

CORE1-4

# CRYSTAL CLEAR

## A DUNGEONS & DRAGONS<sup>®</sup> *LIVING* *FORGOTTEN REALMS* ADVENTURE

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The Low Market of Athkatla is no place for the more delicate flowers of civilization. For those of a less savory character, or whose reputations need not be protected quite so zealously, however, the Low Market is a bazaar like no other. Goods and services of all kinds can be had as long as the price is right... and the price is always right. But today, the coin of the realm seems to be something other than gold. A *Living Forgotten Realms* adventure set in Amn for characters levels 4-7.

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

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## PREPARING FOR PLAY

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

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

Along with this adventure, you'll find a RPGA Session Tracking sheet. If you're playing this adventure as part of an RPGA-sanctioned event, complete and turn in this sheet to your Senior GM directly after play.

## READING MONSTER STAT BLOCKS

Most of the information should be easy to understand, as it mirrors the information presented in the *Monster*

*Manual*. Attacks have a letter next to them designating the type: M for melee, R for ranged, C for close, and A for area. A lower-case letter (used only in some melee and ranged attacks) denotes that the attack can be used as a basic attack.

## IMPORTANT DM INFORMATION

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

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

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

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

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

In short, being the DM for a *Living Forgotten Realms* adventure isn't about following every word on the page; it's about creating a fun, challenging game environment for the players. A great deal of good information on being a DM for a D&D game can be found in Chapters 1-2 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

## APPROPRIATE CHARACTER LEVELS

This adventure is designed for player characters (PCs) levels 4-7. Characters that fall outside of the level range may not participate in the adventure. Make certain to check the levels of the PCs before beginning play to ensure that they are the proper level.

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

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

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

## FAILING TO DEFEAT AN ENCOUNTER

If a group fails to defeat an encounter - that is, if they have to flee from a combat because it's too tough or they reach the predetermined number of failures in a skill challenge before reaching success - they are only

awarded half experience points (round down) for the encounter. If they manage to tackle the encounter later on and defeat it, award them the other half of the experience points for the encounter.

## CHARACTER DEATH

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

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

## MILESTONES

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

action point and affects how some magic item powers are used.

## ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

The merchant-dominated nation of Amn (see FRCG page 92) is one of the wealthiest in all Faerûn and a fierce rival to city-states like Baldur's Gate and Waterdeep. Amnian fleets dominate the southern coasts, and their business interests and colonies can be found throughout the world. Amn's ruling oligarchs are among the most prosperous people in the entire world, although they've had to make quite a few bitter enemies along the way.

One of Amn's holdings is the mining colony of Ioma Town in the Nelanther Isles. Ioma Town (see FRCG page 162) was founded about sixty years ago. The mine is famous for its production of so-called Iomic crystals, which are purplish in color (resembling amethyst), come in various shapes and sizes, and are well-suited to use in all types of jewelry. During the period after the Spellplague, when magic was unstable and dangerous, Iomic crystal gained a reputation for providing protection against the various curses and afflictions that were attributed to the Spellplague. Although this claim was eventually shown by reputable scholars and wizards to be nothing more than snake oil, the crystals nevertheless retain some degree of popularity among the poor and less-educated folk of the world, who buy bracelets and charms with Iomic crystals to protect themselves from evil magic. Various folk remedies claim to be able to remove curses and perform other miracle cures using ground-up Iomic crystal. Because of this, and because the crystals do have some intrinsic value (along the same lines as quartz), the mining colony continues to prosper and serves as a good source of income for the Amnian merchants.

What the merchants of Amn do not know is that even though it is not proof against magic, Iomic crystal actually does have one very valuable property. The peculiar structure of the crystals makes them very well-suited to holding and releasing psionic energy. This fact has become known to certain agents of the Abolethic Sovereignty, who have recently been conducting experiments to see just what can be done with the crystals. Their current project involves infusing a specially-treated group of Iomic crystals with a variant of the aboleth curse (an evil ritual that transforms humanoid creatures into Aboleth Servitors; see page 9 of the *Monster Manual* for details).

After some months of carefully testing and refining different variations of their curse, the Sovereignty's agents are ready for a more wide-scale test. They have

managed to steal a large number of Iomic crystals from shipments between Ioma Town and Athkatla. For the last few days, a merchant in the Low Market of Athkatla named Ormust has been passing out curse-imbued crystals. Ormust's instructions were to only give the crystals to people who nobody would miss - vagrants, street dwellers, and other people too destitute to matter within the money-obsessed culture of Amn. If a few poor people vanish off the streets, nobody in Athkatla will likely notice or care. A master crystal located in a warehouse near the docks is linked to all the individual crystals that Ormust has been passing out in the Low Market. A band of sahuagin servants of the Abolethic Sovereignty have taken up residence in this warehouse. The sahuagin are able to use the master crystal to cast the aboleth curse on all the people who have been given the smaller Iomic crystals. It takes a few days for the curse to run its course, during which time the victims begin transforming into aboleth servitors (suffering terrible pain and all sorts of other ill effects as their bodies fight the alien transformation). The agents of the Sovereignty track, collect, and study these "specimens" to see whether the curse is working as intended. They have constructed a crude laboratory inside the warehouse, where they conduct horrific experiments on the victims.

## PLAYER'S INTRODUCTION

This adventure takes place in the city of Athkatla, capital city of the nation of Amn. The PCs' reasons for being here are their own, but any character should be able to come up with a decent excuse to visit Athkatla. The city is well-known as a place where anything and everything can be had if the price is right. Ships from around the world call at the port of Athkatla, bringing a staggering variety of goods both mundane and exotic. In many cases, if you can't find something in Athkatla, then you probably can't find it anywhere. Of course, you'd better be able to pay, and pay handsomely, for the things you want...

Although Amn is primarily a human nation, its capital is a melting pot in every sense of the word, because anything goes in Athkatla. Things that would be considered illegal or immoral in other places pass without comment in the "city of sin." Most types of public debauchery won't draw more than a disinterested yawn from the city's residents; they've seen it all before. You have to really try to offend people in this town. The only real crimes here are giving insult to one of the major merchant houses or using arcane magic without the permission of the omnipresent Cowled Wizards.

That's not to say that the city is lawless; quite the contrary. The police force is large and vigilant, and the Cowled Wizards are well-known as one of the most powerful wizards' guilds in all Faerûn. The law is vigorously enforced and the streets are (mostly) safe, at least if you know which parts of town to avoid. Most crimes and other transgressions are atoned for in cash (often paid in advance - as the saying goes, if you've paid the fine, you can commit the crime). Even the thieves' guild, known as the Shadow Thieves, operates in a very businesslike manner. Pickpockets and cat burglars who do not register with the Shadow Thieves and pay their dues in a timely fashion will find that the guild is far more zealous about prosecuting them than any civil authorities. Characters who might be shunned or even attacked in other parts of the world, such as drow and even gnolls, can pass largely without comment in Athkatla as long as they look like they have money. (Those "monstrous" PCs who don't have the trappings of wealth, on the other hand, might easily be mistaken for refugees from the monster kingdom of Muranndin to the south.)

It does not matter if the PCs know each other ahead of time or not. You can do all the character descriptions at the beginning, or you can let each player introduce his or her PC at an appropriate moment during the first encounter. When the adventure begins, all the characters happen to be in the same part of the Low Market of Athkatla. Read or paraphrase the following text to the players:

***The morning sun shines brightly on the city of Athkatla in the nation of Amn. This day finds you in the city's infamous Low Market, a place where gold flows freely and anything can be had if the price is right. Perhaps you have come here in search of some rare and exotic item, to partake of the city's legendary debaucheries, or simply to take in the spectacle. The only rule in this so-called "City of Coin" is the Golden Rule: He who has the gold, makes the rules.***

***Of course, that's not to say that the city is lawless: on the contrary, the laws are ruthlessly enforced, particularly for those who don't have the cash to buy their way out of their transgressions. The two most important things to keep in mind when visiting Athkatla are that you don't want to get on the bad side of the ruling merchant houses, and that practicing arcane magic is illegal without a license from the Cowled Wizards.***

***For most citizens and visitors, the day-to-day life of Athkatla is not much different from any other large city. Just keep your wits sharp and at least one hand on your coin purse, and you'll do fine.***

## DM'S INTRODUCTION

The player characters are drawn into this plot in the most direct fashion possible. They are shopping in the Low Market of Athkatla when they are accosted by an aggressive panhandler. The man seems very ill and is obviously in great distress. He begs the PCs for any coin they can spare. Regardless of whether they respond to his pleas or not, moments later he begins coughing up a disgusting fluid - and then he undergoes a shocking transformation, his body twisting and warping into a curse-changed mutant. Driven insane by the shock and pain, he begins laying waste to the Low Market unless the PCs act to stop him. From there, the adventurers must figure out what's going on and put a stop to it before the Abolethic Sovereignty is able to transform more innocent people into their slimy servitors. Along the way, the PCs will interact with a young noblewoman of House Selemchant, one of the ruling Houses of Amn, and will also get an introduction of sorts to the Shadow Thieves of Athkatla before finally confronting the sahuagin in their watery lair.

### CAMPAIGN NOTE: QUEST CARD OPPORTUNITY

Athkatla is a very cosmopolitan city (some would say it's a little bit too cosmopolitan). Thus, if there are any characters in the party who are looking to meet up with yellow-cloaked strangers or make conversation with pottery merchants, they may do so while exploring the city. You should improvise a suitable encounter, but keep it brief so it doesn't derail the adventure. This can be used to fulfill either Task 1 or Task 2 from the *Zhentarim Infiltration* quest card. However, a character may only fulfill one of these two tasks in this adventure. Make sure the player notes the completion of the appropriate task on his or her logsheet.

# ENCOUNTER 1: THE LOW MARKET

## ENCOUNTER LEVEL 4 / 6 (875 / 1,250 XP)

### SETUP

This encounter includes the following creatures at the low tier:

**1 cursechanged beggar (B)**

This encounter includes the following creatures at the high tier:

**1 cursechanged beggar (Level 6) (B)**

The PCs find themselves browsing the stalls of the Low Market. One of them is accosted by a pitiful beggar who is in poor health. You can choose randomly which character gets approached, or you can pick a character based on how you want the scene to play out (the beggar might choose the character who displays the most obvious signs of wealth, or the character who looks like he or she is the kindest, or use any other criterion that you prefer).

Read or paraphrase the following to the player whose character you have chosen for the beggar to approach:

***A watery cough draws your attention to a pitiful human man who has dragged himself across the cobblestones of the market square and is now tugging at your boots. He is clearly destitute and looks as though he has been living on the streets for some time: filthy, emaciated, and covered in open sores. He reaches towards you with his palms outstretched. "Alms! Alms for the poor! Please, won't you spare -"***

***Before you can react, the man's body is wracked by a coughing spasm. Clear fluid leaks from his mouth and nostrils as he shudders uncontrollably, hacking and wheezing. A moment later, he draws a deep breath and then resumes his plea. "Won't you spare a coin for those less fortunate?"***

It makes no difference if the PC gives the beggar any money or not. If he gets anything, the beggar thanks the PC profusely and hugs his or her boots and legs. If he doesn't get anything, the beggar becomes more insistent, tugging at the PC's cloak, scabbard, or anything else he can reach. Give all the nearby characters a Perception check (DC 15). Those who succeed notice that the beggar is apparently not entirely without material possessions: A simple chain hangs around his neck, set

with a small amethyst gemstone. If asked, the beggar clutches the stone tightly and says that it is his charm, his protection against the plague. (It doesn't seem to be working very well, considering that he is obviously very ill.)

He will not relinquish the stone under any circumstances, although if the PCs offer to buy it, he will consider the offer carefully for a moment before shaking his head no. An Insight check (DC 15) reveals that the man seems almost unnaturally attached to the trinket, even though someone in his situation would surely have sold it long ago for a few coins.

