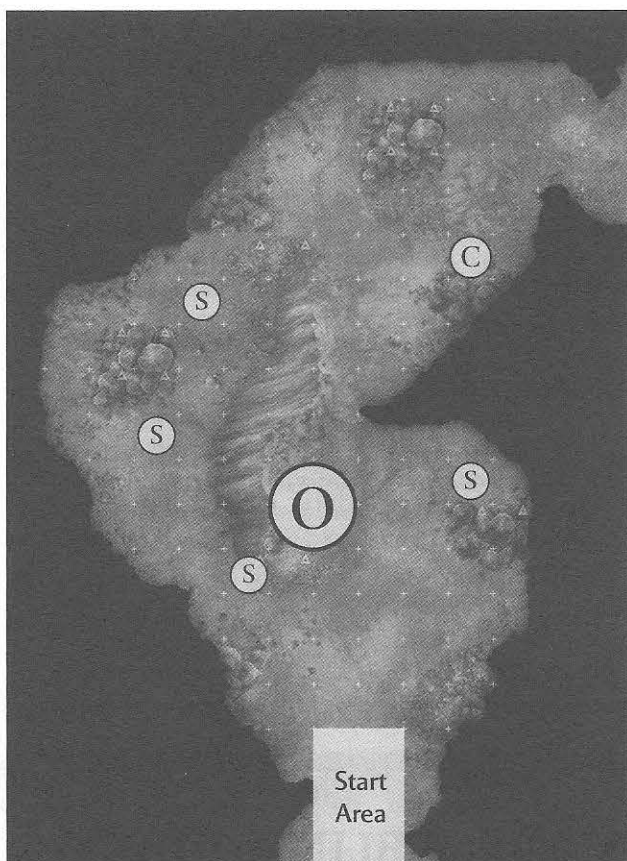
Survival is more important than victory to the monsters, and they retreat if they're near death. They do not pursue aggressive prey.

**Cave Fisher Angler:** The angler stays far back from the battle and tries to pull the weakest enemy toward it. The angler stays near the ceiling so it can haul its prey up.

**Ochre Jelly:** The ooze uses its mass to block the best pathway into the tunnel. If it acts early in the round, it stays where it is and readies an attack. The jelly is no ally of the cave fishers, and it's just as likely to attack them if they are the best targets.

**Cave Fisher Spawn:** These small cave fishers swarm any enemies who get close to them. If an angler snares someone, the spawn rush toward the victim (avoiding opportunity attacks) and gang up on it.





## Development

During the battle, describe signs—blood, remains, and tracks—showing that members of the previous drow expedition ran afoul of these monsters and retreated to the northeast. If the adventurers seem to be having a hard time in the battle, remind them that slaying these monsters is not their ultimate goal.

## Features of the Area

**Illumination:** Dim light. Phosphorescent mushrooms provide a small amount of green light.

**Cliff:** The cliff rises 10 feet (DC 15 Athletics to climb) to the eastern side of the cavern.

**Ceiling:** The walls of the cavern stretch up 20 feet to an arched ceiling, so it's 10 feet above the eastern side of the cavern. A creature clinging to the ceiling has partial cover from stalactites.

**Mushrooms:** The mushroom patches are difficult terrain.

**Rubble:** The piles of fallen rock are difficult terrain.

## The First Expedition

Following the signs revealed during the fight to a nearby cavern, the characters might track and meet the surviving members of the first expedition.

### When the party finds the first expedition, read:

*Gravely injured, the few living members of the first expedition look up at you. One rises to his feet. He seems to be in better shape than the others—not fighting shape, but able to walk.*

*He says, "I am Thezz Tlabbar. Who are you?"*

Thezz grudgingly defers to members of House Xorlarrin (Xorlarrin outranks Faen Tlabbar) but tries to bully anyone of lower station, including members of House Melarn (except a priestess). More information about Thezz can be found in the sidebar on the next page.

### Read:

*Thezz introduces the other living members of the first expedition. "This is Myaral Tlabbar, a priestess of our great house. She was badly burned by the ooze and can no longer see. She has designated me to speak for our expedition and our clan."*

*Thezz continues, "And this is Guannerrae Tlabbar. After that cursed priestess betrayed us, Guannerrae was pierced through the belly by a cave fisher and suspended in the air for some time. I don't expect he will live much longer."*

*Guannerrae tries to speak, but blood gurgles up through his mouth.*

The original expedition consisted of members of House Faen Tlabbar, along with a sizable number of slaves. One of the priestesses in their party was a traitor, attacking her fellow drow from behind while they faced the monsters in this cave, then leaving them for dead as she fled ahead.

The adventurers need to decide what to do with the living drow and the bodies of the dead. The survivors have no healing surges left, but healing magic that doesn't require surges (or transfers surges from one character to another) can at least get the survivors walking again.

Thezz won't go ahead to Sezz'ia, but he plans to return to Menzoberranzan on his own if the tunnels back are safe. If the adventurers agree to let him go, he asks for provisions to help him survive the trip. (Without them, he probably won't make it.)

The dead members didn't have any magical gear, but they had many nonmagical weapons and various suits of armor appropriate for 1st-level characters. Each character can choose to swap his or her armor and one of his or her weapons with equipment from the dead drow.

## THE SURVIVORS

Three members of the previous expedition survived, but they are injured and can't fight. With the aid of healing magic, they might be able to make it home, unless they encounter more trouble on the way.

**Thezz Tlabbar:** Thezz is a minor warrior within House Faen Tlabbar; his greatest asset is his good looks. First Priestess Luafae hasn't taken him as a consort, but he's a favorite of hers.

**Guannerrae Tlabbar:** Guannerrae is on the brink of death. He could survive if he could make it back to Menzoberranzan, but that's a long trip. He carries a secret message he collected from a hidden location in the tunnels (see "House Xorlarrin Goal" below).

**Myral Tlabbar:** Priestess Myral was badly burned and blinded by the ochre jelly's attack. She doesn't say much, but she hopes that she can return to House Faen Tlabbar and be healed.

**The Traitor:** The priestess who betrayed the party was named Iyelle Tlabbar. Whoever she actually was, she departed with the components needed to perform their ritual, ensuring that any survivors could not complete their mission.

**House Xorlarrin Goal:** In session one, Hoshtar asked any Xorlarrin characters in the group to retrieve a letter carried by a member of the first expedition. Guannerrae Tlabbar carries the message. It doesn't have the recipient's name, and it's written in a House Xorlarrin code. (It was intended for Faelas Xorlarrin, a master of Sorcere.) Hoshtar forbade the Xorlarrin characters from reading it, but if they do, they can translate it: "The will of the Goddess supports our cause. When she spins her Weave, we must become equals and sit beside the priestesses on the Ruling Council. Let them hiss and yowl, but they will not keep us from our rightful place!"

## Reward

At the end of the session, each character gains 300 XP for fighting monsters and dealing with the members of the first expedition.

## Ending the Session

After taking a short rest, the characters move farther through the tunnels.

### Read:

*From here, the tunnel winds past old mine shafts abandoned centuries ago. Old ruts in the floor show the passage of mine carts, and scrapes on the wall suggest that this part of the tunnel once saw heavy use.*

*Suddenly, rocks crash to the ground behind your party, sealing the path. Svirfneblin rush out of the old tunnels. It's an ambush!*

## SESSION 2: MINERS' AMBUSH

Last session, the adventurers traveled from Menzoberranzan toward the abandoned Sezz'ia outpost and fought some monsters in a cavern on the way. At the end of the session, the party ran into an ambush near some old mine shafts. This session jumps straight into the combat against the svirfneblin.

### At the start of the session, read:

*From the cavern where the surviving drow from the Faen Tlabbar expedition lay wounded, the tunnel winds past old mine shafts abandoned centuries ago. Old ruts in the floor show the passage of mine carts, and scrapes on the wall suggest that this part of the tunnel once saw heavy use.*

*Suddenly, rocks crash to the ground behind your party, sealing the path. Svirfneblin rush out of the old tunnels. It's an ambush!*

*One of the deep gnomes yells, "The goblin's warning was true! They'll give us no mercy, so show none to them!"*

Continue with the **Svirfneblin Attack** encounter.

## SVIRFNEBLIN ATTACK

Encounter Level 3

### Setup

- 1 svirfneblin ambusher (A)
- 2 svirfneblin protectors (P)
- 2 svirfneblin slingers (S)
- 5 svirfneblin miners (M)

The svirfneblin tried to set up the ambush so they would have an advantageous position, but the adventurers aren't entirely surrounded.

The svirfneblin have a surprise round.



<b>Svirfneblin Ambusher (A)</b>	<b>Level 2 Lurker</b>
Small fey humanoid	
<b>HP 30; Bloodied 15</b>	<b>Initiative +8</b>
<b>AC 16, Fortitude 13, Reflex 15, Will 14</b>	<b>Perception +8</b>
<b>Speed 5</b>	<b>Darkvision</b>
<b>STANDARD ACTIONS</b>	
⚔ <b>Dagger (weapon) ♦ At-Will</b>	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +7 vs. AC	
Hit: 2d4 + 5 damage.	
⚔ <b>Garrote Strangle (weapon) ♦ At-Will</b>	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +5 vs. Fortitude	
Hit: 1d4 + 5 damage, and the target is grabbed (escape DC 13) and cannot speak until the grab ends. While the ambusher has a creature grabbed in this way, the ambusher can use only <i>choke</i> and <i>disappear</i> and has partial cover.	
⚔ <b>Choke and Disappear (illusion, weapon) ♦ At-Will</b>	
Effect: Melee 1 (one creature grabbed by the ambusher); 3d4 + 5 damage, the grab ends, and the ambusher becomes invisible until the end of its next turn or until it hits or misses with an attack. Then the ambusher shifts up to half its speed.	
<b>Skills</b> Stealth +9	
<b>Str</b> 12 (+2)	<b>Dex</b> 17 (+4) <b>Wis</b> 15 (+3)
<b>Con</b> 12 (+2)	<b>Int</b> 10 (+1) <b>Cha</b> 13 (+2)
<b>Alignment</b> unaligned <b>Languages</b> Common, Deep Speech, Elven	
<b>Equipment</b> leather armor, dagger, garrote	

<b>2 Svirfneblin Slingers (S)</b>	<b>Level 3 Artillery</b>
Small fey humanoid	
<b>HP 37; Bloodied 18</b>	<b>Initiative +4</b>
<b>AC 17, Fortitude 14, Reflex 16, Will 15</b>	<b>Perception +8</b>
<b>Speed 5</b>	<b>Darkvision</b>
<b>STANDARD ACTIONS</b>	
⚔ <b>War Pick (weapon) ♦ At-Will</b>	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +8 vs. AC	
Hit: 1d8 + 6 damage.	
⚔ <b>Sling (weapon) ♦ At-Will</b>	
Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +10 vs. AC	
Hit: 2d6 + 4 damage.	
⚔ <b>Ricochet Shot (weapon) ♦ Recharge ☞ ☞</b>	
Effect: The slinger uses <i>sling</i> and, if it hits, repeats the attack against a different target within 10 squares of the first target.	
<b>MINOR ACTIONS</b>	
⚔ <b>Camouflaged Retreat (illusion) ♦ Encounter</b>	
Effect: The slinger shifts up to half its speed, and it has partial concealment during this movement.	
<b>Str</b> 10 (+1)	<b>Dex</b> 17 (+4) <b>Wis</b> 15 (+3)
<b>Con</b> 13 (+2)	<b>Int</b> 10 (+1) <b>Cha</b> 10 (+1)
<b>Alignment</b> unaligned <b>Languages</b> Common, Deep Speech, Elven	
<b>Equipment</b> war pick, sling, 12 sling bullets	

## ADJUSTING DIFFICULTY

This encounter is challenging. To make it easier, eliminate the ambusher and one or two miners. Doing so reduces the encounter level to 2. See also the "Development" section.

<b>2 Svirfneblin Protectors (P)</b>	<b>Level 2 Soldier (Leader)</b>
Small fey humanoid	
<b>HP 41; Bloodied 20</b>	<b>Initiative +4</b>
<b>AC 18, Fortitude 15, Reflex 13, Will 14</b>	<b>Perception +3</b>
<b>Speed 5</b>	<b>Darkvision</b>
<b>STANDARD ACTIONS</b>	
⚔ <b>War Pick (weapon) ♦ At-Will</b>	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +7 vs. AC	
Hit: 1d8 + 6 damage.	
<b>MINOR ACTIONS</b>	
⚔ <b>Protector's Maneuver ♦ At-Will</b>	
Effect: The protector marks each enemy adjacent to it, and one ally adjacent to it can shift 1 square.	
⚔ <b>Stone Camouflage (illusion) ♦ Encounter</b>	
Effect: The protector gains partial concealment until the end of its next turn.	
<b>TRIGGERED ACTIONS</b>	
⚔ <b>Pick Trip (weapon) ♦ At-Will</b>	
Trigger: An enemy marked by the protector willingly leaves a square adjacent to the protector.	
Effect ( <i>Immediate Interrupt</i> ): The protector uses <i>war pick</i> against the triggering enemy, and on a hit the enemy falls prone.	
<b>Str</b> 15 (+3)	<b>Dex</b> 12 (+2) <b>Wis</b> 14 (+3)
<b>Con</b> 17 (+4)	<b>Int</b> 10 (+1) <b>Cha</b> 10 (+1)
<b>Alignment</b> unaligned <b>Languages</b> Common, Deep Speech, Elven	
<b>Equipment</b> scale armor, war pick	

