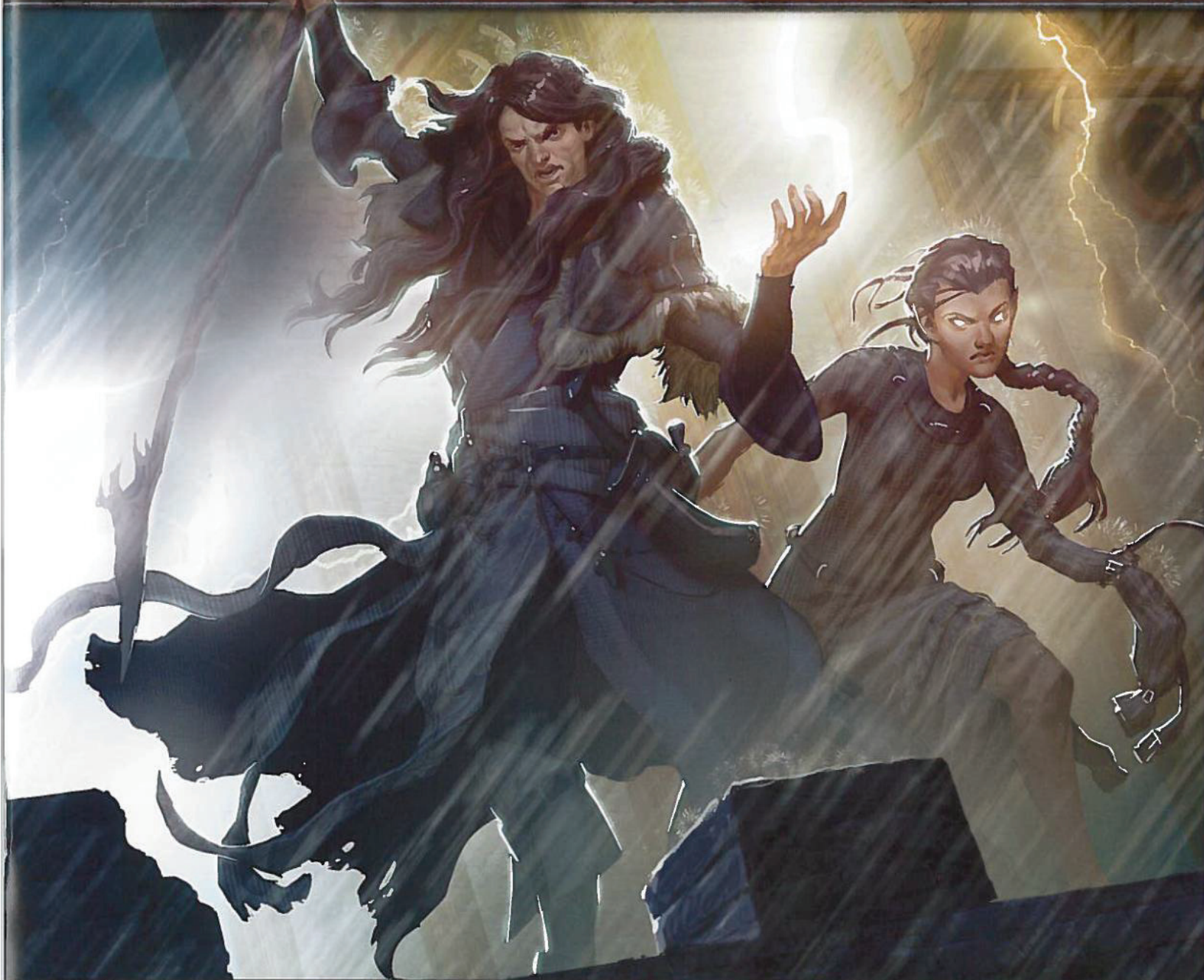


A HEROIC TIER ADVENTURE

AGE 12+

# DUNGEONS & DRAGONS ENCOUNTERS™

## STORM OVER NEVERWINTER™



AN ADVENTURE FOR D&D NEXT CHARACTERS

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# INTRODUCTION

Welcome to DUNGEONS & DRAGONS ENCOUNTERS, an exciting official DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® program. This adventure is a designed to be played in one-encounter sessions once per week at your local Wizards Play Net work location.

## Playtesting D&D® Next

This season of D&D ENCOUNTERS includes an optional online component that allows players and Dungeon Masters to convert their games to the D&D Next playtest. To participate, follow these five steps.

1. Talk to the players at your store and your D&D ENCOUNTERS organizer. Find out how many people are interested in playtesting D&D Next and how many want to continue playing 4th Edition. Gauge players' interest, and coordinate with any other DMs to try to ensure that everyone (including you) has the opportunity to play in his or her preferred type of game.
2. Visit [dndnext.com](http://dndnext.com) and sign up for the playtest.
3. Download the playtest packet and review the documents, paying close attention to the How to Play and DM Guidelines files.
4. Read and print the *Storm over Neverwinter™* conversion notes. This file contains instructions, guidelines, and statistics blocks for adapting the adventure to D&D Next.
5. Familiarize yourself with the adventure, and get ready to run D&D Next!

## 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: Lady in Peril**, page 8. 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 of the appropriate level to play. Players can use one of the pre-generated characters available for download at [dndencounters.com](http://dndencounters.com), or they 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 and experience earned from 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") to maximize the fun for the players.

### At the end of your first session:

- ◆ Have the adventurers take a short rest if they wish, but remind them to track their daily abilities. Hit dice used, and other limited resources do not refresh 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 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.

### At the end of chapter 1:

- ◆ The adventurers take a long rest, regaining all their hit points and hit dice.
- ◆ 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.

## 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.

**Awarding Magic Items:** When the characters obtain 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, 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 higher roll receives the new item.

**Selling Items:** If none of the characters want a particular magic item, the group can sell it at the end of the session. Divide the gold pieces received evenly among the party members.

## Random Items

Use the following table to determine unspecified magic items, either by rolling randomly or choosing items as you see fit. See the Magic Items document in the most recent D&D Next playtest for more information, and to determine weapon and armor types, add details to items, and so on.

Feel free to simply choose magic items from the playtest document rather than using the table, or to reduce the number of magic items gained in the adventure to suit your campaign.

### TREASURE TABLE

d10	Result
1	+1 armor
2	+1 weapon
3	Ring of protection
4	Wand of magic missiles
5	Ring of feather falling
6	Spellguard shield
7	Potion of healing
8	Potion of heroism
9	Potion of invisibility
10	Roll twice more (reroll if 10 comes up again)

## Advancement

At the end of each session, you award experience points and treasure. The "Reward" section at the end of each session indicates how many XP to award the characters. The 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.

**Leveling:** D&D ENCOUNTERS play uses an accelerated XP award system to allow players to run their characters at a succession of levels. If a player attends every session, his or her character advances to 4th level by the start of session 3, to 5th level by the start of session 5, and to 6th level by the start of session 7.

## GENERAL GUIDELINES

In addition to the specific guidelines provided in this document, keep the following general points in mind.

**Ability Checks:** Where this conversion document refers to the difficulty of checks and tasks, the guidelines in the latest playtest packet are used to determine DCs for ability checks.

- Trivial task: DC 5
- Easy task: DC 10
- Moderate task: DC 15
- Hard task: DC 20

**Perception:** Whenever a Perception check is called for, a D&D Next character makes an Intelligence check if searching for something secret, or a Wisdom check if spotting or noticing a hidden creature.

**Distance:** Whenever distance or movement is given in squares, 1 square equals 5 feet.

**Rests:** D&D Next characters can take short rests whenever one is called for in the adventure. When an extended rest is called for, characters take a long rest.

**Blocking Terrain:** This refers to objects or features that cannot be moved through or typically climbed over.

**Tactics:** When a Tactics section describes a 4th Edition power that a D&D Next creature or NPC doesn't possess, substitute an action that the D&D Next creature possesses instead.

**Bloodied:** When a creature is bloodied, it has dropped below half its hit point maximum.

**Number of Monsters:** The conversion notes update the number of monsters of a particular type appearing during an encounter. Be sure to use the numbers from this conversion

## A CHANGING GROUP

Since you can never tell who's going to show up for 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 any resources they spent (healing surges, daily powers, and so on) since their last extended rest.

**Majority Rules:** If an element of the adventure plot hinges on a decision the characters made in a previous session, and the group is different in the current session, find out what was decided. 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 the five characters at your table rescued Lady Nidris's son in session 2 and two didn't, he is considered to be rescued for your session this week.

document rather than the numbers indicated in the original adventure.

**Encounter Difficulty:** You can adjust the difficulty of an encounter or customize it for larger or smaller groups. To do so, adjust the overall encounter XP by increasing or reducing the number of creatures, using the encounter building guidelines in the current D&D Next playtest.

## Changing Characters

Players can switch characters during the season. To do so, a player can bring a new character with experience points equal to those of the character he or she previously played in the season. The new character cannot keep treasure or items 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 the player can start a new level-appropriate character. No other penalty exists for death.

## 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 spots 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, allow that player to place his or her token or miniature in an appropriate location.

## ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

You can read or paraphrase this background section to the players during the character creation session, or you can throw them right into the action and answer questions as they come up.

Rising from the broken coastline of the Savage North, the frontier city of Neverwinter has weathered calamity after cataclysm and remains standing. Lord Dagult Neverember — Open Lord of the cosmopolitan Waterdeep and an imperialistic merchant—has named himself Lord Protector of Neverwinter, and he is slowly rebuilding its residential districts and defenses after an earthquake leveled the city twenty years ago.

Neverember's stabilizing presence, as well as his policy of few trade regulations and low tariffs, has drawn merchants and longtime residents back to the city. Among these merchants are wealthy expatriate traders from faraway lands, such as the Cormyrean Elden Vargas, whose trade fleet makes berth in the city, and the elegant Lady Sala Nidris from Calimshan, who brings spices and fine fabrics from the south.

Despite Lord Neverember's success, much of the city remains untamed and wild, and danger lurks in cracks and crannies. A contingent of Thayans is the most obvious threat to Neverwinter, but rumors speak of werebeasts in the sewers, shades in the great forest to the east, and a powerful devil cult: the Ashmadai.

Over the last few months, the Ashmadai have ramped up their activities. Every day, the symbol of their god, Asmodeus, is seen painted in blood or burned into a new building or fence. And now rumors are blaming the cultists for disappearances: common folks snatched out of their beds or off the street and later found with the mark of Asmodeus branded on their bodies. Although the victims survive the ordeal, they are never quite the same, and they bear terrible scars, both physical and mental, from their captivity. It falls to brave and bold characters to get to the bottom of these kidnappings before they threaten Neverwinter's stability.

Meanwhile, a fearsome storm is rolling in, one that will test the rebuilt city of Neverwinter to its limits.

## ADVENTURE SUMMARY

One way or another, the adventurers end up involved with the kidnappings that plague Neverwinter. They eventually discover that the Ashmadai are merely agents; the mastermind behind the abductions is the merchant wizard Elden Vargas, who seeks to rescue his insane wife, Karis, from Helm's Hold and cure her. The events of the adventure lead up to a final confrontation atop the cathedral in the eye of the storm.

## Chapter 1

The characters learn about kidnappings, fight their way through Ashmadai cultists, and ultimately foil the cult's attempts to kidnap Vargas, a notable merchant and former war wizard. A threatening storm brews over the ocean west of Neverwinter and will arrive soon.



**Session 1:** The characters stumble into an Ashmadai attack on Lady Nidris, a Calishite expatriate and merchant in Neverwinter. They fight off her attackers and possibly escort Nidris to her home, only to discover that her son Zan is missing, kidnapped by Ashmadai. (Vargas needs living bodies to use in tests to see if he can cure his wife's madness.)

**Session 2:** The characters rescue Zan from an Ashmadai safe house and discover that he has been marked with the symbol of Asmodeus. The party learns about a string of similar kidnappings in the city, led by a man called "the Tormentor."

**Session 3:** While investigating the kidnappings, the characters meet an officer in the army who tries to steer them away from their course. During the meeting, two devils attack, and seemingly normal inn patrons go crazy. After the fight, the adventurers discover that the lunatics are marked with the symbol of Asmodeus. Vargas's mind-affecting magic is taking its toll, and his victims are "activating" all over the city.

**Session 4:** Random people in the city start going mad and attacking everyone around them, and all the attackers turn out to have Asmodeus's symbol on their bodies. The New Neverwinter soldiers send the afflicted to Helm's Hold for treatment. At Vargas's townhouse, the adventurers confront a gang of Ashmadai and a bound devil. Vargas sides with the adventurers against the cultists, then attempts to win their trust afterward. He wants to get into Helm's Hold to check on Karis, so he volunteers to help the other maddened victims.

## Chapter 2

The party might have thwarted the kidnappings, but a sinister force has taken over Helm's Hold. Vargas has built a small army of mind-controlled supporters and is making his move to free his wife, no matter the risk to the city. Meanwhile, the storm reaches its climax, centered on Helm's Hold.

**Session 5:** The characters receive a letter from Helm's Hold pleading for aid. When they investigate, they are stopped by acolytes acting under the orders of the "master" of the asylum, the Tormentor. The characters must find a way into the asylum to confront the true threat. Once inside, they interact with various inmates and discover that Vargas is the Tormentor.

**Session 6:** Vargas defeats the Prophet of Helm's Hold in psychic combat, but rather than fight the heroes, he flees with his wife, leaving his newest mindslaves, including several inmates and the green dragon Chartilifax, to cover his retreat up the tower.

**Session 7:** The characters head after Vargas, but a stormy blast destroys the stairs, forcing them to seek another way up while dealing with elemental creatures and Karis's storm magic. Ultimately, they find Vargas, who is protecting Karis while she feeds on the storm. The stage is set for the final battle.

**Session 8:** The characters confront Vargas, Karis, and Chartilifax at the top of Helm's Hold. When Vargas is defeated, his mind-control magic fades away, people regain their willpower, and the symptoms of madness disappear

from the city. If Karis survives the battle, she regains a hint of her former sanity and laments that her husband fell so far and hurt so many people for her sake.

## HALLMARKS OF NEVERWINTER

Neverwinter is a setting designed for the players to become deeply involved and for their choices to drive the story at every turn. What the player characters decide to do matters for themselves, for the people of the North, and perhaps for people far beyond. The following section describes some of the key characteristics of the Neverwinter setting.

### Heroes Make a Difference

The player characters in a Neverwinter campaign can make a difference and change things, for good or ill. This is not a setting where the heroes are stuck facing flunkies of the villain because their enemy is an epic level threat. Whether they like it or not, the adventurers are on their own, and what they decide to do matters.

### Frontier Feel

The destruction of Neverwinter made the North into more of a wilderness than it has been in centuries. People rebuild the city, but law's reach is not long and order's grasp remains weak. Things as simple as the shipments of food to the city can become sources of desperate conflict and dire events. In such a place, individuals such as the player characters can be the linchpin that holds everything together or the factor that forces the wheels to come off the cart.

### Intrigue Abounds

Everyone wants something: the characters, normal folk, secret cults, rebels, mercenaries, invaders, assassins, conquerors, looters, would-be kings. Neverwinter presents many organizations and nonplayer characters with a multitude of plans. The heroes can interact with all these groups, discovering secret ploys, allying with some, making enemies of others, and playing them against one another or taking them all on. Allies can become enemies and enemies can become friends; it's up to the players to decide.

### The Story Goes On

Many settings describe the world as it is and make it seem like it will always be that way. The important individuals are necessary to the setting and forever out of reach of the player characters. Not so in Neverwinter. If the characters do nothing, something will still happen. If they go after and kill the big names in the setting, the story doesn't end—it gets more interesting.

## WHO'S THE VILLAIN?

The Cormyrean expatriate Elden Vargas is a recent immigrant to Neverwinter who based his highly successful trade business in the city. He is a middle-aged wizard with a robust build. Obviously trained for combat, he has a cheerful manner that hides a lack of compassion and a predilection for violence.

A former war wizard in the Purple Dragons, Vargas excelled at mind reading and occasional mental torture. His partner and wife, the Rashemi wizard Karis, had a modicum of compassion and specialized in the power of the elements. In his zeal to ferret out the Crown's enemies, Vargas went too far, forging a pact with Asmodeus to enhance his psychic abilities. When his superiors found out, the other war wizards and the Royal Magician of Cormyr attacked Vargas. The battle shattered Karis's mind, and she and Vargas were exiled from Cormyr.

To support his ailing wife and gather resources for his eventual revenge, Vargas became a prosperous trader along the Sword Coast. His success is due in part to his natural charm and ruthless business acumen but also to his mind-burning magic. Although his magic was never pleasant, the wizard's conversion to the worship of Asmodeus has made his mental powers increasingly damaging for his victims. Those who have weathered his psychic attack dream of raging fires and devilish laughter. They endure severe psychic turmoil and, over time, exhibit erratic and dangerous behavior. Vargas found like-minded people in the Ashmadai, who share his devotion to Asmodeus, and forged a tense alliance with them to ply his talents as an interrogator.

Karis has taken a turn for the worse since she and her husband arrived in Neverwinter, and Mordai Vell (leader of the Ashmadai) suggested that she be sent to Helm's Hold for treatment. Once Vargas agreed, Mordai exploited the situation to gain leverage over the wizard. The cult leader called in favors with the authorities at Helm's Hold, who denied Vargas entry. Unable to see Karis or try to help her, Vargas has been using his personal Ashmadai cell to kidnap subjects on whom he can test his magic to find a cure for his wife's madness. His experiments leave healthy minds broken almost beyond repair. Vargas also brands his victims with the symbol of Asmodeus so that rival Ashmadai are blamed for the crimes.

## SESSION 0:

### CHARACTER CREATION

The initial session of this DUNGEONS & DRAGONS ENCOUNTERS season is intended to allow players to create characters.

Instead of creating characters using 4th Edition materials, ask the players to create 3rd-level characters using the material found in the most recent D&D Next playtest. Existing 3rd-level D&D Next characters can also be used. Newly created characters above 1st level can start with appropriate wealth and can possess common magic items at your discretion.

If you and the players wish to do so, you can treat D&D Next characters as if they had taken part in the D&D ENCOUNTERS season *Lost Crown of Neverwinter*. These “heroes of Neverwinter” gain a +2 bonus to Charisma checks to influence natives of the city, except Lady Nidris and the enemies in this adventure.

A player who misses Session 0 can create a character elsewhere or start Session 1 with one of the pregenerated adventurers provided online at [dndencounters.com](http://dndencounters.com). Each player is responsible for bringing his or her character to each session.