After the PCs have interacted with the beggar for a moment or two, right about the time the players have decided to dismiss him as part of the scenery, he suddenly takes a dramatic turn for the worse. Read or paraphrase the following:

***The beggar's cough grows more insistent and he clutches at his chest. A huge spasm wracks his body and he seems to be having trouble breathing. He turns his head to one side and vomits up a gout of slimy-looking mucus onto the ground. "Help... help me..." he croaks.***

A DC 10 Heal check is sufficient to tell that something is seriously wrong with the man, and that he is probably dying, but the symptoms don't match anything the character has seen before. If anyone thinks to check, a DC 15 Arcana check reveals the presence of a faint magical aura around the man's entire body, as if he is under the effects of some sort of curse. Before the characters can take any effective action, however, the ritual runs its course and the beggar undergoes a startling transformation.

***There is a sudden snapping sound from somewhere deep within the afflicted man's chest. He throws his head back and screams in pain. Thick, whitish fluid leaks from his eyes, nose, and ears. His body begins to shudder as his arms and legs sudden start to elongate, the skin and muscles thickening. His chest expands with the sound of cracking ribs. Moments later his size has nearly doubled. He lurches to his feet, the horrifying transformation complete. His eyes are filled with fury and his mind seems to have snapped. He reaches for the nearest merchant stall and rips it apart in his huge hands, sending passersby scrambling to get out of the way of this unexpected monstrosity.***

There is no one nearby who can deal with this situation other than the player characters. Make it clear that unless they act, the transformed beggar will most likely tear this section of the Low Market apart. He does not

appear to be in control of his own actions and it is clear that he is a danger to himself and everyone else.

#### ARCANE SPELLCASTERS AND THE COWLED WIZARDS

Some of the PCs might be concerned about the prohibition on using arcane magic in Amn without a license from the Cowled Wizards. It is true that those characters are breaking the law if they use any arcane magic (that means all powers from the arcane power source) during the fight. The players will have to decide for themselves if they are willing to take the risk or not. Note that the use of permanent magic items and potions is not illegal, only the use of spells. There is also no prohibition against using divine magic or powers from the martial power source, so characters of those classes do not need to worry about running afoul of the Cowled Wizards. Also, using magic items (such as magic weapons and potions) is not prohibited, just the use of actual arcane powers.

A DC 20 Arcana or Streetwise check lets a character remember that the Cowled Wizards are said to be able to sense the usage of arcane magic. They reputedly have the ability to teleport unerringly between any two locations in the city, but it usually takes them a few minutes to respond to disturbances.

### FEATURES OF THE AREA

This area has a few important features.

**Illumination:** Daylight (bright illumination).

**Fountain:** The fountain is relatively shallow. Its squares count as difficult terrain, costing 2 squares of movement.

**Puddles:** The puddles shown on the street tiles are from a recent rain shower. They are not considered difficult terrain and do not impede movement.

**Wagons:** The wagons (and animals) are treated as blocking terrain. The animals are tethered, but might break free (or be cut free by a PC) and run loose in the marketplace, creating additional confusion, providing some mobile cover, or offering someone a chance to perform an acrobatic stunt. A character might command one of the animals with a DC 20 Nature check, but they have no combat statistics and cannot make attacks.

**Merchant Stalls:** The merchant stalls are treated as blocking terrain. The awnings and display stands are sturdy enough to support a Small or Medium character (DC 15 Athletics to scramble up; DC 15 Acrobatics to use the stall as part of an acrobatic stunt).

**Fruit Carts:** The fruit carts are treated as blocking terrain. As a move action, a character can move or drag one of the carts at half speed with a DC 15 Strength check.

### TACTICS

The cursechanged beggar has no control over his actions - he is in complete agony as the curse causes wrenching changes in his body and attacks his mind. He simply lashes out at whatever or whoever is closest, or whoever causes him the most pain (deals the most damage). He makes *double attacks* on most rounds, using his *awesome blow* every time it recharges. (A character who gets pushed into a piece of blocking terrain by an *awesome blow* suffers an additional 1d10 points of damage.)

If he is accosted by more than one character in melee, particularly if someone tries to flank him, he uses *fist frenzy*. When he becomes bloodied, he howls in fury and leaps into the air, setting off a huge shockwave when he lands (the *curse-stomp* ability). Also note that once he is bloodied, his *bloodied rage* ability activates for the rest of the encounter.

### SCALING THE ENCOUNTER

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

**Four PCs:** Reduce the cursechanged beggar's hit points by 40 at the low tier and by 60 at the high tier.

**Six PCs:** Increase the cursechanged beggar's hit points by 40 at the low tier and by 60 at the high tier.

### ENDING THE ENCOUNTER

When the beggar is defeated, the transformation reverses itself; his body shrinks back on itself and he collapses to the ground. The amethyst crystal he was wearing seems to have somehow fused itself into his flesh. Be sure to ask whether the PCs knock the beggar unconscious or kill him when they reduce him to 0 hit points or below. If they choose to knock him out, he falls into a coma; they will not be able to ask him any further questions, but the PCs actually can save his life along with everyone else who has been afflicted by the aboleths' curse, if they destroy the master crystal in Encounter 5.

### EXPERIENCE POINTS

The characters receive 175 / 250 experience points each for defeating the cursechanged beggar.

### TREASURE

There is no treasure in this encounter, but the amethyst crystal (which remains embedded in the beggar's chest, though it can be pried out by the PCs) is certainly interesting. This is the subject of the next encounter.

# ENCOUNTER 1: “THE LOW MARKET” STATISTICS (LOW LEVEL)

| Cursechanged Beggar  |                      | Level 4 Solo Brute |
|--|----------------------|--------------------|
| Large aberrant humanoid  |                      | XP 875             |
| Initiative +8  | Senses Perception +2 |                    |
| HP 240; Bloodied 120; see also <i>cough up a lung</i>  |                      |                    |
| AC 18; Fortitude 20 (22 when bloodied), Reflex 18, Will 15   |                      |                    |
| Immune fear  |                      |                    |
| Saving Throws +5; see also <i>shake it off</i>   |                      |                    |
| Speed 6  |                      |                    |
| Action Points 2  |                      |                    |
| m <b>Slam</b> (standard; at-will)  |                      |                    |
| Reach 2; +8 vs. AC; 1d10 + 4 damage.   |                      |                    |
| M <b>Double Attack</b> (standard; at-will)   |                      |                    |
| The cursechanged beggar makes two slam attacks.  |                      |                    |
| M <b>Awesome Blow</b> (standard; recharge 5 6)   |                      |                    |
| Reach 2; +8 vs. AC; 2d8 + 4 damage and the cursechanged beggar makes a secondary attack against the same target.   |                      |                    |
| <i>Secondary Attack:</i> +6 vs. Fortitude; the target is pushed 3 squares and knocked prone.   |                      |                    |
| M <b>Berserk Attack</b> (immediate reaction; when a melee attack hits the cursechanged beggar; at-will)  |                      |                    |
| The cursechanged beggar makes a slam attack against a random target within its reach.  |                      |                    |
| C <b>Fist Frenzy</b> (standard; encounter)   |                      |                    |
| Close burst 2; +8 vs. AC; 2d8 + 4 damage and the target is dazed (save ends).  |                      |                    |
| C <b>Curse-Stomp</b> (free; when first bloodied; encounter)  |                      |                    |
| Close burst 5; +8 vs. Reflex; 2d10 + 5 damage and the target is knocked prone. <i>Miss:</i> half damage.   |                      |                    |
| <b>Bloodied Rage</b>   |                      |                    |
| While it is bloodied, the cursechanged beggar gains a +2 bonus to its Fortitude defense, gains a +2 bonus to all attack rolls, and gains a +5 bonus to all damage rolls. (These bonuses have already been included in the <i>curse-stomp</i> power.) |                      |                    |
| <b>Shake it Off</b>  |                      |                    |
| At the end of its turn, the cursechanged beggar automatically saves against the dazed and stunned conditions and against charm effects that a save can end.  |                      |                    |
| <b>Threatening Reach</b>   |                      |                    |
| The cursechanged beggar can make opportunity attacks against all enemies within its reach (2 squares).   |                      |                    |
| Alignment Unaligned  | Languages Common     |                    |
| Skills Intimidate +11  |                      |                    |
| Str 20 (+7)  | Dex 14 (+4)          | Wis 8 (+1)         |
| Con 20 (+7)  | Int 3 (-2)           | Cha 8 (+1)         |
| Equipment strange crystal embedded in flesh  |                      |                    |

## ENCOUNTER 1: “THE LOW MARKET” STATISTICS (HIGH LEVEL)

| Cursechanged Beggar (Level 6)  | Level 6 Solo Brute                   |
|--|--------------------------------------|
| Large aberrant humanoid  |                                      |
| XP 1,250   |                                      |
| Initiative +9      Senses Perception +3  |                                      |
| HP 304; <b>Bloodied</b> 152; see also <i>cough up a lung</i>   |                                      |
| AC 20; <b>Fortitude</b> 22, <b>Reflex</b> 20, <b>Will</b> 17; see also <i>bloodied rage</i>  |                                      |
| Immune fear  |                                      |
| Saving Throws +5; see also <i>shake it off</i>   |                                      |
| Speed 6  |                                      |
| Action Points 2  |                                      |
| m <b>Slam</b> (standard; at-will)  |                                      |
| Reach 2; +10 vs. AC; 1d10 + 5 damage.  |                                      |
| M <b>Double Attack</b> (standard; at-will)   |                                      |
| The cursechanged beggar makes two slam attacks.  |                                      |
| M <b>Awesome Blow</b> (standard; recharge 5 6)   |                                      |
| Reach 2; +10 vs. AC; 3d8 + 5 damage and the cursechanged beggar makes a secondary attack against the same target.  |                                      |
| <i>Secondary Attack</i> : +8 vs. Fortitude; the target is pushed 3 squares and knocked prone.  |                                      |
| M <b>Berserk Attack</b> (immediate reaction; when a melee attack hits the cursechanged beggar; at-will)  |                                      |
| The cursechanged beggar makes a slam attack against a random target within its reach.  |                                      |
| C <b>Fist Frenzy</b> (standard; encounter)   |                                      |
| Close burst 2; +10 vs. AC; 3d8 + 5 damage and the target is dazed (save ends).   |                                      |
| C <b>Curse-Stomp</b> (free; when first bloodied; encounter)  |                                      |
| Close burst 5; +10 vs. Reflex; 3d10 + 10 damage and the target is knocked prone. <i>Miss</i> : half damage.  |                                      |
| <b>Bloodied Rage</b>   |                                      |
| While it is bloodied, the cursechanged beggar gains a +2 bonus to its Fortitude defense, gains a +2 bonus to all attack rolls, and gains a +5 bonus to all damage rolls. (These bonuses have already been included in the <i>curse-stomp</i> power.) |                                      |
| <b>Shake it Off</b>  |                                      |
| At the end of its turn, the cursechanged beggar automatically saves against the dazed and stunned conditions and against charm effects that a save can end.  |                                      |
| <b>Threatening Reach</b>   |                                      |
| The cursechanged beggar can make opportunity attacks against all enemies within its reach (2 squares).   |                                      |
| <b>Alignment</b> Unaligned   | <b>Languages</b> Common              |
| <b>Skills</b> Intimidate +12   |                                      |
| <b>Str</b> 20 (+8)   | <b>Dex</b> 14 (+5) <b>Wis</b> 8 (+2) |
| <b>Con</b> 20 (+8)   | <b>Int</b> 3 (-1) <b>Cha</b> 8 (+2)  |
| <b>Equipment</b> strange crystal embedded in flesh   |                                      |

# ENCOUNTER 1: "THE LOW MARKET" MAP

## DU2 STREETS OF SHADOW

|                                       |     |    |
|---------------------------------------|-----|----|
| Long Street / Long Sewer              | 4x8 | x2 |
| Weapons Merchant / Refuse Pile        | 2x2 | x2 |
| Armor Merchant / Piled Refuse         | 2x2 | x2 |
| Food Merchant / Floating Corpse       | 2x2 | x2 |
| Town Square Fountain / Sewer Junction | 8x8 | x2 |
| Ox Cart / Sewer Floor                 | 4x2 | x1 |
| Horse Cart / Sewer Floor              | 4x2 | x1 |
| Long Street / Long Sewer              | 8x2 | x1 |



## ENCOUNTER 2: CRYSTAL UNCLEAR

### SETUP

**Important NPC:** Sulina Selemchant (human female noble, Bluff +9, Insight +7)

This encounter begins a few moments after the PCs have defeated the cursechanged beggar. While they are standing over the beggar's body, trying to figure out what just happened, they realize that someone has been watching them - someone who has just realized that she might have just seen her own fate.