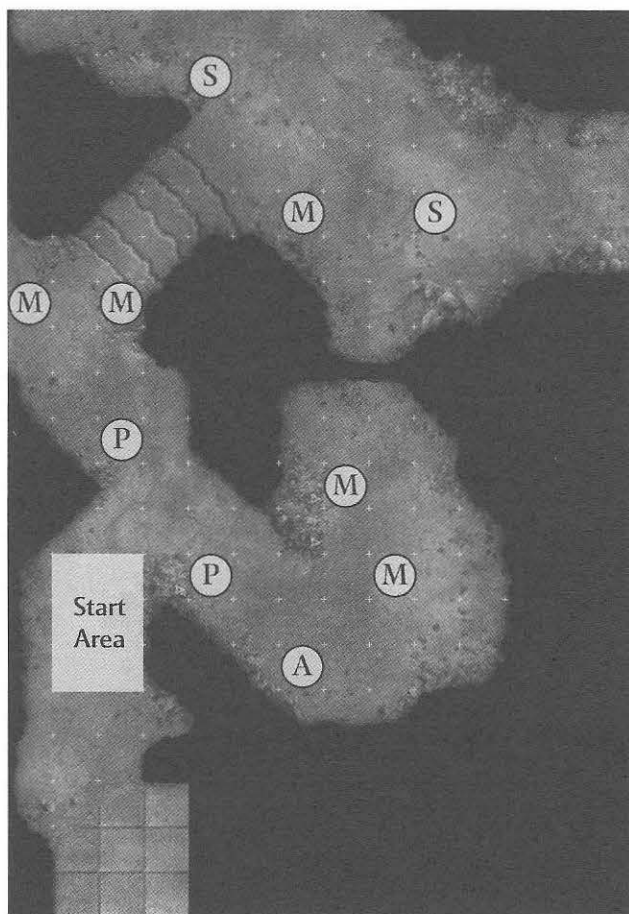
<b>5 Svirfneblin Miners (M)</b>	<b>Level 1 Minion Soldier</b>
Small fey humanoid	
<b>HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.</b>	<b>Initiative +2</b>
<b>AC 17, Fortitude 15, Reflex 12, Will 13</b>	<b>Perception +1</b>
<b>Speed 5</b>	<b>Darkvision</b>
<b>STANDARD ACTIONS</b>	
⚔ <b>War Pick (weapon) ♦ At-Will</b>	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +6 vs. AC	
Hit: 4 damage, or 6 if the target is granting combat advantage to the miner.	
<b>MINOR ACTIONS</b>	
⚔ <b>Stone Camouflage (illusion) ♦ Encounter</b>	
Effect: The miner gains partial concealment until the end of its next turn.	
<b>Str</b> 14 (+2)	<b>Dex</b> 10 (+0) <b>Wis</b> 13 (+1)
<b>Con</b> 14 (+2)	<b>Int</b> 10 (+0) <b>Cha</b> 10 (+0)
<b>Alignment</b> unaligned <b>Languages</b> Common, Deep Speech, Elven	
<b>Equipment</b> war pick	

## Tactics

**Protectors:** These gnomes hold the line to protect the slingers. During the surprise round, they ready actions to attack the first enemy to move within reach. These warriors hope to draw the adventurers to them so their allies hiding in side corridors can attack from behind. They use *protector's maneuver* to get slingers or the ambusher out of melee, or to help miners get into flanking positions if no one is in danger.

**Ambusher:** During the surprise round, the ambusher hides and waits until its next turn to attack. When enemies move into sight, it comes up behind the nearest one and uses *garrote strangle* against him or her.

**Slingers:** These svirfneblin stay behind their line of defenders. If they can't get to a safe location to keep



attacking from range, they would rather fight than retreat.

**Miners:** The minions flank their enemies to gain combat advantage. The miners near the stairs try to protect the slingers.

## Features of the Area

**Illumination:** A brazier by the stairs provides bright light.

**Fallen Boulders:** The area just south of the start area is blocked by fallen stones the svirfneblin dropped to trap the adventurers in this area. The obstacle can be cleared away, but not during the course of battle.

**Rubble:** These piles of rocks are difficult terrain.

## Conclusion

After overcoming the ambushers, the adventurers might find a cowardly goblin hiding in one of the mining tunnels. See “Snüt, Goblin Messenger,” below.

## Snüt, Goblin Messenger

Tucked in the back recesses of one of the shafts is a goblin named Snüt. Roll a Stealth check for him (he has a +8 modifier) and compare the result to the passive Perception scores of the adventurers, or their Perception check results if they’re actively searching the area.

Snüt told the svirfneblin leaders about the drow traveling through the tunnel. He doesn’t know who paid him to deliver the message, just that it was a female drow from Menzoberranzan whose face he never saw.

The message was simple: “Drow attack imminent. Guard the Passage of Old Mines or see your people enslaved.”

Snüt is craven and terrified, and he keeps saying that he never should have taken on this job. If he’s threatened, even slightly, he reveals all the information he knows. If the characters attack him, he dies (no attack or damage roll needed). Snüt still has what remains of his pay in his coin purse (see “Treasure” on the next page), and he tries to bribe the adventurers to let him live.

## Behind the Scenes

The drow who sent Snüt to deliver a message to the svirfneblin was the traitorous priestess from the Faen Tlabbar expedition. She set up the ambush to attack her own party, planning to betray them in the midst of that battle. However, the cave fishers in Session 1 got to them first, and she took the opportunity that attack presented. She managed to sneak past the svirfneblin ambush, figuring the deep gnomes would cut off any pursuit.

## Reward

Each character gains 350 XP for defeating the svirfneblin.

**Treasure:** The svirfneblin carry a number of precious gems (garnets and amethysts worth a total of 80 gp per character), as well as two random magic items. Roll for both on the table on page 3.

Snüt carries 3 gp per character.

## Ending the Session

When the adventurers have defeated the svirfneblin and questioned Snüt, they can move onward to the Sezz’ia outpost.

### Read:

*Leaving behind the old mines, you travel another day through the winding passages of the Underdark toward the Sezz’ia outpost. At last, you reach an area of worked stone that suggests you must be at or near the place you seek.*

The adventurers can take a short rest. End the session.



## SESSION 3: SEZZ'IA OUTPOST

Last session, the adventurers fought off an ambush of svirfneblin and discovered that someone had warned the deep gnomes of their imminent arrival.

### At the start of the session, read:

*Leaving behind the old mines, you travel another day through the winding passages of the Underdark toward the Sezz'ia outpost. At last, you reach an area of worked stone that suggests you must be at or near the place you seek.*

*To the right, a narrow passage quickly turns into natural tunnel again and bends back to the left. On your left, a worked stone wall juts into the passage you're in, but around it is a large stone plaza.*

The plaza to the left opens up into the main encounter area on the right, and on the left a set of wide, shallow stairs leads down into a long, narrow cavern (it extends about 20 feet off the edge of the map). A similar set of stairs leads up into a small chamber with arrow slits looking into the encounter area. If the adventurers peer through the arrow slits, describe the scene using the read-aloud text in the **Traitor's Mission** encounter below. If the characters are stealthy, they might escape Iyelle's notice long enough to make a surprise attack through the arrow slits or otherwise observe the goings-on.

The passage to the right bends quickly around to the main encounter area.

When the characters enter the central area or attract Iyelle's attention, proceed to the encounter.

## TRAITOR'S MISSION

Encounter Level 2

### Setup

Iyelle, drow acolyte (I)

3 hobgoblin battle guards (H)

### When the adventurers enter, read:

*In the central cavern, a female drow in the garb of a priestess stands before a smooth wall of sheer obsidian. She is running her hands over the surface as if feeling for cracks or perhaps magic within the wall. Three burly hobgoblins in heavy armor are spread about nearby, fidgeting slightly and grimacing each time one makes a sound.*

*At your approach, the drow says softly, "I thought you dead. Never did I expect you'd catch up to me." She turns to face you, smiling cruelly; then her eyes widen and her smile vanishes. "You are not who I thought you were. What is your business here? House Faen Tlabbar has claimed this site." The hobgoblins look to her as if awaiting the command to attack.*

Iyelle and her slaves do not attack immediately. She waits for the adventurers to answer her question and her challenge. If the characters attack her, she fights back without making any further effort at conversation.

If the adventurers question Iyelle about the rest of her expedition or accuse her of treachery, she sneers. "Those fools were not worthy of the task before us," she says, refusing to elaborate further. She does not try to deny that she turned on her party and left them to die.

Once she has lost any hope of turning the characters away and back to Menzoberranzan, Iyelle commands her hobgoblins to attack. As she fights, she reveals more about her purpose and the reason for her betrayal, in bits and pieces. On each of her turns, she utters one of the following mocking comments:

- ◆ "Claim this site's power for Lolth, they say? The cursed wizards want to claim it for themselves, more like."
- ◆ "This world has survived, and the goddess has prospered, without a Demon Weave. It can continue thus."
- ◆ "The will of Lolth cannot possibly include elevating males and wizards to the same stature as her faithful servants."
- ◆ "You claim to serve the will of Lolth, and seek to undermine her way. You cannot do both."

### Tactics

**Iyelle:** Iyelle tries to keep her hobgoblin slaves between her and her adversaries, relying as much as possible on *pain strand* and other ranged attacks. She focuses her attacks on male drow and drow wizards, and is nervous about attacking another priestess.

**Hobgoblins:** The hobgoblins stay in a line so they can benefit from *share shield*, using phalanx movement to stay in formation. They try to shield Iyelle from attack as much as possible.

### Features of the Area

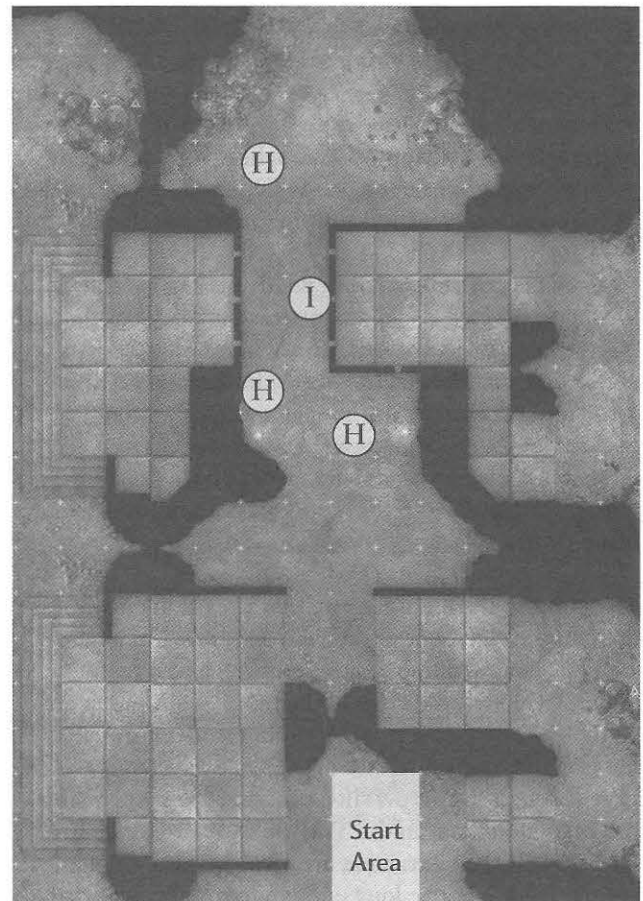
**Illumination:** The hobgoblins have wedged torches into cracks in the walls near the obsidian wall, shedding bright light throughout the central chamber. Dim light extends out into the side areas.

**Ceiling:** The rough natural ceiling is 15 feet high.

**Arrow Slits:** A creature behind an arrow slit has superior cover against attacks from outside the slit, unless the attacker is directly adjacent to the arrow slit.

Iyelle, Drow Acolyte (I) Level 4 Controller (Leader)	
Medium fey humanoid	
HP 54; Bloodied 27	Initiative +3
AC 18, Fortitude 15, Reflex 16, Will 16	Perception +5
Speed 6	Darkvision
TRAITS	
☼ Lolth's Favor ♦ Aura 2	
Spider allies and drow allies in the aura gain a +2 bonus to damage rolls against enemies in the aura.	
STANDARD ACTIONS	
⚔ Mace (weapon) ♦ At-Will	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +9 vs. AC	
Hit: 2d8 + 2 damage, and the target grants combat advantage until it leaves the acolyte's aura (save ends).	
☣ Pain Strand (poison) ♦ At-Will	
Attack: Ranged 5 (one creature); +7 vs. Reflex	
Hit: 1d6 + 3 damage, ongoing 5 poison damage, and the target is immobilized (save ends both).	
MINOR ACTIONS	
☣ Strengthen Poison (poison) ♦ Recharge if this power misses	
Attack: Ranged 5 (one creature taking ongoing poison damage); +7 vs. Fortitude	
Hit: The ongoing poison damage increases by 5, and the target is weakened (save ends both).	
☣ Darkfire ♦ Encounter	
Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +7 vs. Reflex	
Hit: Until the end of the acolyte's next turn, the target grants combat advantage and cannot benefit from invisibility or concealment.	
☣ Pain Link (healing) ♦ Encounter	
Effect: Ranged 5 (one spider ally or drow ally); the target takes 10 damage and the acolyte regains 10 hit points.	
Skills Arcana +10, Intimidate +10, Religion +10	
Str 10 (+2)	Dex 13 (+3) Wis 16 (+5)
Con 14 (+4)	Int 16 (+5) Cha 16 (+5)
Alignment evil Languages Common, Elven	
Equipment chainmail, mace	

3 Hobgoblin Battle Guards (H) Level 3 Soldier	
Medium natural humanoid	
HP 49; Bloodied 24	Initiative +5
AC 19, Fortitude 17, Reflex 15, Will 15	Perception +8
Speed 6	Low-light vision
STANDARD ACTIONS	
⚔ Flail (weapon) ♦ At-Will	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +8 vs. AC	
Hit: 1d10 + 5 damage, and the hobgoblin marks the target until the start of the hobgoblin's next turn.	
MOVE ACTIONS	
Phalanx Movement ♦ At-Will	
Effect: Close burst 1 (allies in burst). The hobgoblin and each target can shift 1 square as a free action. The target must shift to a square adjacent to the hobgoblin.	
TRIGGERED ACTIONS	
Share Shield ♦ At-Will	
Trigger: An adjacent ally is hit by an attack against AC or Reflex.	
Effect (Immediate Interrupt): The ally gains a +2 bonus to AC and Reflex against the triggering attack.	
Str 19 (+5)	Dex 14 (+3) Wis 15 (+3)
Con 17 (+4)	Int 10 (+1) Cha 10 (+1)
Alignment evil Languages Common, Goblin	
Equipment chainmail, flail, heavy shield.	



## Conclusion

Once the adventurers have dealt with the traitorous priestess, they must find a way through the obsidian wall to perform their ritual.

**Bregan D'aerthe Goal:** In session one, Ro'kolor instructed members of Bregan D'aerthe to capture the traitor alive and bring that person back. To satisfy their goal, members of the group must retrieve Iyelle, potentially convincing others in the party to spare her.

## Obsidian Wall

The site of the primordial's power, where the characters must perform the ritual, is located in the upper right corner of the map, behind the obsidian wall. They must find a way through the wall to complete their mission.