A player who joins midseason should create a 3rd-level character for session 2; a 4th-level character for sessions 3 or 4; a 5th-level character for sessions 5 or 6; and a 6th-level character for sessions 7 or 8.

### Races

A player can create a character from any of the races available in the most recent D&D Next playtest.

### Classes

A player can create a character from any of the classes available in the most recent D&D Next playtest.

### Neverwinter Background

Neverwinter is a frontier city. The city has gone through the wringer in recent centuries, suffering from manufactured plagues, crippling wars, natural disasters, and uprisings by would-be conquerors. For better or worse, it is a product of a violent history.

People here come from all sorts of backgrounds and places in Faerûn, and the city provides a safe haven. Settlers on the run from orc hordes seek protection behind Neverwinter’s walls, as do religious adherents seeking escape from oppression. Lord Neverember offers no judgment as long as newcomers bring coin or muscle to work. Neverwinter also draws people to the cathedral in Helm’s Hold, an asylum dedicated to the treatment of those scarred by wild magic.

Characters in Neverwinter find countless opportunities for adventure. Lord Neverember is always happy to hire more warriors to defend the city from the threat of monsters from the less-settled areas within the walls, as well as marauding hordes or pirates from outside. Merchants, nobles, and other authority figures often need to hire

larcenous types to reclaim lost assets or holdfasts in the city, drive out invading monsters, or run off rivals. Priests of various religious orders, such as the Church of Oghma, seek to lay claim to the hearts and souls of the settlers. Long-lost arcane secrets lie buried deep within the rubble of centuries of turmoil.

### Neverwinter Themes

D&D Next character backgrounds can be used in place of character themes. Neverwinter’s status as a wide-open frontier city makes the bounty hunter, charlatan, guide, guild thief, noble, soldier, and spy character backgrounds particularly appropriate.

### Character Hooks

Consider using some of the following hooks for one or more of the characters, incorporating the event as backstory.

1. You came upon the scene of a gang battle that left numerous Dead Rats slain, marked with the symbol of Asmodeus. No signs of Ashmadai casualties remained, however, and nothing indicated that the bodies had been moved. Most of the Dead Rats had not even drawn their weapons. If the Ashmadai can walk away from a battle with a rival gang unscathed, they must have a powerful new weapon. You need to find those responsible before the Ashmadai kill a group of innocent people.
2. A friend of yours vanished recently. He reappeared a few days later, branded with the symbol of Asmodeus and traumatized from the experience but otherwise physically unharmed. Shortly thereafter, you began to notice quirks of behavior and mood swings in your friend. You caught him looking at things that weren’t there. These changes must be related to the kidnapping. Alternatively, perhaps you were the victim, and now you seek to patch the holes in your memory.
3. Concerned about the kidnappings, the merchant Lady Nidris of Calimshan has requested your protection when she goes about her business in Neverwinter. The pay isn’t great, but it keeps you in drink and board until you can arrange a bigger score. Of course, catching the kidnappers could lead to a much more substantial reward.
4. A family member seeking treatment in Helm’s Hold for magic-induced insanity has sent you several unsettling letters. They contain mostly incoherent ramblings, but the sigil of Asmodeus is clearly drawn in each. Perhaps if you catch the kidnappers, they might provide a clue that will help in your relative’s treatment.
5. You have suffered frightening dreams of floating in a tempest of wind and lightning, surrounded by maddened female screams. Each morn, you awaken and rush to the window, expecting to see a dark storm. Finally, this morning, you saw a storm approaching in the distance, one that matches your nightmares. Trouble is coming, and you must be ready for it.

## EXTRA TIME?

Combat in D&D Next can run more quickly than in 4th Edition. This season of D&D Encounters was designed with a 4th Edition timeframe in mind. As a result, it's possible that a D&D Next session finishes much earlier than its counterpart.

If you have extra time in your D&D Next sessions, consider adding an encounter or some additional exploration or roleplaying opportunities. You can pick up the *Neverwinter™ Campaign Setting* and use the nonplayer characters (NPCs) from that book or from page 8 of *Storm over Neverwinter*. Here are a few diversions to fill out your session:

- **Session 1:** The characters must chase some of the kidnappers through the streets and battle them on the rooftops of Neverwinter.
- **Session 2:** After combat, the characters are summoned by Lord Neverember to discuss their actions.
- **Session 3:** A group of thugs breaks into the House of Knowledge to steal copies of records from Helm's Hold. The characters must stop them or track them down.
- **Session 3 or 4:** Lady Sala Nidris asks the heroes to recover a remedy for her son, which she believes will alleviate any remaining trauma to her son from his encounter with the Ashmadai.
- **Session 4:** Vargas relays his suspicions about the Ashmadai to the party and sends them on a wild goose chase to one of the Ashmadai safehouses.
- **Session 5:** Assassins hired by Vargas attempt to kill the characters on their way to Helm's Hold.
- **Session 6 or 7:** The characters must battle additional enemies in the staircases or must climb the outside of the cathedral to ascend.
- **Session 8:** The party is summoned before Lord Neverember to explain what happened at Helm's Hold.





# CHAPTER 1: MARK OF THE ASHMADAI

By helping a merchant rescue her son from Ashmadai cultists, the adventurers become involved in investigating a rash of kidnappings that has plagued Neverwinter for weeks. Ultimately, the characters confront cultists trying to snatch Elden Vargas, who is the real master mind behind the abductions.

## SESSION 1: LADY IN PERIL

As the session opens, the evening weather in Neverwinter is producing moderate rain and some wind off the sea. The characters are taking refuge from the rain in the Moonstone Mask, a popular inn built on an earthmote that floats just off the west cliff of the Protector's Enclave.

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

*The weather grows ominous in the city of Neverwinter, heralding a fearsome tempest that is brewing a few leagues off the coast. Sages in the city predict that the storm will arrive in full force within days, and already resources are stretched to their limit to prepare for the coming deluge. Like many people, you have sought shelter from the inclement weather in one of Neverwinter's inns.*

*The Moonstone Mask is full of huddled folk this evening—laborers, merchants, politicians, travelers, and more. Rain patters the roof and wind whistles outside the shuttered windows. The inn stands on a floating chunk of earth that bobs lightly in the wind, making the thick chains that hold it to the mainland clink softly.*

*A rope bridge connects the earthmote to the western edge of the Protector's Enclave. This bridge leads to the main entrance of the Moonstone's common room, which can entertain about forty patrons. A fenced space behind the inn contains a garden, providing panoramic views and a leisure area for guests. The second floor hosts a dozen or so guest rooms.*

*Each of you has a room, paid up through the next month.*

Give the characters some time to interact with one another and the inhabitants of the common room.

As inns go, the Moonstone is moderately expensive, and it has a reputation for being friendly to the Lord Protector, Dagult Neverember—it houses a number of his Mintarn mercenary soldiers. The characters are staying at the inn as their base of operations. For more details on the Moonstone Mask, see page 142 of the *Neverwinter Campaign Setting*.

## Denizens of the Moonstone

Below are some of the nonplayer characters (NPCs) that the adventurers can find in the Moonstone Mask. Encourage the players to roleplay their characters' interactions with these people.

- ◆ **Lady Sala Nidris** is a human Calishite expatriate and merchant, here at the Moonstone to do business. Elegantly dressed and graceful of form, Lady Nidris is

unflappable and appraises all with a critical eye. As the scene opens, she is sitting in a corner chair, arguing quietly with a cloaked man who eventually frowns, stands up, and leaves. To characters who make a good impression, she explains that she was speaking with Elden Vargas, a Cormyrean merchant. The two are friendly business rivals, and a deal just fell through. She refuses to discuss the rumored kidnappings and clams up if the characters persist in asking about them. She is a key participant in the combat that takes place during this session.

- ◆ **Swordcaptain Muln Horan** is a muscular dwarf warrior and a close advisor to General Sabine, Neverember's strong right hand. With Sabine out on business, Horan is in command of the half-dozen or so Mintarn soldiers who remain at the Moonstone. Horan is drowning his unrequited feelings for his commander in a comfortable armchair by the fire. Characters who are friendly or impress him with their bluster earn his confidence, and he admits his feelings for Sabine. During the combat encounter, he is too drunk to intervene in any meaningful way.
- ◆ **Sedge** is a garrulous male halfling bard who gladly attends to the characters, flirting, flattering, or comparing stories as appropriate. He makes his living as a fireside companion for hire, bodyguard, and teller of tales. During the encounter, he scurries from hiding place to hiding place, cheering on characters who were nice to him and booing the villains.
- ◆ **Myrin**, a blue-haired, dark-skinned female human wizard, is excited to be in the Moonstone, smiling at everyone and eager to chat about any number of subjects. Her taciturn bodyguard and companion, **Kalen**—a dark-haired male human paladin with a greataxe—gruffly discourages her from drawing attention. The two travelers are passing through Neverwinter on their way from Luskan to Westgate. During the combat encounter, Kalen hauls Myrin out of the inn, and they are not seen again.
- ◆ **Liset Cheldar**, innkeeper and owner of the Moonstone Mask, is a lovely, middle-aged half-elf with a wink and a smile for friends and strangers alike. If approached, she seems sincere in her affection for everyone she meets, particularly customers and people of power in the city, but a hard Wisdom check suggests that she is watchful for something. During the combat encounter, she hides.
- ◆ **Theron** is the inn's aged elf cook, who shares the refined fare of his people with the "noisy and smelly" humans of Neverwinter. He stays near the bar, sighs frequently, and irritably supervises the Moonstone's wait staff: **Haedra** (female human), **Linu** (female elf), **Aarin** (male human), and **Daelan** (male half-orc). If attacked, Theron and his charges run, screaming.

## Inn Services

The Moonstone Mask offers both normal fare and exotic beverages. Fine feywine and strong dwarf liquor cost 1 gp per glass or 5 gp per bottle.

A sellboard allows people to offer jobs to mercenaries and adventurers. Several sketches of missing citizens are posted on the board with rewards for information, as well as a request from Lady Nidris for bodyguards at a rate to be negotiated. Feel free to create additional tasks as hooks to tantalize the characters.

Among the items Nidris sells are potions and ointments. She can offer the characters *potions of healing* at the normal price.

## Tavern Tales

A persistent thread of conversation in the Moonstone Mask relates to kidnappings that have targeted city residents. Victims reappear a few days later, traumatized but unhurt. No one can say why people are being taken or what happens to them.

Sedge tells anyone who's willing to listen that his brother, sister, cousin, second cousin, or second cousin's former traveling companion fell prey to the kidnappers and was never seen again! He has no idea what anyone would want with the victim, and no demands came from the kidnappers. (Then again, Sedge is a teller of tales by trade; maybe the missing person left town.)

By spending time in the Moonstone Mask, the characters can pick up plenty of gossip. Below are ten rumors; the first four are relevant to this adventure, and the others are irrelevant or false. To learn one of these rumors, the characters can spend 1 gp or make a DC 10 Charisma check.

1. Victims of the kidnappings in the city have consistently been branded with the symbol of Asmodeus.
2. Elden Vargas, a merchant from Cormyr, is spending vast sums of coin for his magic-maddened wife's treatment at Helm's Hold.
3. Victims of the kidnappings seem odd afterward. They have violent mood swings and stare too long at you when you're speaking.
4. Helm's Hold is locked down tight, and its inmates have been more boisterous than usual.
5. By withholding regular sacrifices to Umberlee, evil goddess of the sea, Lord Neverember offended her. She has sent a storm to punish him for insolence.
6. A mighty mage in Waterdeep slew and impersonated the archmage of the city in a bid to take over as the Blackstaff. The would-be usurper's skeleton now orbits Alghairon's Tower as a warning to others.
7. An oft-rumored horde of orcs is finally marching on Neverwinter to join forces with Warchief Fensi in the River District. They plan to overthrow Lord Neverember and claim the city.
8. Luskan was recently quarantined to contain a plague that drives people mad, causing them to kill one another before being consumed from within by demonic insects.

9. Lord Neverember is having an enormous white dragon statue moved from the main square and carved into a new throne for the Hall of Justice.
10. Under a blanket of darkness, the lands of the Silver Marches are embroiled in a war against orcs that have formed an unholy alliance with the drow.

## Kidnappers Make a Move

As midnight approaches, Ashmadai thugs arrive at the Moonstone Mask to kidnap Lady Nidris.

### When you're ready, read:

*A group of cloaked people dripping with rain enters the inn. Their arrival draws no real attention from other patrons, but your instincts tell you to be wary. The newcomers stalk into the crowd, their pace and posture suggesting anything but good intentions.*

Continue with the **Kidnapping Attempt** encounter on the next page.

# KIDNAPPING ATTEMPT

## Encounter Level 3

### Setup

1 Ashmadai garroter (G)

4 Ashmadai thugs (T)

Lady Nidris (N)

The Ashmadai garroter hides just outside the back door of the inn, so place him only when he enters the inn on his first turn. The Ashmadai thugs believe that drawing attention to their cause and intimidating people gives glory to their deity. They might briefly interact with the characters before attacking.

You can place additional tokens or miniatures to represent noncombatant tavern patrons. They can add flavor and tactical interest to the scene, but when combat breaks out, all of them flee for hiding places or rush out into the street.

#### When the Ashmadai attack, read:

*The cloaked people draw clubs burned with a symbol of three triangles that resembles a winged devil. One of the thugs shouts "For Asmodeus!" and smashes the nearest patron to the floor. The common room erupts in violence, with people scattering in all directions. The cultists make straight for you.*

### Ashmadai Garroter

Medium Humanoid (Human)

Armor Class 15 (studded leather)

Hit Points 32 (5d8 + 10)

Speed 30 ft.

Str 12 (+1)      Dex 15 (+2)      Con 14 (+2)

Int 10 (+0)      Wis 11 (+0)      Cha 7 (–2)

Alignment lawful evil

Languages Common

#### TRAITS

**Creature Shield:** While the garroter has a creature grappled, it gains a +2 bonus to Armor Class.

#### ACTIONS

**Melee Attack—Garrote:** +6 to hit (reach 5 ft.; one creature). *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) damage, and a Medium or smaller target is grappled. While it has a creature grappled, the garroter can use garrote on only that creature but has advantage on attack rolls against that creature.

**Brimstone Cloud (Recharge 6):** If it has no creature grappled, the garroter calls forth magical smoke in a 5-foot-radius cloud centered on it. The area of the cloud is heavily obscured to everyone except the garroter.

#### ENCOUNTER BUILDING

Level 3 XP 80

### 4 Ashmadai Thug

Medium Humanoid (Human)

Armor Class 13 (studded leather)

Hit Points 25 (3d12 + 6)

Speed 30 ft.

Str 14 (+2)      Dex 11 (+0)      Con 14 (+2)

Int 9 (–1)      Wis 11 (+1)      Cha 9 (–1)

Alignment lawful evil

Languages Common

#### ACTIONS

**Melee Attack—Greatclub:** +5 to hit (reach 5 ft.; one creature). *Hit:* 6 (1d8 + 2) bludgeoning damage. If the attack deals 7 or more damage, the target falls prone.

**Invoke Asmodeus:** If the thug has 14 or fewer hit points, its greatclub attack deals 5 (2d4) extra fire damage on a hit. If the attack misses, the thug takes 2 (1d4) fire damage.

#### ENCOUNTER BUILDING

Level 2 XP 60

## Tactics

The Ashmadai's primary goal in this encounter is to kidnap Nidris. Their plan is for the thugs to draw every one's attention while the garroter hauls Nidris away. The presence of seasoned opponents such as the adventurers, however, means that the cultists must improvise. The easiest escape route is through the back door, but if that way is blocked, the garroter takes Nidris out one of the other ways.

**Ashmadai Thugs:** The thugs attack with greatclubs immediately, trying to slow as many characters as possible to cover the retreat of the garroter. Once bloodied, they go berserk with rage and *invoke Asmodeus* to damage the nearest character as much as possible.

**Ashmadai Garroter:** If he wins initiative, the garroter delays until the thugs create a distraction and he can get into the building and use garrote on Nidris (an automatic hit that knocks her unconscious). He then drags her away on his next turn. He uses *brimstone cloud* to distract characters who try to stop him. If Nidris is removed from the garroter's grasp, he turns his attention to the nearest character.

## ADJUSTING DIFFICULTY

If you have a party of experienced players or more than five players, add a second garroter to assist in grabbing Nidris or covering for his partner. If the characters are having too much trouble in the fight, have a garroter or a thug seize one of the NPCs in the tavern and retreat, which might lead to more complications in a future encounter.

For a party of four, remove one thug.

## Features of the Area

The left, right, and top edges of the battle map represent the edges of the roughly oval earthmote and are fringed with a short fence. The back edge borders a high fence, beyond which is a garden. A creature forced over the left, right, or top edge of the battle map must make a saving throw to catch itself rather than go over; success means that the creature falls prone at the edge. A creature that goes over the edge but is capable of taking actions can make a saving throw to grab the chains that anchor the earthmote; an easy Strength check allows the creature to climb back up to the edge of the map near where it fell. A creature that fails both saving throws falls 100 feet to the rocks below. It can use the chains to climb back up (an easy Strength task).

**Illumination:** Inside the Moonstone Mask, the hearth and the oil lamps hung around the room provide bright light. Outside, in the rain, the illumination is dim light from the cloudy evening sky and whatever shines out through the inn's windows.

**Bar:** The wooden bar is 4 feet in height. A creature can scramble onto the bar by using 10 feet of movement, or can ignore the movement cost with an easy Strength or Dexterity check.

**Fountain:** The fountain depicts dancing nymphs and a gigantic squid. It is difficult terrain.

**Furniture:** The furnishings are difficult terrain. Chairs and various utensils and containers on the tables can be used as improvised weapons.

**Hearth:** A creature that enters the fireplace or starts its turn there takes 5 fire damage. A creature can take this damage only once per turn.

**Patrons:** Any customer engaged in combat has AC 10 and 5 hit points, and makes checks and saves with a +0 modifier. Some hide and stay out of harm's way; others flee the scene.