*The market square is eerily empty for the middle of the day, as everyone who was capable of running took flight during the battle. As you stand over the body of the beggar-turned-monster, the amethyst crystal embedded in his chest glitters in the sunlight.*

*From somewhere behind you, you hear a gasp. You see a petite human woman with long, dark hair, standing and staring with one hand over her mouth, as if she is in shock at what she has just witnessed. From her other hand, an elongated purple crystal falls to the ground, where it makes a bright, musical tinkling sound, finally bouncing to a stop at her feet.*

Sulina is a beautiful, impetuous, young (20 year old) noblewoman of House Selemchant, the most powerful of the High Houses of Amn. She is vain, shallow, and only concerned with herself and the goings-on in her social circles - but she is not stupid. On the contrary, to survive in the cutthroat world in which she dwells, Sulina has to be very clever and cunning. She is definitely not vapid and you should strive to portray her as someone who understands the value of her connections and station very well. Yes, she needs the PCs to help her, but she also knows that they could benefit greatly from her favor, particularly if any of them are arcane spellcasters who have just broken the law by using magic without a license from the Cowled Wizards (which her family just happens to control). She will not allow the PCs to think that she is desperate, nor is she swayed by threats.

The PCs will get a much better reaction from Sulina if they treat her with courtesy and deference befitting her station (even if they despise her). She is accustomed to having her whims obeyed without question and treats the PCs like a slightly higher class of servant (unless any of them are obviously noble or can demonstrate noble connections, in which case she will view them as

potential allies and treat them much better, giving all her attention to them and ignoring "the help," i.e. the other PCs).

Sulina knows the following:

- She came to the Low Market because she needed to purchase an Iomic crystal. It's not for her, it's for her boyfriend, a young nobleman of House Alibakkar. The two of them are supposed to be attending a masked ball later this week, but he just sent his regrets, saying that he had stumbled into a pocket of wild Spellplague while out on a hunt with his brothers, and is suffering from a terrible malady. (This is an over-elaborate fiction, of course; the real reason he can't go is because he is also dating someone else and was double-booked for that night. Since it's a masked ball, he thinks he can go with the other girl and nobody will know.)
- Sulina doesn't know anything about curses or magic, but when she was telling her maids about her boyfriend's problem, they told her that there is an old woman who works in the kitchens who knows all about that sort of thing, and when she talked to the old woman, she said that Iomic crystals are absolutely the best thing to use. You just get a crystal and grind it up into a goblet of red wine, and add a few other things... (she goes on to describe an elaborate folk remedy that any character trained in Heal would realize is absolutely worthless).
- Ladies of Sulina's stature don't come to the Low Market under normal circumstances, but it's such an embarrassing thing, she doesn't trust anyone else to get the ingredients for the cure, and at the same time, she doesn't want anyone else to know about what she's doing. People would be absolutely scandalized if they knew that Sulina Selemchant didn't have a date to THE biggest ball of the season!
- Sulina came to the Low Market by herself, with a few gold pieces to purchase an Iomic crystal. Of course, there are limits to what she's willing to do for herself; so, she paid someone to go buy a crystal for her. She's willing to go to great lengths for love, but there are limits.
- No, of course she doesn't remember who the person was who bought the crystal for her. She doesn't pay attention to such things. "He was a dirty man... one of those street people. You know, commoners. Someone who would surely never TALK to anyone, and most importantly, someone who wouldn't know who I was." That's all she cared about; she gave him the money and told him

what she wanted, and he went and bought it. (Of course, what actually happened is that she gave her money to a panhandler who happened to know that there was a man giving Iomic crystals away for free. He went and got a free crystal, which he gave to Sulina, and kept all the money for himself. Not that she would ever know the difference.)

- Sulina has no idea where the man would have gone to buy the crystal. She waves in the general direction of the entire Low Market. *“I’m sure it was... somewhere around here. He wasn’t gone for more than half an hour. I had started to think that he wasn’t coming back, and I was going to be VERY upset with him. Of course, I’m not stupid; I had promised him a few extra gold pieces when he came back with the crystal.”*
- Sulina had just gotten her crystal and was heading back to her manor when she saw the whole scene unfold with the beggar and the PCs. She realized that the beggar was wearing a crystal just like the one she bought, which is what caused her to gasp, drawing the PCs’ attention. Now she is terrified that the same thing is going to happen to her, and she asks the PCs to find the man who sold the crystal and take him to the Cowled Wizards so that they can remove any curses or other evil magic on the crystal.
- Of course, she wants the PCs to do this without actually dragging her name into it. *“They don’t need to know who sent you - just find the man, and bring him and the crystal to the Cowled Wizards. They’ll do the rest. They know all about magic and curses and that sort of thing.”*
- Sulina doesn’t have any more money on her, but she promises to make sure that the PCs are rewarded handsomely for helping her. (The idea that perhaps there are other crystals out there, and that other people might be in danger, doesn’t even occur to her, but it should occur to the PCs.)
- If the PCs seem reluctant to help her, she can use the threat of the Cowled Wizards if any of the PCs used spells (arcane powers) during the fight with the beggar. *“You know what you did is against the law, and the Cowled Wizards are awfully fond of disintegrating people who break the law. My family controls the Cowled Wizards. They have to do whatever we tell them to do. So, I can help you... but only if you help me first.”*
- If none of the PCs used spells, Sulina can still use the leverage she has as a daughter of House

Selemchant. She will try the nice approach first, talking about all the benefits that the PCs would get from having her favor, but if they still don’t seem inclined to help her, she is not above resorting to threats, telling the PCs that their stay in Amn will be very unpleasant if they end up on the bad side of House Selemchant (while threatening the PCs, she remains seemingly oblivious to the fact that she is by herself in the market without any guards).

- If all else fails, Sulina will leave in a huff, saying that she can find someone else to help her. This doesn’t have to end the adventure; the PCs can continue to investigate on their own, but it means that they won’t earn the *Favor of House Selemchant* story object at the end.

## ENDING THE ENCOUNTER

Sulina allows the PCs to take her crystal (they may also want to extract the crystal embedded in the beggar’s flesh, a grisly task.) She agrees to send someone to meet with them (if none of them are socially suitable to call at her house) or to meet with them in person (if any of them are socially acceptable) once they have solved “her little problem.”

The rest of this adventure assumes that the PCs do not take an extended rest, because they have no way of knowing how much time they might have left before Sulina’s crystal triggers its curse. If that’s not enough, they might have been exposed to the curse themselves, by way of their contact with the cursechanged beggar. However, if the first combat drained all their resources and you don’t think they will be able to survive the remaining combat encounters without an extended rest, you can allow them to hole up and resume their investigations the next day. (The Low Market is open all day and all night, although the vendors and their wares definitely change from daytime to nighttime.)

## TREASURE

Sulina normally carries a lot of gold, but since she was “slumming” today, she left all her jewelry and most of her coin at home for fear that she would be mugged or waylaid or whatever it is that those horrible nasty common folk do to people of good breeding when they encounter them alone in public. She does promise the PCs that she will make sure they are more than amply rewarded once they have dealt with the crystals.

## EXPERIENCE POINTS

The PCs earn no XP in this encounter, and this encounter does not count towards a milestone.

## ENCOUNTER 3: THE SEARCH

**SKILL CHALLENGE LEVEL 4 / 6,  
COMPLEXITY 3 (525 / 750 XP)**

### SETUP

**Number of Successes:** 8

**Number of Failures:** 3

**Primary Skills:** Acrobatics, Athletics, Arcana, Bluff, Diplomacy, Heal, Intimidate, Perception, Religion

**Secondary Skills:** Endurance, History, Insight

In this skill challenge, the PCs must attempt to search through the Low Market and find the person who is selling the tainted Iomic crystals. There are many shops and stalls selling items that use the crystals, but most of them are harmless. Only by finding the source of the cursed crystals can the PCs make further progress in unraveling this mystery.

*The Low Market is huge, virtually an entire city district unto itself. Its plazas and alleys are filled with hundreds, if not thousands, of shops, stalls, and vendors, hawking goods of every shape and size. People of all races and nationalities crowd the market in search of everything from exotic (and probably illegal) substances to the mundane staples of daily life. Somewhere in this chaotic mix of buyers and sellers is the person you seek - the person who can lead you to the source of these strangely tainted Iomic crystals.*

### SKILL CHALLENGE

This is a very free-form encounter. The end goal is to lead the PCs in the direction of Ormust's stall. You can use the sample scenes provided here to represent different phases of the investigation, and you should feel free to improvise whatever additional scenes are necessary or desirable. Although this encounter is presented as a skill challenge, it is necessary for the PCs to learn the identity of Ormust in order for the story to proceed. Thus, if the PCs fail the skill challenge (by accumulating three failures before eight successes), you should nevertheless continue with the encounter so that the PCs get the full story and learn where they need to go next. The consequences for failing the skill challenge (aside from the fact that the PCs only earn half XP for the encounter) are detailed in the next encounter, when the PCs meet the Shadow Thieves.

One example of how you might link the three scenes together would be as follows. The PCs take the

initial approach of fanning out and searching through the market for more people who have recently acquired Iomic crystals and interrogate the owners to find out where they got the crystals from. This leads to the discovery that none of the local vendors recognize the cut of the particular type of crystals that the PCs have found. They might then seek out more specialized information by paying a visit to Madroon's Curios, which is well-known as a purveyor of all things strange and magical. This enables them to learn that the tainted crystals have a unique aura, which normal Iomic crystals lack. Back on the streets, the PCs ask around, and eventually discover that the tainted crystals are being given to beggars and other street dwellers (the type of folks who are less likely to be missed if they should disappear or meet with an untimely demise). This leads the PCs to make a visit to the local temple of Ilmater, where they discover several more people with tainted crystals. Here they learn Ormust's name and that he has been giving the crystals away for free. They also learn from the priest that a few other people have come in sick with very strange symptoms; although nobody has undergone the same transformation as the beggar from earlier in the day, the fact that the crystals have been distributed to dozens of people throughout the Low Market indicates that a huge crisis could be about to erupt in Athkatla.

The skill uses and DCs provided herein are illustrative, but by no means comprehensive. If a player comes up with a skill use that you find particularly appropriate, allow a check against the moderate DC (12 / 13). If a player comes up with a skill use that you think is harder or more far-fetched, use the difficult DC (17 / 18). The PCs might also have access to rituals (such as Hand of Fate) that could help guide them through the challenge (such as by pointing out specific locations, or identifying locations where the PCs can find another person with a tainted crystal). Feel free to give out automatic successes for clever use of powers and rituals, but don't let them bypass the entire encounter this way.

At any time during the challenge, if the players seem a bit lost about how to proceed, you can let a character use Insight as a secondary skill to get some clues. Alternatively, this skill can be used to assist another character's skill check by figuring out some detail or course of action that would be most beneficial.

**Insight (DC 12/13, not a success or failure):** The PC realizes some piece of information that helps the party narrow down the search. This is a way for you to suggest a clue. Examples might include the fact that the tainted crystals have a unique aura which non-tainted crystals do not, that the tainted crystals are only being given out to beggars and other street people, that the

individual crystal vendors might have distinctive styles and cuts for their particular wares, and so forth. This can suggest a way to lead the PCs to one of the other scenes, or during a scene, this skill can provide a +2 bonus on another character's skill check.

### SCENE 1: SEARCHING THE LOW MARKET

Use this scene to represent a general search through the Low Market. The PCs might look for additional people carrying Iomic crystals, look for vendors selling the crystals, check for magical auras that match the aura of the samples they already have, and so forth. As the PCs make progress in their investigation, you should make sure that they learn the information listed under the "What the Common Folk Know" section.

**Arcana (DC 12 / 13, 1 success, no maximum):** The first success with this skill can suggest Madroon's Curios as a potential source of more information about the crystals. Once the PCs have learned about the unique magical aura that the tainted crystals carry, this skill can be used in various ways. A PC can study additional Iomic crystals (found in a vendor's cart or on a passing citizen) to determine if they share the same aura as they cursed samples the party has already discovered. Only the tainted crystals have an aura; regular Iomic crystals are totally non-magical. Alternatively, the character can attempt a harder DC (17/18) to scan the area for people who are carrying cursed crystals, which might lead to another beggar, or to search for a stronger aura that might lead the PCs in the direction of the main stockpile.