**When the characters examine the wall, read:**

*Perfectly smooth and straight, this wall is the dusky, translucent gray of obsidian, though it lacks the fracture patterns typical of that stone. It extends all the way to the roof of the cavern, with no apparent cracks, inscriptions, or other features marring its surface. The wall gives off a faint hum, though something doesn't sound right about it.*

**Perception DC 12:** *Actually, it's more than just a hum, it's a voice—no, two voices—chanting something. It's difficult to make out the words.*



The two voices are chanting different words at the same time, making it difficult to discern the words of either one. A character who listens closely at the wall can attempt a Perception check (DC 12) to discern the words of one of the wall's low chants.

One chant is a simple litany in the Elven language. Any drow recognizes it as a well-known prayer to Lolth, a prayer of thanksgiving for the attention the Goddess gives to her people. The other chant is a recitation of nonsense syllables used by drow wizards to help them memorize arcane principles. Any drow wizard knows the syllables, but a character who listens for a full minute to either chant can memorize it.

Once the characters discern the chants, they know how to activate the wall. If a character places a hand on the wall and chants along with one of the wall's chants, that chant coming from the wall becomes loud enough that everyone in the room can hear it clearly, drowning out the other one for one round. If two characters place their hands on the wall and chant along with both chants, they must make a successful Wisdom check (DC 8) to maintain the concentration required to stick to their own chant. If both characters are successful on this check, the chants coming from the wall cease and the wall becomes insubstantial for 1 minute. Characters can pass freely through the wall during that time.

## Sezz'ia Outpost

The heart of the Sezz'ia outpost lies behind the wall.

### When the party passes through the wall, read:

*A small room of worked stone lies inside the wall, opening up quickly into a small cavern that vibrates with power. A rainbow of crystals juts from the cavern floor, walls, and ceiling, sparkling with their own inner light. Every sound is answered by a chorus of soft echoes.*

*In the center of the cavern, a particularly large crystal lies on its side, presenting a flat surface large enough to serve as an altar to the Goddess—the perfect place to perform your ritual. A spear with a serrated blade lies across this makeshift altar, suggesting that it might have been used to offer blood sacrifices to Lolth.*

This cavern is actually part of the skull cavity of a long-dead primordial of earth and stone, and its power is the gift that Lolth desires. With this power, Lolth will grow one step closer to spinning her Demon Weave and seizing control of arcane magic.

**House Melarn Goal:** In session one, Priestess Ash'ala gave each Melarn character a vial of unholy water to use to rinse the altar and spear. To complete their house goals, any Melarn characters must rinse the altar to guard against taint from the Xorlarrin or Bregan D'aerthe drow. Melarn characters can attempt to make Bluff or Stealth checks to rinse the altar in

secrecy, but Ash'ala also instructed Melarn characters to note anyone in the party that objects to the cleansing.

### When the party performs the ritual, read:

*As you begin to read the scroll, the light shining inside the crystals is extinguished for a moment. It returns a moment later, but not as bright, and as the ritual continues it grows darker. Across the cavern ceiling, however, some of the crystals shine as bright as ever, forming a pattern like a spider's web. The vibrations in the air grow faster, swelling from a low rumble to a high-pitched whine. At last, as you reach the end of the scroll, the crystals forming the spiderweb pattern flash with blinding light and then go out again, leaving the image seared into your eyes. The sound stops, the air grows still, and the cavern feels utterly empty.*

## Reward

At the end of the session, each character gains 350 XP for defeating the monsters and completing the mission. Each character who has earned all the experience available so far in the adventure reaches 2nd level.

**Treasure:** Iyelle carries two random magic items from the table on page 3, plus 70 gp per character in coins and gems. The spear on the altar is a +1 shock spear.

### +1 Shock Spear

Level 3 Uncommon

*You hold the spear aloft and stand fast before your enemies as it throws out bolts of lightning that leave those foes reeling.*

**Enhancement Bonus:** Attack rolls and damage rolls

**Critical:** +1d6 lightning damage

#### Property

All untyped damage dealt by ranged attacks using this weapon changes to lightning damage.

⚡ **Attack Power (Lightning)** ♦ **Daily** (Minor Action)

**Attack:** Close blast 5 (one, two, or three enemies in the blast); +6 vs. Reflex

**Hit:** 1d8 lightning damage.

## Ending the Session

After exploring the outpost and conducting the ritual, the adventurers can return to Menzoberranzan. Allow the characters the opportunity to report or deliver their findings to their respective house leaders.

### Read:

*Priestess Ash'ala, Hoshtar, and Ro'kolor have heard your reports about the Faen Tlabbar expedition and the Shobalar outpost, and they seem pleased with your efforts on your first mission. Hoshtar actually breaks a smile, and tells you you're entitled to some rest.*

End the session there. The adventurers can take an extended rest before the next session.

## CHAPTER 2

On their return to Menzoberranzan, the characters have time to prepare for their next mission. All the characters are fully rested, and characters who have played all three previous sessions should be 2nd level.

### SESSION 4: THE FALLEN HOUSE

The adventurers are tasked with finding one of the members of the tribunal who assigned them their first mission. Hoshtar Xorlarrin has been captured by a group of rebellious wizards and is being held in the ruins of an old compound belonging to a fallen house. When they arrive, however, not everything is as it seems.

#### At the start of the session, read:

Once again, you meet in the same small cavern in the Eastways where you met the three drow who gave you your first mission. This time, however, one of the three is missing. Priestess Ash'ala Melarn explains.

"Lolth's efforts to spin the Demon Weave have given some wizards dangerous ideas," she says. "They believe Lolth's commands, delivered through her avatar to all the people of Menzoberranzan, mean that the exclusive rule of her priestesses has or should come to an end. Calling themselves the Council of Spiders, they clamor to give wizards seats on the Ruling Council. Dangerous and foolish ideas."

Ro'kolor raises a hand to cover the hint of a smirk. "Perhaps you're wondering where Hoshtar is," he says.

Ash'ala glares at him for a moment, then says, "A group of these heretic wizards have captured him. We have learned that they are using a building in the ruins of the old compound of House Srune'Lett as a meeting place, and we suspect they're holding Hoshtar there."

"Moving against them openly would be unwise," Ro'kolor says. "It would bring the issue to a head and might even stir up open warfare. House Baenre does not want that." That's the first time you've heard him admit that he speaks for House Baenre in this gathering.

Ash'ala smiles at you. "And that's where you come in. Find them and do what you must, only bring Hoshtar back—and don't let yourselves be known."

### House Goals

At the start of this mission, the characters receive new goals from their houses or organizations. Distribute the goals to the players, keeping the goal of each house secret from players whose characters are associated with other houses. You can pass out notes to the players, or take the players aside in groups (by house) to describe the houses' goals.

**House Xorlarrin:** As the characters leave the cavern, a masked and hooded figure beckons to the House Xorlarrin characters. He identifies himself as Hafnein, a wizard of the house, and tells them that he strongly suspects that one or more wizards of the house are involved with this renegade group. He says it is the wish of Ravel, the leading wizard of the house, that the adventurers spare these wizards if possible, but bring word of their identities back to Hafnein.

**House Melarn:** Ash'ala again keeps the Melarn characters behind after briefing the whole group. She confides in them that she suspects Hoshtar of meeting willingly with these heretics. She orders the Melarn characters to learn the truth and inform her.

**Bregan D'aerthe:** Ro'kolor whispers to the characters that his benefactor, House Baenre, would be pleased if the Council of Spiders were to suspect that members of House Melarn were behind an attack on the council. He gives each character a shred of cloth or minor piece of jewelry bearing the insignia of House Melarn, which he orders them to plant in the council's hideout. Ro'kolor emphasizes that the involvement of House Xorlarrin should be kept secret.

#### When the group is ready to proceed, read:

House Srune'Lett fell during the War of the Spider Queen, and its impressive compound in the neighborhood of Narbondellyn, a fashionable district of elegant manors, eclectic artisans, and rising socialites. In the midst of all this sophistication, the ruins of the Srune'Lett compound are a terrible blemish. The wall surrounding the compound is crumbled and breached in several places, and the tall spire that was its most prominent feature bears a gaping hole near its top.

The wizards are said to be hiding in one of the smaller buildings, which is still mostly intact. As you approach the building, you can see black curtains hanging over the windows, suggesting that the place is indeed inhabited and being used for secretive purposes.

A wide set of stone steps leads up to an open plaza with a large basin of water set in the floor. You can see doors leading into the building to the left, to the right, and straight ahead. Standing near the doors to left and right are sentries with long spears, apparently trying to stay out of sight. They see you and shift nervously, clutching their spears.

### Entering the Hideout

The sentries don't attack the adventurers without provocation, and it's possible for the characters to talk their way into the hideout without a fight. Three approaches, backed up by appropriate roleplaying and/or skill checks (using a base DC of 12), can gain the characters limited admittance.

- ♦ "A (specific house) wizard sent us as envoys to the Council of Spiders." The characters need to come up with a convincing lie to explain the presence of any priestesses in the party, especially one belonging



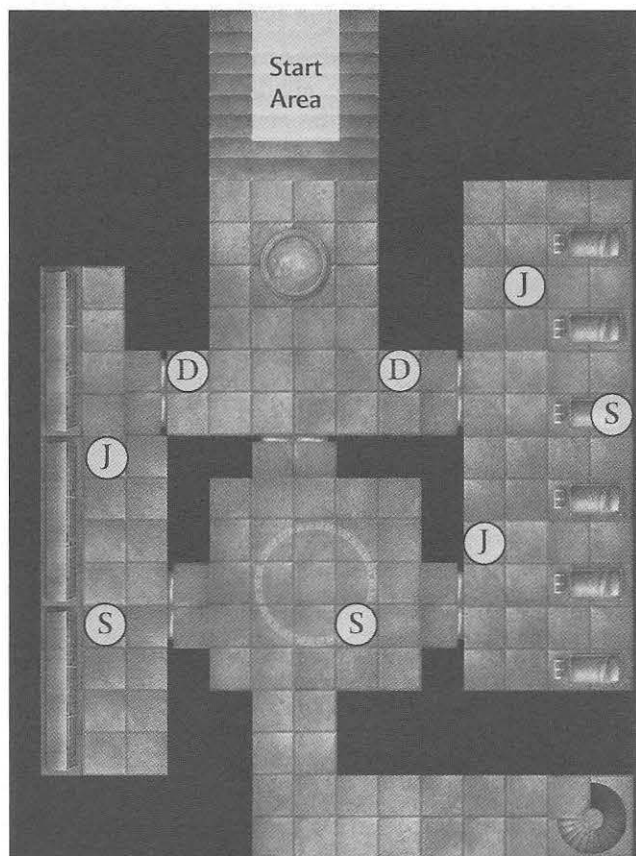
to House Melarn, but this lie feeds directly into the deepest desires of the Council of Spiders, and the sentries would be remiss if they turned such an envoy away.

- ◆ “We wish to join forces with the Council of Spiders.” The characters—especially priestesses—need to convince the sentries that they share the Council’s goal to see male representation on the Ruling Council.
- ◆ “We have been sent to retrieve Hoshtar Xorlar-rin.” Perhaps surprisingly, the sentries consider this honest request. They believe that Hoshtar is here for a peaceful meeting with the leaders of the Council, and if he is urgently needed by his house, they’re willing to allow the characters to speak to him.

After the adventurers have waited a few moments, perhaps interacting with other Council members, a deep gong sound comes from the southern passage. The sentry and any other drow present jump in surprise, shout an alarm, and immediately attack the characters. The gong signals the sentries that these “guests” are not welcome and they should be slain.

## Battle

When battle is joined, continue with the **Wizard Clash** encounter on the next page.



# WIZARD CLASH

Encounter Level 3

## Setup

2 drow sentries (D)

3 junior drow wizards (J)

3 senior drow wizards (S)

**When battle begins, read:**

*The drow take a battle stance and shout, “Attackers! Attackers! Bring aid!” The sound of racing footsteps comes from the interior of the hideout.*

*“You must be mad,” a sentry says. “An open attack on a peaceful gathering? Your houses will pay for this when you are dead.”*

Characters in the Supplicants’ Room notice that the doors can be barred from within.

3 Senior Drow Wizards (S)	Level 3 Artillery
Medium fey humanoid	
HP 34; Bloodied 17	Initiative +3
AC 17, Fortitude 14, Reflex 16, Will 15	Perception +2
Speed 6	Darkvision
STANDARD ACTIONS	
⚡ <b>Spellshock Rod</b> (implement, lightning) ◆ <b>At-Will</b>	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +8 vs. AC	
Hit: 2d6 + 4 lightning damage, and the drow pushes the target up to 2 squares.	
⚡ <b>Dark Bolt</b> (implement, lightning, necrotic) ◆ <b>At-Will</b>	
Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +8 vs. Reflex	
Hit: 1d4 + 4 lightning damage, and ongoing 5 necrotic damage (save ends).	
⚡ <b>Lightning Web</b> (implement, lightning) ◆ <b>Encounter</b>	
Attack: Close blast 5 (creatures in the blast); +6 vs. Reflex	
Hit: The target is immobilized and takes ongoing 5 lightning damage (save ends both).	
Miss: 5 lightning damage, and the target is slowed (save ends).	
MINOR ACTIONS	
✧ <b>Levitate</b> ◆ <b>Encounter</b>	
Effect: The drow flies up to 4 squares vertically and hovers there until the end of its next turn. When the levitation ends, the drow descends safely to the ground, without taking falling damage.	
Sustain Move: The levitation persists until the end of the drow’s next turn, and it can fly up to 3 squares vertically and 1 square horizontally.	
Skills Arcana +9, Stealth +8	
Str 10 (+1)	Dex 14 (+3)
Con 10 (+1)	Int 16 (+4)
	Wis 12 (+2)
	Cha 15 (+3)
Alignment evil	Languages Common, Elven
Equipment robes, rod	

2 Drow Sentries (D)		Level 2 Soldier
Medium fey humanoid		
HP 38; Bloodied 19		Initiative +5
AC 18, Fortitude 15, Reflex 14, Will 13		Perception +7
Speed 6		Darkvision
STANDARD ACTIONS		
⬆ Longspear (weapon) ♦ At-Will		
Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +7 vs. AC		
Hit: 1d10 + 5 damage.		
⬆ Sweeping Strike (weapon) ♦ At-Will		
Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +7 vs. AC		
Hit: 1d10 + 5 damage, and the drow can slide the target 1 square or knock the target prone.		
MINOR ACTIONS		
⚡ Darkfire ♦ Encounter		
Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +5 vs. Reflex		
Hit: Until the end of the drow's next turn, the target grants combat advantage and cannot benefit from invisibility or concealment.		
TRIGGERED ACTIONS		
⬆ Engaging Strike ♦ At-Will		
Trigger: An adjacent enemy shifts or makes an attack that doesn't include the drow as a target.		
Effect (Immediate Interrupt): The drow uses <i>sweeping strike</i> on the triggering enemy.		
Skills Athletics +9, Intimidate +6		
Str 17 (+4)	Dex 14 (+3)	Wis 13 (+2)
Con 14 (+3)	Int 11 (+1)	Cha 11 (+1)
Alignment evil Languages Common, Elven		
Equipment scale armor, longspear		

3 Junior Drow Wizards (J)		Level 1 Minion Artillery
Medium fey humanoid		
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.		Initiative +1
AC 15, Fortitude 11, Reflex 13, Will 12		Perception +1
Speed 6		Darkvision
STANDARD ACTIONS		
⬆ Dagger (weapon) ♦ At-Will		
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +6 vs. AC		
Hit: 4 damage.		
⚡ Poison Bolt (implement, poison) ♦ At-Will		
Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +6 vs. Fortitude		
Hit: Ongoing 4 poison damage (save ends).		
MINOR ACTIONS		
⚡ Darkfire ♦ Encounter		
Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +6 vs. Reflex		
Hit: Until the end of the drow's next turn, the target grants combat advantage and cannot benefit from invisibility or concealment.		
Str 9 (-1)	Dex 12 (+1)	Wis 12 (+1)
Con 12 (+1)	Int 16 (+3)	Cha 14 (+2)
Alignment evil Languages Common, Elven		
Equipment robes, dagger, wand		

## Tactics

Once they hear a call for help, drow come from adjacent areas at the start of the second round. If the fight starts in the foyer or the Supplicants' Room, they can move in from all sides at once. (The first drow to arrive at a doorway must take a minor action to open the doors.) If battle starts in one of the side rooms, the sentries arrive first. Drow from the other side of the map don't arrive until the start of the third round.