**Rain:** Outdoors, any area more than 5 squares from a given creature is lightly obscured to that creature.

**Staircase:** The stairs are difficult terrain for creatures moving up them.

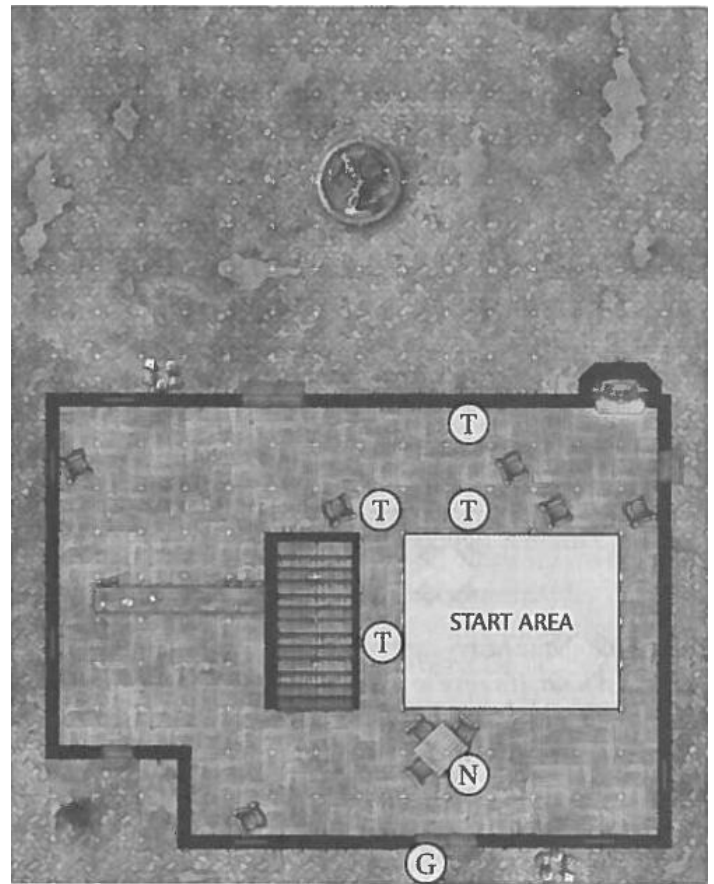
**Windows:** A window can be broken open with an easy Strength check or a successful attack against AC 10 that deals damage. An open window is difficult terrain.

## Conclusion

After defeating the cultists, the characters can take a short rest.

**Ashmadai:** These cultists wear soaked clothes and bear the mark of Asmodeus branded onto their bodies. A character who inspects the Ashmadai notices (easy Intelligence or Wisdom check) that their boots are stained with reddish mud. A character familiar with the city (easy Intelligence or Wisdom check) identifies the mud as coming from the docks in the Blacklake District.

**Lady Nidris:** If the garroter escapes, he might abandon his captive because she is too difficult to haul off alone. Alternatively, Nidris could fight her way free, or you can allow the characters to chase the garroter.



Regardless of how it happens, the characters foil the kidnap attempt and save Lady Nidris. Shaken, she promises to reward them for their efforts (5 gp each) if they escort her to her home in the Blacklake District. She also opens up about the kidnappings. Lately, the sign of Asmodeus has appeared on the walls around her compound, painted in ash or blood.

**Other Moonstone Patrons:** The other people in the Moonstone have little information, other than praise for a battle well fought or condolences for injuries suffered. Unless the characters have been rude to Liset Cheldar, she insists on paying for repairs and housing them for free (refunding the 1 gp each has paid for quarters). Unless the characters have offended Swordcaptain Horan, he swears to "get to the bottom of this violence!" by investigating the Ashmadai, but his efforts yield no useful leads.

## Reward

Each character gains 650 XP for roleplaying, rumor gathering, combat, and rescuing Nidris.

**Treasure:** Together, the cultists carry coins and jewelry worth 40 gp per character. If the adventurers escort Lady Nidris to her home, she gives them 5 gp each. A character can use this money to purchase potions or other items from Nidris.



## Ending the Session

If the characters escort Lady Nidris home, they find that her son, Zan, has been kidnapped.

### Read:

*Even through the heavy rain, which has increased in intensity in the last hour, it's easy to see that Lady Nidris's compound has been the site of foul play. The bodies of two Calishite guards are crumpled on the porch. One of the front doors is broken and hangs from a single hinge, and the mark of Asmodeus is scrawled in blood on the other door. Lady Nidris cries out, over and over: "My son!"*

For help in recovering her son, Lady Nidris offers the party a substantial reward (10 gp per character or an equally valuable favor). If the characters refused to escort Nidris home from the Moonstone Mask, she heads home on her own. Less than an hour later, a courier brings the party a message from her, pleading for help in rescuing her missing son. The message promises the same reward (10 gp per character or an equally valuable favor). If the characters then go to her manor, you can adapt the readaloud text above.

## SESSION 2: LOST BOY

The characters have helped to foil the kidnapping of Lady Nidris, but another band of Ashmadai under the command of Vargas has abducted her son, Zan.

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

*The home of Lady Sala Nidris is a scene of violence. The front door is smashed in, the heavy, windblown rain soaking the foyer. Mud and blood stain the exotic carpets, mirrors hang broken on the walls, and the symbol of Asmodeus is scrawled in blood or burned into various surfaces. Several of Nidris's guards are dead, and her son, Zan, is gone.*

*The distraught lady utters curses in her native Calishite tongue, then turns to you for aid. "Catch the monsters who did this. I will reward you with gold or whatever favor is within my power to bestow. But please, make haste!"*

## Clues in the House

Lady Nidris's house offers clues. As the characters search, note how many skill check failures they accrue because the total will dictate Zan's mental state when he is rescued (see page 15).

**Blacklake Smell:** The air has the faint smell of rotting fish and saltwater, which someone who makes a moderate Wisdom check can identify. Further, a moderate Intelligence or Wisdom check can determine that the smell is like that of the Blacklake docks.

**Blacklake Mud:** The Ashmadai tracked a considerable amount of reddish mud into the house. A character familiar with the city (moderate Intelligence or Wisdom check) identifies this mud as that found near the Blacklake docks. A moderate Intelligence check identifies recognizable hobnailed boot prints from about half a dozen warriors. A hard Intelligence check also identifies a separate set of prints that appear to be softer-edged, as if they were left by fashionable shoes rather than boots.

**Fallen Guard:** The firesoul genasi Veas, one of Lady Nidris's Calishite guards, survived the attack, albeit with a large scorch mark on his chest. He was burned despite his innate fire resistance; a hard Intelligence check recognizes his wound as originating from a lightning bolt.

A hard Wisdom check or any healing magic makes Veas strong enough to speak. He identifies the attackers as three warriors with flaming chains and two arcanists who channeled power from fiery brands on their chests. They smelled like rotting fish, so Veas thought they came from the docks. They had a leader—a man in a dark cloak who issued orders in a cold voice. Veas would recognize the voice if he heard it again, but he can provide no other details about the man. (This individual is Vargas.)

**Senseless Seneschal:** Talzu, Nidris's Calishite seneschal, fought the attackers but suffered a blow to the head that left him unconscious while Zan was carried off. A moderate Wisdom check or any healing magic is sufficient to treat Talzu's concussion, and he gives the characters most of the same information that Veas knows, except that Taizu never saw the gang's leader.

**Servant Staff:** The half-elf Arris, chief butler of Nidris's house and Taizu's partner, locked himself and the rest of the

house staff in a sitting room during the attack. They are terrified and in shock. An easy Charisma check convinces them to open up and describe the ordeal, information that amounts to what Talzu also knows.

## Heading for the Docks

If the characters don't yet know to head for the docks in the Blacklake District, they find witnesses on the street who tell them the Ashmadai went toward that part of town. They can also track the cultists by making moderate Intelligence or Wisdom checks. Once the characters reach the docks, a stroke of luck leads them to the cultists, but if your players are having a good time with the investigation, feel free to improvise a scene with more clues and leads, using easy and moderate DCs. For instance, the characters might find someone who ran afoul of the fleeing cultists.

### When the characters head to the docks, read:

*Heavy rain falls as you make your way down the hill to the docks. Mud on the uncobbled streets sucks at your feet. Searching the area seems like a miserable and futile task, since no one else is out at this hour and in this weather, but Tymora smiles on your efforts. You see a flicker of firelight beneath a dock near the Beached Leviathan tavern and dimly hear the chanting of infernal syllables.*

Continue with the **Ashmadai Safe House** encounter.

## ASHMADAI SAFE HOUSE

### Encounter Level 4

## Setup

### 4 branded zealots (B)

### 1 custist of Asmodeus (H)

### Zan (Z)

The Ashmadai who kidnapped Zan reside in a safe house under the docks near the Beached Leviathan tavern. The entrance is hidden behind a curtain of polluted water, through which firelight shines. Two cultists keep watch outside, while the others are inside.

**Stealth:** Sneaking undetected requires all the characters to make Dexterity checks opposed by the guards' Wisdom checks. The darkness and rain provide sufficient concealment for intruders to remain hidden right up to the entrance to the sewer. If the sentries detect an intruder, they cry out a warning to their allies.

**Talk:** The characters can try to talk their way in. The zealot sentries are extremely suspicious and prone to rash action, so any attempt to use diplomacy on them fails (and a second attempt results in a cry of alarm). If the characters succeed in tricking or frightening the sentries (a hard Charisma check), they can then attempt to talk their way through to the sewer entrance (a second hard Charisma check). If the characters fail any of these checks, the sentries raise the alarm.

**Vargas:** Regardless of how close the characters get to the safe house, Vargas is not fooled. He detects them with his magic, directs the Ashmadai to kill the intruders, and uses *dimension door* to get away. Characters who succeeded on their Dexterity checks remain hidden from the Ashmadai even if Vargas detects them.

### When Vargas senses the characters, read:

*Abruptly, a wave of mental static strikes you, leaving a burning headache in its wake. "We have intruders," says a cold voice that you hear in your minds. "Kill them all now." The Ashmadai, alerted to your presence, attack.*

### If any character can see into the sewers, read:

*You catch a glimpse of a man in a black cloak and a leering devil mask standing over the bound form of a boy. As though the man can sense you, he turns to glare at you in such a way that you feel his rage. He then vanishes into a black portal, and the others in the room cry, "For Asmodeus!"*

The Ashmadai do not respond to any further communication from the characters. Begin combat at this point.

## 4 Branded Zealots

**Medium Humanoid (Human)**

**Armor Class** 13 (mage armor)

**Hit Points** 32 (5d8 + 10)

**Speed** 30 ft.

**Str** 12 (+1)      **Dex** 13 (+1)      **Con** 14 (+2)

**Int** 9 (–1)      **Wis** 10 (+0)      **Cha** 12 (+1)

**Alignment** lawful evil

**Languages** Common

### ACTIONS

**Melee Attack—Mace:** +5 to hit (reach 5 ft.; one creature).

*Hit:* 3 (1d6) bludgeoning damage plus 3 (1d6) fire damage.

**Ranged Attack—Hellfire Chain:** +5 to hit (range 15 ft.; one creature). *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) slashing damage and 3 (1d6) fire damage, and the target and the zealot engage in a Strength contest. *Failed Contest:* The target is pulled next to the zealot, and the zealot makes a mace attack against it.

### ENCOUNTER BUILDING

**Level 3** XP 80

## Cultist of Asmodeus

**Medium Humanoid (Human)**

**Armor Class** 14 (mage armor)

**Hit Points** 27 (6d8)

**Speed** 30 ft.

**Str** 10 (+0)      **Dex** 14 (+2)      **Con** 11 (+0)

**Int** 13 (+1)      **Wis** 10 (+0)      **Cha** 14 (+2)

**Alignment** lawful evil

**Languages** Common, Infernal

### ACTIONS

**Multiattack:** The cultist makes two mace attacks or two hurl flame attacks.

**Melee Attack—Mace:** +5 to hit (reach 5 ft.; one creature).

*Hit:* 3 (1d6) bludgeoning damage plus 7 (2d6) fire damage.

**Ranged Attack—Hurl Flame:** +5 to hit (range 50 ft.; one creature). *Hit:* 10 (3d6) fire damage

**Frighten (1/day):** The cultist chooses any number of creatures within 20 feet of it. Each target must make a DC 10 Wisdom saving throw. *Failed Save:* The target is frightened for 1 minute. As an action, the frightened target can make a DC 12 Wisdom check to end this effect.

**Infernal Seduction (1/day):** The cultist chooses a creature within 50 feet of it that can hear and understand it. The creature must make a DC 10 Wisdom saving throw. *Failed Save:* The target is charmed until the end of its next turn. During that turn, the cultist can verbally control how the target uses its action and movement, but cannot command the target to harm itself.

### ENCOUNTER BUILDING

**Level 4** XP 170

## Tactics

**Branded Zealots:** The sentries throw themselves at attackers with abandon. If moved into difficult or hindering terrain (such as the sucking mud), they use *hellfire chain* to pull others in with them.

**Cultist of Asmodeus:** The cultist tries to keep attackers out of the safe house. If possible, he uses *frighten* to keep attackers out, and he reserves *infernal seduction* to escape a poor tactical position.

**Zan:** The child sits catatonic in the corner of the sewer safe house and takes no actions. The child has AC 10 and 10 hit points, and makes checks and saves with a +0 modifier. If he drops to 0 hit points, he falls unconscious. He dies at -10 hit points.

At the end of every round, Zan mutters something cryptic or otherwise unsettling, such as “Obey the man in the devil face,” or “Smile and kill them all,” or “Blood and burn, bone and black.”

A creature adjacent to Zan can take an action to grapple the child and gain half cover. If an attack misses because of this cover, it hits Zan. The cultists might use him this way.

Zan can be dropped at any time (no action required). If a creature drops the boy, he stirs from his lethargy and shrieks, “Stay away, devil! Stay away!” He then lapses back into catatonia.

## Features of the Area

**Illumination:** The exterior is in dim light. The sewer is lit with bright light from torches and cook fires.

**Blocked Sewer:** The disused sewer extends only as far as the map edges, where it is blocked by cave-ins.

**Curtain of Water:** The curtain of water provides half cover against attacks that pass through it.

**Rain:** Outdoors, any area more than 3 squares from a given creature is lightly obscured to that creature.

**Sea of Swords:** Off the edge of the map, the Sea of Swords extends to the horizon.

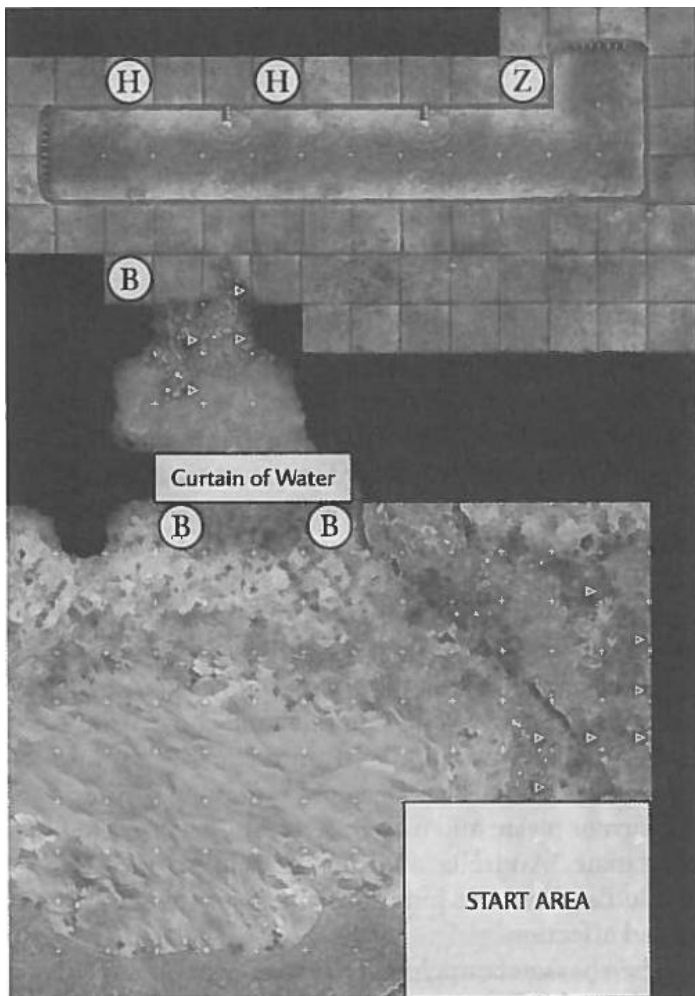
**Sewer Channel:** The sewer water is about 1 foot deep and is difficult terrain. These spaces are 3 feet lower than the sewer floor, so a creature standing in the sewer channel has half cover against ranged attacks from creatures not in or adjacent to the channel.

**Sucking Mud:** Exterior spaces marked with triangles and spaces that are half or more filled with water are difficult terrain.

## Conclusion

When the battle is over, the adventurers can take a short rest.

**Ashmadai:** The Ashmadai organize themselves in cells; members of one cell have no information about other cells. All the cultists in this cell were defeated here or at the Moonstone Mask. A moderate Charisma check is required to influence a cultist to reveal that members of this cell know no other cultists except for the man in the black cloak, whom they call “the Tormentor” and whose true identity is unknown. He wears a mask, and the cultists fear him. Some



believe he is a devil, given his skill with torture and what they call “mind magic,” which is based on mental torment and domination. They know he is an anointed favorite in the organization, and some cultists think he is a chosen servant of Asmodeus.

**Zan:** When the Ashmadai brought Zan to this safe house, Vargas began to use his mind magic on the boy. Zan’s will is weaker than an adult’s, so Vargas made considerable progress in a short time. How much progress depends on how many checks the characters failed during their investigation (see “Clues in the House,” page 12).

**One or No Failures:** Vargas has barely broken Zan’s will. The boy is traumatized but can describe his attacker as a man in a black cloak and a devil mask. He can answer a few other questions before the mark of Asmodeus spontaneously appears by magic, burning itself into his chest. This effect indicates that Vargas’s magic is taking hold; when the mark appears, Zan becomes perfectly calm and returns to his former self, with no memory of the attack or kidnapping.

**Two or Three Failures:** Vargas has completed his mindburning only halfway, leaving Zan traumatized and unable to speak coherently. The mark of Asmodeus is smoking on his chest as though he has been recently branded. After a moment he awakens, perfectly calm and with no memory of the attack or kidnapping.

**Four or More Failures:** Vargas completed his mindburning several moments before the characters arrived. Zan is perfectly calm and has no memory of the attack or

kidnapping. The mark of Asmodeus is already branded on his chest, although he is magically compelled to try to hide it.

## Reward

Each character gains 650 XP for investigating the kidnapping, tracking the Ashmadai, cleaning out the safe house, and recovering Zan.