**Diplomacy (DC 12 / 13, 1 success, no maximum):** The PC finds a local vendor selling Iomic crystals, shows her the samples, and gets her to talk about where she might have seen crystals like that before. The cut of these particular crystals is very distinctive, meaning that it must be a new entrant to the market who is selling designs that haven't been seen before. This can be used to rule out other vendors and parts of the market, thereby narrowing down the search area. None of the vendors the PCs talk to have seen these particular crystals before.

**Intimidate (DC 17 / 18, 1 success, no maximum):** The PC begins accosting vendors, beggars, or other likely candidates to possess the Iomic crystals. This course of action is more difficult, because people are naturally less cooperative when they're being shouted at, but for a party lacking in diplomatic graces, this skill can still provide a way to gather information. If the PCs use this skill to shake down a street urchin or someone of similarly humble means, they can discover another tainted crystal, but this draws the attention of the Shadow Thieves to that character (beggars and

panhandlers who value their lives are required to be members of the guild, of course).

**Perception (DC 12 / 13, 1 success, no maximum):** The character keeps a sharp eye out for other vendors selling Iomic crystals, or for people who are wearing or carrying similar crystals. Each crystal the PCs discover in this fashion can quickly be checked against their existing samples to determine if they are similar. The main differences are in the cut (the tainted crystals have a very particular and unique cut) and in aura (which can be checked with Arcana; only the tainted crystals have an aura, regular crystals do not).

**Streetwise (DC 12 / 13, 1 success, no maximum):** The character "puts the word out" and uses his or her contacts and knowledge of the streets to find out who has been selling Iomic crystals lately. The first success with this skill brings the character to the attention of the Shadow Thieves (which will not come into play until the next encounter). After two successes with this skill, the character has learned that someone has been giving away free Iomic crystals specifically to beggars and other poor people who could never afford to buy them; this can lead the PCs to the Temple of Ilmater, or directly to Ormust, as needed.

### SCENE 2: MADROON'S CURIOS

*Although Madroon's Curios is housed in a nondescript building, its contents are anything but mundane. Shelves groan under the weight of fantastic items large and small. Boxes and chests overflowing with mysterious relics are piled high in every nook and cranny, forming narrow passageways of their own. Dusty books of ancient lore, flasks bubbling with strange liquids, crystal balls filled with swirling mist, wands and other magical implements of all sorts, alchemical components in unlabeled tins, all this and more can be found here.*

*The elderly man behind the counter peers over the top of his horn-rimmed glasses. "Hmm, what's that you say?" he asks of no one in particular. "Customers? Where? I don't see any... ah, yes, all right, all right, I see them. I said I see them! You don't have to shout!"*

The purpose of this scene is to impart two specific pieces of information to the PCs: the fact that the tainted Iomic crystals have a specific aura, which regular crystals do not; and the fact that this aura is reminiscent of the ritual used to create aboleth servitors.

If any of the PCs have been planning to buy a specific magic item, this shop provides an excellent in-character opportunity. Anything and everything that the PCs are permitted to purchase according to the

campaign rules can be found in this shop. (This shop's existence rests on a narrow technicality of the laws of Amn. Using arcane spells is illegal without a license from the Cowled Wizards, but buying, selling, and using magic items is not prohibited.)

Madroon, the eponymous proprietor, isn't as crazy as he seems, but he does have an odd habit of talking to some invisible entity that no one else can perceive. If asked, he will just shrug off any questions about the invisible personage. "Oh, don't mind him... he's always nosing around in matters that don't concern him. Can't get a minute's peace. Now what were we talking about?"

**Arcana (DC 12/13, 1 success, maximum 1 success in this scene):** If shown a sample of the tainted Iomic crystals, Madroon will study the object intently through his spectacles (which allow him to perceive magical auras). "Look here... this is most interesting. Yes, I see it. I said I see it!" Madroon tells the PC that the crystal has a very unique arcane signature, and if the PC is trained in Arcana, he shows the PC how to recognize it. This also opens up the use of the History skill in this scene.

**History (DC 17 / 18, 1 success, maximum 1 success in this scene, does not cause a failure):** Once the PCs have learned about the unique magic aura of the tainted Iomic crystals, they can do a bit of research using the tomes in the shop to see if there is anything similar known to exist. Madroon insists that he's seen something like it before, but he can't quite remember where. You can allow the PCs to make a group check to obtain this information (PCs who are not trained in History can assist using Intelligence checks.)

After a bit of searching, the PCs turn up a reference to a ritual that is said to be used by aboleth mages to create aboleth servitors. The magical signature described in the book is very similar to the aura of the tainted crystals, as if the crystals have somehow been modified to be able to carry the aboleth curse. This is interesting information, but not critical, so it doesn't count as a failure if the PCs attempt the group History check but do not succeed.

### SCENE 3: TEMPLE OF ILMATER

*Athkatla is a city seemingly designed to cater to every whim and desire of the wealthy. However, even the poor have their places of refuge. The temple of Ilmater, God of Suffering, is housed in a shabby, low-ceilinged tenement next to a tannery. The smell of lye and the stench of misery compete for attention in this place. Dirty cots line the walls, filled with dark shapes clad in rags and covered in threadbare blankets. The sounds of sickly coughing, low moans of pain, and quiet whimpering can be heard.*

*An emaciated priest, as thin as any of his charges, bald-headed and clad in grey homespun, shuffles forward to greet you. "How may the Crying God serve such fine nobles on this day? Have you come in search of succor from some pain, or dare I hope that you might wish to make a contribution towards the betterment of the poor?"*

Yasha, the Painbearer on duty, has seen all the worst that Athkatla has to offer, and then some. As is typical of many Ilmatari, he tends towards dark humor, though is not as cynical as some of his brethren and still believes very strongly in his work of caring for the poor, sick, and needy of the city. He is very protective of his charges, however, so the PCs will need to convince him of their good intentions before he will allow them to talk to the people sheltering in the temple. This requires a successful Bluff, Diplomacy, or Religion check (DC 12 / 13) and doing so counts as one success towards the overall skill challenge. (The PCs can retry with a different skill if they fail the initial check.) The people gathered here can impart all of the information listed under the "What the Common Folk Know" heading.

**Acrobatics or Athletics (DC 12 / 13, 1 success, maximum 1 success in this scene):** To gain the trust and lift the spirits of the miserable people gathered here, the PC puts on a display of tumbling, juggling, feats of strength, or some other appropriate use of these skills.

**Bluff or Diplomacy (DC 12 / 13, 1 success, no maximum):** The PCs use charm and kindness to ingratiate themselves with the desperately poor people who are gathered at the temple. Each success with this skill earns the PCs another piece of information.

**Endurance (DC 12 / 13, 1 success, maximum 1 success in this scene):** Ilmater is the God of Suffering. A PC can win favor with the people here by making some sort of visible demonstration of his or her ability to endure pain, in the traditions of the Ilmatari. The priest can help with an appropriate ritual if asked.

**Heal (DC 12 / 13, 1 success, no maximum):** The PCs can earn a great deal of trust and goodwill by tending to people's wounds, caring for the sick, and so forth. The use of a daily power that heals people or triggers healing surges should count as an automatic success, particularly if it affects multiple people.

**Intimidate (no success possible):** The priest of Ilmater will not allow the PCs to browbeat his charges. This skill cannot be used to gain a success in this scene.

**Religion (DC 12 / 13, 1 success, maximum 1 success in this scene):** The PCs can preach a sermon, offering words of comfort and hope to the afflicted. This does not have to be done in the name of Ilmater, but if a

follower of Ilmater uses this skill, it counts as 2 successes instead of 1.

### WHAT THE COMMON FOLK KNOW

As the PCs earn the trust of the poor and destitute people, they can learn the following pieces of information. (The PCs can gain this information at the Temple of Ilmater, from talking to people on the street, or in any other way you see fit, based on their approach to the skill challenge.)

- There have been an increasing number of incidents of people getting very sick in the last few days. Symptoms vary, but they all include a watery, wheezing cough (like the one the beggar had in Encounter 1). There haven't been any other transformations quite like the one the PCs witnessed, but several dead bodies have turned up with deformities and other strange symptoms (elongated limbs, skin that has turned clear and slimy, and so forth). People who live on the streets have to deal with disease as a constant companion, so they have just assumed that this was some new malady.
- Everybody agrees that the disease isn't a problem for the "highborn" (because if it was, someone would be doing something about it). Nobody cares about the lower class in this city. Some of the people who get sick simply disappear, and don't return. People assume that they are just finding someplace to crawl away and die, but one young boy insists that he saw someone being taken away by dark figures in the night. No trace was left except a trail of water and some fish scales (sahuagin).
- Several of the people at the temple have Iomic crystals. Some of them bought the crystals themselves because of their reputation for protecting people from curses and plagues, but a few will grudgingly admit that their crystals were given to them. (They don't admit this easily, because they are afraid that they won't be believed, and will be accused of having stolen the crystals, because everybody knows that nobody gives anything away for free in Athkatla.)
- *Note: This should be the very last thing the PCs learn, when they have accumulated enough successes to complete the skill challenge.* The man giving the crystals away is named Ormust. He has a stall at the edge of the Low Market, near the entrance to the Docks District. He's a new arrival; hasn't been in the area for more than a few weeks, but everyone agrees that he seems like a nice man,

always willing to share a few scraps from his meal or throw a few copper pieces to someone who's down on his luck.

### ENDING THE ENCOUNTER

Eventually, the PCs should learn that a man named Ormust has been giving out free Iomic crystals, that he has been targeting only poor people and beggars for his gifts, that a number of these people have gotten very sick or disappeared, and that his stall is located on the very edge of the Low Market, near the Docks District.

The PCs will no doubt hurry to this location. The lead-in to the next encounter depends on whether they succeeded or failed at the skill challenge.

#### SUCCESS

The PCs arrive at Ormust's stall just as he is preparing to make his getaway. He still escapes, leading into the next scene, but the PCs will be in hot pursuit and the Shadow Thieves will not be able to set up an ambush. Read the following:

***You arrive at the location of Ormust's stall just in time to see the proprietor scurrying away down a nearby alley. He has obviously closed up his operation in a great hurry: papers stick out of his belt pouches and you can see scattered bits and pieces of shattered crystal lying on the ground around the stall, where he probably dropped them in his haste to sweep up his remaining inventory and make his escape.***

#### FAILURE

The PCs arrive at Ormust's stall, but he is already gone, having gotten word from his contacts that people were asking around about anyone selling Iomic crystals and concluding that they would find him sooner or later. However, they can ask around among the other vendors in the area (any social skill will do for this purpose) to find out that he just left a few minutes ago, and he was obviously in a hurry, as if he was expecting trouble. The PCs get good enough directions to be able to follow Ormust, leading to the next encounter, but the Shadow Thieves have time to set up an ambush and will get a surprise round.

Either way, proceed from here to Encounter 4.

#### EXPERIENCE POINTS

The characters receive 105 / 150 experience points each for successfully completing the skill challenge.

## ENCOUNTER 4: SHADOW THIEVES

ENCOUNTER LEVEL 3 / 5 (775 / 1,150 XP)

### SETUP

This encounter includes the following creatures at the low tier:

- 3 Shadow Thief bodyguards (Level 3) (B)
- 1 human berserker (Level 3) (Z)
- 1 Ormust, human illusionist (I)

This encounter includes the following creatures at the high tier:

- 3 Shadow Thief bodyguards (Level 5) (B)
- 1 human berserker (Level 7) (Z)
- 1 Ormust, human illusionist (Level 6) (I)

The PCs have learned the identity of the man who has been distributing the tainted Iomic crystals. As they are on their way to his last known location, however, they are intercepted. Ormust has been very loyal about paying his protection money to the Shadow Thieves, the thieves' guild of Athkatla, and in fact has made some voluntary extra "contributions" to ensure that he will always have a group of bodyguards on call.