**Sentries:** These sentries rush to stop the most mobile members of the party, using *sweeping strike* to knock them down. The sentries have a great deal of experience with arcane spellcasters, so they know to corner wizards to prevent them from making ranged or area attacks without great risk.

**Senior Wizards:** These arcanists engage in combat, even entering melee, to delay the adventurers until the sentries can come to assist them. With the sentries present, the mages stand back or use *levitate* to hurl spells from a distance.

**Junior Wizards:** Since they're inexperienced, these students use their one spell (*poison bolt*) over and over while trying desperately to get to safety. A few might be bolder, trying to impress the other drow, until some fall in battle; then they attempt to flee.

## HOUSE XORLARRIN GOAL

Of the three junior wizards and three senior wizards in this encounter, four are members of House Xorlarrin, easily identified by the masks that cover their faces as well as the house insignia they wear. Hafnein has asked any adventurers from House Xorlarrin to identify members of the house involved with the Council of Spiders. If the adventurers spare these wizards, they can learn their names and report them back to Hafnein. They are:

- ♦ Filraen Xorlarrin (senior wizard)
- ♦ Nym Brael Xorlarrin (senior wizard)
- ♦ Tarlyn Xorlarrin (junior wizard)
- ♦ Krenaste Xorlarrin (junior wizard)

In the next session characters have the opportunity to learn that Raelaryn, a Xorlarrin cousin of Hafnein, was responsible for inviting Hafnein to meet with the council.



## Features of the Area

**Illumination:** Various glowing enchantments cast dim light in the foyer, the library, and the Supplicants' Room. The bunk room is in darkness.

**Basin:** The water basin is only a few feet deep. It's difficult terrain.

**Ceiling:** The distance from floor to ceiling is 20 feet.

**Supplicants' Room:** The circle in this room is a teleportation circle, which the adventurers are unable to operate.

**Doors:** The doors in the Supplicants' Room have bars on the inside. Shutting one door is a minor action, and throwing a bar in place across one door is a standard action. Once a door is barred, a DC 25 Athletics check is required to force it open.

## Conclusion

If the adventurers reach the circular stairwell in the southeastern corner of the map, the encounter ends.

**Bregan D'aerthe Goal:** At the start of the session, Ro'kolor ordered Bregan D'aerthe characters to plant evidence of Melarn involvement in the attack on the council facility. To satisfy their goals, these characters must place items bearing the insignia of House Melarn around the hideout. Allow the characters to do so surreptitiously, calling for appropriate skill checks if a member of House Melarn is likely to notice the activity. Members of Bregan D'aerthe also have the opportunity to plant the materials in the next session as well.

## Reward

At the end of the session, each character gains 350 XP for infiltrating the hideout and reaching the stairwell.

**Treasure:** The drow in this area carry coins worth a total of 50 gp per character.

## Ending the Session

**As the party descends the stairs, read:**

*You move down the spiral staircase to the lower level. A drow stands near a large desk, holding a rapier and glaring at you. There's a door behind him, but no sign of Hosh'tar.*

*"And so it begins," he says with a sneer. "Thank you, dear friends, for starting what I'm sure will be a perfectly lovely war."*

The adventurers can take a short rest. End the session.

## SESSION 5: SECRETS AND LIES

Last session, the adventurers infiltrated a hideout used by wizards of the Council of Spiders, looking for their ally Hoshtar Xorlarrin, thought to be held captive there. All the members of the Council of Spiders they met seemed to believe that Hoshtar was there for a peaceful meeting. At the end of the session, the party descended a stairway into the cellar beneath the hideout and discovered a Jaezred Chaulssin assassin.

**At the start of the session, read:**

*You move down the spiral staircase to the lower level. A drow stands near a large desk, holding a rapier and glaring at you. There's a door behind him, but no sign of Hosh'tar.*

*"And so it begins," he says with a sneer. "Thank you, dear friends, for starting what I'm sure will be a perfectly lovely war."*

The assassin gives the adventurers a chance to put their weapons away or otherwise show they don't plan to attack immediately. As long as they don't act aggressively, he talks to them.

He's happy to answer the adventurers' questions, confident that they have already helped set his plans in motion and can do little to stop them at this point.

- ◆ *Where's Hoshtar?* "He is my guest," he says, gesturing to the door behind him. "He won't be leaving anytime soon."
- ◆ *Is Hoshtar still alive?* "For now, yes. I'm still trying to decide what to do with him."
- ◆ *What do you want with him?* "He has already served his purpose, provoking the priestesses to strike against the Council of Spiders—through you, poor, helpless pawns of the Spider Queen."
- ◆ *What war are you talking about?* "Do you think the houses of these poor fools will suffer such an attack upon their members without retaliation? Do you think the wizards of the city will allow the slaughter of so many wizards to go unpunished? Tension is already at a boiling point, thanks to the avatar of Lolth. You have simply provided the spark to ignite the flame."
- ◆ *Why not let him go?* "Well, what purpose would that serve?"
- ◆ *Why did the wizards upstairs think Hoshtar was here as a guest?* "That's what Hoshtar thought, too. He came here for a meeting with some elders of the Council. Alas, the meeting was cut short. Those elders won't be meeting with anyone else."
- ◆ *What do you plan to do with us?* "Well, I think you have served your purpose as well. Can you think of any further use I might put you to?"

- ◆ *Who are you and whom do you serve?* “Merinid Dalael, at your service.” He snickers as he gives a florid bow. “As for your second question, I’m afraid that’s one I can’t answer. Let us merely say that we are no friends of the Spider Queen.”

The assassin refuses to let the characters leave, attacking them (and summoning his allies to his side) if they try. If they attack him, he calls his allies and then retreats through the open doors to get some cover from their attacks. Continue with the **Shadow Battle** encounter.

## SHADOW BATTLE

### Encounter Level 4

### Setup

Merinid Dalael, Jaezred Chaulssin assassin (A)

2 dark creepers (D)

2 hex knights (H)

Jaezred Chaulssin Assassin (A)		Level 5 Skirmisher
Medium fey humanoid		
HP 64; Bloodied 32		Initiative +8
AC 19, Fortitude 17, Reflex 18, Will 17		Perception +8
Speed 6		Darkvision
STANDARD ACTIONS		
⚔ <b>Rapier</b> (weapon) ◆ <b>At-Will</b>		
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +10 vs. AC		
Hit: 2d8 + 4 damage.		
Fencer's Footwork ◆ <b>Recharge</b> [2] [2]		
Effect: The assassin uses rapier twice, and he can use <i>guarded shift</i> between the attacks.		
MOVE ACTIONS		
Guarded Shift ◆ <b>At-Will</b>		
Effect: The assassin shifts up to half his speed, gaining a +2 bonus to all defenses while shifting.		
MINOR ACTIONS		
☁ <b>Cloud of Darkness</b> (zone) ◆ <b>Encounter</b>		
Effect: Close burst 1. The burst creates a zone that lasts until the end of the assassin's next turn. The cloud blocks line of sight for all creatures except the assassin. While entirely within the cloud, any creature other than the assassin is blinded.		
🔥 <b>Darkfire</b> ◆ <b>Encounter</b>		
Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +8 vs. Reflex		
Hit: Until the end of the assassin's next turn, the target grants combat advantage and cannot benefit from invisibility or concealment.		
Skills Acrobatics +11, Athletics +9, Bluff +10, Stealth +11		
Str 14 (+4)	Dex 18 (+6)	Wis 12 (+3)
Con 16 (+5)	Int 12 (+3)	Cha 17 (+5)
Alignment evil		
Languages Common, Draconic, Elven		
Equipment leather armor, rapier		

## Tactics

**Jaezred Chaulssin Assassin:** Merinid retreats to the library, using *cloud of darkness* to slow down pursuers. Once he reaches the library, he puts a dagger to Hoshtar's throat and demands the characters' surrender. After fighting them, he would prefer to kill them slowly rather than continue the fight. He has no qualms about killing Hoshtar if the characters don't give in.

**Dark Creepers:** The dark creepers use dark step to dart in and out of melee, attacking with combat advantage whenever possible. They move into flanking positions with the hex knights in order to bolster the knights' attacks. They also move to attack characters who grant combat advantage because of the hex knights' *shadow hex*.

**Hex Knights:** The hex knights protect the assassin as much as possible, covering his retreat into the library. They use *shadow hex* to mark characters who are hanging back out of melee.

2 Dark Creepers (D)	Level 4 Skirmisher
Small shadow humanoid	
HP 54; Bloodied 27	Initiative +8
AC 18, Fortitude 15, Reflex 17, Will 15	Perception +4
Speed 6	Darkvision
STANDARD ACTIONS	
⚔ <b>Dagger</b> (weapon) ◆ <b>At-Will</b>	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +9 vs. AC	
Hit: 2d4 + 6 damage, and 1d6 extra damage if the target is granting combat advantage to the dark creeper.	
🔪 <b>Dagger</b> (weapon) ◆ <b>At-Will</b>	
Attack: Ranged 5/10 (one creature); +9 vs. AC	
Hit: 2d4 + 6 damage, and 1d6 extra damage if the target is granting combat advantage to the dark creeper.	
MOVE ACTIONS	
Dark Step ◆ <b>At-Will</b>	
Effect: The dark creeper moves 4 squares, gains a +4 bonus to AC against opportunity attacks provoked by this movement, and gains combat advantage against any target that it ends its move adjacent to until the end of the dark creeper's next turn.	
TRIGGERED ACTIONS	
👁 <b>Killing Dark</b>	
Trigger: The dark creeper drops to 0 hit points.	
Effect (No Action): Close burst 1 (enemies in burst); the target is blinded (save ends).	
Skills Stealth +11, Thievery +11	
Str 11 (+2)	Dex 18 (+6)
Con 14 (+4)	Int 13 (+3)
	Cha 13 (+3)
Alignment Unaligned	
Languages Common	
Equipment black garments, 5 daggers	



**2 Hex Knights (H)****Level 4 Soldier**

Small shadow humanoid, dark one

HP 54; Bloodied 27

Initiative +7

AC 20, Fortitude 15, Reflex 16, Will 15

Perception +3

Speed 6

Darkvision

**STANDARD ACTIONS**⚔ **Short Sword (weapon) ♦ At-Will**

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +9 vs. AC

Hit: 2d6 + 5 damage, and the target is slowed until the end of the hex knight's next turn.

✈ **Hand Crossbow (weapon) ♦ At-Will**

Attack: Ranged 10/20 (one creature); +9 vs. AC

Hit: 2d6 + 5 damage.

**MOVE ACTIONS**⬅ **Dark Step ♦ At-Will**

Effect: The hex knight moves 4 squares, gains a +4 bonus to AC against opportunity attacks provoked by this movement, and gains combat advantage against any target that it ends its move adjacent to until the end of the hex knight's next turn.

**MINOR ACTIONS**⬅ **Shadow Hex ♦ At-Will**

Effect: One creature within 3 squares of the hex knight is marked until the end of the encounter or until the hex knight uses shadow hex again. While the creature is marked by the hex knight, whenever it makes an attack that does not include the hex knight as a target, it grants combat advantage until the end of its next turn.

**TRIGGERED ACTIONS**⬅ **Killing Dark**

Trigger: The hex knight drops to 0 hit points.

Effect (No Action): Each enemy adjacent to the hex knight is blinded until the end of his or her next turn.