**Treasure:** Hidden under some loose stones (moderate Intelligence or Wisdom check to notice) are coins, gems, and jewelry worth 60 gp per character, as well as one magic item (use the Treasure Table, page 5). If the characters return Zan alive to his mother, she gives each character a reward of 10 gp or a favor of similar value. If the characters return with Zan’s dead body or without the boy, Nidris gives them nothing.

## Ending the Session

Lady Nidris has followed the party to the docks in her armored carriage. The session ends when the characters emerge from the sewer. If they rescued Zan, Nidris takes the boy from there.

If the party did not rescue Zan or never made any arrangements with Nidris, alter or skip the first paragraph of the read-aloud text.

### Read:

*Lady Nidris thanks you for your efforts and explains that she has convinced Lord Neverember to post a reward of 1,000 gold pieces for the capture of the person responsible for the kidnappings. She rides off to be with her son.*

*The storm has eased for the moment, but the dark clouds on the horizon have thickened. It is only a matter of hours before the storm comes to Neverwinter in full force, and you cannot help but think that it has something to do with these kidnappings.*

End the session.

## ADJUSTING DIFFICULTY

Add one cultist (of either type) for each character in the party beyond five. You can place the extra cultists inside the safe house at the start or have them show up as reinforcements.

Subtract one cultist for a party of four. If the battle proves too difficult for the characters, have one or more bloodied Ashmadai flee.



## SESSION 3:

### CITY OF THE INSANE

This session picks up where the previous one left off. It gives the characters the opportunity to begin their investigation of the Ashmadai.

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

*After defeating the Ashmadai at their safe house, you stand in the saturated, foggy night air near the Beached Leviathan tavern. Tonight, you watched a young boy lose his mind after suffering the magic of the Tormentor, a formidable member of the cult. Lord Neverember is offering a substantial reward for his capture. The Tormentor must be hiding somewhere in the city, and the docks and the safe house might hold clues to his identity.*

If the characters investigate the docks, proceed to **Knocking on Doors**. If they go to the **Beached Leviathan** instead, perhaps to find information or warm themselves, proceed to **Tavern Talk**. If the characters show little concern for hunting down the Tormentor, use one or more of the hooks on page 7 to pique their interest. It might be a good time for a friend or relative of the party to go missing.

### Knocking on Doors

The characters can find information at various locations near the docks. It's after midnight, though, so few places are open. If a character makes a moderate Charisma check for characters attempting to bluff or use diplomacy, or a hard Charisma check for characters attempting to intimidate, a resident or business owner opens up to answer a few questions. Failure means no one is home or the inhabitants refuse to answer the door. With each success, the characters learn one of the following clues about the kidnappings, all of which aid them in the **Belly of the Beast** encounter.

1. Victims have a nervous twitch or stare blankly at people. As a result of learning this information, the characters gain a  
1. +4 bonus to Wisdom checks to spot hidden dominated ruffians.
2. Victims seem tough but are easily bullied. As a result of learning this information, the characters gain a +2 bonus to Charisma checks to intimidate dominated ruffians in the combat encounter.
3. Several victims have been overheard babbling about devils. As a result of learning this information, the characters might suspect that they will face one or more devils in the combat encounter.
4. Victims are left mentally weak. As a result of learning this information, the characters know that the dominated ruffians' have a low Wisdom saving throw modifier.

When the characters gather all four clues or fail three checks (whichever happens first), a squad of three Mintarn soldiers arrives, led by Swordcaptain Muln Horan from the Moonstone Mask. In a friendly but firm manner, Horan escorts the characters to the nearby Beached Leviathan. Proceed to **Tavern Talk**.

### Tavern Talk

Characters who go to the Beached Leviathan find a tavern built out of a converted ship. The walls creak, and the floor rocks slightly. The inn has a reputation as a dive. See the *Neverwinter Campaign Setting* and the article "The Beached Leviathan" in *Dungeon* 193 for more on this tavern.

This late at night, the common room is only half full, with patrons trying to keep warm in the heated interior. Along with half a dozen taciturn customers, the common room includes **Caern** (a burly human apprentice smith), **Baelsra** (a half-elf thief and con artist), **Ludegar** (a half-orc dockhand), and **Honk** (a shy human potter). The crew of the Beached Leviathan includes the former pirate and owner, "**Captain**" **Harrag**, and his "first mate," **Andrella**, a prim, proper human widow of middle years who puts up with Harrag out of unrequited affection.

The characters might have arrived with Muln Horan, but if not, the dwarf arrives within a few moments at the head of a trio of Mintarn soldiers. Horan leaves the soldiers outside and approaches the characters for a friendly chat. If Horan is not yet present, the characters can gather the same clues in the **Knocking on Doors** section by talking to the customers and making similar checks. The dwarf arrives after the characters gather all four clues or fail three checks.

Horan considers the characters friends, so he is hesitant to tell them off. He chats for a while before getting to the point, which is to warn the party to stop prying into the kidnappings.

#### When Horan gets to the point, read:

*"I'm grateful—right grateful—for what you did at the Moonstone Mask," the dwarf says, "and I heard about what you did for Lady Nidris. But I want you to stop investigating this business about the kidnappings. It's just too dangerous, and you should let Lord Neverember's forces take care of it. I..."*

*He trails off as a burly human male rushes forward and bars the front doors.*

*"Look here, you!" Horan says, but he abruptly freezes in place as a hooded humanoid in the corner of the room sends a ray of cold energy at him. Horan falls to the floor, blue and lifeless. The humanoid who killed him pulls back its hood, revealing itself to be a blue-skinned fiend. Another fiend—this one with red skin—appears out of nowhere and snarls at you.*

Continue with the **Belly of the Beast** encounter.

### ADJUSTING DIFFICULTY

Add one dominated ruffian per character over five in the party. Subtract one ruffian for a party of four. You can add dominated ruffians, or have some recover or flee, during the battle to adjust the difficulty on the fly.

# BELLY OF THE BEAST

## Encounter Level 4

### Setup

**3 dominated ruffians (D)**

**1 fimbrul devil (F)**

**1 scorch devil (S)**

Place the devils as the map indicates, and place ten ordinary patrons in various sections of the tavern. Three other patrons, victims of Vargas's mind magic, are dominated sleeper agents who activate and attack the party. If the characters are wary and study the crowd, they might notice the dominated ruffians before the attack. By making a moderate Wisdom check, a character can identify one ruffian, plus an additional ruffian for every point by which he beats the DC. Unidentified ruffians remain hidden until they attack.

#### As the battle begins, read:

*The bar patrons rise from their chairs as the violence erupts. Most of them look terrified.*

Choose the occupation and race of each ruffian.

#### If the characters spot a ruffian in advance, read:

*One human fishwife looks on with a crazed expression. "Kill them all," she says. "For the Tormentor!"*

#### If a hidden ruffian attacks, read:

*Suddenly, a male human dockworker lunges at you. "Kill," he says, almost chanting. "Kill them all."*

### Dominated Ruffian

**Medium Humanoid (Human)**

**Armor Class** 12 (leather armor)

**Hit Points** 33 (6d8+6)

**Speed** 30 ft.

**Str** 14 (+2)      **Dex** 12 (+1)      **Con** 14 (+2)

**Int** 12 (+1)      **Wis** 7 (–2)      **Cha** 10 (+0)

**Alignment** lawful evil

**Languages** Common

#### TRAITS

**Mad Tactics:** The ruffian has advantage on attack rolls against any target that cannot move.

#### ACTIONS

**Melee Attack—Improvised Weapon:** +6 to hit (reach 5 ft.; one creature). *Hit:* 6 (1d8+2) bludgeoning damage.

**Ranged Attack—Thrown Object:** +4 to hit (range 20 ft.; one creature). *Hit:* 5 (1d6+2) bludgeoning damage

#### ENCOUNTER BUILDING

**Level 3 XP 70**

### Fimbrul Devil

**Medium Fiend (Devil)**

**Armor Class** 13

**Hit Points** 37 (5d10 + 10); resistant to cold and fire

**Speed** 30 ft.

**Str** 13 (+1)      **Dex** 14 (+2)      **Con** 15 (+2)

**Int** 11 (+0)      **Wis** 12 (+1)      **Cha** 10 (+0)

**Alignment** lawful evil

**Languages** Common, Infernal

#### TRAITS

**Ice Walk:** The devil ignores difficult terrain consisting of ice or snow.

**Magic Resistance:** The devil has advantage on saving throws against magical effects.

#### ACTIONS

**Melee Attack—Claws:** +6 to hit (reach 5 ft.; one creature).

*Hit:* 6 (2d4 + 1) slashing damage and 3 (1d4 + 2) cold damage.

**Icy Exhalation:** Each creature in a 15-foot cone originating from the devil must make a DC 10 Constitution saving throw. *Failed Save:* 7 (2d6) cold damage, and the target's speed drops to 0 until the end of its next turn. *Successful Save:* Half damage.

#### ENCOUNTER BUILDING

**Level 4 XP 150**

### Scorch Devil

**Medium Fiend (Devil)**

**Armor Class** 12

**Hit Points** 34 (4d10 + 12); resistant to fire

**Speed** 30 ft.

**Str** 13 (+1)      **Dex** 12 (+1)      **Con** 16 (+3)

**Int** 9 (–1)      **Wis** 12 (+1)      **Cha** 7 (–2)

**Alignment** lawful evil

**Languages** Common, Infernal

#### TRAITS

**Choking Ash:** A creature that ends its turn within 5 feet of the devil and fails to attack the devil or force the devil to make a saving throw takes 3 (1d6) fire damage..

**Magic Resistance:** The devil has advantage on saving throws against magical effects.

#### ACTIONS

**Melee Attack—Slam:** +5 to hit (reach 5 ft.; one creature).

*Hit:* 3 (1d4 + 1) bludgeoning damage and 5 (1d4 + 3) fire damage.

#### ENCOUNTER BUILDING

**Level 4 XP 130**

## Tactics

**Dominated Ruffians:** Hidden ruffians delay their actions, preferring to wait for characters to move past them and provoke opportunity attacks. Once identified or after the first round, they attack normally on their turns, constantly muttering “Kill them all!” or “For the Tormentor!”

**Devils:** The devils try to lure the characters into moving past hidden ruffians. To do so, they attack other patrons to incite the party.

## Features of the Area

**Illumination:** The interior of the Beached Leviathan is brightly lit by lamps.

**Front Doors:** These stout wooden doors are barred on the inside. They can be unlocked with a moderate Dexterity check.

**Furniture:** The furnishings are difficult terrain. Chairs and various utensils and containers on the tables can be used as improvised weapons.

**Interior Walls:** The interior walls are blocking terrain, but a creature can burst through an interior wall a hard Strength check.

**Patrons:** The customers in the tavern have AC 10 and 5 hit points, and make checks and saves with a +0 modifier. Some hide and stay out of harm’s way; others flee the scene.

**Staircase:** The stairs are difficult terrain for creatures moving up them.

**Windows:** A window can be broken open with an easy Strength check or a successful attack against AC 10 that deals damage. An open window is difficult terrain.

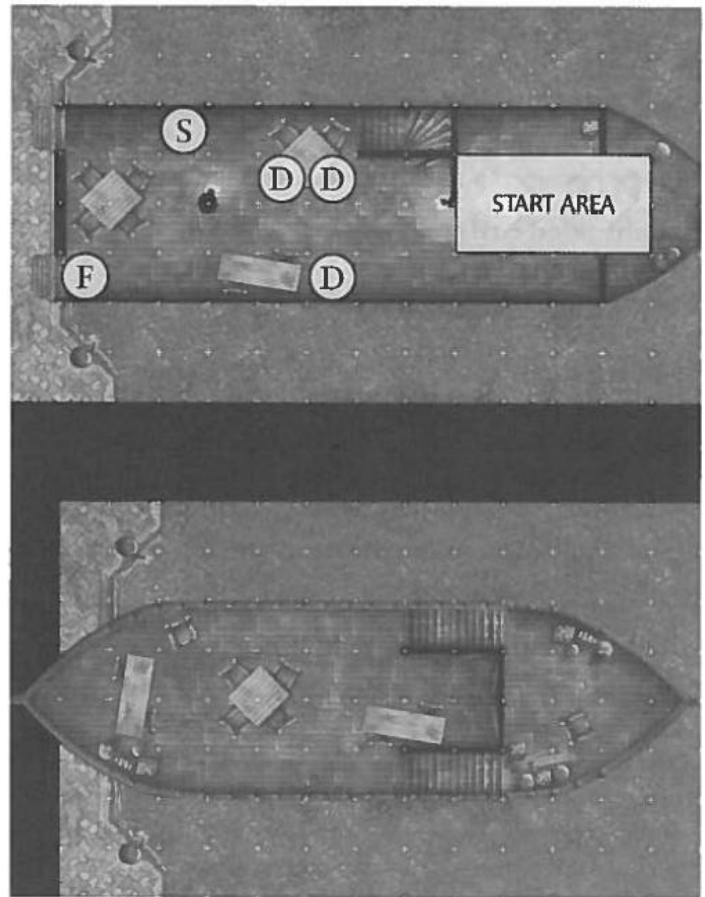
## For Neverwinter!

Three Mintarn soldiers are outside the Beached Leviathan, banging on the barred doors to get in. If a character unbars and opens a door, that act immediately admits a Mintarn soldier, who attempts to subdue the threat. The other two enter on subsequent rounds and try to help their comrade. The threat, however, is not immediately clear to them; from the soldiers’ perspective, the characters are attacking civilians, and Muln Horan is dead, possibly at the adventurers’ hands.

The soldiers attack the devils over all other foes, the characters second, and the dominated ruffians third. As part of an attack made against a devil, a character can attempt to convince a Mintarn soldier that the adventurers are allies. Using diplomacy to do so is an easy Charisma task, while attempting to bluff or intimidate a guard is a moderate Charisma task. A successful check grants a +2 bonus to subsequent checks to convince other soldiers. Success means that soldier fights for the characters and also affects the party’s treasure reward. The players can control soldiers that are fighting on the party’s side.

## Conclusion

The encounter ends when the characters have defeated all the dominated ruffians and devils, or when the tavern



contains more Mintarn soldiers than antagonists (in which case the soldiers quell the battle).

Any ruffians who were knocked unconscious rather than killed eventually wake up ranting and raving. The soldiers carry them to Helm’s Hold for treatment.

## Reward

Each character gains 1,250 XP for investigating the kidnappings, interacting with Swordcaptain Horan, and defeating the devils and dominated ruffians.

**Treasure:** If the characters ended the combat on good terms with the Mintarn soldiers (and did not kill any of them), each character receives a civic reward of 25 gp plus 5 gp per soldier that the party won over during the fight. In addition, Harrag offers each character a reward of 25 gp for saving his inn, and then kicks them out before they cause more trouble.

## Ending the Session

Characters leave the Beached Leviathan to find chaos escalating on the streets of the city.

### Read:

*Thunder rolls and lightning flashes to accompany the sharp sounds of watch horns in the stormy night. A small group of Mintarn soldiers is gathered around a courier nearby.*

If asked, the soldiers explain that people all over Neverwinter seem to be going mad and attacking anyone near them. They had to subdue the courier before he hurt anyone else. End the session.

## SESSION 4: THE ASHMADAI STRIKE BACK

The characters have just fought mind-controlled citizens, and word is spreading that many more people are going crazy. All have the brand of Asmodeus. The characters must track down the culprits responsible, a chase that leads them to the house of Elden Vargas.

Mordai Vell, leader of the Ashmadai, has known about Vargas's experiments for some time and has finally decided to put a stop to them. Vell has sent a contingent of Ashmadai to bring the wizard in line or kill him. They march through the streets, openly displaying their brands, so as to make a public example of Vargas.

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

*The stormy night rages around you. A group of Mintarn soldiers have just told you that many citizens seem to be going mad. As the conversation ends and you prepare to depart, a human girl, an urchin about twelve years old, runs up to you. "I saw what you did under the docks and at the Leviathan. Them others saw, too. I figured you might care about the others, so here I am. My price is fair."*

The girl is Darla, one of the leaders of the Little Rats, a group of orphans who work as spies, cutpurses, and messengers for the Dead Rats gang. The characters should realize that Darla is referring to their previous two encounters. If the players don't catch the implication, the character who makes the highest Wisdom check realizes that Darla saw another group spying on the party during the previous two battles.

Darla is willing to share her information for 5 gp. If she gets the gold, she describes the other group as "like them under the docks, and sometimes there was a fella in a black cowl." A character can attempt a moderate Charisma check to fool or cajole Darla into helping without payment. A character with the guild thief background can reveal a connection to the Dead Rats gang to gain a +2 bonus to this check.

If the characters ignore Darla, she gives them one tidbit in the hopes of intriguing them into paying for more. She says, "I think they meant to kill someone at the docks, but you did their work for 'em. Now they're headed somewhere else."

Darla also knows that the cultists said they planned to "take out the merchant at his house," and that the cultists have "a funny brand like three triangles, like the crazy folks on the street tonight."

Thinking they might earn some coin as a reward, other members of the Little Rats surreptitiously pursue the Ashmadai to Vargas's manor.

## Night of Madness

Insanity is unfolding in Neverwinter this evening, and the characters can intercede in some cases. Run as many of these small encounters as you like, and then have the party catch up to the assassins. These mini-encounters are intended to be roleplaying opportunities. Skill checks should be moderate or hard, and three or four successes should be enough to end any incident.

Combat is also a possibility in the encounters. Due to the rain, any area more than 25 feet from a given creature is lightly obscured to that creature.

During or after each event, a member of the Little Rats reports to Darla, revealing the current location of the cultists who are on their way to visit Vargas. Characters who previously ignored Darla don't benefit from her knowledge; instead, they run across witnesses who saw which way the Ashmadai assassins went.

Unless you decide otherwise, no short rest is possible between the small encounters and the **War Wizard's Duel** encounter. Such a rest would take too much time, allowing the Ashmadai to get away from the characters in the rain-soaked streets.