The setup for this encounter depends on whether or not the PCs succeeded or failed at the skill challenge in the previous encounter. If the PCs failed the skill challenge, then the Shadow Thieves will be able to ambush them, gaining a surprise round. If the PCs succeeded at the skill challenge, then the Shadow Thieves do not gain a surprise round.

Also, take note of any characters who used the Streetwise skill during the skill challenge, or who used Intimidate on anyone who would reasonably be connected with the Shadow Thieves (such as panhandlers or other street people). These characters will get special attention from the Thieves, who don't like it when unlicensed rogues come into their town and start throwing their weight around.

As the adventurers enter the area, read:

*This alley runs between the Low Market and the Docks District. Tall buildings rise on either side of the cobblestone street, which is slick with puddles of ocean water carried through here on wagon wheels and wet crates taken directly off incoming ships and rushed to the market to satisfy a particularly demanding customer.*

If the PCs are in hot pursuit of Ormust (because they succeeded at the skill challenge, then they see him clambering up a ladder onto the roof of one of the nearby buildings. If the PCs are running behind, then Ormust has already taken up his position and is hiding, waiting for the Shadow Thieves to ambush his pursuers. Either way, read the following:

*A dark-cloaked figure calls out from one of the rooftops above. "Well now, wot's all this ruckus? Looks like some fools what don't know who runs this town. Boys, tell me - who runs this town?"*

*From all around, voices echo. "The Shadow Thieves!"*

*"That's right. We take care of our valued customers, like Ormust 'ere, and ennybody who messes with 'im, messes with us. Get 'em boys!"*

If the PCs failed the skill challenge, their penalty is that the Shadow Thieves and Ormust automatically get a surprise round. Otherwise, roll initiative normally.

### FEATURES OF THE AREA

This area has a few important features.

**Illumination:** Daylight (bright illumination).

**Buildings:** The buildings are 20 feet tall. Climbing the side of a building requires a DC 20 Athletics check. There are several ladders shown on the map, which do not require an Athletics check, but still require the character to move at half speed while climbing.

**Crates:** The squares with crates in them count as blocking terrain. The crates can be used as part of an acrobatic stunt with a DC 15 Acrobatics check, they can be jumped over with a DC 20 Athletics check (DC 10 with a running start), they can be moved (DC 16 Strength), or they can be destroyed (AC and Reflex 5, Fortitude 10, Will immune, 20 hit points).

**Puddles:** There are puddles shown on the map, but they are not large or deep enough to count as difficult terrain. They are slippery, however. A character who runs or charges through a puddle must succeed on a DC 7 Acrobatics check or slip and fall prone.

### TACTICS

The bodyguards attempt to stay mobile, crossing the rooftops and using their shuriken at range. Note that the range of their *blinding barrage* attack is only a close blast 3, so they can't use it from the rooftops to the ground (since that is a 20-foot distance).

The human berserker is a straight-up fighter, who attempts to engage weaker-looking PCs if possible (although most likely one of the party's defenders will

stick to him pretty quickly). He knows that he is the most expendable member of the group and fights with little care for his own survival.

Ormust uses his illusion powers to best effect. He will open the fight with *phantom chasm* and *grasping shadows* to try and split the PCs up, and then uses *phantasmal assailant* against a tough-looking PC. All the thieves then gang up on that character while they have combat advantage. Ormust knows that he probably can't get away from the PCs if he runs, and even if he escapes them, either the Shadow Thieves or his other employers will come after him, so he fights until all appears lost and then attempts to surrender and bargain for his life.

## SCALING THE ENCOUNTER

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

**Four PCs:** Remove one of the Shadow Thief bodyguards.

**Six PCs:** Add another Shadow Thief bodyguard.

## ENDING THE ENCOUNTER

Once the PCs defeat the Shadow Thieves, they can interrogate Ormust (if they kept him alive) or they can go through his possessions (if they killed him). Either way, they learn the location of the warehouse that the sahuagin are using as their base of operations (which enables the PCs to reach the next encounter). The other Shadow Thieves have never interacted with anyone other than Ormust, who has been paying them protection money, so they can't help the PCs even if they are left alive. (If the PCs do let the Shadow Thieves go without killing them, though, you should have the players make a note on their logsheets. Some DM in the future might use that fact in a future roleplaying encounter involving the organization. It's not enough to warrant a full-blown story object, but it's one of those little details that can be good to know.)

If Ormust is dead, he has papers that give the location of the warehouse, which is where he goes to pick up his crystal shipments. If he is alive, then the PCs can learn a little bit more (any social skill checks will do, but he is extremely susceptible to the Intimidate skill). Ormust is a very low-ranking agent who doesn't even really understand that he is ultimately doing the bidding of the Abolethic Sovereignty (he doesn't even know who that is). He can't tell the PCs a whole lot about the overall plan or what the crystals can do. However, he does know the following:

- Ormust recently moved to Athkatla after losing his fortune in Waterdeep. He wasn't having much better luck here, either, when he was

approached about a month ago about a lucrative new business opportunity.

- He has never gotten a good look at the people who he's working for; they are always heavily cloaked and hooded and shine lights in his face. The contacts only come late at night. However, he remarks that they smell like fish and salt water.
- Once a week, for about the last month, Ormust has gone to a particular warehouse in the Docks District. There is always a wagon waiting there for him. In the wagon he finds a pouch of Iomic crystals and some gold. His instructions are to sell the crystals to people that are not likely to be missed - street people, beggars, and other commoners with no ties to anyone in the upper echelons of the city. Ormust doesn't really know why that is, but he assumes it's because the crystals are stolen and his employer doesn't want the High Houses to find out, since Iomic crystal imports are tightly controlled.
- The strange thing about the arrangement is that Ormust gets a bonus if he is able to sell all the crystals within the week - and if he has any left over, he gets in trouble. But he doesn't actually have to turn in the gold that he gets for selling the crystals; part of the deal is that he gets to keep the money from the sales. So, to make sure he didn't fall out of favor, he recently just started giving the crystals away. The type of lower-class people he's supposed to be selling to hardly have any money anyway, and the payment he gets is worth more than the sale price of the crystals, so he figures he's still better off.
- Ormust swears that he doesn't know anything about anybody disappearing, or getting strange diseases, or undergoing transformations into giant monsters. Okay, it's true that most of the people he sells or gives crystals to, he never sees again. But that could be just a coincidence, right? Right?

## EXPERIENCE POINTS

The characters receive 155 / 230 experience points each for defeating the Shadow Thieves.

## TREASURE

Between Ormust and the Shadow Thieves, the PCs are able to loot some coin (25 / 50 gp per PC). Ormust also carries an *orb of crystalline terror* +2.

## ENCOUNTER 4: “SHADOW THIEVES” STATISTICS (LOW LEVEL)

| Shadow Thief Bodyguard (Level 3)   | Level 3 Skirmisher      |
|--|-------------------------|
| Medium natural humanoid  |                         |
| XP 150   |                         |
| Initiative +6 Senses Perception +1   |                         |
| HP 45; Bloodied 22   |                         |
| AC 17; Fortitude 13, Reflex 15, Will 13  |                         |
| Speed 6  |                         |
| m <b>Short Sword</b> (standard; at-will) ♦ <b>Weapon</b>   |                         |
| +7 vs. AC; 1d6 + 2 damage, and the human bandit shifts 1 square.   |                         |
| r <b>Shuriken</b> (standard; at-will) ♦ <b>Weapon</b>  |                         |
| Ranged 6/12; +8 vs. AC; 1d4 + 4 damage.  |                         |
| C <b>Blinding Barrage</b> (standard; encounter)  |                         |
| Requires shuriken; Close blast 3; +8 vs. AC; 3d4 + 4 damage and the target is blinded until the end of the shadow thief bandit's next turn. <i>Miss:</i> Half damage, and the target is not blinded. |                         |
| <b>Combat Advantage</b>  |                         |
| The bandit deals an extra 1d6 damage on melee and ranged attacks against any target it has combat advantage against.   |                         |
| Alignment Unaligned Languages Common   |                         |
| Skills Acrobatics +9, Stealth +9, Streetwise +7, Thievery +9   |                         |
| Str 12 (+2)  | Dex 17 (+4) Wis 11 (+1) |
| Con 13 (+2)  | Int 10 (+1) Cha 12 (+2) |
| Equipment leather armor, short sword, 20 shuriken  |                         |

| Human Berserker (Level 3)   | Level 3 Brute           |
|---|-------------------------|
| Medium natural humanoid   |                         |
| XP 150  |                         |
| Initiative +2 Senses Perception +1  |                         |
| HP 56; Bloodied 28  |                         |
| AC 14; Fortitude 14, Reflex 13, Will 13   |                         |
| Speed 7   |                         |
| m <b>Greataxe</b> (standard; at-will) ♦ <b>Weapon</b>   |                         |
| +6 vs. AC; 1d12 + 3 damage (crit 1d12 + 15).  |                         |
| R <b>Handaxe</b> (standard; at-will) ♦ <b>Weapon</b>  |                         |
| Ranged 5/10; +4 vs. AC; 1d6 + 2 damage.   |                         |
| M <b>Battle Fury</b> (free; when first bloodied; encounter)   |                         |
| The human berserker makes a melee basic attack with a +4 bonus to the attack roll and deals an extra 1d6 damage on a hit. |                         |
| Alignment Unaligned Languages Common  |                         |
| Skills Athletics +8, Endurance +8   |                         |
| Str 17 (+4)   | Dex 12 (+2) Wis 11 (+1) |
| Con 16 (+4)   | Int 10 (+1) Cha 12 (+2) |
| Equipment hide armor, greataxe, 2 handaxes  |                         |

| Ormurst, Human Illusionist  | Level 4 Controller      |
|---|-------------------------|
| Medium natural humanoid   |                         |
| XP 175  |                         |
| Initiative +4 Senses Perception +5  |                         |
| HP 52; Bloodied 26  |                         |
| AC 18; Fortitude 15, Reflex 17, Will 16   |                         |
| Speed 6   |                         |
| m <b>Quarterstaff</b> (standard; at-will) ♦ <b>Weapon</b>   |                         |
| +4 vs. AC; 1d8 damage.  |                         |
| R <b>Illusory Ambush</b> (standard; at-will) ♦ <b>Arcane, Illusion, Implement, Psychic</b>  |                         |
| Ranged 10; +8 vs. Will; 1d6 + 4 psychic damage, and the target takes a -2 penalty on attack rolls until the end of the human illusionist's next turn.   |                         |
| R <b>Phantasmal Assailant</b> (standard; encounter) ♦ <b>Arcane, Illusion, Implement, Psychic</b>   |                         |
| Ranged 10; +8 vs. Will; 2d10 + 4 psychic damage. <i>Effect:</i> The target takes ongoing 5 psychic damage and grants combat advantage to all of the human illusionist's allies (save ends both).  |                         |
| A <b>Grasping Shadows</b> (standard; encounter) ♦ <b>Arcane, Illusion, Implement, Psychic</b>   |                         |
| Burst 1 within 10 squares; +8 vs. Will; 1d8 + 4 psychic damage, and the target is slowed until the end of the human illusionist's next turn. <i>Effect:</i> Shadows writhe in the designated area and continue until the end of the human illusionist's next turn. Any creature that enters the area of the grasping shadows takes 4 points of psychic damage and is slowed until the end of its next turn. |                         |
| A <b>Phantom Chasm</b> (standard; encounter) ♦ <b>Arcane, Illusion, Implement, Psychic</b>  |                         |
| Burst 1 within 20 squares; +8 vs. Will; 2d6 + 4 psychic damage, and the target is prone and immobilized until the end of its next turn. <i>Miss:</i> The target is immobilized until the end of the human mage's next turn.   |                         |
| Alignment Unaligned Languages Common  |                         |
| Skills Arcana +11   |                         |
| Str 10 (+2)   | Dex 14 (+4) Wis 17 (+5) |
| Con 12 (+3)   | Int 18 (+6) Cha 12 (+3) |
| Equipment robes, quarterstaff, orb  |                         |