Skills Athletics +9, Stealth +10

Str 15 (+4)

Dex 16 (+5)

Wis 12 (+3)

Con 14 (+4)

Int 11 (+2)

Cha 11 (+2)

Alignment unaligned Languages Common

Equipment hide armor, 2 short swords, hand crossbow, 10 bolts

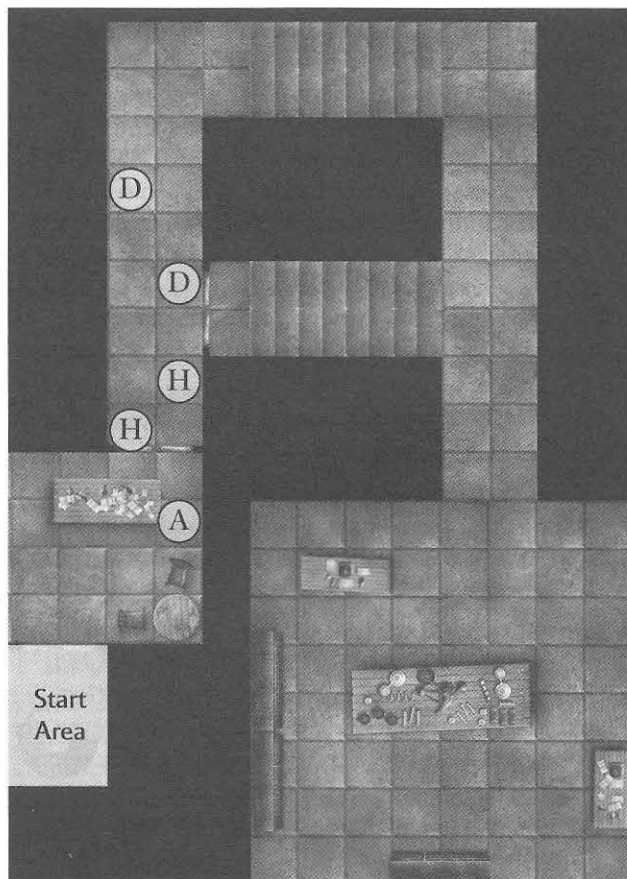
## Features of the Area

**When a character enters the library, read:**

*This room is a library or laboratory of some kind. Bookshelves line the walls, and a large table stands in the middle of the room. It's covered with pieces of old relics, plus a plethora of oils and solvents. Many of them appear to be volatile or dangerous. On the floor in front of the table lies Hoshtar, bound, gagged, and heavily beaten. The corpses of two other male drow, dressed in wizards' robes, lie behind the table.*

**Illumination:** None.**Tables and Desks:** Furnishings are difficult terrain.

**Experimental Reagents:** The large table in the southeastern room is covered with vials and jars filled with reagents. Some of them are volatile. If any attack or effect includes the table in its area and you judge that the act might set off volatile chemicals, roll a d6 and consult the table below. Throwing the reagents doesn't cause them to mix violently in this way.

**REAGENT EFFECTS**

d6	Effect
1-2	<b>Smoke:</b> Squares in and adjacent to the table's space are lightly obscured until the end of the next round.
3	<b>Flash:</b> Each creature in or adjacent to the table's space is blinded until the end of its next turn.
4-5	<b>Poison:</b> Each creature in the room takes 5 poison damage.
6	<b>Flame:</b> The table catches fire until the end of the encounter. Any creature that ends its turn in or adjacent to the table's space takes 5 fire damage.

## Rescuing Hoshtar

If Hoshtar survives the battle and the characters free him, he explains what happened and the insight he has gained into the workings of the Council of Spiders. He can summarize any of the information in the "Adventure Background" and "The Demon Weave" sections on page 4, refreshing the players' memory if necessary. He has learned:

- ♦ Most wizards in Menzoberranzan view Lolth's creation of a Demon Weave as an opportunity to elevate their social standing, but the Council of Spiders have taken that viewpoint to its extreme. They want to see wizards represented on the Ruling Council, overturning thousands of years of tradition.

- ◆ Various lesser wizards of House Xorlarrin and House Barrison Del'Armgo—the two houses that give their wizards the most authority and leeway—form the backbone of the Council of Spiders. The two dead drow in the library are Raelaryn, a Xorlarrin cousin of Hoshtar's (who invited Hoshtar to a meeting in the hideout) and some minor scion of Barrison Del'Armgo.
- ◆ A number of wizards from other houses are involved with the Council as well, but no prominent wizards have sided with them yet—no house wizards or masters of Sorcere. The Council desperately hopes to gain the support of a more prominent wizard to advance their cause.
- ◆ Hoshtar's dead cousin Raelaryn believed that the Archmage of Menzoberranzan, Gromph Baenre himself, is sympathetic to the Council's cause and will soon give it his full support.
- ◆ Naturally, most priestesses support Lolth's will and aid her efforts to spin the Demon Weave, but they have no intention of giving up their position of supremacy in the city. A few priestesses, however, are so terrified of losing their power that they are opposing any effort to aid Lolth's ascension. The priestess the adventurers encountered in the Shobalar outpost seems to have been one of these.
- ◆ Whoever sent Merinid Dalael was trying to fan the sparks of this tension into open flame, driving a wedge between priestesses and wizards and perhaps launching the city into civil war. Hoshtar doesn't know who might want such a thing.
- ◆ Hoshtar's cousin invited him here to hear what he and the Barrison Del'Armgo wizard had to say about the mission of the Council of Spiders. They hoped to gain Hoshtar's support, knowing that he has some influence in House Xorlarrin and might be able to secure even greater support from others in his house. Hoshtar claims he was not interested in their proposal.

A character who makes a successful DC 12 History check can offer some insight into that last question. The assassin's dark creeper allies point to a connection to the Shadowfell, which suggests a potential association with the Jaezred Chaulssin. The Jaezred Chaulssin is a secretive, patriarchal order of assassins with mysterious ties to the Shadowfell. During the War of the Spider Queen over a century ago, the Jaezred Chaulssin spurred both a horde of demonic orcs and an army of duergar to attack Menzoberranzan. Their stated goal is to free the drow race from Lolth's tyranny by any means necessary, and launching a civil war in Menzoberranzan seems in keeping with their past methods.

**House Melarn Goal:** At the start of Chapter 2, priestess Ash'ala asked Melarn characters to learn if

Hoshtar was meeting willingly with the heretics in the Council of Spiders. The truth is that although his intentions were benign, Hoshtar did meet willingly with the council. Ash'ala will be especially pleased to learn of Hoshtar's cousin's involvement in the council, if that fact comes out over the course of the session. To satisfy their goal, Melarn characters must report what they learn back to Ash'ala.

## Reward

At the end of the session, each character gains 450 XP for defeating the assassin and his shadowy minions.

**Treasure:** If the adventurers kill the assassin, they can take 60 gp per character from his body.

The characters also find two random magic items in the hideout's library. In addition, one of the dead drow carried a +1 *staff of striking* or another equivalent magic item. Determine random items using the table on page 3.

### +1 Staff of Striking

Level 4 Uncommon

*Fashioned of unadorned metal in a symmetrical and severe design, this staff delivers forceful blows to your enemies.*

**Implement:** Staff

**Enhancement Bonus:** Attack rolls and damage rolls

**Critical:** +1d8 damage

**Attack Power** ◆ **Encounter** (No Action)

**Trigger:** You hit a creature adjacent to you with an implement or a weapon attack using this staff.

**Effect:** You push the creature 1 square and knock it prone.

## Ending the Session

The adventurers can take a short rest, then leave the hideout and return Hoshtar (if he survived) to safety. (Remind them to note whether Hoshtar survived on their Play Trackers.) Whether Hoshtar is alive or not, the characters should report back to Ash'ala and Ro'kolor.

### When the adventurers leave the hideout, read:

*When you come before Ash'ala, [Hoshtar,] and Ro'kolor once more, they listen with grave interest to your account of your deeds. When you are done, there is a long silence as the other drow ponder the significance of your words.*

*"Well," Ash'ala says at last, "it appears that we all have an important decision to make. If Menzoberranzan lies on the brink of civil war, how will our houses respond?"*

End the session there. The next session involves a variant skill challenge that you should be familiar with in advance of the session. Feel free to also prepare a combat encounter, if you suspect your players will finish the skill challenge quickly. Make sure the combat encounter feels like an organic extension of the story. For example, after speaking to Ash'ala, Ro'kolor, and Hoshtar, a group of dark creepers sent by the Jaezred Chaulssin might ambush the group.



# INTERLUDE

The adventurers have learned enough to make the representatives of their houses very nervous. It's time to sort out the information collected so far and help Ash'ala, Hoshtar, and Ro'kolor decide what side their houses should take in the brewing conflict.

## SESSION 6: THE BRINK OF WAR

Last session, the adventurers rescued their ally, Hoshtar Xorlarrin, from captivity. They learned some disturbing information about wizards seeking to overthrow the social order, priestesses daring to defy the will of Lolth, and someone seeking to turn that conflict into full-scale civil war. The adventurers' intrusion into the hideout used by the Council of Spiders might have already provided the spark to ignite that war.

Ash'ala, Hoshtar, and Ro'kolor need to decide what they will tell their houses—and what course they will advise their leaders to take. In this session, the adventurers have an opportunity to help the leaders decide.

Before continuing, find out whether Hoshtar Xorlarrin survived the last session and tally the results—majority rules. If Hoshtar is dead, he has been replaced by another wizard of his house, Baragh Xorlarrin.

### To start the session, read:

*When you come before Ash'ala, Hoshtar, and Ro'kolor once more, this time in a large audience chamber in a mansion owned by Ro'kolor, they listen with grave interest to your account of your deeds. When you are done, there is a long silence as the other drow ponder your words.*

*"Well," Ash'ala says at last, "it appears that we all have an important decision to make. If Menzoberranzan lies on the brink of civil war, how will our houses respond?"*

Summarize the key pieces of information the characters have learned so far.

- ◆ A group of defiant priestesses (represented by the Faen Tlabbar priestess in the Shobalar outpost) seeks to undermine all attempts to create the Demon Weave in order to hold onto their own power.
- ◆ The Council of Spiders seeks male representation on the Ruling Council.
- ◆ Somebody (represented by the assassin) is trying to provoke this tension into open civil war.

Each of the three drow leaders has an initial inclination or gut feeling about the proper course to take:

- ◆ Ash'ala feels that the defiant priestesses are correct: the Way of Lolth, established as the social order in Menzoberranzan for thousands of years, cannot be

overturned even by Lolth's current whim. The Council of Spiders must be stopped, and if that means war, then so be it. She can also see a case for trying to exterminate the Council of Spiders, which would certainly launch a civil war.

- ◆ Hoshtar believes the Council of Spiders has a valid point: If Lolth becomes the goddess of arcane magic, then wizards, who will draw on and help sustain the Demon Weave, should be represented in the rule of the city. He can also see a case for trying to exterminate the defiant priestesses, which would also launch a war.
- ◆ Ro'kolor does not express an initial position, only joking that civil war is good for mercenaries—but not so good for House Baenre.
- ◆ In addition, all three leaders are concerned about the assassin the adventurers encountered and want to get to the bottom of that situation as well.

## Playing the Argument

This encounter is similar to a skill challenge, though you should never let a skill check replace an actual argument in favor of one path or another. These pages contain the building blocks of the conversation, grouped into two categories: objectives and obstacles.

The characters' objectives are to convince each of the three leaders of a particular course of action by appealing to each leader's core motivations. The obstacles that stand in the way of those objectives are arguments about the two key factors in this debate—the conflict between the established Way of Lolth and Lolth's desire to spin the Demon Weave.

As the interaction plays out, your role is essentially the same as it is in any other aspect of the game.

- ◆ Describe the environment—express the opinions and reactions of the drow leaders, using the text in the objectives and obstacles below.
- ◆ Listen to the players and evaluate which objective the characters' words might apply to, asking for clarification from the players if necessary. ("It sounds like you're trying to appeal to Ash'ala's faith. Is that right?") Determine whether the adventurers are successful in helping to achieve that objective or overcome an obstacle, and check off their progress toward success if they are successful. Keep an eye on the obstacles and interject with the questions and counterarguments there when appropriate.
- ◆ Narrate the results of the characters' actions—use the text in the objectives and obstacles as a starting point for the NPCs' responses.

The drow leaders won't change their minds or their behavior immediately. Each objective in this encounter requires two or three steps to complete it. Similarly, the obstacles offer a set number of challenges the

characters must address before each obstacle is out of the way. When characters fail to respond to obstacles, they suffer setbacks in their progress toward completing their objectives. When the characters suffer a setback, they must overcome that setback by making a new successful argument toward the objective before they can progress toward completing the objective.

This encounter should feel as much as possible like a natural conversation, with the players roleplaying their characters and you taking on the role of the three drow leaders. The focus should always be on back-and-forth between you and the players, not NPCs talking to each other.

In this encounter, it's entirely possible for different characters to attempt to sway the drow leaders in different directions. If that happens, track different characters' progress toward the objectives separately. If a character achieves one step toward an objective with one leader, characters trying to sway that leader toward a different course suffer a setback. Whoever completes an objective first has sealed that leader's decision once and for all, so no other character can make progress toward an objective with that leader. The encounter might end with different leaders committed to different courses of action.

**Using Skill Checks:** Despite the similarity to a skill challenge, this encounter doesn't strictly require any skill checks. First and foremost, use your own judgment to determine whether a character's argument is strong enough to make progress toward an objective or overcome an obstacle. If you're not comfortable making a judgment call, you can call for a skill check—most often Diplomacy, but perhaps also a skill that reflects a character's ability to draw on knowledge (perhaps Arcana, History, or Religion) to make a convincing argument. The strongest argument against using skill checks is that the interaction relies heavily on a small number of skills, and characters who don't have training in those skills should not feel left out of the encounter.

If you do require skill checks, use DC 12 for most checks. If the character made a particularly strong verbal argument, use DC 8 instead. Similarly, if the character is really stretching, use DC 19.

## Objective:

### Appeal to Ash'ala's Faith

Ash'ala needs to know or believe that whatever course the characters are arguing is in accordance with Lolth's will. She responds well to language laced with Lolth's praise, as well as characters who flatter her for her faith or for the devotion of her house. If characters can cite any historical precedent for their proposed course of action, she appreciates that as well. Religion, Diplomacy, and History checks are the most likely to work toward this objective.

Each time the characters appeal to Ash'ala's faith (and back it up with a successful check, if you think it's necessary), they achieve one of the following milestones, in this order.

- ◆ Ash'ala nods, touching the holy symbol she wears around her neck. "*Lolth tlu malla*," she whispers—Lolth be praised.
- ◆ Ash'ala smiles broadly and says, "Your words are a credit to you and your house."
- ◆ "To walk apart from House and Queen is to walk into the grave," Ash'ala says, quoting a drow proverb. "You are correct—this is the best course, and House Melarn will support you."
- ◆ **Setback:** Ash'ala scowls. "I question your devotion to the Goddess. Are you putting your own will above hers?"

## Objective:

### Appeal to Hoshtar's Pride

Hoshtar is an accomplished wizard and proud of that fact. He has been working very hard to gather magic items and other artifacts that can lend Lolth additional arcane power. He knows dozens of other wizards who have worked just as tirelessly. He has felt Lolth's favor rewarding him for his work, and he suffered an attack from an assassin because of it. All of this contributes to his initial belief that the wizards of Menzoberranzan should be recognized with seats on the Ruling Council, but his pride can also be channeled toward another course of action. He also responds well to arguments about the nature of magic, the function of the Demon Weave, or the skill needed to wield arcane magic properly. Diplomacy, Arcana, and perhaps Bluff are the most likely to work toward this objective.

Each time the characters appeal to Hoshtar's pride (and back it up with a successful check, if you think it's necessary), they achieve one of the following milestones, in this order.