1. A dominated ruffian is acting bellicose on the street, threatening people who look out their windows at him. The heroes can use Charisma checks to talk him down, and they can use Wisdom or Intelligence to find a watch patrol. Three successful checks cause the ruffian to break down into a bewildered heap. Other citizens then take over to help him.
2. Five looters are taking advantage of the confusion to rob a local shop. The characters can use Charisma checks to make them stop looting and leave, or to influence other citizens nearby to help stop the thefts. The characters can also use Wisdom or Intelligence to find a watch patrol.
3. A runaway wagon barrels down the street. Aboard is a female half-elf who is trying to control the maddened horse. The heroes can use Strength or Dexterity checks to stop the wagon. They can also use Wisdom or Charisma checks to call instructions to the half-elf and help calm her so she can bring the wagon to a stop.
4. The characters and Darla find an injured Little Rat named Chadal, a half-elf teenager. He has been burned, and he faints before he can give Darla the information he gathered on the Ashmadai. The characters can use Wisdom checks to help Chadal recover and calm down. Healing magic can take the place of a Wisdom check. The adventurers can use Intelligence checks to identify his injuries as the result of hellfire. If the characters refuse to help Chadal, he still tells what he knows, but in retribution, Darla warns the Ashmadai prior to the **War Wizard's Duel** encounter, thwarting any attempt by the characters to use Stealth in that encounter.



## Dominated Ruffian

**Medium Humanoid (Human)**

**Armor Class** 12 (leather armor)

**Hit Points** 33 (6d8+6)

**Speed** 30 ft.

**Str** 14 (+2)      **Dex** 12 (+1)      **Con** 14 (+2)

**Int** 12 (+1)      **Wis** 7 (–2)      **Cha** 10 (+0)

**Alignment** lawful evil

**Languages** Common

### TRAITS

**Mad Tactics:** The ruffian has advantage on attack rolls against any target that cannot move.

### ACTIONS

**Melee Attack—Improvised Weapon:** +6 to hit (reach 5 ft.; one creature). *Hit:* 6 (1d8+2) bludgeoning damage.

**Ranged Attack—Thrown Object:** +4 to hit (range 20 ft.; one creature). *Hit:* 5 (1d6+2) bludgeoning damage

### ENCOUNTER BUILDING

**Level 3 XP 70**

After the last event you choose to run, the characters catch a fleeting glimpse of the Ashmadai assassins. The cultists are clearly headed somewhere in particular.

### When the party sees the cultists, read:

*Despite the smoke and rain, you see a band of black-cloaked figures marching with dark purpose down the street. They hasten around a corner and onto a side road.*

If the characters pursue the Ashmadai, they catch up just as the cultists reach Vargas's house.

### When the characters arrive at the house, read:

*The cultists break open a door and rush into a noble's town house, which is a rare spot of peace amid the storm.*

In their haste, they leave the door open behind them. An easy Intelligence or Wisdom check identifies this house as belonging to Elden Vargas, a former Cormyrean war wizard who has become a merchant.

Continue with the **War Wizard's Duel** encounter.

## ADJUSTING DIFFICULTY

This encounter is intentionally tough (even with Vargas's help) because it is the end of the first chapter, and the party must pull out all the stops. That said, if you need to lower the difficulty, have one or two cultists focus on attacking Vargas rather than a character. You can also have Vargas kill a cultist or two without rolling. To increase the difficulty, add a previously unrevealed cultist or two at a dramatic point.

## WAR WIZARD'S DUEL

### Encounter Level 6

## Setup

**Vizier devil (D)**

**4 Ashmadai thugs (I)**

**2 branded zealots (B)**

**Elden Vargas (V)**

Ashmadai break into Vargas's home just as the characters show up. The cultists do not expect to be followed, so the characters can make it to the door before they are spotted. The Ashmadai assume that the characters are guards employed by Vargas and attack.

A player who announces the intent to approach stealthily can have his or her character attempt a moderate Dexterity check to start the combat hidden.

### When the characters see into the townhouse, read:

*The black-cloaked cultists stand arrayed in front of a middle-aged human man wearing a purple robe and carrying a long spear that looks like a lightning bolt. He has a warrior's demeanor, and although the Ashmadai outnumber him, he projects an air of confidence.*

*"I am Elden Vargas, and this is my home," he says. "I offer you trespassers one chance to leave peaceably."*

*The cultists laugh. "The Ashmadai punish those who stand against them," their leader says. "You made the wrong enemies, old man."*

Any character who succeeds on a hard Wisdom check realizes that Elden Vargas is aware of the party's presence.

## 2 Branded Zealots

**Medium Humanoid (Human)**

**Armor Class** 13 (mage armor)

**Hit Points** 32 (5d8 + 10)

**Speed** 30 ft.

**Str** 12 (+1)      **Dex** 13 (+1)      **Con** 14 (+2)

**Int** 9 (–1)      **Wis** 10 (+0)      **Cha** 12 (+1)

**Alignment** lawful evil

**Languages** Common

### ACTIONS

**Melee Attack—Mace:** +5 to hit (reach 5 ft.; one creature). *Hit:* 3 (1d6) bludgeoning damage plus 3 (1d6) fire damage.

**Ranged Attack—Hellfire Chain:** +5 to hit (range 15 ft.; one creature). *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) slashing damage and 3 (1d6) fire damage, and the target and the zealot engage in a Strength contest. *Failed Contest:* The target is pulled next to the zealot, and the zealot makes a mace attack against it.

### ENCOUNTER BUILDING

**Level 3 XP 80**

### When the Ashmadai spot the characters, read:

*“Ambush!” the leader shouts, and the other cultists pull out barbed chains. “Kill them!”*

*The leader pulls back its hood, revealing itself to be a devil. Hellfire springs up around one of its clawed hands, and in the other it holds a rod-like scepter.*

## Tactics

**Vizier Devil:** The devil takes cover or otherwise hangs back to direct the zealots with *hellfire command* and *hellfire enchantment*.

### Elden Vargas

**Medium Humanoid (Human)**

**Armor Class** 14 (mage armor)

**Hit Points** 44 (8d8 + 8); resistant to lightning

**Speed** 30 ft.

**Str** 10 (+0)      **Dex** 14 (+2)      **Con** 12 (+1)

**Int** 17 (+3)      **Wis** 13 (+1)      **Cha** 15 (+2)

**Alignment** lawful evil

**Languages** Common

#### TRAITS

**Arcane Recovery:** Elden can recover up to three spell slots per day, one of which can be a 2nd-level slot, and one of which can be a 3rd-level slot. He can recover slots only during a short rest.

**Spell Tactician:** Elden can exclude up to three creatures from the area of a damaging evocation spell.

#### ACTIONS

**Melee or Ranged Attack—Lightning Spear:** +6 to hit (reach 5 ft. or ranged 50 ft.; one creature). *Hit:* 6 (1d8 + 2) piercing damage and 10 (2d6 + 3) lightning damage, and the target cannot take reactions until its next turn.

**Mind Burn (2nd-Level Spell):** A target Elden chooses within 25 feet of him must make a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw. *Failed Save:* The target takes 6 (1d6 + 3) fire damage and 10 (2d6 + 3) psychic damage, and is blinded until the end of its next turn. *Successful Save:* Half damage.

**Spells:** Elden has the following spells (save DC 15).

Cantrips: *mage armor*, *mage hand*, *shocking grasp*.

1st-Level (4/day): *cause fear*, *charm person*, *shield* (see reactions).

2nd-level (3/day): *invisibility*, *levitate*, *mind burn*.

3rd-level (3/day): *dispel magic*, *fireball*.

4th-level (2/day): *dimension door*.

#### REACTIONS

**Shield (1st-Level Spell):** When hit by an attack or targeted with *magic missile*, Elden can gain a +2 bonus to AC and immunity to *magic missile* for 10 minutes.

#### ENCOUNTER BUILDING

**Level 6** XP 610

### Devil, Vizier

**Medium Fiend (Devil)**

**Armor Class** 13

**Hit Points** 37 (5d10 + 10); resistant to fire

**Speed** 30 ft.

**Str** 11 (+0)      **Dex** 14 (+2)      **Con** 14 (+2)

**Int** 18 (+4)      **Wis** 14 (+2)      **Cha** 16 (+3)

**Alignment** lawful evil

**Languages** Common, Infernal

#### TRAITS

**Hellfire Enchantment:** At the start of each of its turns, the devil chooses one ally within 25 feet of it. Until the end of the ally's next turn, it deals 3 (1d6) extra fire damage when it hits with a melee attack.

**Magic Resistance:** The devil has advantage on saving throws against magical effects.

#### ACTIONS

**Melee Attack—Fire Scepter:** +6 to hit (reach 5 ft.; one creature). *Hit:* 4 (1d8) bludgeoning damage and 11 (2d6 + 4) fire damage.

**Hellfire Bolt:** A target the devil chooses within 25 feet of the devil must make a DC 12 Dexterity saving throw. *Failed Save:* The target takes 18 (4d8) fire damage and the target falls prone. *Successful Save:* Half damage.

**Hellfire Command (Recharge 6):** A target the devil chooses within 25 feet of the devil must make a DC 12 Wisdom saving throw. *Failed Save:* The target takes 18 (4d8) fire damage and uses its action and movement on its next turn to attack a target of the devil's choice. *Successful Save:* Half damage, and the target falls prone.

#### ENCOUNTER BUILDING

**Level 5** XP 310

### 4 Ashmadai Thug

**Medium Humanoid (Human)**

**Armor Class** 13 (studded leather)

**Hit Points** 25 (3d12 + 6)

**Speed** 30 ft.

**Str** 14 (+2)      **Dex** 11 (+0)      **Con** 14 (+2)

**Int** 9 (–1)      **Wis** 11 (+1)      **Cha** 9 (–1)

**Alignment** lawful evil

**Languages** Common

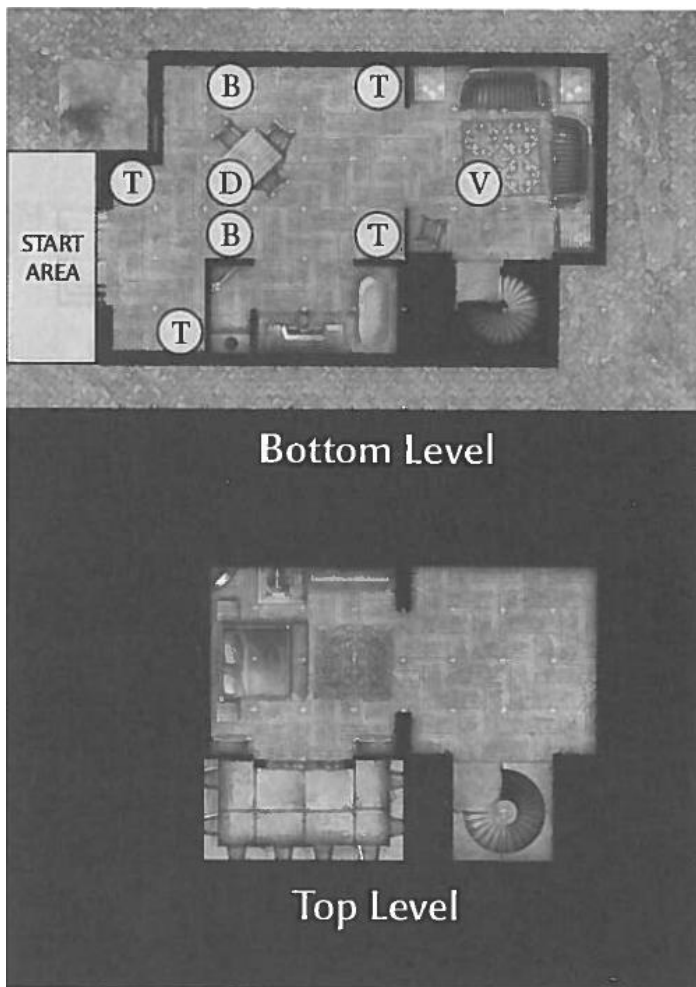
#### ACTIONS

**Melee Attack—Greatclub:** +5 to hit (reach 5 ft.; one creature). *Hit:* 6 (1d8 + 2) bludgeoning damage. If the attack deals 7 or more damage, the target falls prone.

**Invoke Asmodeus:** If the thug has 14 or fewer hit points, its greatclub attack deals 5 (2d4) extra fire damage on a hit. If the attack misses, the thug takes 2 (1d4) fire damage.

#### ENCOUNTER BUILDING

**Level 2** XP 60



**Branded Zealots:** The zealots attack the nearest characters, assuming them to be Vargas's hired muscle.

**Elden Vargas:** The wizard jabs at opponents with *lightning spear*, diverts cultists with *mind burn*, and uses *dimension door* to retreat to an alley near his house. If the characters need his help, he might stay to fight alongside them, focusing his attacks on the vizier devil.

## Features of the Area

**Illumination:** The house is brightly lit.

**Furniture:** The furnishings are difficult terrain.

**Bathing Chamber:** This inner room has a silvery tub and an empty pot. When a creature enters the room, the pot magically fills with water and starts heating.

**Staircase:** The stairs are difficult terrain for creatures moving up them. Moving up the stairs requires 60 feet of movement, including 15 feet on the ground floor and 15 feet on the second floor.

**Windows:** A window can be broken open with a DC 10 Strength check or a successful attack that deals damage. An open window is difficult terrain.

**Bedroom:** Vargas sleeps in this room. He keeps his possessions in the closets (see "Reward").

**Balcony:** A closed set of doors leads onto the rain-soaked balcony, which is 20 feet above the street.

## Conclusion

After the combat, unless the characters attacked Vargas, he thanks them for coming to his rescue.

### Read:

*"I thank you for your aid," says Vargas. "Given the nature of this night, the attack was to be expected. I was once a war wizard in Cormyr, and the Ashmadai must have sought to stop me before I could quell the curse affecting their victims.*

*"I am versed in the ways of the mind, and I might be able to help those afflicted in this wave of madness. I came to Neverwinter to get help for my wife, Karis, who suffered a terrible curse when we left Cormyr that left her sanity broken. She is being treated in Helm's Hold, but I haven't been let into the cathedral to see her. If you put in a good word for me, I'd be happy to attempt to treat the poor souls who were affected tonight. Maybe I can do for them what I could not for my wife."*

A hard Wisdom check reveals that Vargas cares little about helping those touched by madness, but he is earnest in his desire to see Karis. If the characters don't agree to help him get into Helm's Hold, he doesn't push the subject or bring it up again. Instead, he breaks into the cathedral on his own and is there during chapter 2.

If the characters attack Vargas for any reason during this concluding scene, he flies into a rage and vows to see them punished. Then he teleports away.

## Reward

Each character gains 1,250 XP for dealing with the city's madness, fighting the Ashmadai, and rescuing Vargas.

**Treasure:** If the characters agree to help Vargas get into Helm's Hold, he offers them a reward of 100 gp each and a magic item (use the Treasure Table, page 2). Regardless of whether they help him, the next day, they receive 5 gp per character from grateful guards, merchants, and residents for each situation they resolved during the **Night of Madness**.

## Ending the Session

No matter how the encounter ends, Vargas leaves his townhouse and disappears. As he goes, so does the magic that was activating the madness.

### Read:

*Outside, the storm subsides, and dawn breaks relatively clear. Maybe the gods are telling you that you have done the right thing during the night. But the horizon is thick with more dark clouds.*

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



## CHAPTER 2: CHAOS IN HELM'S HOLD

The full fury of the storm hits Neverwinter as Vargas ensconces himself in Helm's Hold, where he plans to cure his wife by enabling her to feed on the power of the tempest. It falls to the adventurers to stop him.

### SESSION 5: INTO THE MOUTH OF MADNESS

After saving Vargas from the cultists, the heroes have had a break from action for the past couple of days.

Before you begin this session, make sure any characters that have sufficient XP have been advanced to 5th level.

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

*Two days have passed since what has become known as the Night of Madness in Neverwinter. Soldiers rounded up all the crazed survivors of that night and sent them to Helm's Hold, which is renowned for treating ailments of the mind. No more kidnappings or attacks have been reported, and your defeat of the Ashmadai seems to have driven the cult to ground.*

*The last few hours have been fairly peaceful, but now heavy rain has returned to the city, and strong winds make travel in open areas treacherous. Few risk going outside. The storm has everyone uneasy.*

*You feel the urge to do something. Maybe you can talk to Lady Nidris, or Harrag at the Beached Leviathan, or find something to do besides watch the weather. You've also heard that General Sabine is holding a wake for Muln Horan, whom you saw killed in the Moonstone Mask on the Night of Madness. You each have an invitation to the wake.*

In this downtime, the characters have a chance to do business in the city (see "Checking on Contacts") or look for another quest (see "Plea from Helm's Hold"). In addition, they can shop for equipment and supplies.

### Checking on Contacts

The lull in action is a great time for the characters to check on the NPCs they have encountered in the season so far. Each character can split from the party and make one of the following visits.

1. Lady Sala Nidris, in her manor house in Blacklake, is in an anxious state. After being rescued by the characters, her son Zan went crazy and tried to kill her on the Night of Madness. Mintarn soldiers arrested him and took him to Helm's Hold, and a new administrator in the cathedral has put the place on lockdown. Nidris can't visit or send a message to Zan. She asks the characters to deliver a letter to him if they are heading that way, for which she offers 10 gp to each character.
2. General Sabine is holding a wake at the Moonstone Mask for her slain swordcaptain, Muln Horan. He was a good



soldier who always followed orders. If a character drinks with her (drinks are on the house if the party saved the inn earlier) and listens to her story she gives the characters Horan's +1 guardian weapon, admonishing them to wield it well.

3. Harrag, in the Beached Leviathan, has enjoyed the notoriety that the tavern gained as the epicenter of the Night of Madness. The old sailor has left signs of the battle in place and charges folks to see them and hear him recount the events. Harrag provides the characters free food and drink, and he relates that he has heard rumors about a riot in Helm's Hold—the place is “guarded fiercer than a dragon's hoard.”
4. Elden Vargas has not been seen since the night the characters interacted with him. His manor house in Blacklake (hard Dexterity check to unlock) is cleaned out, suggesting that he left in a hurry.

## Plea from Helm's Hold

At some point, a sickly messenger in a faded tabard with the eye-in-gauntlet sigil of Helm's Hold arrives with an urgent missive from Brother Satarin, the Hold's equivalent of a high priest. The boy, Gorev, walks awkwardly and stutters as he explains that he was told to find the heroes of the Night of Madness.

### When the characters read the letter, it says:

*Heroes, I beseech your aid. The madness that fell upon Neverwinter has not been vanquished, but instead it has spread through Helm's Hold. A terrible monster of a man has seized the cathedral, placing our beloved Prophet under his thrall. He is rousing the poor wretches of the sanatorium to fight and die for him, like an army of the insane. I fear what he will do.*

*Come without delay, if you will!*

—Satarin

If the characters ask for a reward, Gorev says that Brother Satarin will compensate them as well as he can, although the Hold is not wealthy.