## ENCOUNTER 4: "SHADOW THIEVES" STATISTICS (HIGH LEVEL)

| Shadow Thief Bodyguard (Level 5)  | Level 5 Skirmisher                    |
|---|---------------------------------------|
| Medium natural humanoid   | XP 200                                |
| <b>Initiative</b> +7  | <b>Senses Perception</b> +2           |
| <b>HP</b> 61; <b>Bloodied</b> 30  |                                       |
| <b>AC</b> 19; <b>Fortitude</b> 15, <b>Reflex</b> 17, <b>Will</b> 15   |                                       |
| <b>Speed</b> 6  |                                       |
| m <b>Short Sword</b> (standard; at-will) ♦ <b>Weapon</b>  |                                       |
| +9 vs. AC; 1d6 + 3 damage, and the human bandit shifts 1 square.  |                                       |
| r <b>Shuriken</b> (standard; at-will) ♦ <b>Weapon</b>   |                                       |
| Ranged 6/12; +10 vs. AC; 1d4 + 5 damage.  |                                       |
| C <b>Blinding Barrage</b> (standard; encounter)   |                                       |
| Requires shuriken; Close blast 3; +10 vs. AC; 3d4 + 5 damage and the target is blinded until the end of the shadow thief bandit's next turn. <i>Miss:</i> Half damage, and the target is not blinded. |                                       |
| <b>Combat Advantage</b>   |                                       |
| The bandit deals an extra 1d6 damage on melee and ranged attacks against any target it has combat advantage against.  |                                       |
| <b>Alignment</b> Unaligned  | <b>Languages</b> Common               |
| <b>Skills</b> Acrobatics +10, Stealth +10, Streetwise +8, Thievery +10  |                                       |
| <b>Str</b> 12 (+3)  | <b>Dex</b> 17 (+5) <b>Wis</b> 11 (+2) |
| <b>Con</b> 13 (+3)  | <b>Int</b> 10 (+2) <b>Cha</b> 12 (+3) |
| <b>Equipment</b> leather armor, short sword, 20 shuriken  |                                       |

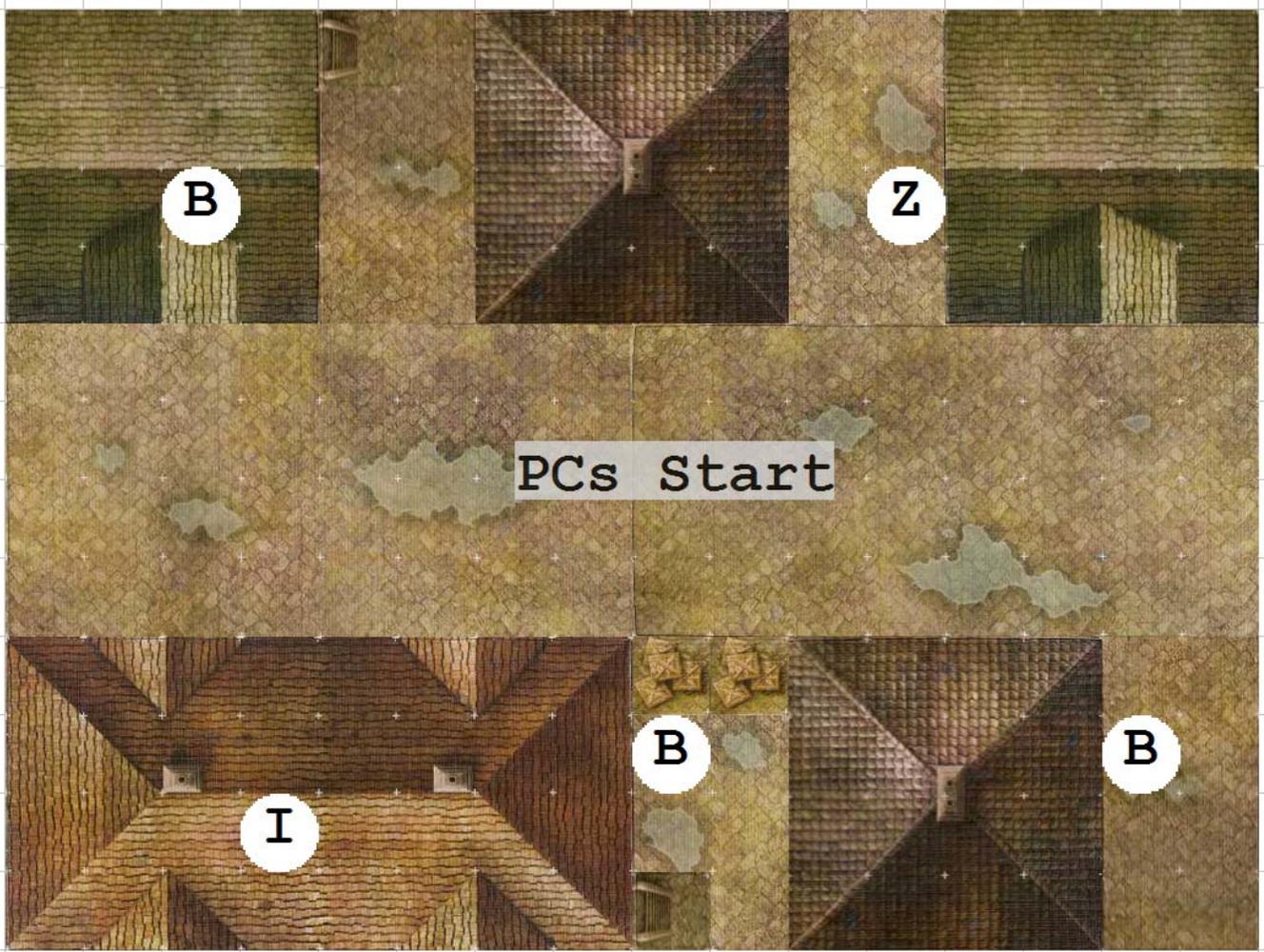
| Human Berserker (Level 7)   | Level 7 Brute                         |
|---|---------------------------------------|
| Medium natural humanoid   | XP 300                                |
| <b>Initiative</b> +4  | <b>Senses Perception</b> +3           |
| <b>HP</b> 96; <b>Bloodied</b> 48  |                                       |
| <b>AC</b> 18; <b>Fortitude</b> 18, <b>Reflex</b> 17, <b>Will</b> 17   |                                       |
| <b>Speed</b> 7  |                                       |
| m <b>Greataxe</b> (standard; at-will) ♦ <b>Weapon</b>   |                                       |
| +10 vs. AC; 1d12 + 5 damage (crit 1d12 + 17).   |                                       |
| R <b>Handaxe</b> (standard; at-will) ♦ <b>Weapon</b>  |                                       |
| Ranged 5/10; +8 vs. AC; 1d6 + 4 damage.   |                                       |
| M <b>Battle Fury</b> (free; when first bloodied; encounter)   |                                       |
| The human berserker makes a melee basic attack with a +4 bonus to the attack roll and deals an extra 1d6 damage on a hit. |                                       |
| <b>Alignment</b> Unaligned  | <b>Languages</b> Common               |
| <b>Skills</b> Athletics +10, Endurance +10  |                                       |
| <b>Str</b> 17 (+6)  | <b>Dex</b> 12 (+4) <b>Wis</b> 11 (+3) |
| <b>Con</b> 16 (+6)  | <b>Int</b> 10 (+3) <b>Cha</b> 12 (+4) |
| <b>Equipment</b> hide armor, greataxe, 2 handaxes   |                                       |

| Ormurst, Human Illusionist (Level 6)   | Level 6 Controller                    |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| Medium natural humanoid  | XP 250                                |
| <b>Initiative</b> +5   | <b>Senses Perception</b> +6           |
| <b>HP</b> 68; <b>Bloodied</b> 34   |                                       |
| <b>AC</b> 20; <b>Fortitude</b> 17, <b>Reflex</b> 19, <b>Will</b> 18  |                                       |
| <b>Speed</b> 6   |                                       |
| m <b>Quarterstaff</b> (standard; at-will) ♦ <b>Weapon</b>  |                                       |
| +6 vs. AC; 1d8 + 1 damage.   |                                       |
| R <b>Illusory Ambush</b> (standard; at-will) ♦ <b>Arcane, Illusion, Implement, Psychic</b>   |                                       |
| Ranged 20; +10 vs. Will; 1d6 + 5 psychic damage, and the target takes a -2 penalty on attack rolls until the end of the human illusionist's next turn.   |                                       |
| R <b>Phantasmal Assailant</b> (standard; encounter) ♦ <b>Arcane, Illusion, Implement, Psychic</b>  |                                       |
| Ranged 10; +10 vs. Will; 2d10 + 5 psychic damage. <i>Effect:</i> The target takes ongoing 5 psychic damage and grants combat advantage to all of the human illusionist's allies (save ends both).  |                                       |
| A <b>Grasping Shadows</b> (standard; encounter) ♦ <b>Arcane, Illusion, Implement, Psychic</b>  |                                       |
| Burst 1 within 10 squares; +10 vs. Will; 1d8 + 5 psychic damage, and the target is slowed until the end of the human illusionist's next turn. <i>Effect:</i> Shadows writhe in the designated area and continue until the end of the human illusionist's next turn. Any creature that enters the area of the grasping shadows takes 5 points of psychic damage and is slowed until the end of its next turn. |                                       |
| A <b>Phantom Chasm</b> (standard; encounter) ♦ <b>Arcane, Illusion, Implement, Psychic</b>   |                                       |
| Burst 1 within 20 squares; +10 vs. Will; 2d6 + 5 psychic damage, and the target is prone and immobilized until the end of its next turn. <i>Miss:</i> The target is immobilized until the end of the human mage's next turn.   |                                       |
| <b>Alignment</b> Unaligned   | <b>Languages</b> Common               |
| <b>Skills</b> Arcana +12   |                                       |
| <b>Str</b> 10 (+3)   | <b>Dex</b> 14 (+5) <b>Wis</b> 17 (+6) |
| <b>Con</b> 12 (+4)   | <b>Int</b> 18 (+7) <b>Cha</b> 12 (+4) |
| <b>Equipment</b> robes, quarterstaff, orb  |                                       |

# ENCOUNTER 4: "SHADOW THIEVES" MAP

## DU2 STREETS OF SHADOW

|  |     |    |
|--|-----|----|
| Street Ladder / Sewer Ladder           | 1x1 | x2 |
| Stack of Crates / Toxic Rats           | 1x1 | x2 |
| One-puddle Street / Sewer with Pipe    | 4x2 | x2 |
| Two-puddle Street / Sewer without Pipe | 4x2 | x2 |
| Long Street / Long Sewer               | 4x8 | x2 |
| Building / Sewer T                     | 4x4 | x2 |
| Building / Sewer Outfall               | 4x4 | x2 |
| Large Building / More Sewer            | 4x8 | x1 |



## ENCOUNTER 5: WATERY WAREHOUSE

ENCOUNTER LEVEL 4 / 7 (920 / 1,470 XP)

### SETUP

This encounter includes the following creatures at the low tier:

- 5 sahuagin guards (Level 4) (G)
- 3 sahuagin raiders (Level 4) (R)
- 1 sahuagin priest (Level 4) (P)

This encounter includes the following creatures at the high tier:

- 5 sahuagin guards (Level 4) (G)
- 2 sahuagin raiders (R)
- 1 sahuagin priest (Level 6) (P)
- 1 sahuagin baron (Level 6) (B)

After interrogating Ormust (or searching his body), the PCs have learned the location of the warehouse where the tainted crystals are being brought into the city.

As the adventurers approach the warehouse, read:

*Athkatla's Docks District is as large and busy as one would expect given the city's prominence as one of the largest ports in all of Faerûn. The particular warehouse to which you have been directed lies only a few dozen yards from the waterfront, next to one of the ubiquitous wooden piers that jut out from the shore like crooked teeth. Teamsters curse as they maneuver heavily-laden wagons to and from the various ships, whose masts block the horizon as far as the eye can see.*

The building is windowless, and has only a single door at one corner (wide enough to admit a wagon). During the daytime, there are plenty of people moving around on the streets; at night, the crowds thin, but there are still drunken sailors and other people out and about on the docks, so it is never truly quiet here. The PCs get no response if they try to knock on the door or otherwise bluff their way into the warehouse (impersonating city authorities is a good tactic, but one that won't work in this case). If the PCs try to enlist the real authorities, seeking reinforcements from the city police or the Cowled Wizards, they are told that the authorities are busy dealing with other matters and don't have time to attend to nonsense involving missing beggars in the Low Market. (If you want to introduce a larger element of

excitement and more time pressure to the end of the adventure, you could instead have the authorities busy dealing with outbreaks of aboleth plague all across the city, as numerous individuals who received the tainted crystals from Ormust suddenly have their curse trigger and transform into monsters that begin attacking whoever is nearby. This would also explain why the PCs are the only ones available to deal with the warehouse.)