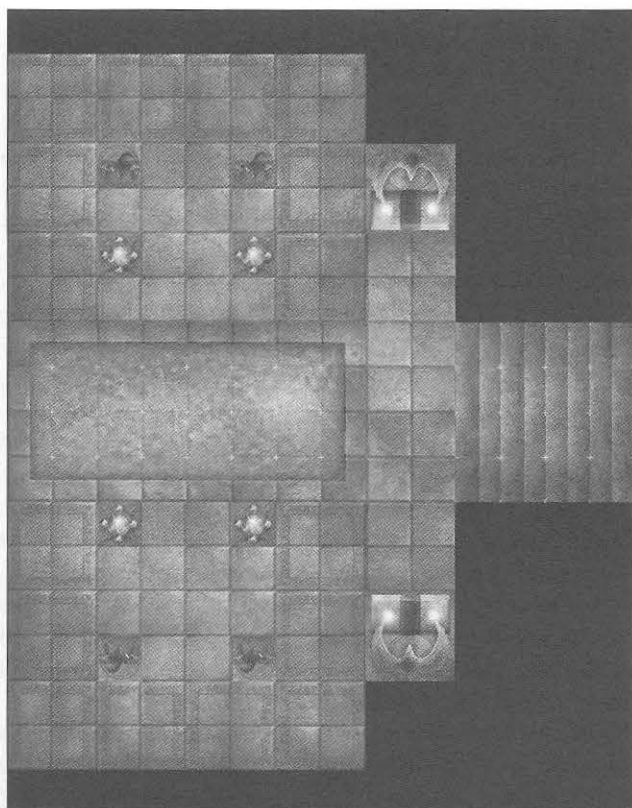
- ◆ Hoshtar thumps his fist to his chest. "Thanks you for acknowledging our service to the Goddess, friends."
- ◆ "I see the wisdom of your words," Hoshtar says.
- ◆ Hoshtar claps you on the shoulder. "This is the voice of reason! House Xorlarrin will support this course."
- ◆ **Setback:** "Have you no respect for the work the wizards have done in Lolth's service—the work *I* have done?"

## Objective:

### Appeal to Ro'kolor's Self-Interest

Ro'kolor is a mercenary, and his primary interest is in securing the greatest profit for both himself and Bregan D'aerthe. His greed is just part of a larger self-interest





that is his true motivation. He responds to arguments that point out the ways that he or Bregan D'aerthe will benefit from one or another course of action. He carefully weighs potential gains and losses, and chooses a course that maximizes the former while minimizing the latter. Diplomacy and Streetwise (representing a character's sense of the realities of life in Menzoberranzan) are the most likely to work toward this objective.

Each time the characters appeal to Ro'kolor's self-interest (and back it up with a successful check, if you think it's necessary), they achieve one of the following milestones, in this order.

- ◆ Ro'kolor grins. "I can see the appeal to that course."
- ◆ "I agree," the mercenary says. "That way is best for us, and best for me. Bregan D'aerthe will support your cause."
- ◆ **Setback:** "And where does that leave Bregan D'aerthe? Where does that leave me?"

## Obstacle:

### What About the Way of Lolth?

The drow leaders can't afford to ignore the Way of Lolth, the fundamental principles of drow society that have been in place since the founding of Menzoberranzan thousands of years ago. Each of them gives the Way of Lolth a different weight in their consideration, but any of them might raise an objection if the characters

make an argument that is too dismissive of the way things have always been done.

The leaders pose the following challenges to the adventurers, but only when the characters offer arguments that radically dismiss the Way of Lolth. Each question demands a satisfying answer (backed up with a successful check, if you think it's necessary), or the adventurers suffer a setback in the objective related to the leader who raised the question. If the adventurers offer three successful rebuttals to these challenges, they have neutralized this obstacle.

- ◆ "For over five thousand years the Way of Lolth has guided us, expressed through the will of the Ruling Council. Would you change that so lightly?"
- ◆ "If the Goddess had meant for men to sit in the Council, she would have said so at the Founding."
- ◆ "We call it the Way of Lolth because it came from the Goddess herself. You seem to be disregarding Lolth's own will!"

## Obstacle:

### What About the Demon Weave?

At the same time, none of the drow leaders can completely dismiss Lolth's stated desire to spin a Demon Weave to replace Mystra's torn Weave. The Spider Queen has revealed her will more explicitly than perhaps ever before, through her prophet/avatar Danifae, and to ignore that command would bring Lolth's disfavor upon a house or the entire city. Again, the leaders give different weight to this concern (it is particularly important to Hoshtar), but any of them might raise an objection if the characters are too quick to dismiss Lolth's explicit command.

The leaders pose the following challenges to the adventurers, but only when the characters offer arguments that ignore or dismiss the Demon Weave. Each question demands a satisfying answer (backed up with a successful check, if you think it's necessary) or the adventurers suffer a setback in the objective related to the leader who raised the question. If the adventurers offer two successful rebuttals to these questions, they have neutralized this obstacle.

- ◆ "And the Demon Weave? The work already done to spin its web?"
- ◆ "How can you disregard the message of Danifae?"

## Outcomes

Six possible outcomes are the most obvious approaches to the situation, but it's possible your players might argue a different solution.

- ◆ Support the defiant priestesses (and if that means war, so be it).

- ◆ Try to exterminate the defiant priestesses, launching a civil war.
- ◆ Support the Council of Spiders (and if that means war, so be it)—House Xorlarrin's initial position.
- ◆ Try to exterminate the Council of Spiders, launching a civil war.
- ◆ Pursue the spinning of the Demon Weave without supporting male representation on the Council.
- ◆ Try to stay neutral and uncommitted as long as possible.

Again, it's possible for different leaders (and their different organizations) to end up supporting different paths. That will have an effect in later sessions, but won't send the adventure wildly off course.

## What if Things Go Wrong?

The three drow leaders are willing to agree to disagree, advising their houses to choose different courses, even if it means that they do not work together any longer. It is possible for this encounter to erupt into violence, though nobody wants it. If the adventurers draw arms, the leaders will of course defend themselves. Depending on how the argument has gone, some leaders might side with the adventurers and others against.

If combat breaks out, use the map on this page to represent the audience chamber where the meeting occurs. Use combat statistics from elsewhere in the adventure to represent the three drow leaders:

- ◆ For Ash'ala, use the drow acolyte statistics from session 3 (page 16).
- ◆ For Hoshtar, use the senior drow wizard statistics from session 4 (page 20).
- ◆ For Ro'kolor, use the Jaezred Chaulssin assassin statistics from session 5 (page 21).

## Reward

At the end of the session, each character gains 450 XP for dealing with the drow leaders. A character who has gained all the experience available so far in the adventure reaches 3rd level.

## Ending the Session

The adventurers have time to take an extended rest after this encounter.

### When the argument is over, read:

*The leaders return to their houses and masters to make their arguments and prepare for whatever lies ahead, and they urge you to do the same. Whatever happens next, life in Menzoberranzan may never be the same.*

End the session there.

# CHAPTER 3

Last session, the adventurers discussed the situation with the drow leaders who have been guiding their adventures so far. Depending on the outcome of the session, House Melarn, House Xorlarrin, and Bregan D'aerthe might be united in pursuit of a single goal, or they might be fractured in their approach to the crisis. After the argument, the characters had time to rest up and possibly advance to 3rd level.

## SESSION 7: INTO THE SHADOWS

At the start of the session, have the players tell you the outcome of the previous session (this information should be noted on their Play Trackers). Tally the results—majority rules. Identify what course of action each of the three leaders—Ash'ala Melarn, Hoshtar Xorlarrin, and Ro'kolor—decided on, and whether the leaders all agreed on a single direction or chose different paths. If the three leaders all adopted the same direction, the adventurers begin this session as they did all the others, receiving a mission from the three leaders united. If not, characters associated with different houses meet with their leaders separately, and this session plays out slightly differently.

### To begin the session, read:

*One last time, your house leaders have summoned you into their presence with a mission. Although tensions between the priestesses of Lolth and the wizards of the city still run high, exacerbated by open conflict between the Council of Spiders and certain radical priestesses, a more pressing matter weighs on the leaders.*

*They have learned that the assassin who captured Hoshtar Xorlarrin was an agent of the Jaezred Chaulssin, an order of assassins committed to the overthrow of what they call the tyranny of Lolth over drow society. Though most of their members are drow, they have strong ties to the Shadowfell and claim descent from shadow dragons. The mastermind behind their operations in the midst of this crisis is a drow from the distant Dalelands named Valan Jaelre. Spies have traced his location to a small network of caves and cellars in the Braeryn, Menzoberranzan's slum district. Your mission is to find him and kill him, putting an end to the Jaezred Chaulssin's interference.*

### If the leaders don't agree on the same course, add:

*Of course, with division separating the three drow who have guided you thus far, you are not sent on a single mission this time. Your houses send you separately, and your goals might not be the same. When you see each other again, how will you react?*



## House Goals

In addition to the common goal of finding and killing Valan Jaelre, different houses might have different secondary goals, depending on the outcome of the previous session. These secondary goals depend on the course of action the houses decided upon. These goals are based on the six possible outcomes outlined on page 27. If the characters persuaded one or more houses to a different course of action, improvise a goal using these as a starting point. As before, keep these goals secret from any player whose character doesn't share the same goal.

**Support the Defiant Priestesses:** The house believes that Valan Jaelre is in possession of a powerful artifact claimed from the surface in recent raids. Find it and claim it for the priestesses, or destroy it if necessary to keep it out of the hands of the wizards.

**Oppose the Defiant Priestesses:** Iyelle Tlabbar was a pawn of the Jaezred Chaulssin, and the house believes that Valan has lured in another such pawn from the ranks of the city's priestesses. Find her and kill her.

**Support the Council of Spiders:** The Ruling Council will be forced to take the Council of Spiders seriously if the wizards uncover the Jaezred Chaulssin plot. Valan Jaelre wasn't working alone—find out who he works for.

**Oppose the Council of Spiders:** Hoshtar Xorlar-rin was just one part of a larger effort to attract support among the prominent wizards of the city. The house believes that Valan has acquired information about a secret meeting between leaders of the Council and a very important house wizard. Learn who this wizard is and find any information about the meeting you can.

**Focus on the Demon Weave:** The house believes that Valan Jaelre is in possession of a powerful artifact claimed from the surface in recent raids. Find it and claim it to fuel the Demon Weave.

**Stay Neutral:** Avoid drawing the ire of either the Council of Spiders or the priestesses who oppose them.

### When the players are ready to begin, read:

*The Braeryn is not a neighborhood where respectable or noble drow are often seen. Also called Stenchstreets, it's a decrepit slum that's home to the lowliest filth that dare call Menzoberranzan home. It hardly comes as a surprise that this Jaezred Chaulssin assassin is hiding out in this suffocating cesspit of filth and desperation.*

*Winding your way past drinking pits and slave pens, you finally reach the building that's supposed to hold the assassin's hideaway. It's a run-down shack that looks like it's on the verge of collapse, with no front door and a single room inside, littered with garbage and debris.*

**Perception DC 12:** One small area of the floor is almost entirely free of filth and debris.

A character investigating the cleaner spot on the floor immediately spots the trap door leading down into the cellar.

## THE ENTOURAGE

### Encounter Level 4

### Setup

**Faeryl Melarn, drow acolyte (A)**

**2 drow spies (S)**

**3 drow templars (T)**

**5 drow initiates (D)**

### When the adventurers descend, read:

*A long ladder beneath the trap door leads down into a short natural tunnel that almost immediately opens into a large cavern. A number of other tunnels lead off from the cavern, and at one corner it turns into finished stone. A dozen drow are ranged around the cavern—three sentries standing at attention, unmoving, at the edge of the finished stone, five young priestesses grouped around an older priestess wearing the sigil of House Melarn, and two cloaked males who seem to be guarding the priestesses. They all seem surprised and displeased at your approach.*

*"I must not be seen here," the senior priestess says, gesturing to her bodyguards.*

### If the characters are separated, start them at opposite sides of the map and add this:

*At the other side of the cavern, you see your former associates approaching at the same time.*

Any character from House Melarn recognizes the senior priestess as Faeryl, a relative of Matron Mother Zhindia Melarn who is said to carry her house's favor. Faeryl is here to meet with Valan, who has promised to help her bring an end to the effort to help Lolth create the Demon Weave. It would indeed be disastrous, not just to Faeryl but to all of House Melarn, if her presence here were known to anyone outside the house. Associating with an agent of the Jaezred Chaulssin is heresy as well as treason, and the self-appointed inquisitors of Lolth's will in Menzoberranzan cannot afford that kind of scandal.

The other drow don't attack at once, though the spies advance menacingly. If the adventurers try to talk their way out of a fight with Faeryl, they must convince her that they won't reveal her presence here or her association with Valan Jaelre. If other members of House Melarn claim they are here for the same reason, she relaxes.

The sentries don't allow anyone to pass into the next area without a fight, however. Faeryl is waiting in the cavern for Valan to come out and meet her, and he does not want to be disturbed. Fighting past the sentries is a clear sign to Faeryl that the adventurers are not here for a peaceful conversation with Valan.