Helm's Hold is a small town about a day's journey southeast from Neverwinter. Its primary feature is Helm's Cathedral, which is the site of the disturbances.

### When the characters approach Helm's Hold, read:

*Across a wide moat is a cathedral that rises into the stormy sky. Its many lit windows burn like eyes through the rain. The town resembles a fortress keep surrounded by a supporting village, and a crowd is massed around the cathedral doors.*

You can show the players the illustration of Helm's Hold on the previous page. Scores of residents have gathered at the cathedral, demanding entrance. The crowd parts to let through the adventurers.

Anyone the characters ask about what is going on says that the cathedral has been sealed. The priests, who are normally open and friendly, have become gruff and refuse to admit anyone for any reason. The priests also refer to someone called “the Tormentor.”

### When the characters approach the doors, read:

*Two gray-robed, red-cloaked priests stand at the cathedral's grand doors. Their eyes are vacant, much like those of the people you faced on the Night of Madness.*

*“Back,” one priest says flatly, “by order of the Tormentor.”*

**Easy Intelligence or Wisdom:** *A few other robed figures lurk behind arrow slits near the gate.*

The characters can fight their way inside directly, alerting all the guards. If they exercise some ingenuity, however, they can make the fight easier. The following sections provide examples for adjudicating what the characters might try to gain entry into the cathedral.

**Breaking In:** The cathedral has a back gate, which the characters might know (moderate Intelligence check) or can learn about from a member of the crowd (easy Charisma check). Moving to the back gate requires all the characters to make Dexterity checks contested by the sentries' Wisdom checks; a failed check means the enemies in the nearest wing of the cathedral spot the party and raise the alarm. Opening the locked gate requires a hard Strength Dexterity check.

Most of the windows in the cathedral are too high or too narrow to allow access, but the curtained windows in the warded sun room are accessible. The characters might already know about these windows (hard Intelligence check), or if the characters circle the cathedral, they might spot the windows and recognize their value (easy Intelligence or Wisdom check). Forcing a window open from the outside requires a moderate Strength or hard Dexterity check. The patients in the sun room must then be pacified (hard Charisma check, or easy if trying to intimidate) before they start shouting, which also alerts the guards.

**Bluffing the Guards:** The characters can present themselves as victims in need of treatment, which requires a hard Charisma check. All the other characters must then make easy Charisma checks to play the part of victims needing treatment. If half or more of the characters succeed on this group check, the gate guards let them in.

**Using the Mob:** The characters can use three moderate Charisma checks to incite the gathered townsfolk into storming the gates. In this case, the mob attacks the two gate guards, and the acolytes behind the arrow slits fire on the mob instead of the party. The distraction allows the characters to try other means of entry; see “Features of the Area” on the next page. The crowd takes down the two guards at the gate, but the violence makes the mob hesitant to enter the hold. It also alerts the guards inside the cathedral, who come running for the entrance.

# CATHEDRAL ASSAULT

## Encounter Level 5

### 6 Dominated Acolytes

**Medium Humanoid (Human)**

**Armor Class** 12 (leather armor)

**Hit Points** 33 (6d6 + 12)

**Speed** 30 ft.

**Str** 14 (+2)      **Dex** 12 (+1)      **Con** 14 (+2)

**Int** 10 (+0)      **Wis** 7 (–2)      **Cha** 10 (+0)

**Alignment** lawful evil

**Languages** Common

#### TRAITS

**Mad Tactics:** The ruffian has advantage on attack rolls against any target that cannot move.

#### ACTIONS

**Melee Attack—Greatclub:** +6 to hit (reach 5 ft.; one creature). *Hit:* 6 (1d8 + 2) bludgeoning damage.

**Ranged Attack—Light Crossbow:** +4 to hit (range 20 ft.; one creature). *Hit:* 5 (1d8 + 1) piercing damage.

#### ENCOUNTER BUILDING

**Level 3 XP 70**

### Dominated Mage

**Medium Humanoid (Human)**

**Armor Class** 13 (mage armor)

**Hit Points** 18 (4d6 + 4)

**Speed** 30 ft.

**Str** 9 (–1)      **Dex** 12 (+1)      **Con** 12 (+1)

**Int** 16 (+3)      **Wis** 9 (–1)      **Cha** 13 (+1)

**Alignment** lawful evil

**Languages** Common

#### ACTIONS

**Melee Attack—Quarterstaff:** +2 to hit (reach 5 ft.; one creature). *Hit:* 3 (1d4 + 1) damage.

**Shocking Grasp (Cantrip):** The mage chooses a creature within 5 feet of it. The target must succeed on a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw. *Failed Save:* 1d8 lightning damage, and the creature can't take reactions until its next turn.

**Spells:** The mage has the following spells (save DC 15).

Cantrips: *mage armor, mage hand, shocking grasp.*

1st-Level (4/day): *burning hands, magic missile, shield* (see reactions).

2nd-level (3/day): *mirror image, scorching ray.*

#### REACTIONS

**Shield (1st---Level Spell):** When hit by an attack or targeted with *magic missile*, the mage can gain a +2 bonus to AC and immunity to *magic missile* for 10 minutes.

#### ENCOUNTER BUILDING

**Level 3 XP 110**

### Dominated Adept

**Medium Humanoid (Human)**

**Armor Class** 14 (studded leather)

**Hit Points** 22 (4d8 + 4)

**Speed** 25 ft.

**Str** 12 (+1)      **Dex** 12 (+1)      **Con** 13 (+1)

**Int** 10 (+0)      **Wis** 14 (+2)      **Cha** 12 (+1)

**Alignment** lawful evil

**Languages** Common

#### ACTIONS

**Melee Attack—Greatclub:** +4 to hit (reach 5 ft.; one creature). *Hit:* 5 (1d8 + 1) bludgeoning damage.

**Lance of Faith:** The adept chooses a creature within 50 feet of it that it can see. The target must succeed on a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw, or it takes 4 (1d8) radiant damage.

**Spells:** The adept has the following spells (save DC 14).

Cantrips: *cure minor wounds, lance of faith.*

1st-Level (3/day): *cause fear, cure wounds, divine favor, inflict wounds.*

2nd-level (2/day): *aid, lesser restoration, silence.*

#### ENCOUNTER BUILDING

**Level 4 XP 190**

## Setup

**1 dominated mage (M)**

**1 dominated adept (A)**

**6 dominated acolytes (D)**

In taking over the cathedral, Vargas dominated the priests and acolytes who care for the inmates. They are positioned as noted on the map, but place them only when the characters can see them.

If the characters sneak into the hold, they are attacked by the first guards they encounter inside. These guards also raise the alarm. Cautious characters might be able to sneak up on the guards and surprise them.

## Tactics

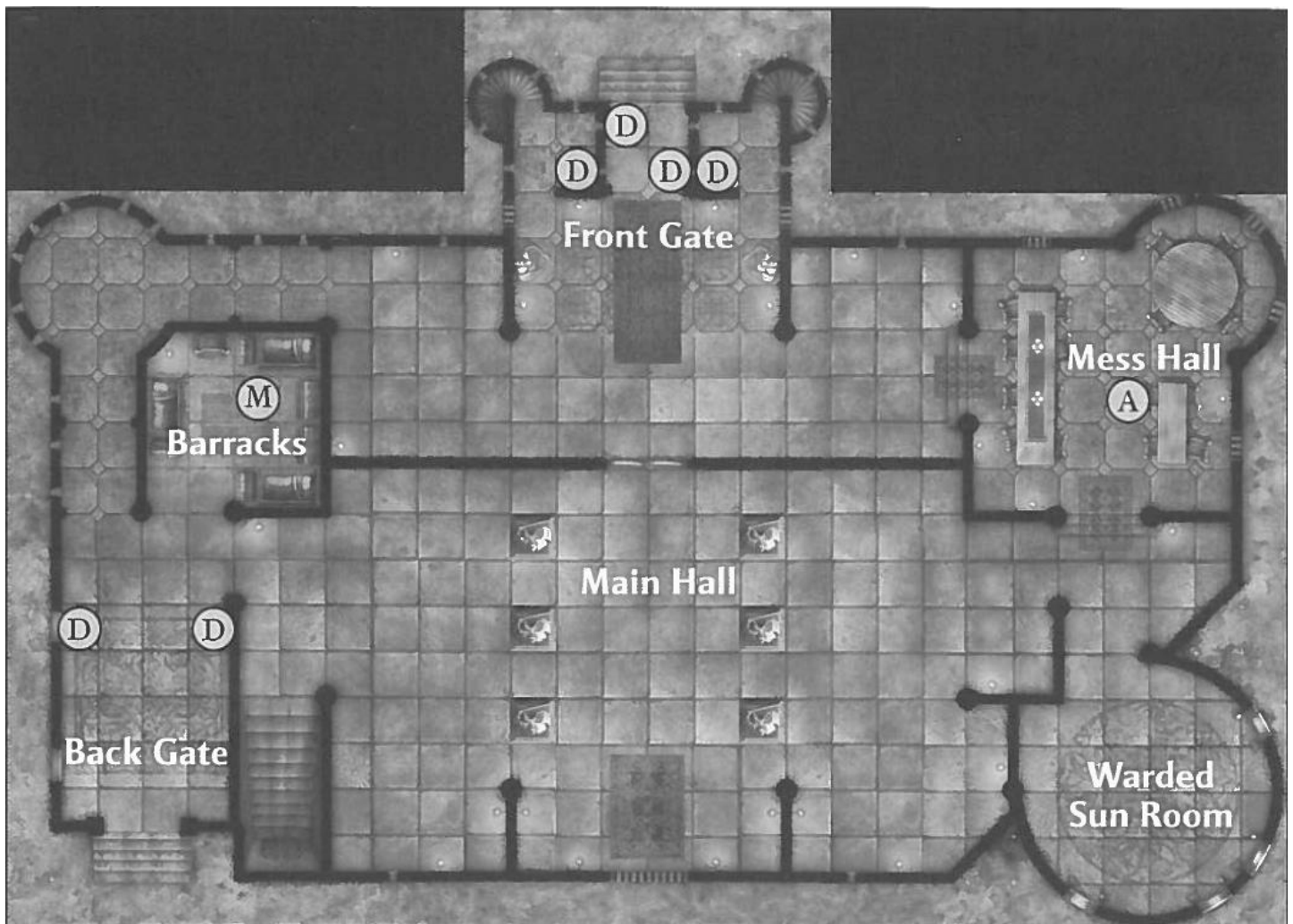
These enemies work together poorly due to their bent minds. When the foes in one area hear a battle in another, they move to aid their allies.

## Features of the Area

**Illumination:** Torches provide bright light outside the cathedral, and persistent magical radiance brightly lights the interior. The sun room is dimly lit, with the only illumination coming from the magic circle.

## ADJUSTING DIFFICULTY

To increase or decrease the difficulty, Change the number of acolytes that confront the characters. You can have more acolytes appear from the main hall or disappear into the hall.



**Front Gate:** These doors are closed and locked, and the gate guards have the keys. Characters can try to pick a guard's pocket (hard Dexterity check) or force the gate (hard Strength or Dexterity check).

Statues in the foyer are blocking terrain. The arrow slits can provide three-quarters cover. The staircases are difficult terrain for anyone moving up them. They lead to the second level of the cathedral.

**Main Hall:** The doors from the main gate area into this room are closed, locked, and barred. They can be unlocked with a moderate Dexterity check, but the bars still prevent them from opening. Forcing them open requires a hard Strength check.

**Mess Hall:** The staff dines in this room. Furnishings are difficult terrain, and the tables contain utensils and other items that can be used as improvised weapons. Numerous tapestries on the walls depict chivalrous knights and scenes sacred to the faith of Helm.

**Warded Sun Room:** The acolytes are keeping disobedient patients in this room until Vargas decides what to do with them. The captives are imprisoned within a magic circle traced on the floor. A creature outside the magic circle can break it at any time (no action required). See the Patients section.

**Barracks:** Acolytes can rest in this room. The furnishings are difficult terrain. The chests are filled with clothes and miscellaneous items.

**Back Gate:** This rear entrance has fewer guards. Inscribed stones in the floor radiate a persistent ward called Helm's Blessing. Any creature that uses the dodge action while standing on one of the indicated squares gains an additional +2 to the bonus to AC and Dexterity saving throws. An easy Intelligence or Wisdom check identifies this magical effect.

## Patients

The characters might interact with patients imprisoned in the magic circle in the sun room. Any of the patients can tell the characters that the Tormentor (a man in a devil mask and a black cloak) is currently in the main hall, where he is attempting to dominate the will of the Prophet. The captives in the circle can include any or all of the following.

1. Brother Satarin is an aged dwarf priest who sent the letter pleading for aid. He is not crazed, but time among the patients has disoriented him. He thanks the characters for coming, asks them not to kill any residents or staff, and, if freed, leads them to a stash of consumables (see *Treasure*).
2. Zan, Lady Nidris's son, is here if he was freed from captivity earlier in the adventure. He is a surprisingly calm voice among the other inmates. He is indifferent until reminded of his mother, at which point he breaks down crying.

3. Arrath “Rath” Vir is a taciturn, beardless dwarf monk who keeps to himself and sits in constant meditation. The right half of his otherwise handsome face and much of his right wrist are scarred from burns. If questioned, he says only that he seeks to atone for a lifetime of wrongs. The other patients avoid him.
4. Seidra Tylmarande, a half-elf bladesinger, is the infamous traitor who brought Neverwinter to its knees a year or so ago. (Seldra’s presence might be meaningful to characters who came to this adventure after experiencing Lost Crown of Neverwinter, in which she was the central figure.) A natural leader, she rallied her fellow inmates to resist the Tormentor and his goons. Her veins burn with blue fire from a powerful magical curse, which has shattered her health.

## Conclusion

Once the characters have defeated the guards, they can take a short rest, but they still must confront the Tormentor. Defeated guards (and patients) can tell the party that he is in the main hall. When the characters enter the hall, go to Ending the Session.

## Reward

Each character gains 2,375 XP for reaching and entering the cathedral, overcoming the guards, and interacting with the patients.

**Treasure:** Everything found here is the property of Helm’s Hold, but Brother Satarin can lead the characters to a secret stash in the barracks that contains a *potion of healing* for each character, as well as a *potion of heroism*.

## Ending the Session

The session ends when the characters enter the main hall. As soon as they arrive, Vargas senses them regardless of any attempts at subtlety.

### When a character looks into the main hail, read:

*A black-cloaked humanoid with a bright red devil mask—the Tormentor—stands over a kneeling woman who must be the Prophet Rohini. She is an attractive, middle-aged human with a smooth face that is currently contorted in pain. Rohini appears to be praying as the Tormentor pours fiery magic into her from his outstretched hands.*

*Around the room stand numerous acolytes in stained white jerkins, as well as one handsome, green-skinned elf with hair the color of gold. He holds a limp, dark-skinned female human in his arms as though she weighed no more than a loaf of bread.*

*The devil-masked face looks in your direction. “You,” a familiar voice says in your minds.*

*His concentration broken, the Tormentor cannot flinch away as the Prophet reaches up and tears off his devil mask before collapsing. You recognize the weathered face of Elden Vargas.*

End the session.

## SESSION 6: MASTER OF HELM’S HOLD

The characters have entered Helm’s Hold and come face to face with the Tormentor, who has been revealed as Elden Vargas.

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

*The rain and wind rise outside, and a flash of lightning illuminates the great stained glass window, which depicts Helm fully armored to do his duty. Under his watchful eye, Vargas stands over the unconscious Prophet. Beyond him, the green skinned elf holds the chain of a human female with an iron collar around her neck.*

*“I see the time for deception is at an end,” Vargas says. “Chartilifax, give me Karis and deal with this rabble.”*

*The elf hands the woman’s chain to Vargas and smiles eerily at you. “Little heroes have come to play,” he half speaks, half sings. “Little heroes die today.”*

*His body shifts and his bones crackle as his limbs and torso distort. His shoulder blades burst through his back and become wings. A green dragon rears up, rolling mad eyes and expelling poison fumes.*

Chartilifax is not interested in talking, but if the characters try to engage him in conversation, refer to “Dragon’s Madness” on the next page.

Continue with the **Green Traitor** encounter.

## GREEN TRAITOR

### Encounter Level 6

## Setup

**Chartilifax (C)**

**8 dominated inmates (I)**

**The Prophet (P)**

Refer to Elden Vargas’s statistics from session 4 (page 21) and see “Tactics” below. The dragon intends to kill the heroes, but first it delays them while Vargas flees.

## Tactics

**Vargas:** Interested only in escaping the battle, Elden uses *dimension door* to bring himself and Karis to the second level of the cathedral.

**Chartilifax:** Mobility is key to the dragon’s combat style, so he keeps moving and tries to position himself to catch the most enemies in a single *poison breath*. Chartilifax lets the inmates impede melee combatants while he focuses on weaker opponents, such as clerics and wizards. The dragon never considers the Prophet to be an enemy.



As soon as possible after Chartilifax is first hit, he uses one of his attacks to destroy the stained glass window. When he drops to 40 or fewer hit points, he retreats through the window and flies off into the stormy night. He will return in session 8.

**Dominated Inmates:** The inmates swarm melee combatants, trying to hamper them so that Chartilifax can move freely through the chamber.

**The Prophet:** A moderate Wisdom check or any healing magic revives the Prophet. She crawls to safety but has no power to aid the characters as they fight Chartilifax.

## Dragon's Madness

Driven insane and mentally enslaved to the Prophet, Chartilifax proved a receptive subject for Vargas's mind control. Fragments of the dragon's personality emerge through the wizard's influence, and during the battle, he mutters nonsense such as:

1. "Down in the depths, the choir sings. When the song ends, madness it brings!"
2. "Do you like to run? I like to hunt and fly. Run for me, little rabbits, and choke and die."
3. "Behind the face you think you know, a terrible evil smiles and lies. Be wary, and don't close your eyes."

## Features of the Area

**Illumination:** The main hail is brightly illuminated with torches and magical light.

**Stained Glass Window:** If Chartilifax breaks the window, the storm rushes into the room. The area within 15 feet of the window becomes lightly obscured and difficult terrain due to the rain and wind.