If the PCs know about the distinctive aura of the tainted Iomic crystals, they can sense an overwhelming aura of that same type emanating from the warehouse (Arcana DC 15). Another thing that the characters might notice (DC 15 Perception while examining the building) is that there are puddles along all the walls, as if water is seeping out from the foundation. A subsequent DC 20 Dungeoneering or Nature check would suggest that this might mean that the building actually has a connection directly to the ocean, perhaps through its sewer. This can provide a way for the PCs to get into the building without going through the door; by entering the ocean just off the nearby coast, the PCs can find the two large intake tunnels that the sahuagin use to get in and out of the warehouse directly from the ocean without drawing attention. If they choose to swim, each character must succeed on three DC 15 Athletics checks to navigate the tunnel. For each check failed, the character must attempt a DC 20 Endurance check to hold his or her breath. Failing the Endurance check means the loss of a healing surge (or damage equal to the character's level if the character has no more surges), and the DC of the remaining checks increases by +5 for that character. PCs who have some way to breathe water don't have to make the skill checks. If the PCs swim into the warehouse, they come out in either of the two pools of water shown on the map.

Another option the PCs might pursue would be to follow up on the rumors of dark-cloaked figures who have been kidnapping people off the streets at night. (These are the sahuagin raiders, who go out under cover of darkness, locate the individuals who are carrying the aboleth curse, and bring them back to the warehouse for experimentation.) If the PCs wait until the middle of the night, they will see a number of cloaked and hooded creatures emerge from the ocean (they swim out through the tunnel) and head off in the direction of the Low Market. This could clue the PCs' to the tunnel's existence, or they could trail the figures and see what happens. A few hours later, the figures return, dragging unconscious human forms with them. Rather than risk having their captives drown, the sahuagin take their captives back into the warehouse through the front door, which could provide an opportunity for the PCs to launch a frontal assault with surprise.

*The inside of the warehouse is like a combination of a temple to some dark god and a bizarre laboratory under the direction of a mad scientist.*

*A raised platform at the back holds a table. Set into the center of the table is a huge purple crystal cut in the same style as the tainted Iomic crystals you have already found. The surface of this crystal is covered with arcane runes and it pulses with light, like an artificial heart. The light washes over the stone floor, which is slick with blood. Two pools of dark water at the back of the room carry the smell of brine and the sea.*

*Real hearts, along with every other organ of the human body, are on grisly display atop the lab tables scattered throughout the warehouse. A number of humans, who all have the look of the destitute people of the city to whom the crystals were given, are stretched out on these tables in various stages of dissection. They seem to have undergone a series of cruel experiments. A few of them are somehow still breathing, clinging to life despite all the horrors that have been inflicted upon their bodies and minds.*

*Scattered throughout the chamber are a number of vicious-looking creatures, half man, half shark. They grin evilly as they raise their tridents and prepare to attack. One of them raises an unholy symbol and begins chanting in Abyssal.*

*[High Tier Only] Rising from one of the two saltwater pools at the back of the room, one sahuagin stands much taller than the others. This monster has an extra pair of arms, and seems especially hungry for blood.*

## FEATURES OF THE AREA

**Illumination:** The pulsing energy from the master crystal atop the platform fills the entire room with bright illumination.

**Pillars:** The diagonal pillars serve as meat lockers, where the sahuagin put their “specimens” after they die so that other agents of the Abolethic Sovereignty can study them later. The pillars are otherwise treated as blocking terrain, and stretch from floor to ceiling.

**Ceiling:** The ceiling is 20 feet high.

**Lab Tables:** The coffins and sarcophagi indicated on the tactical map are actually lab tables. Each of these holds several human specimens that the sahuagin have been experimenting on, studying the effects of the various types of curses they have transmitted via the tainted crystals. These are considered blocking terrain, but they can be jumped over with an Athletics check. Standing on them would be inadvisable as the character would be standing on one of the hapless victims.

**Platform and Stairs:** The platform is 10 feet above the ground. The stairs are steep and are treated as difficult terrain.

**Altar:** The altar depicted on the map is really a rectangular table. Set into the center of the table is the master crystal, a massive Iomic crystal that has been enchanted to serve as the focus for the ritual that spreads the aboleth curse through the other tainted crystals.

During the fight, the PCs might think that they should destroy the crystal. They may attack it, but it is extremely resistant to damage (AC/Reflex 5, Fortitude 10, Will immune, 200 hit points, resist 10 all). If they do destroy it somehow, that has the same effect as ending the ritual as described in the next encounter.

## TACTICS

The sahuagin are vicious fighters and their preferred tactic is to gang up on a single PC. The faster they can get foes bloodied, the more they can take advantage of their *blood frenzy*. Thus, they will focus their attacks relentlessly.

The priest tries to stay in the water to maximize the damage of his *water bolt* power, and always keeps *spectral jaws* active (recasting it as soon as it recharges).

The sahuagin do not negotiate, retreat, or surrender, and they all fight to the death. They tell the PCs that their slimy overlords (the Abolethic Sovereignty) will turn them all into fish food and thralls, soon enough.

## SCALING THE ENCOUNTER

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

**Four PCs:** Remove one of the sahuagin raiders.

**Six PCs:** Add another sahuagin raider.

## ENDING THE ENCOUNTER

Once the PCs defeat the sahuagin, they can turn their attention to the crystal and the captives.

## EXPERIENCE POINTS

The characters receive 185 / 295 experience points each for defeating the sahuagin.

## TREASURE

The sahuagin raiders carry no treasure. The sahuagin priest has an *amulet of physical resolve* +2 and wears *bracers of bold maneuvering*. If the baron is not present, one of the sahuagin raiders wields a *piercing weapon* +2 (low-level only). If he is present, the sahuagin baron wields a *wounding weapon* +2 (high-level only).

## ENCOUNTER 5: “WATERY WAREHOUSE” STATISTICS (LOW LEVEL)

| Sahuagin Raider (Level 4)  | Level 4 Soldier         |
|--|-------------------------|
| Medium natural humanoid (aquatic)  |                         |
| XP 175   |                         |
| Initiative +6 Senses Perception +3; low-light vision   |                         |
| HP 54; Bloodied 27   |                         |
| AC 18; Fortitude 17, Reflex 14, Will 13  |                         |
| Speed 6, swim 6  |                         |
| m Trident (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon   |                         |
| +9 vs. AC; 1d8 + 4 damage, and the target is marked until the end of the sahuagin raider's next turn; see also <i>blood frenzy</i> . |                         |
| R Trident (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon   |                         |
| Ranged 3/6; +9 vs. AC; 1d8 + 4 damage. The sahuagin raider must retrieve its trident before it can throw it again.                   |                         |
| M Opportunistic Strike (immediate reaction; when a flanked enemy shifts; at-will) ♦ Weapon   |                         |
| The sahuagin raider makes a melee basic attack against the enemy.  |                         |
| <b>Blood Frenzy</b>  |                         |
| The sahuagin gains a +1 bonus to attack rolls and a +2 bonus to damage rolls against bloodied enemies.                               |                         |
| Alignment Chaotic Evil Languages Abyssal   |                         |
| Str 20 (+7)  | Dex 14 (+4) Wis 12 (+3) |
| Con 14 (+4)  | Int 10 (+2) Cha 10 (+2) |
| Equipment trident  |                         |

| Sahuagin Guard (Level 4)  | Level 4 Minion          |
|---|-------------------------|
| Medium natural humanoid (aquatic)   |                         |
| XP 44   |                         |
| Initiative +4 Senses Perception +3; low-light vision  |                         |
| HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.   |                         |
| AC 18; Fortitude 16, Reflex 15, Will 14   |                         |
| Speed 6, swim 6   |                         |
| m Trident (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon  |                         |
| +9 vs. AC; 5 damage; see also <i>blood frenzy</i> .   |                         |
| R Trident (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon  |                         |
| Ranged 3/6; +9 vs. AC; 5 damage. The sahuagin guard must retrieve its trident before it can throw it again. |                         |
| <b>Blood Frenzy</b>   |                         |
| The sahuagin gains a +1 bonus to attack rolls and a +2 bonus to damage rolls against bloodied enemies.      |                         |
| Alignment Chaotic evil Languages Abyssal  |                         |
| Str 16 (+5)   | Dex 14 (+4) Wis 12 (+3) |
| Con 14 (+4)   | Int 10 (+2) Cha 10 (+2) |
| Equipment trident   |                         |

| Sahuagin Priest (Level 4)  | Level 4 Artillery       |
|--|-------------------------|
| Medium natural humanoid (aquatic)  |                         |
| XP 175   |                         |
| Initiative +6 Senses Perception +7; low-light vision   |                         |
| HP 46; Bloodied 23   |                         |
| AC 18; Fortitude 15, Reflex 16, Will 17  |                         |
| Speed 6, swim 8  |                         |
| m Trident (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon   |                         |
| +8 vs. AC; 1d8 + 1 damage; see also <i>blood frenzy</i> .  |                         |
| R Trident (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon   |                         |
| Ranged 3/6; +8 vs. AC; 1d8 + 1 damage. The sahuagin priest must retrieve its trident before it can throw it again.   |                         |
| R Water Bolt (standard; at-will)   |                         |
| Ranged 20 (10 out of water); +10 vs. AC; 2d8 + 3 damage (1d8 + 3 out of water); see also <i>blood frenzy</i> .   |                         |
| R Spectral Jaws (standard; recharges when a target saves against this effect)  |                         |
| Ranged 20; spectral shark jaws appear and bite the target; +10 vs. Will; 3d6 + 3 damage, and the target takes ongoing 5 damage and takes a -2 penalty to all defenses (save ends both); see also <i>blood frenzy</i> . |                         |
| <b>Blood Frenzy</b>  |                         |
| The sahuagin gains a +1 bonus to attack rolls and a +2 bonus to damage rolls against bloodied enemies.   |                         |
| Alignment Chaotic evil Languages Abyssal, Common   |                         |
| Skills Intimidate +10  |                         |
| Str 16 (+5)  | Dex 18 (+6) Wis 20 (+7) |
| Con 16 (+5)  | Int 12 (+3) Cha 16 (+5) |
| Equipment trident, holy symbol, kelp robe  |                         |