<b>Drow Acolyte (A)</b>	<b>Level 4 Controller (Leader)</b>
Medium fey humanoid	
<b>HP 54; Bloodied 27</b>	<b>Initiative +3</b>
<b>AC 18, Fortitude 15, Reflex 16, Will 16</b>	<b>Perception +5</b>
<b>Speed 6</b>	<b>Darkvision</b>
<b>TRAITS</b>	
☼ <b>Lolth's Favor</b> ♦ <b>Aura 2</b>	
Spider allies and drow allies in the aura gain a +2 bonus to damage rolls against enemies in the aura.	
<b>STANDARD ACTIONS</b>	
⚔ <b>Mace (weapon)</b> ♦ <b>At-Will</b>	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +9 vs. AC	
Hit: 2d8 + 2 damage, and the target grants combat advantage until it leaves the acolyte's aura (save ends).	
☠ <b>Pain Strand (poison)</b> ♦ <b>At-Will</b>	
Attack: Ranged 5 (one creature); +7 vs. Reflex	
Hit: 1d6 + 3 damage, ongoing 5 poison damage, and the target is immobilized (save ends both).	
<b>MINOR ACTIONS</b>	
☠ <b>Strengthen Poison (poison)</b> ♦ <b>Recharge</b> if this power misses	
Attack: Ranged 5 (one creature taking ongoing poison damage); +7 vs. Fortitude	
Hit: The ongoing poison damage increases by 5, and the target is weakened (save ends both).	
☠ <b>Darkfire</b> ♦ <b>Encounter</b>	
Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +7 vs. Reflex	
Hit: Until the end of the acolyte's next turn, the target grants combat advantage and cannot benefit from invisibility or concealment.	
☠ <b>Pain Link (healing)</b> ♦ <b>Encounter</b>	
Effect: Ranged 5 (one spider ally or drow ally); the target takes 10 damage and the acolyte regains 10 hit points.	
<b>Skills</b> Arcana +10, Intimidate +10, Religion +10	
<b>Str</b> 10 (+2)	<b>Dex</b> 13 (+3) <b>Wis</b> 16 (+5)
<b>Con</b> 14 (+4)	<b>Int</b> 16 (+5) <b>Cha</b> 16 (+5)
<b>Alignment</b> evil	
<b>Languages</b> Common, Elven	
<b>Equipment</b> chainmail, mace	

<b>2 Drow Spies (S)</b>	<b>Level 1 Lurker</b>
Medium fey humanoid	
<b>HP 25; Bloodied 12</b>	<b>Initiative +7</b>
<b>AC 15, Fortitude 12, Reflex 14, Will 13</b>	<b>Perception +1</b>
<b>Speed 6</b>	<b>Darkvision</b>
<b>STANDARD ACTIONS</b>	
⚔ <b>Dagger (weapon)</b> ♦ <b>At-Will</b>	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +6 vs. AC	
Hit: 2d4 + 3 damage, or 4d4 + 6 if the drow was invisible to the target when the drow attacked.	
☠ <b>Vanish (illusion)</b> ♦ <b>At-Will</b>	
Effect: The drow becomes invisible, then shifts up to 3 squares. It remains invisible until the end of its next turn or until it hits or misses with an attack.	
<b>MINOR ACTIONS</b>	
☠ <b>Cloud of Darkness (zone)</b> ♦ <b>Encounter</b>	
Effect: Close burst 1. The burst creates a zone that lasts until the end of the drow's next turn. The cloud blocks line of sight for all creatures except the drow. While entirely in the cloud, any creature other than the drow is blinded.	
<b>Skills</b> Acrobatics +8, Stealth +8, Thievery +8	
<b>Str</b> 13 (+1)	<b>Dex</b> 16 (+3) <b>Wis</b> 12 (+1)
<b>Con</b> 13 (+1)	<b>Int</b> 12 (+1) <b>Cha</b> 14 (+2)
<b>Alignment</b> evil	
<b>Languages</b> Common, Elven	
<b>Equipment</b> black cloak, dagger	

<b>3 Drow Templars (T)</b>	<b>Level 2 Soldier</b>
Medium fey humanoid	
<b>HP 38; Bloodied 19</b>	<b>Initiative +5</b>
<b>AC 18, Fortitude 15, Reflex 14, Will 13</b>	<b>Perception +7</b>
<b>Speed 6</b>	<b>Darkvision</b>
<b>STANDARD ACTIONS</b>	
⚔ <b>Longspear (weapon)</b> ♦ <b>At-Will</b>	
Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +7 vs. AC	
Hit: 1d10 + 5 damage.	
⚔ <b>Sweeping Strike (weapon)</b> ♦ <b>At-Will</b>	
Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +7 vs. AC	
Hit: 1d10 + 5 damage, and the drow can slide the target 1 square or knock the target prone.	
<b>MINOR ACTIONS</b>	
☠ <b>Darkfire</b> ♦ <b>Encounter</b>	
Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +5 vs. Reflex	
Hit: Until the end of the drow's next turn, the target grants combat advantage and cannot benefit from invisibility or concealment.	
<b>TRIGGERED ACTIONS</b>	
⚔ <b>Engaging Strike</b> ♦ <b>At-Will</b>	
Trigger: An adjacent enemy shifts or makes an attack that doesn't include the drow as a target.	
Effect (Immediate Interrupt): The drow uses sweeping strike on the triggering enemy.	
<b>Skills</b> Athletics +9, Intimidate +6	
<b>Str</b> 17 (+4)	<b>Dex</b> 14 (+3) <b>Wis</b> 13 (+2)
<b>Con</b> 14 (+3)	<b>Int</b> 11 (+1) <b>Cha</b> 11 (+1)
<b>Alignment</b> evil	
<b>Languages</b> Common, Elven	
<b>Equipment</b> scale armor, longspear	

<b>5 Drow Initiates (D)</b>	<b>Level 1 Minion Controller</b>
Medium fey humanoid	
<b>HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.</b>	<b>Initiative +2</b>
<b>AC 15, Fortitude 12, Reflex 13, Will 14</b>	<b>Perception +3</b>
<b>Speed 6</b>	<b>Darkvision</b>
<b>TRAITS</b>	
☼ <b>Venomous Presence</b> ♦ <b>Aura 1</b>	
Enemies in the aura take a -2 penalty to saving throws.	
<b>STANDARD ACTIONS</b>	
⚔ <b>Staff (weapon)</b> ♦ <b>At-Will</b>	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +6 vs. AC	
Hit: 4 damage, and the initiate can slide the target 1 square.	
☠ <b>Spider Ray (poison)</b> ♦ <b>At-Will</b>	
Attack: Ranged 5 (one creature); +4 vs. Fortitude	
Hit: Ongoing 4 poison damage (save ends).	
<b>Str</b> 9 (-1)	<b>Dex</b> 14 (+2) <b>Wis</b> 16 (+3)
<b>Con</b> 12 (+1)	<b>Int</b> 12 (+1) <b>Cha</b> 14 (+2)
<b>Alignment</b> evil	
<b>Languages</b> Common, Elven	
<b>Equipment</b> robes, staff	

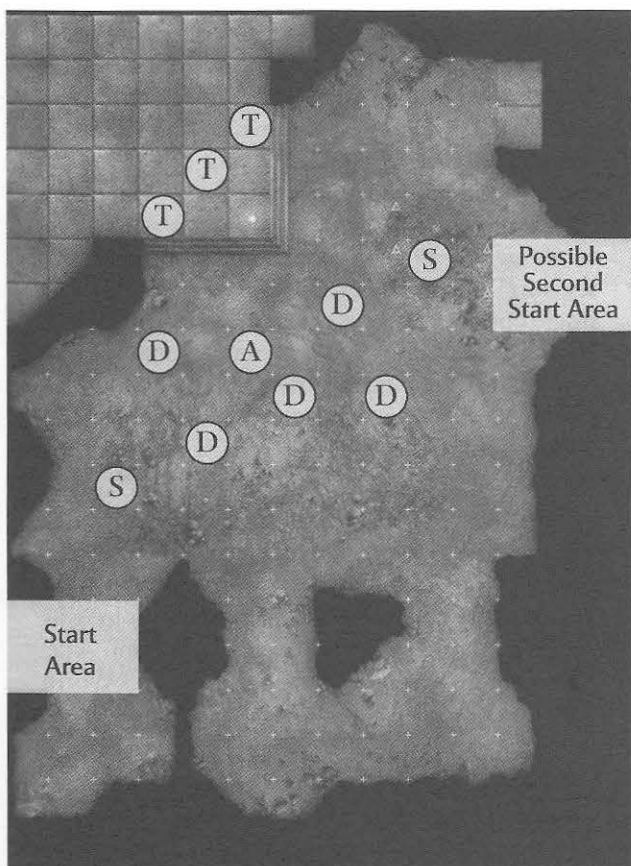
## Tactics

**Acolyte:** Faeryl uses *pain link* to save herself, preferring to target the templars rather than her own servants. She favors *pain strand* to keep opponents from advancing on her while she attacks from range.

**Spies:** These spies try to protect Faeryl. They use *vanish* to sneak around the edges of the fray.

**Templars:** To protect Valan, the sentries try to keep adventurers from getting past them. They intervene in a fight, trying to bring the adventurers to a speedy end.





**Initiates:** The young priestesses stay close to Faeryl, trying to stay out of melee and using *spider ray* to attack.

## Features of the Area

**Illumination:** A torch at the corner of the finished stone area sheds bright light throughout the area.

**Rubble:** Piles of rocks are difficult terrain.

## Reward

At the end of the session, each character gains 500 XP for defeating the other drow.

**Treasure:** The adventurers can take 160 gp per character from the slain drow, as well as two random magic items from the table on page 3.

## Ending the Session

The adventurers can take a short rest.

**When the adventurers continue, read:**

*The finished stone area looks like a cellar—a cellar in Stenchstreets, to be precise. Broken crates and splintered barrels litter the floor, and an odor of rancid food and bodily waste fills the air. A stairway in the far corner leads farther down—presumably to the lair of Valan Jaelre.*

End the session there.

## SESSION 8: THE JAEZRED CHAULSSIN

Last session, the adventurers entered a cavern complex beneath the filthy streets of the Braeryn in search of the Jaezred Chaulssin agent Valan Jaelre. There they found a priestess of House Melarn waiting to meet with Valan in betrayal of her house and the Way of Lolth, and they might have had to deal with conflicting goals or competitive attitudes between two or even three splintered groups of adventurers. In this session, they confront Valan Jaelre at last.

At the start of the session, have the players tell you the outcome of Session 6 (this information should be noted on their Play Trackers). Identify what course of action each of the three leaders—Ash’ala Melarn, Hoshtar Xorlarrin, and Ro’kolor—decided on, and whether the leaders all agreed on a single direction or chose different paths. Tally the results—majority rules. If the three leaders all adopted the same direction, the adventurers begin this session as they did all the others, receiving a mission from the three leaders united. If not, find out how the adventurers dealt with encountering each other in the last session. Did they agree to work together in pursuit of a common goal? Did they fight with each other? Depending on the outcome, you might need to adjust the start of this encounter slightly. For example, if the adventurers associated with House Melarn and Bregan D’aerthe killed all the Xorlarrin characters in the last session, bring any Xorlarrin characters present at this session in to the encounter separately, perhaps trailing after the other characters by a minute or two.

**To start this session, read:**

*A stairway in the corner of the cellar has taken you down into a chamber that looks like a catacombs or a shrine, perhaps both. From the looks of it, it might even be older than the vast Bone Locker beneath West Wall, perhaps constructed in a day and age when Braeryn was less of a stinking slum than it is today.*

*To your left is a small altar dedicated to Lolth. Ahead are four alcoves, each holding several niches stacked with the brown bones of long-dead drow. Some of the alcoves are choked with spider webs that extend to the ceiling, teeming with living spiders. To the right, more webs hang from the ceiling and drape over two statues of glowering gargoyles, which flank another stairway leading even farther down.*

*As you look around, a small figure detaches itself from the shadows near the statues and slips down the stairs. But before you can react, a cloud of greasy brown smoke appears over the altar, accompanied by a sharp stench. It’s little more than a hazy smudge in the air, but you can feel the power and malevolence oozing from it.*

A priestess immediately recognizes this as a yochlol demon, one of the handmaidens of Lolth. Usually seen only in temples, when summoned by Lolth's priestesses, a yochlol appearing on its own in such a place is unheard of, surely a sign of either Lolth's favor or her severe displeasure.

## Handmaiden of Lolth

The yochlol is literally the voice of Lolth, and adventurers who insult or abuse the yochlol will anger Lolth and earn her disfavor (and lose Worth; see page 8).

When the yochlol speaks, its words are telepathically projected into the minds of the adventurers. "Prove yourselves to the Goddess, mortals!" it says. "How do you obey the Spider Queen's will?"

Lolth, through the yochlol, is testing the adventurers, ensuring that they are pursuing their course of action out of respect for Lolth's will and not for any other reason. The yochlol demands an answer from every character. Each character's response determines what blessing or curse the yochlol places on that character. The yochlol waits for all the characters to answer her before revealing Lolth's judgment to any character.

These six answers mirror the six possible outcomes from session 6. If you can't fit a character's answer into one of these categories, try to find the closest match or improvise the yochlol's response.

- ◆ I'm upholding the Way of Lolth by supporting the defiant priestesses: "Those priestesses defy Lolth's command, delivered by the avatar of Lolth herself. It is not enough to cling to tradition—Lolth will not have her commands ignored." The character suffers Lolth's curse, losing 3 Worth and taking a -2 penalty to saving throws for the rest of the session.
- ◆ I'm upholding Lolth's command through Danifae by trying to exterminate her unfaithful priestesses: "Your attention to Lolth's command is noted, but the priestesses are the agents of the Spider Queen. They might be misguided, but that is not license to kill them. Attacking a priestess is blasphemy." The character suffers Lolth's curse, losing 3 Worth and taking a -1 penalty to all defenses for the rest of the session.
- ◆ I'm upholding Lolth's command through Danifae by supporting the Council of Spiders and their efforts to channel arcane power to Lolth: "It is good that you heed Lolth's command. The service of the wizards is important, but it is no more than the Spider Queen expects from all her people, and not deserving of any special reward." The character suffers no penalty and gains no benefit.

- ◆ I'm upholding the Way of Lolth by opposing the ambition of the Council of Spiders: "You have chosen a satisfactory path. The Way of Lolth remains unchanged by her latest command. As long as you do not ignore her command in your zeal to preserve her way, she will smile on your efforts." The character enjoys Lolth's blessing, gaining 3 Worth and receiving a +1 bonus to attack rolls for the rest of the session. The character may also ask the yochlol a single question and expect an accurate answer, if the answer is something Lolth might reasonably know. (For example, she can tell the character which house wizard Valan is planning to meet and when—see "Conclusion" on page 35.)
- ◆ I'm upholding Lolth's command through Danifae by pursuing the spinning of the Demon Weave over all other concerns: "You seek to carry out the Spider Queen's will without concern for the Way of Lolth. Your zeal for her command is excellent, as long as you do not stray from tradition in its pursuit." The character enjoys Lolth's blessing, gaining 3 Worth and receiving a +2 bonus to saving throws for the rest of the session.
- ◆ I can't discern Lolth's will, so I remain uncommitted (or follow the lead of our priestess): "You stand astride the chasm, and soon you will plunge into it. Lolth is your queen—will you not serve her? Danifae has revealed her will—do you not seek to obey it? The Way of Lolth has been established for centuries—do you not wish to preserve it? Neither hot nor cold, I spit you out." The character suffers Lolth's curse: When combat begins, the character goes last in the initiative order and is weakened (save ends). The character also loses 3 Worth.

As soon as all the characters have answered the yochlol's challenge and received Lolth's judgment, the creature disappears in a bright burst of flame. At the same instant, one of the dragonblooded spellspinners from the room below launches a dark bolt at the nearest character, starting the **Shadow Assassin** encounter.