**Staircase:** These stairs descend into the crypts below the cathedral. The door at the bottom is locked, requiring a

### Chartilifax, Green Dragon

**Large Dragon**

**Armor Class** 16

**Hit Points** 76 (9d12 + 18)

**Immunities** poison

**Speed** 40 ft., fly 100 ft., swim 40 ft.

**Senses** darkvision 60 ft.

**Str** 18 (+4)      **Dex** 18 (+4)      **Con** 15 (+2)

**Int** 12 (+1)      **Wis** 14 (+2)      **Cha** 15 (+2)

**Alignment** lawful evil

**Languages** Common, Draconic

#### TRAITS

**Aquatic:** The dragon can breathe underwater, and being underwater imposes no penalty on its attack rolls or checks.

**Dragon:** The dragon cannot be paralyzed or put to sleep.

**Keen Senses:** The dragon gains a +5 bonus to all checks to detect hidden creatures.

**Magic Resistance:** The dragon has advantage on saving throws against magical effects.

## ADJUSTING DIFFICULTY

If the battle is easy for the characters, add more dominated inmates rushing into the main hail. Also, consider replacing one or more dominated inmates with dominated acolytes from Session 5, or have acolytes who survived Session 5 arrive to aid Chartilifax.

If the characters find the battle too difficult, have some inmates relapse into madness and wander off or fail down helpless on the floor.

moderate Dexterity check to open. The Prophet has the key.

**Statues:** These stone statues of knights bearing the symbol of Helm are blocking terrain.

## Conclusion

If the Prophet is unconscious at the end of the encounter, she awakens while the characters take a short rest. She asks the characters to search the upper levels of the cathedral to see if they can find Vargas. They can take the spiral staircases near the front gate to the level above.

Everyone in Neverwinter knows Rohini's reputation for prophecies that have a way of coming true. Any character who asks her for a prophecy receives one of the following (roll a d6, rerolling any duplicate results).

1. "She feeds upon the storm in her mind and body, but her heart is pure." (Karis)
2. "He sacrifices all for love, and he is left with nothing but sacrifice." (Vargas)
3. "The green traitor flees his own brokenness, but he shall come again, still broken." (Chartilifax)
4. "All wealth is birthed, and all birthing requires blood and pain."
5. "Denial of the darkness gives it a hiding place. Let it not live inside you, sheltered so."

**Poisonous Presence:** While the dragon has 39 or fewer hit points, any creature that ends its turn within 5 feet of the dragon must make a DC 10 Constitution saving throw. *Failed Save:* 5 poison damage.

#### ACTIONS

**Multiattack:** The dragon makes one bite attack and two claw attacks.

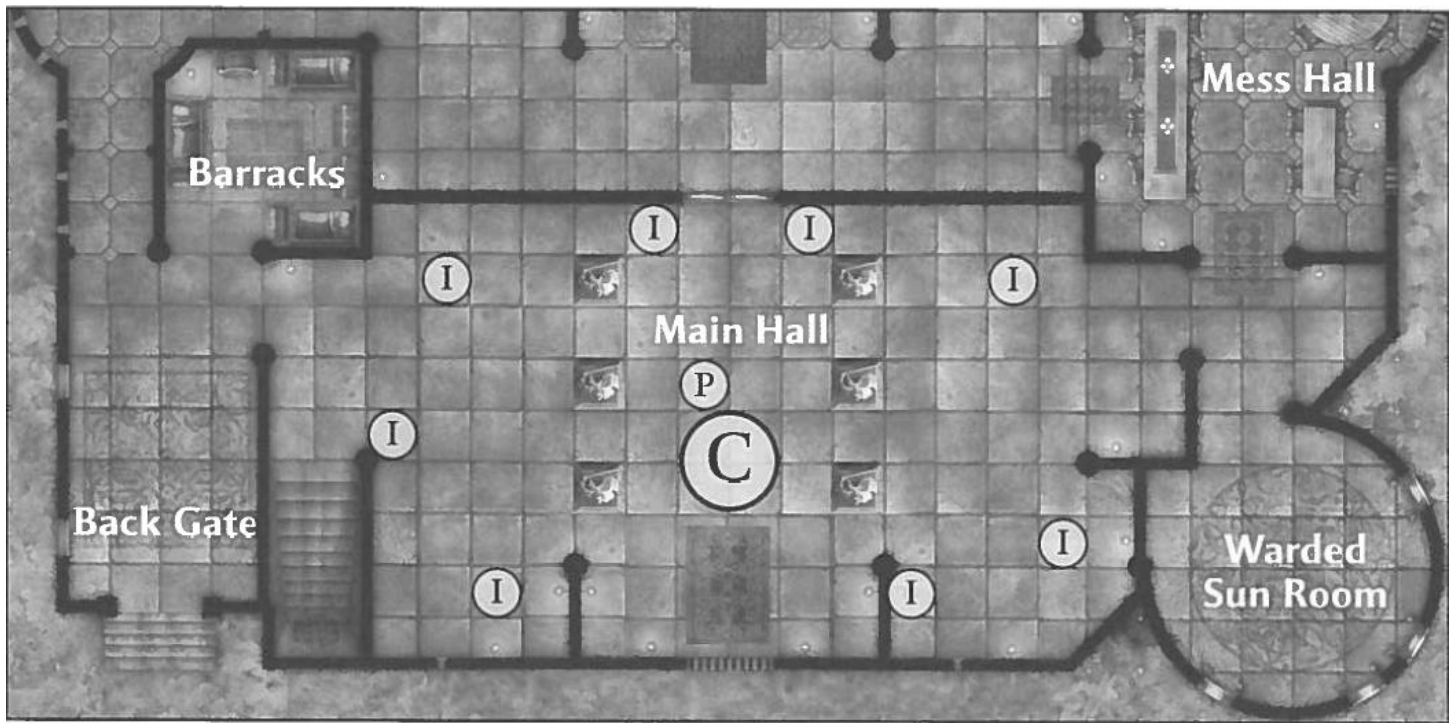
**Melee Attack—Bite:** +5 to hit (reach 10 ft.; one creature). *Hit:* 13 (2d8 + 4) piercing damage and 4 (1d8) poison damage.

**Melee Attack—Claw:** +5 to hit (reach 5 ft.; one creature). *Hit:* 11 (2d6 + 4) slashing damage.

**Poison Breath (Recharge 5–6):** The dragon breathes poisonous gas in a 40-foot cone. Each creature in the area must make a DC 10 Constitution saving throw. *Failed Save:* 21 (5d6 + 4) poison damage, and the dragon has advantage on attack rolls against the target until the end of the dragon's next turn. *Successful Save:* Half damage.

#### ENCOUNTER BUILDING

**Level 7** XP 1,600



6. "The storm has risen, and only madness can cure madness.  
One falls for another to live."

## Reward

Each character gains 2,375 XP for battling Chartilifax and rescuing the Prophet.

**Treasure:** Rohini gives the party one magic item (use the Treasure Table, page 2) to help defeat Vargas.

## Ending the Session

With Karis in tow, Vargas has fled.

**When the party is ready to follow Vargas, read:**

*The storm redoubles in fury outside the cathedral, and the whole building shudders at the force of the rolling thunder.  
Your enemy awaits you up the next stairway*

End the session.

### 8 Dominated Inmates

**Medium Humanoid (Human)**

**Armor Class** 11

**Hit Points** 11 (2d8 + 2)

**Speed** 30 ft.

**Str** 12 (+1)      **Dex** 12 (+1)      **Con** 12 (+1)

**Int** 10 (+0)      **Wis** 8 (–1)      **Cha** 11 (+0)

**Alignment** lawful evil

**Languages** Common

#### ACTIONS

**Melee Attack—Slam:** +4 to hit (reach 5 ft; one creature).

**Hit:** 1d6 + 1 bludgeoning damage. If the attack deals 5 or more damage, the target falls prone.

#### ENCOUNTER BUILDING

**Level 1** XP 10



# SESSION 7:

## THUNDER AND LIGHTNING

The characters have rescued the Prophet from Vargas and rushed up to confront him in the tower.

Before you begin this session, make sure the players have advanced their characters if they have enough XP to do so.

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

*You ascend a narrow spiral staircase and arrive on the second level of the cathedral as an earth-shaking peal of thunder is answered with a roar as part of the main staircase in the center of the chamber cracks and then collapses. The tower sways and shakes, its walls groaning. The windows explode inward, broken under the pressure, and lightning dances into the hall. It strikes violently, then rises up as crackling creatures made of raw lightning.*

Vargas has already fled up the main staircase. With that way destroyed, the characters must search for another way to the upper level of the cathedral.

Continue with the Indoor Storm encounter.

## INDOOR STORM

Encounter Level 6

### Setup

- 3 storm vortices (V)
- 4 storm hurlers (H)

Karis’s storm magic has created the elemental creatures that roam around the room. The elementals are not immediately hostile, seeming not to notice the characters. See “Tactics” below.

Warn the players about the storm tremors described in “Features of the Area,” since the shaking and its effects are obvious to everyone.

### Tactics

The elementals are not very aggressive. But if a character attacks one, all the elementals respond by attacking the entire party, culminating in a full-scale combat. Also, a character who enters a square within 10 feet of an elemental must make a moderate Dexterity check. Failure indicates that any elemental within 10 feet of the character attacks that character, and a battle begins. A character needs to make this check only once per turn.

If an elemental is currently passive, on its turn, it moves

## ADJUSTING DIFFICULTY

To increase the difficulty, add one storm hurler. You can lower the difficulty on the fly by having elementals disengage the characters to wander elsewhere or rejoin the storm by heading out through a window

toward the farthest elemental or away from the nearest one. The creatures always move in such a way that two or more of them are between the characters and the center staircase, as well as the two chambers near the back of the second level.

### 3 Storm Vortices

**Medium Elemental (Air)**  
**Armor Class** 16  
**Hit Points** 45 (6d10 + 12); resistant to lightning and thunder  
**Speed** 0 ft., fly 60 ft.  
**Str** 10 (+0)      **Dex** 16 (+3)      **Con** 12 (+1)  
**Int** 5 (–3)      **Wis** 12 (+1)      **Cha** 5 (–3)  
**Alignment** neutral  
**Languages** Auran

**TRAITS**

**Essence of Air:** As a being of pure air, the elemental cannot be knocked prone, is immune to disease and poison, and cannot be paralyzed, petrified, or put to sleep. It does not need to sleep, eat, or breathe.

**Lightning Backlash:** Any creature within 5 feet of the storm vortex that hits it with an opportunity attack takes 4 (1d8) lightning damage.

**ACTIONS**

**Melee Attack—Storm Strike:** +6 to hit (reach 5 ft.; one creature). *Hit:* 14 (2d10 + 3) lightning damage. On a critical hit, the target takes 1d8 extra thunder damage and falls prone.

**ENCOUNTER BUILDING**

**Level 5   XP 320**

### 4 Storm Hurlers

**Medium Elemental (Air)**  
**Armor Class** 15  
**Hit Points** 28 (4d10 + 6); resistant to lightning and thunder  
**Speed** 0 ft., fly 60 ft.  
**Str** 13 (+1)      **Dex** 16 (+3)      **Con** 12 (+1)  
**Int** 5 (–3)      **Wis** 12 (+1)      **Cha** 5 (–3)  
**Alignment** neutral  
**Languages** Auran

**TRAITS**

**Essence of Air:** As a being of pure air, the elemental cannot be knocked prone, is immune to disease and poison, and cannot be paralyzed, petrified, or put to sleep. It does not need to sleep, eat, or breathe.

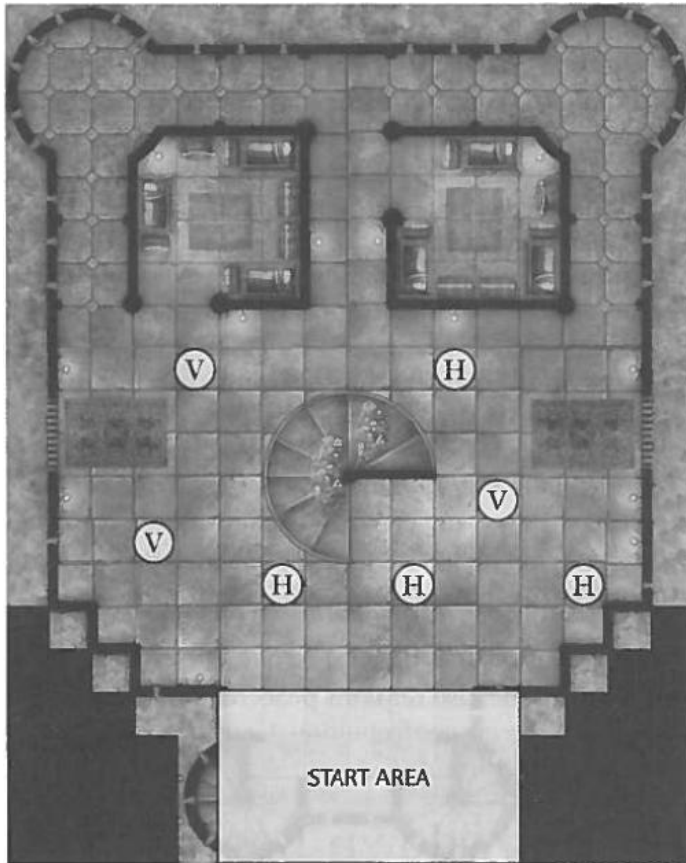
**ACTIONS**

**Melee Attack—Storm Slam:** +5 to hit (reach 5 ft.; one creature). *Hit:* 8 (1d10 + 3) thunder damage.

**Ranged Attack—Forked Lightning:** +5 to hit (range 30 ft.; one or two creatures). *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) lightning damage.

**ENCOUNTER BUILDING**

**Level 4   XP 140**



If the characters flee up those stairs, the elementals do not pursue.

## Features of the Area

**Illumination:** The area is brightly lit by flashing lightning and magical lights.

**Bedrooms:** These bedchambers house the cathedral's staff. Their doors were blown open by the winds that broke the windows. Furnishings in the rooms are difficult terrain. Locked chests (moderate Strength or Dexterity check to open) contain clothes and mundane equipment.

**Main Staircase:** The central stairway is in shambles and is difficult terrain.

Wreckage blocks most of the staircase, requiring characters to climb if they want to reach the upper level of the cathedral. Climbing the broken stairs requires an easy Strength check. Failure means the character falls, taking 3 (1d6) damage from abrasions and the impact, and the character lands prone in a square adjacent to the bottom of the stairs.

**Spiral Stairs:** These spiral staircases lead back down to the main level.

**Storm Magic:** Because of Karis's influence, the storm enhances lightning and thunder magic. A character in this area who makes an attack that deals lightning damage or thunder damage deals 3 (1d6) extra damage (player's choice of lightning or thunder) on the attack.

**Storm Tremors:** The storm is violent enough to shake buildings. In the cathedral, the walls groan and the floor trembles. A nonflying creature that moves more than 15 feet

during its turn must succeed on an easy Dexterity saving throw or fall prone.

**Windows:** The windows are broken, letting in gale-force winds. A nonflying creature that moves more than 15 feet during its turn must succeed on an easy Dexterity saving throw or fall prone.

## Conclusion

The encounter ends when all the characters leave the map (by going up the spiral stairs) or when all the elementals have been slain. If any elementals remain alive, the characters cannot take a short rest in the room—they must take shelter on the stairway before they can rest safely.

## Third Level

When the characters climb up the stairs, they arrive in an open storage area with shattered windows. Winds whip and lightning flashes. **Each turn, each character must make an easy Strength or Dexterity saving throw or take 5 damage from flying debris.**

Alternatively, a character can make a moderate Strength check or Dexterity check to protect another character, who does not have to make his or her own check if the harder check succeeds. The central stairs are in decent condition on this level. The characters can climb them to reach a pair of doors that lead to the roof. When the characters arrive on the roof, go to **Ending the Session**.

## Reward

Each character gains 3,250 XP for dealing with the elementals and finding a way up to the tower.

## Ending the Session

The characters have reached the top of the cathedral, where Vargas is executing his final plan.

**When the characters open the doors, read:**

*The doors open onto a platform on the cathedral roof. The storm winds and rain do not blast through the doorway, although you hear the sounds of the tempest raging all around you.*

End the session.

## SESSION 8:

### EYE OF THE STORM

The characters headed up the tower of Helm's Cathedral after Vargas, but a great blast of wind and rain cut off the stairs, and they had to deal with elemental creatures created by Karis's wild magic. Eventually, the characters found a way up and now must confront Vargas.

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

*The doors swing open onto a platform atop the cathedral. A sixty foot-diameter sphere of calm air—the eye of the storm—is surrounded by hurricane-force winds and lightning. Columns of whirling clouds and lightning flare inward from the perimeter of the sphere to strike a dark-skinned woman who floats in the center of the eye, twenty feet above the floor. Her eyes crackle with energy, and she cries out in pain and ecstasy as the power of the storm flows into her.*

*"No," says a voice, and you see Vargas emerge from behind a statue at the corner of the roof and move toward you, his lightning spear pointed menacingly in your direction. "We shall not be parted again! I have no desire to harm you, but if you try to stop this, I will destroy you all."*

If the characters try to negotiate with Vargas, continue with **It's the Only Way**. If they attack immediately, proceed to **The Showdown Begins**.

### It's the Only Way

Vargas does not expect the characters to attempt to reason with him, but if they do, he readily explains himself. He has the following to say.

**Who are you?** *"I was a war wizard in Cormyr, tasked with interrogating significant prisoners ranging from priests of Bane or Cyric to Shadovar spies. My techniques were harsh, leaving most prisoners' minds burned to cinders."*

**You were a torturer?** *"Sometimes terrible things must be done to protect the innocent. Only the naive believe otherwise."*

With that part of the story filled in, a character might recall (moderate Intelligence check) that Vargas's methods increased in brutality, and the leaders of his order forcibly expelled him from Cormyr. The characters can also convince Vargas to finish the story (moderate Charisma check; see "Who's the Villain," page 5).

**Why were you working with the Ashmadai?** *"They needed someone of my talents, and their lord's ways match mine. The cult betrayed me when they prevented me from coming to see Karis here in Helm's Hold."*

If the characters convince Vargas to divulge further information on his involvement (hard Charisma check), he opens his robe to reveal a brand of Asmodeus on his chest. "The Lord of the Nine is the ultimate dominator," Vargas says.

**What happened to your wife?** *"Karis was a hathran, one of the ruling class of witches from Rashemen. We met during a diplomatic mission and have been together ever since. My enemies made her this way."*

Vargas is hesitant to say more on this subject, but if the characters successfully press him for details (moderate Charisma check), he adds, "Karis sacrificed herself to save me when we fled Cormyr. A forceful spell from Ganrahast, the leader of my order, caused her current state."