# SHADOW ASSASSIN

Encounter Level 5

## Setup

Valan Jaelre (V)

2 dragonblooded spellspinners (S)

2 hex knights (H)

The hex knight slipping down the stairs warned Valan and his allies of the characters' approach, and the appearance of the yochlol gave the Jaelred Chaulssin plenty of time to prepare. The dragonblooded spell-spinner makes a single attack in a surprise round; then everyone can roll initiative normally.

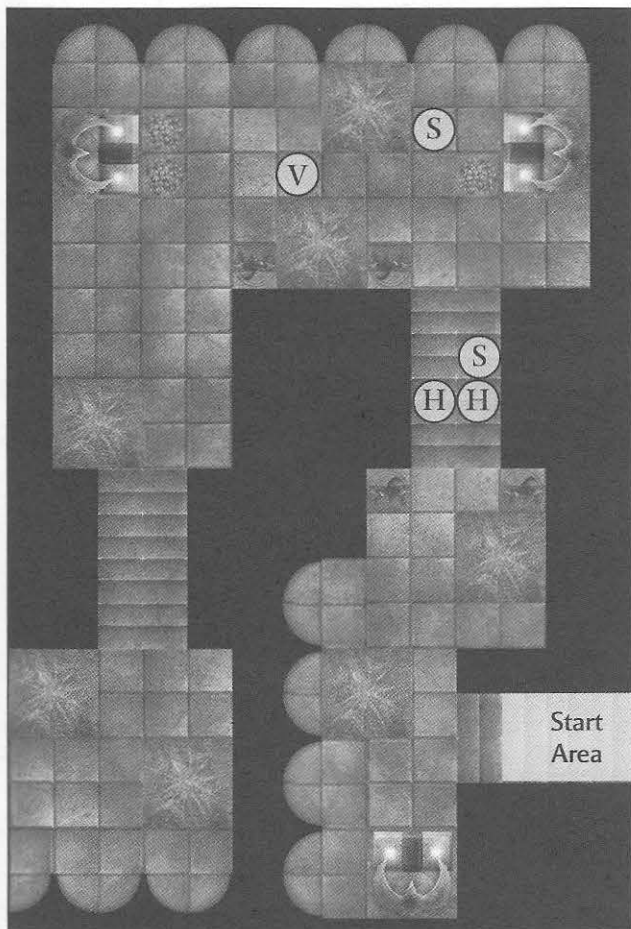
**When the characters enter the lower room, read:**

*This large chamber has six more alcoves laden with bones, and an altar at each end. More gargoyle statues stand against the wall to your left, and spider webs are everywhere. The ceiling has crumbled a bit in places, leaving small piles of rubble here and there on the floor.*

Near the center of the room is a male drow wearing ornate robes and carrying what looks like solidified strands of shadow twisted together into a gnarled staff. He wears a symbol that looks like a sunburst that transitions into two

daggers pointing down like fangs—not a house insignia that any of you recognize. This must be Valan Jaelre.

His allies or minions include two drow who boast obsidian scales on their necks, shoulders, and clawlike hands, as well as two more of the small shadow creatures you encountered in the Srune'Lett compound.



Valan Jaelre (V)	Level 4 Elite Controller (Leader)
Medium fey humanoid, drow	
HP 110; Bloodied 55	Initiative +3
AC 18, Fortitude 15, Reflex 17, Will 16	Perception +8
Speed 6	Darkvision
Saving Throws +2; Action Points 1	
<b>TRAITS</b>	
☼ Spider Bones ♦ Aura 5	
Whenever an ally in the aura drops to 0 hit points, it dies and a bone spider appears in its former space.	
<b>STANDARD ACTIONS</b>	
⚔ Spider Staff (fear, poison, weapon) ♦ At-Will	
Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +9 vs. AC	
Hit: 1d8 + 3 damage, and ongoing 5 poison damage (save ends).	
Effect: Valan pushes the target up to 3 squares.	
☹ Mind Shadows (fear, psychic) ♦ At-Will	
Attack: Ranged 20 (one creature); +7 vs. Will	
Hit: 1d6 + 4 psychic damage, and ongoing 5 psychic damage (save ends).	
Effect: Valan slides the target up to 2 squares.	
⚔ Double Attack ♦ At-Will	
Effect: Valan makes two basic attacks.	
☼ Webbed Miasma (poison) ♦ Recharge when first bloodied	
Attack: Area burst 2 within 10 (enemies in the burst); +7 vs. Reflex	
Hit: 1d6 + 4 poison damage, ongoing 5 poison damage, and the target is slowed (save ends both).	
Effect: The burst creates a zone of webs that lasts until the end of the encounter. The webs are difficult terrain for enemies.	
<b>MINOR ACTIONS</b>	
☼ Darkfire ♦ Encounter	
Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +7 vs. Reflex	
Hit: Until the end of Valan's next turn, the target grants combat advantage and cannot benefit from invisibility or concealment.	
☼ Venom Puppet (charm) ♦ Recharge ☼ ☼	
Effect: Ranged 20 (one ally or one creature taking ongoing poison damage or ongoing psychic damage); the target makes a basic attack as a free action against a target of Valan's choice.	
☼ Cloud of Darkness (zone) ♦ Encounter	
Effect: Close burst 1. The burst creates a zone that lasts until the end of Valan's next turn. The cloud blocks line of sight for all creatures except Valan. While entirely in the cloud, any creature other than Valan is blinded.	
Skills Arcana +11, Bluff +10, Intimidate +10	
Str 10 (+2)	Dex 12 (+3)
Con 15 (+4)	Int 18 (+6)
	Wis 12 (+3)
	Cha 16 (+5)
Alignment evil	Languages Common, Elven, Goblin
Equipment robes, staff	

**If Valan's aura creates a shadow spider, read:**

A cloud of magical smoke snakes away from Valan and hits the fallen drow. The dying warrior screams in agony as its flesh melts away. Its bones twist, snap, and reshape into a grisly, spider-like construct that skitters into the fray.

The shadow spider rolls initiative and joins the combat.

**2 Dragonblooded Spellspinners (S)****Level 3 Artillery**

Medium fey humanoid, drow

HP 34; Bloodied 17

Initiative +3

AC 17, Fortitude 14, Reflex 16, Will 15

Perception +2

Speed 6

Darkvision

**STANDARD ACTIONS****⚡ Spellshock Rod (implement, lightning) ♦ At-Will**

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +8 vs. AC

Hit: 2d6 + 4 lightning damage, and the drow pushes the target up to 2 squares.

**☠ Dark Bolt (implement, lightning, necrotic) ♦ At-Will**

Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +8 vs. Reflex

Hit: 1d4 + 4 lightning damage, and ongoing 5 necrotic damage (save ends).

**⚡ Shadow Web (implement, necrotic) ♦ Encounter**

Attack: Close blast 5 (creatures in the blast); +6 vs. Reflex

Hit: The target is immobilized and takes ongoing 5 necrotic damage (save ends both).

Miss: 5 necrotic damage, and the target is slowed (save ends).

**MINOR ACTIONS****Levitate ♦ Encounter**

Effect: The drow flies up to 4 squares vertically and hovers there until the end of its next turn. When the levitation ends, the drow descends safely to the ground, without taking falling damage.

Sustain Move: The levitation persists until the end of the drow's next turn, and it can fly up to 3 squares vertically and 1 square horizontally.

**TRIGGERED ACTIONS****Bloodied Recharge ♦ Encounter**

Trigger: The drow is first bloodied.

Effect (Free Action): The drow regains the use of *shadow web* and can use it.

Skills Arcana +9, Stealth +8

Str 10 (+1)

Dex 14 (+3)

Wis 12 (+2)

Con 10 (+1)

Int 16 (+4)

Cha 15 (+3)

Alignment evil

Languages Common, Elven

Equipment robes, rod

**Bone Spider****Level 2 Minion Skirmisher**

Small fey animate (construct, spider)

HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.

Initiative +6

AC 16, Fortitude 13, Reflex 15, Will 14

Perception +3

Speed 6

Darkvision

**STANDARD ACTIONS****⚡ Bite (poison) ♦ At-Will**

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +7 vs. AC

Hit: 5 poison damage, or 7 poison damage against a target granting combat advantage to the spider.

**MOVE ACTIONS****Skitter ♦ At-Will**

Requirement: The spider must have taken no actions this turn.

Effect: The shadow spider shifts up to half its speed.

Str 12 (+2)

Dex 17 (+4)

Wis 14 (+3)

Con 9 (+0)

Int 1 (-4)

Cha 7 (-1)

Alignment unaligned

Languages –

**2 Hex Knights (H)****Level 4 Soldier**

Small shadow humanoid, dark one

HP 54; Bloodied 27

Initiative +7

AC 20, Fortitude 15, Reflex 16, Will 15

Perception +3

Speed 6

Darkvision

**STANDARD ACTIONS****⚡ Short Sword (weapon) ♦ At-Will**

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +9 vs. AC

Hit: 2d6 + 5 damage, and the target is slowed until the end of the hex knight's next turn.

**🏹 Hand Crossbow (weapon) ♦ At-Will**

Attack: Ranged 10/20 (one creature); +9 vs. AC

Hit: 2d6 + 5 damage.

**MOVE ACTIONS****Dark Step ♦ At-Will**

Effect: The hex knight moves 4 squares, gains a +4 bonus to AC against opportunity attacks provoked by this movement, and gains combat advantage against any target that it ends its move adjacent to until the end of the hex knight's next turn.

**MINOR ACTIONS****Shadow Hex ♦ At-Will**

Effect: One creature within 3 squares of the hex knight is marked until the end of the encounter or until the hex knight uses *shadow hex* again. While the creature is marked by the hex knight, whenever it makes an attack that does not include the hex knight as a target, it grants combat advantage until the end of its next turn.

**TRIGGERED ACTIONS****⚡ Killing Dark**

Trigger: The hex knight drops to 0 hit points.

Effect (No Action): Each enemy adjacent to the hex knight is blinded until the end of his or her next turn.

Skills Athletics +9, Stealth +10

Str 15 (+4)

Dex 16 (+5)

Wis 12 (+3)

Con 14 (+4)

Int 11 (+2)

Cha 11 (+2)

Alignment unaligned

Languages Common

Equipment hide armor, 2 short swords, hand crossbow, 10 bolts



## Features of the Area

**Illumination:** The altars cast dim light.

**Ceiling:** The ceiling in the upper and lower chambers is 10 feet high, but in the large center chamber it's 20 feet high.

**Altars:** These areas are difficult terrain.

**Statue:** The gargoyle statues are blocking terrain.

**Webs:** A character who ends his or her turn in an area of webs takes 5 damage from biting spiders. If a character includes a web square in the effect of a close or area power, the web is destroyed along with the spiders in it. For killing the spiders, the character loses 2 Worth.

## Tactics

**Valan Jaelre:** Valan initially tries to keep the dark creeper hex knights between himself and the adventurers, using *webbed miasma* to slow the characters' advance and *mind shadows* to attack from range. If the hex knights fall, he moves into the fray, trying to allow the spellspinners to continue keeping their distance. He is terribly overconfident and boasts about the adventurers' imminent demise—and the inevitable fall of Menzoberranzan—long after his defeat is certain. (His arrogant manner of speech is similar to that of the Jaezred Chaulssin assassin in Session 5.)

**Bone Spiders:** These creatures mindlessly attack the closest enemy.

**Dragonblooded Spellspinners:** Descended from the shadow dragons that founded the Jaezred Chaulssin, these wizards prefer their ranged attacks. In the central chamber, they use *levitate* to stay out of melee reach as long as possible.

**Hex Knights:** The hex knights protect Valan and the spellspinners as much as they can, taking advantage of the stairway to keep characters out of the large chamber as long as possible. If characters break through their line, they use *dark step* to move the line. They use *shadow hex* to mark characters who attacking Valan.

## Conclusion

The death of Valan Jaelre is a step toward averting the civil war that threatens to engulf Menzoberranzan. With the yochlol's judgment, the adventurers can take steps to bring both the defiant priestesses and the Council of Spiders into alignment with Lolth's will, and the conflict over the Demon Weave will simmer down into the usual backstabbing and treachery of drow society.

Searching the area after Valan's death, the adventurers find three key items, which might help them accomplish house goals outlined on page 29.

- ◆ The *Spellfire Manacle*, an important artifact created after a devout follower of Mystra was captured by the drow. Mystra blessed her with the temporary gift of Spellfire—the ability to channel and control raw magical energy, which she used to win her freedom. The manacle she wore was sacred to Mystra and is said to contain significant remnants of the power of Spellfire.
- ◆ A scrap of paper in Valan's pouches describes a meeting scheduled between some leaders of the Council of Spiders and Gromph Baenre, the Archmage of Menzoberranzan himself. There's no indication that Gromph has thrown in his lot with the Council, but even meeting with them is a significant step on his part.
- ◆ A letter lying on the far altar in the large chamber bears the symbol of House Nuryndin, the inconsequential 48th house of Menzoberranzan. The letter is veiled in vague, probably coded language, but there's a suggestion that Valan was taking orders from whoever wrote the letter—presumably a senior member of the Jaezred Chaulssin.





# DUNGEONS & DRAGONS ENCOUNTERS

## WATCH YOUR BACK

Lolth's avatar has come to Menzoberranzan, declaring the god's intent to spin a Demon Weave and gain control of arcane magic. The drow rush to aid her by retrieving ancient artifacts and channeling their power to Lolth. But in Menzoberranzan, the City of Intrigue, nothing is ever as simple as it seems. The Council of Spiders demands representation for wizards on the Ruling Council of the drow theocracy. Tension rises between priestesses and wizards in a drow battle of the sexes. Will the tension erupt into civil war? Which side will you choose?

*Council of Spiders™* is a DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® Roleplaying Game adventure designed for the summer 2012 season of the D&D ENCOUNTERS™ official play program. In this season, participants are encouraged to play drow characters as they vie for supremacy in the Underdark. This season incorporates lore from *Menzoberranzan: City of Intrigue™*. The adventure comes with three full-color battle maps, eight ready-to-play encounters, and information on the D&D ENCOUNTERS program.

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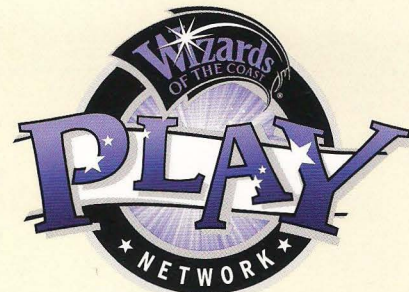
*Menzoberranzan: City of Intrigue™*

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