**What is her connection to the storm?** *"Karis is a storm sorceress, and the storm gathered in response to her will. She called it to feed upon it. I hope it will restore her."*

If pressed (moderate Charisma check), Vargas says, "I recognized Karis's magic when the storm first started gathering, so I hatched a plan to get into Helm's Hold by presenting myself as an expert on mental maladies. It worked."

**Concluding the Talk:** If the characters do not attack Vargas he also remains peaceful, but events transpire to force a confrontation. Continue with **The Showdown Begins**.

### The Showdown Begins

Several events occur and spark a showdown.

#### To start, read:

*The storm rises in fury, and lightning flashes down toward the tower. Above you, Karis screams into the gale, and bolts of lightning crash into the tower around you. At that moment, a great winged form swoops through the storm into the bubble of calm. The green dragon, Chartilifax, still wounded from the beating you gave him, roars in fury.*

Continue with the **Storm Showdown** encounter.

## STORM SHOWDOWN

### Encounter Level 8

### Setup

**Elden Vargas (V)**  
**Karis Vargas (K)**  
**Chartilifax**

Vargas's priority in this fight is to protect Karis long enough for her to absorb the storm. Chartilifax has arrived to protect the wizard and to gain vengeance on the characters, but he is bloodied (50 hit points).

### Tactics

**Vargas:** The wizard focuses on any character who attacks Karis or tries to channel the storm (see "Using the Storm," page 34).

**Karis:** In her insanity, Karis attacks the characters by instinct. At the beginning of the encounter, she is floating 4 squares above the rooftop near the top of the cathedral spire. She uses storm strike to attack the characters, attempting to avoid striking Vargas. Until Karis is bloodied, she is immune to forced movement and cannot fall. This effect is due to her strong connection to the storm, not part of her normal abilities.

**Chartilifax:** The wounded dragon rejoins the battle in a position you choose, flying crazily around the roof in the globe of calm air. He has no regard for his safety. If somehow knocked onto the roof, he fights viciously in melee.

## Features of the Area

**Illumination:** The area is brightly lit with the roiling storm, but it becomes dimly lit after the storm breaks free of Karis’s control.

**Hatch:** The hatch is locked (easy Dexterity check) and contains a cache where a grappling hook is stored.

**Parapeted Roof:** Moving over the crenellated parapet costs 5 extra feet of movement. The parapet is a low wall that

can provide cover to creatures on the roof. If a creature would be pushed, pulled, or slid over the parapet, that creature can make an easy Strength or Dexterity saving throw to end the forced movement before going over the parapet.

**Sloping Roof:** Outside the parapet, the roof slopes down to a sheer drop. These squares are difficult terrain. If a creature falls off the roof, it drops 2 squares before being sucked into the storm; see “Ride the Winds” on the next page.

**Spire:** The area marked as blocking terrain represents a spire that reaches up an additional 15 feet (3 squares) from

### Karis Vargas

**Medium Humanoid (Human)**

**Armor Class** 15 (mage armor)

**Hit Points** 52 (8d8 + 16); resistant to lightning

**Speed** 30 ft.

**Str** 12 (+1)      **Dex** 16 (+3)      **Con** 14 (+2)

**Int** 17 (+3)      **Wis** 15 (+2)      **Cha** 16 (+3)

**Alignment** neutral

**Languages** Common, Draconic

#### TRAITS

**Spell Tactician:** Karis can exclude up to three creatures from the area of a damaging evocation spell.

#### ACTIONS

**Shocking Grasp (Cantrip):** Karis chooses a creature within 5 feet of her. The target must succeed on a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw. *Failed Save:* 9 (2d8) lightning damage, and the creature can’t take reactions until its next turn.

**Thunderwave (1st-Level Evocation Spell):** Each creature in a 15-foot cone originating from Karis must make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw. *Failed Save:* The creature takes 13 (3d8) thunder damage and is pushed 15 feet away from Karis. *Successful Save:* The creature takes half as much damage and is not pushed.

**Storm Burst (4th-Level Evocation Spell):** Karis creates a 10-foot-radius cloud of violent energy centered on a point within 50 feet of her. Each creature in the cloud must make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw. *Failed Save:* 13 (3d8) lightning damage and 13 (3d8) thunder damage, and the target falls prone. *Successful Save:* Half damage. Effect: The area is difficult terrain until the end of Karis’s next turn.

**Spells:** Karis has the following spells (save DC 15).

Cantrips: *light*, *mage armor*, *shocking grasp*.

1st-Level (4/day): *shield* (see reactions), *thunderwave*.

2nd-level (3/day): *invisibility*, *levitate*, *mirror image*.

3rd-level (3/day): *dispel magic*, *fly*, *lightning bolt*.

4th-level (2/day): *storm burst*.

#### REACTIONS

**Shield (1st-Level Spell):** When hit by an attack or targeted with *magic missile*, Karis can gain a +2 bonus to AC and immunity to *magic missile* for 10 minutes.

#### ENCOUNTER BUILDING

**Level 7** XP 1,080

### Elden Vargas

**Medium Humanoid (Human)**

**Armor Class** 14 (mage armor)

**Hit Points** 44 (8d8 + 8); resistant to lightning

**Speed** 30 ft.

**Str** 10 (+0)      **Dex** 14 (+2)      **Con** 12 (+1)

**Int** 17 (+3)      **Wis** 13 (+1)      **Cha** 15 (+2)

**Alignment** lawful evil

**Languages** Common

#### TRAITS

**Arcane Recovery:** Elden can recover up to three spell slots per day, one of which can be a 2nd-level slot, and one of which can be a 3rd-level slot. He can recover slots only during a short rest.

**Spell Tactician:** Elden can exclude up to three creatures from the area of a damaging evocation spell.

#### ACTIONS

**Melee or Ranged Attack—Lightning Spear:** +6 to hit (reach 5 ft. or ranged 50 ft.; one creature). *Hit:* 6 (1d8 + 2) piercing damage and 10 (2d6 + 3) lightning damage, and the target cannot take reactions until its next turn.

**Mind Burn (2nd-Level Spell):** A target Elden chooses within 25 feet of him must make a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw. *Failed Save:* The target takes 6 (1d6 + 3) fire damage and 10 (2d6 + 3) psychic damage, and is blinded until the end of its next turn. *Successful Save:* Half damage.

**Spells:** Elden has the following spells (save DC 15).

Cantrips: *mage armor*, *mage hand*, *shocking grasp*.

1st-Level (4/day): *cause fear*, *charm person*, *shield* (see reactions).

2nd-level (3/day): *invisibility*, *levitate*, *mind burn*.

3rd-level (3/day): *dispel magic*, *fireball*.

4th-level (2/day): *dimension door*.

#### REACTIONS

**Shield (1st-Level Spell):** When hit by an attack or targeted with *magic missile*, Elden can gain a +2 bonus to AC and immunity to *magic missile* for 10 minutes.

#### ENCOUNTER BUILDING

**Level 6** XP 610

## ADJUSTING DIFFICULTY

Effectively attacking Karis or Chartilifax represents a substantial challenge in this encounter, and if the characters are having trouble figuring out how to engage those opponents in melee, give them hints about using the storm. You can also rule that once Vargas is defeated, Karis automatically descends to engage the characters hand to hand. Conversely, if the fight is too easy for the characters, have Vargas or Karis summon a few storm hurlers like those in session 7.

the rooftop. Creatures can climb the spire with a hard Strength check.

**Statues:** These statues of angels and sainted guardians offer cover to a creature that hides behind one of them. A statue is blocking terrain.

**Protective Sphere:** After Karis drops to 26 hit points or fewer, whenever a creature is moved against its will, the distance it moves increases by 5 feet.

## Using the Storm

The characters might realize they can use the storm to their benefit.

**Channel Lightning:** As an action, a character with knowledge of arcana can make a moderate Intelligence check to channel the power of the storm. With a successful check, the character can direct the storm against a creature within 50 feet of him or her, forcing that creature to make a moderate Dexterity saving throw or take 9 (2d8) lightning damage and 4 (1d8) thunder damage.

A character who strikes Karis with the lightning realizes that it is disrupting her ritual. If Karis fails the save against this lightning four times, her ritual is disrupted and she takes 5 (1d10) damage.

### Chartilifax, Green Dragon

**Large Dragon**

**Armor Class** 16

**Hit Points** 50 (9d12 + 18)

**Immunities** poison

**Speed** 40 ft., fly 100 ft., swim 40 ft.

**Senses** darkvision 60 ft.

**Str** 18 (+4)      **Dex** 18 (+4)      **Con** 15 (+2)

**Int** 12 (+1)      **Wis** 14 (+2)      **Cha** 15 (+2)

**Alignment** lawful evil

**Languages** Common, Draconic

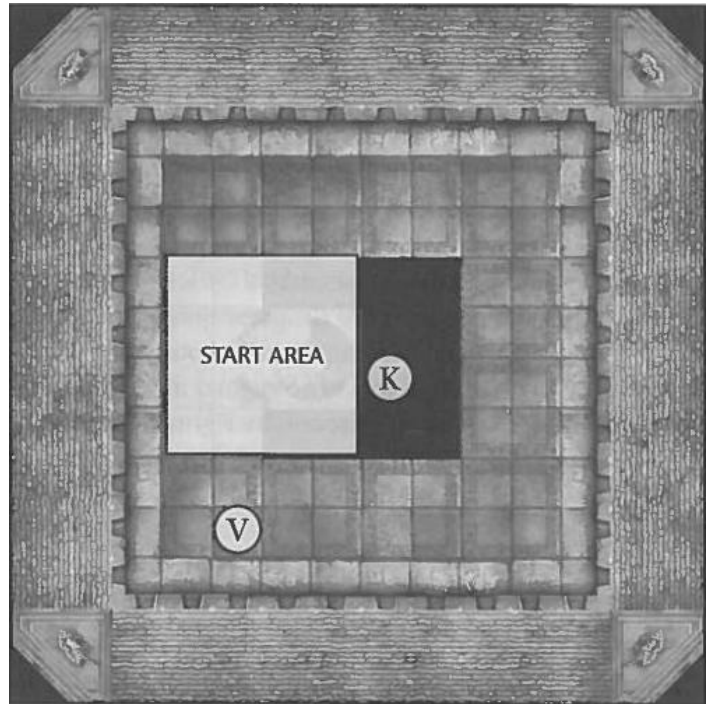
#### TRAITS

**Aquatic:** The dragon can breathe underwater, and being underwater imposes no penalty on its attack rolls or checks.

**Dragon:** The dragon cannot be paralyzed or put to sleep.

**Keen Senses:** The dragon gains a +5 bonus to all checks to detect hidden creatures.

**Magic Resistance:** The dragon has advantage on saving throws against magical effects.



As an action, a character that can cast spells can attempt a hard Intelligence check to disconnect Karis from the storm without attacking her. With a successful check, her ritual is disrupted and her current hit points drop to 26 if they are not already lower.

**Ride the Winds:** A creature that is blown back onto the roof lands 20 feet from the point where it fell, takes 7 (2d6) damage, and falls prone. A creature that succeeds on a moderate Strength or Dexterity saving throw takes half damage and lands standing. A creature that succeeds on a hard saving throw can ride the winds, moving to a location of its choice (including in midair to attack a flying opponent), then landing on the roof and taking no damage.

**Poisonous Presence:** While the dragon has 39 or fewer hit points, any creature that ends its turn within 5 feet of the dragon must make a DC 10 Constitution saving throw. *Failed Save:* 5 poison damage.

#### ACTIONS

**Multiattack:** The dragon makes one bite attack and two claw attacks.

**Melee Attack—Bite:** +5 to hit (reach 10 ft.; one creature). *Hit:* 13 (2d8 + 4) piercing damage and 4 (1d8) poison damage.

**Melee Attack—Claw:** +5 to hit (reach 5 ft.; one creature). *Hit:* 11 (2d6 + 4) slashing damage.

**Poison Breath (Recharge 5–6):** The dragon breathes poisonous gas in a 40-foot cone. Each creature in the area must make a DC 10 Constitution saving throw. *Failed Save:* 21 (5d6 + 4) poison damage, and the dragon has advantage on attack rolls against the target until the end of the dragon's next turn. *Successful Save:* Half damage.

#### ENCOUNTER BUILDING

**Level 7** XP 1,050

## Development

If Vargas or Karis becomes bloodied or is reduced to 0 hit points while the other is still conscious, a particular event takes place.

### If Vargas is reduced to 22 hit points, read:

*The war wizard staggers under the blow and cries out: "No! I won't lose her again!" He rips open his robe, revealing the sigil of Asmodeus branded in his chest, and fire flares around him.*

Whenever Elden Vargas has 22 or fewer hit points, he gains the following trait.

**Hellfire Aura:** Any enemy within 15 feet of Elden Vargas that hits him with an attack during his turn takes 5 fire damage.

### If Karis is reduced to 26 hit points, read:

*Karis cries out in pain, and blood flies out of her nose and mouth into the winds around her. The sphere holding back the storm shudders as if dealt a blow, and thunder rips across the rooftop. Karis descends quickly and alights gently on the roof*

The sphere starts to fail. See "Features of the Area."

### If Vargas dies and Karis is still alive, read:

*As the war wizard falls, Karis cries out in rage. She turns toward you, lightning dancing from her fingers, and raises a hand. Her husband's lightning spear flies to her grip, and she points it at you.*

Until the end of the encounter or until she loses the spear, replace her *storm touch* attack with Elden's *lightning spear* attack.

The characters can talk Karis down by making three hard Charisma checks. If she capitulates, go to "Conclusion."

### If Karis dies and Vargas is still alive, read:

*As Karis goes down, Vargas looses a cry of shock and outrage. "All I've done, for nothing!" he shouts, his eyes burning with flame. "You'll follow her into death!" He raises his lightning spear and brings it down with a shattering crack on one knee.*

When Vargas breaks the *lightning spear*, make the ranged version of that attack against all creatures within 50 feet of him. Until the end of the encounter, the enraged Vargas takes a -2 penalty to AC and saving throws, gains a +5 bonus to damage rolls, and cannot make *lightning spear* attacks.

## Conclusion

The encounter ends when all the enemies have been defeated or when Karis is the last enemy alive but the party has defeated her or talked her down.

### If Karis is still alive, read:

*Karis reels, throwing off her insanity for a moment. "Oh, my love," she says, and the winds bear her to Vargas's body. She cradles the crumpled wizard and shakes her head. "You have done such evil for my sake. Now it is time to rest."*

At this point, if Karis was defeated, she stands and allows herself to be borne away in the wind, taking Vargas with her. If the characters succeeded in talking her down, she instead remains to make amends. Go to "Ending the Session."

## Reward

Each character gains 3,250 XP for confronting Vargas, chasing off Chartilifax, defeating Karis, and dispelling the storm.

**Treasure:** The City of Neverwinter rewards the party with 1,000 gp for dealing with the threat of the Ashmadai and ending the storm. If Elden Vargas's *lightning spear* was not broken and is claimed by the characters, treat it as having the properties of a *flame tongue longsword* but dealing lightning damage.

## Ending the Session

With Vargas defeated, the storm breaks and his mental domination fades. The city once again enjoys peace—as much as it ever does.

### Read:

*Now that the source of the tempest has been defeated, the storm breaks and tears itself apart with remarkable speed. The thick clouds part, and for the first time in a long while, sunlight falls upon Neverwinter.*

See the **Epilogue** section on the next page.



## EPILOGUE

The storm has passed, leaving Neverwinter and Helm's Hold battered but still standing. Of perhaps greater significance is the disappearance of Vargas's mind-control magic, which dissipated upon his defeat. Victims still must deal with the trauma of having been kidnapped and tortured, but they need never again fear that the Tormentor will make them harm those they love.

### New Neverwinter

The characters have done a great service for Neverwinter in ending the kidnappings and dispelling the storm that endangered the city. Dagult Neverember's office gives the party a reward of 1,000 gp, as mentioned previously. The characters are publicly dubbed "heroes of Neverwinter."

### Vargas and Karis

If Vargas survives, the battle and his defeat drive him mad. His fate is up to the characters. Neverwinter's authorities will surely execute him, the staff of Helm's Hold will imprison him, or the characters can make other arrangements.

If Karis survives and did not flee, she regains her sanity and can converse with the characters. She was able to restore herself by feeding on the storm, and she thanks the party for helping to dissipate it before it caused too much damage. Weather magic, she explains, is all about balance, which her husband never understood.

She can relate the bittersweet story of her life with Vargas in Cormyr, their subsequent exile that resulted in her madness, and her incarceration in Helm's Hold. She asserts that beneath his desperation and apparent cruelty, Vargas is a good man who lost his way, and if he still survives, she begs that he be allowed to live.

If Vargas is turned over to Neverwinter justice and Karis is able to speak in his defense, she has his execution sentence commuted to imprisonment at Helm's Hold. She then leaves Neverwinter to find a way to help Vargas recover from his insanity. If her husband is dead, Karis returns to her homeland of Rashemen.

### Helm's Hold

The characters' actions draw the attention of the Prophet Rohini, who follows their story and reputation with interest. She publicly thanks them for their efforts, then locks up Helm's Hold to prevent further probing into its affairs.

Brother Satarin also thanks the characters. The dwarf offers any future aid he or his priests can provide.

Finally, the townsfolk of Helm's Hold thank the characters for saving them from the storm and rescuing their civic leader, the Prophet, from the Tormentor. The characters have unintentionally strengthened Rohini's position. The town returns to the usual routine of hoping and praying for loved ones who are sent to the sanatorium for treatment.

### Ashmadai

The Ashmadai weathered the storm without being damaged too badly. Two of their cells were obliterated and they lost their chief interrogator, the Tormentor, but the cult will rebuild and continue.

### Lady Nidris

If Zan survives, Lady Sala Nidris is reunited with her son. With the defeat of Vargas, Zan is cured of his ailments. Nidris weeps with joy and thanks the characters profusely. She is the one who arranged for Lord Neverember to reward the party with the gold mentioned previously, and she also promises to provide the characters with any political favor that is within her power.

## FACE THE COMING STORM

The frontier city of Neverwinter has persevered in the face of calamity. Yet even as the city rebuilds, an insidious threat rises from within its walls. Neverwinter's citizens are succumbing to an inexplicable madness, while from the shadows, an evil cult of Asmodeus spins sinister plans. Unless a group of heroes rises to stop these perils, Neverwinter might face an even greater danger on the horizon.

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