## ENCOUNTER 5: “WATERY WAREHOUSE” STATISTICS (HIGH LEVEL)

| Sahuagin Priest (Level 6)  |   | Level 6 Artillery  |
|--|---|--------------------|
| Medium natural humanoid (aquatic)  |   | XP 250             |
| <b>Initiative</b> +7   | <b>Senses</b> Perception +8; low-light vision |                    |
| <b>HP</b> 58; <b>Bloodied</b> 29   |   |                    |
| <b>AC</b> 20; <b>Fortitude</b> 17, <b>Reflex</b> 18, <b>Will</b> 19  |   |                    |
| <b>Speed</b> 6, swim 8   |   |                    |
| m <b>Trident</b> (standard; at-will) <b>Weapon</b>   |   |                    |
| +10 vs. AC; 1d8 + 2 damage; see also <i>blood frenzy</i> .   |   |                    |
| R <b>Trident</b> (standard; at-will) <b>Weapon</b>   |   |                    |
| Ranged 3/6; +10 vs. AC; 1d8 + 2 damage. The sahuagin priest must retrieve its trident before it can throw it again.  |   |                    |
| R <b>Water Bolt</b> (standard; at-will)  |   |                    |
| Ranged 20 (10 out of water); +12 vs. AC; 2d8 + 4 damage (1d8 + 4 out of water); see also <i>blood frenzy</i> .   |   |                    |
| R <b>Spectral Jaws</b> (standard; recharges when a target saves against this effect)   |   |                    |
| Ranged 20; spectral shark jaws appear and bite the target; +12 vs. Will; 3d6 + 4 damage, and the target takes ongoing 5 damage and takes a -2 penalty to all defenses (save ends both); see also <i>blood frenzy</i> . |   |                    |
| <b>Blood Frenzy</b>  |   |                    |
| The sahuagin gains a +1 bonus to attack rolls and a +2 bonus to damage rolls against bloodied enemies.   |   |                    |
| <b>Alignment</b> Chaotic evil  | <b>Languages</b> Abyssal, Common              |                    |
| <b>Skills</b> Intimidate +11   |   |                    |
| <b>Str</b> 16 (+6)   | <b>Dex</b> 18 (+7)                            | <b>Wis</b> 20 (+8) |
| <b>Con</b> 16 (+6)   | <b>Int</b> 12 (+4)                            | <b>Cha</b> 16 (+6) |
| <b>Equipment</b> trident, holy symbol, kelp robe   |   |                    |

| Sahuagin Raider   |   | Level 6 Soldier    |
|---|---|--------------------|
| Medium natural humanoid (aquatic)   |   | XP 250             |
| <b>Initiative</b> +7  | <b>Senses</b> Perception +4; low-light vision |                    |
| <b>HP</b> 70; <b>Bloodied</b> 35  |   |                    |
| <b>AC</b> 20; <b>Fortitude</b> 19, <b>Reflex</b> 16, <b>Will</b> 15   |   |                    |
| <b>Speed</b> 6, swim 6  |   |                    |
| m <b>Trident</b> (standard; at-will) <b>Weapon</b>  |   |                    |
| +11 vs. AC; 1d8 + 5 damage, and the target is marked until the end of the sahuagin raider's next turn; see also <i>blood frenzy</i> . |   |                    |
| R <b>Trident</b> (standard; at-will) <b>Weapon</b>  |   |                    |
| Ranged 3/6; +11 vs. AC; 1d8 + 5 damage. The sahuagin raider must retrieve its trident before it can throw it again.                   |   |                    |
| M <b>Opportunistic Strike</b> (immediate reaction; when a flanked enemy shifts; at-will) <b>Weapon</b>                                |   |                    |
| The sahuagin raider makes a melee basic attack against the enemy.   |   |                    |
| <b>Blood Frenzy</b>   |   |                    |
| The sahuagin gains a +1 bonus to attack rolls and a +2 bonus to damage rolls against bloodied enemies.                                |   |                    |
| <b>Alignment</b> Chaotic Evil   | <b>Languages</b> Abyssal                      |                    |
| <b>Str</b> 20 (+8)  | <b>Dex</b> 14 (+5)                            | <b>Wis</b> 12 (+4) |
| <b>Con</b> 14 (+5)  | <b>Int</b> 10 (+3)                            | <b>Cha</b> 10 (+3) |
| <b>Equipment</b> trident  |   |                    |

| Sahuagin Baron (Level 6)   |   | Level 6 Elite Brute (Leader) |
|--|---|------------------------------|
| Large natural humanoid (aquatic)   |   | XP 500                       |
| <b>Initiative</b> +7   | <b>Senses</b> Perception +4; low-light vision |                              |
| <b>Blood Healing (Healing)</b> aura 10; any ally in the aura that starts its turn adjacent to a bloodied enemy regains 5 hit points. |   |                              |
| <b>HP</b> 176; <b>Bloodied</b> 88  |   |                              |
| <b>AC</b> 22; <b>Fortitude</b> 21, <b>Reflex</b> 18, <b>Will</b> 19  |   |                              |
| <b>Saving Throws</b> +2  |   |                              |
| <b>Speed</b> 6, swim 8   |   |                              |
| <b>Action Points</b> 1   |   |                              |
| m <b>Trident</b> (standard; at-will) <b>Weapon</b>   |   |                              |
| Reach 2; +11 vs. AC; 2d4 + 4 damage; see also <i>blood hunger</i> .  |   |                              |
| R <b>Trident</b> (standard; at-will) <b>Weapon</b>   |   |                              |
| Ranged 3/6; +11 vs. AC; 2d4 + 4 damage. The sahuagin baron must retrieve its trident before it can throw it again.                   |   |                              |
| m <b>Claw</b> (standard; at-will)  |   |                              |
| Reach 2; +11 vs. AC; 1d6 + 4 damage, and ongoing 5 damage (save ends); see also <i>blood hunger</i> .                                |   |                              |
| M <b>Baron's Fury</b> (standard; at-will) <b>Weapon</b>  |   |                              |
| The sahuagin baron makes a trident attack and two claw attacks.  |   |                              |
| <b>Blood Hunger</b>  |   |                              |
| The sahuagin baron gains a +2 bonus to attack rolls and a +5 bonus to damage rolls against bloodied enemies.                         |   |                              |
| <b>Alignment</b> Chaotic evil  | <b>Languages</b> Abyssal, Common              |                              |
| <b>Skills</b> Intimidate +11   |   |                              |
| <b>Str</b> 22 (+9)   | <b>Dex</b> 18 (+7)                            | <b>Wis</b> 12 (+4)           |
| <b>Con</b> 18 (+7)   | <b>Int</b> 12 (+4)                            | <b>Cha</b> 16 (+6)           |
| <b>Equipment</b> trident, headdress  |   |                              |

| Sahuagin Guard (Level 4)  |   | Level 4 Minion     |
|---|---|--------------------|
| Medium natural humanoid (aquatic)   |   | XP 44              |
| <b>Initiative</b> +4  | <b>Senses</b> Perception +3; low-light vision |                    |
| <b>HP</b> 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.  |   |                    |
| <b>AC</b> 18; <b>Fortitude</b> 16, <b>Reflex</b> 15, <b>Will</b> 14   |   |                    |
| <b>Speed</b> 6, swim 6  |   |                    |
| m <b>Trident</b> (standard; at-will) <b>Weapon</b>  |   |                    |
| +9 vs. AC; 5 damage; see also <i>blood frenzy</i> .   |   |                    |
| R <b>Trident</b> (standard; at-will) <b>Weapon</b>  |   |                    |
| Ranged 3/6; +9 vs. AC; 5 damage. The sahuagin guard must retrieve its trident before it can throw it again. |   |                    |
| <b>Blood Frenzy</b>   |   |                    |
| The sahuagin gains a +1 bonus to attack rolls and a +2 bonus to damage rolls against bloodied enemies.      |   |                    |
| <b>Alignment</b> Chaotic evil   | <b>Languages</b> Abyssal                      |                    |
| <b>Str</b> 16 (+5)  | <b>Dex</b> 14 (+4)                            | <b>Wis</b> 12 (+3) |
| <b>Con</b> 14 (+4)  | <b>Int</b> 10 (+2)                            | <b>Cha</b> 10 (+2) |
| <b>Equipment</b> trident  |   |                    |

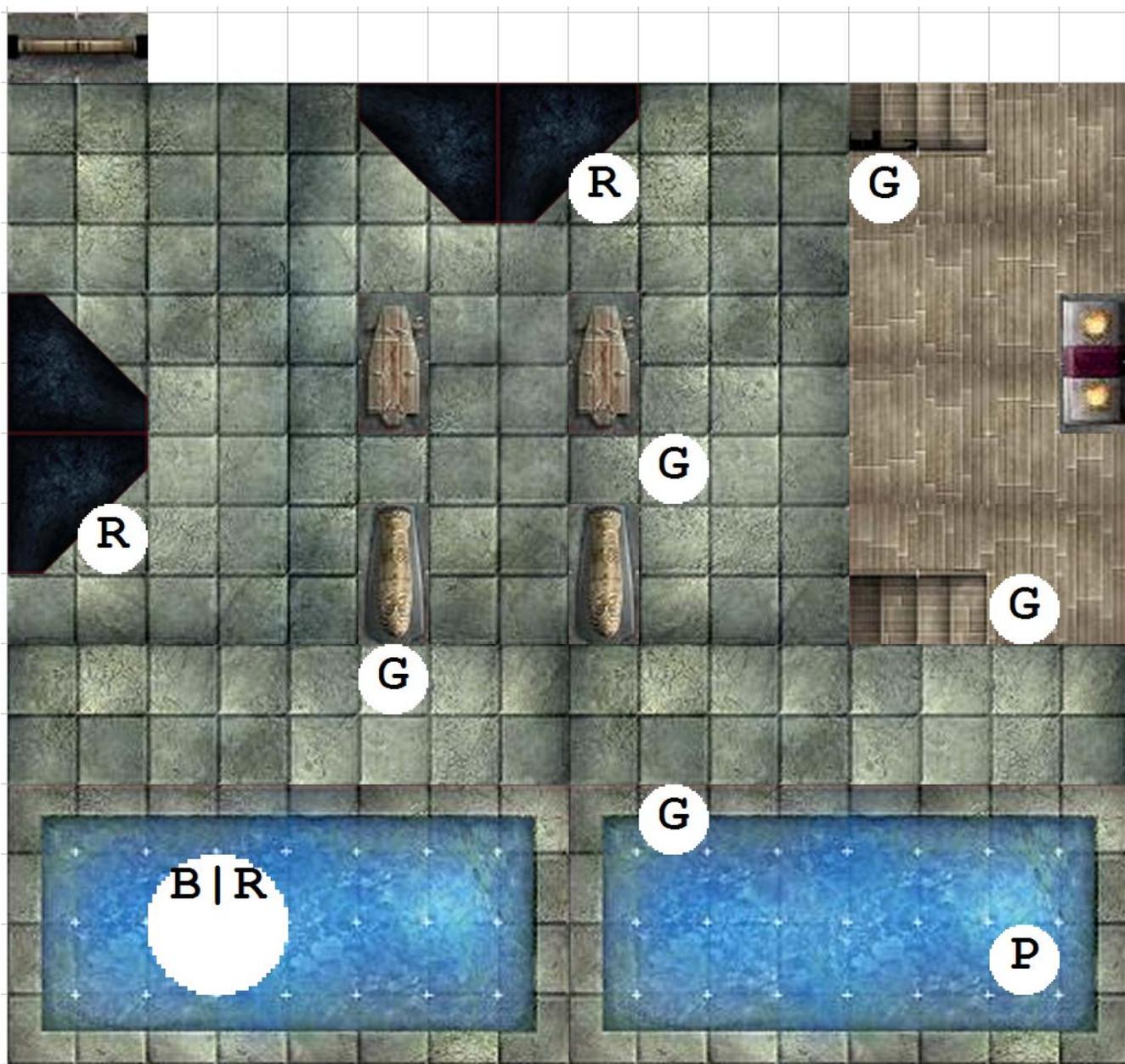
## ENCOUNTER 5: “WATERY WAREHOUSE” MAP

### DT2 ARCANE CORRIDORS

|                        |      |    |
|------------------------|------|----|
| Altar / Floor          | 1x2  | x1 |
| Double Doors / Floor   | 2x1  | x1 |
| Lightning / Floor      | 8x2  | x1 |
| Pool / Hall w/ Statues | 4x8  | x2 |
| Tower Base / Floor     | 8x10 | x1 |

### DT3 HIDDEN CRYPTS

|                           |      |    |
|---------------------------|------|----|
| Alcoves / Floor           | 8x2  | x2 |
| Rack / Coffin             | 2x1  | x2 |
| Sarcophagus / Floor       | 2x1  | x2 |
| Wall / Floor              | 2x2d | x2 |
| Wooden Floor / Floor      | 4x2  | x2 |
| Wooden Platform / Floor   | 4x2  | x1 |
| Wooden Platform 2 / Floor | 4x2  | x1 |



Note: The “B|R” token is the Sahuagin Baron (Large) at high tier and the third Sahuagin Raider (Medium) at low tier.

## ENCOUNTER 6: CRYSTAL CLEAR

### SETUP

The PCs have found the source of the aboleth curse that is plaguing Athkatla. Now, they just need to destroy the master crystal and release the victims of the sahuagin ritual.

*The huge purple gemstone is covered in glowing runes scribed in a mixture of Barazhad [Abyssal] and Espruar [Deep Speech]. The smaller Iomic crystals seem to vibrate in tune with the pulses of light that erupt every few seconds from the master crystal.*

Characters who are carrying tainted Iomic crystals can actually feel their skin crawling every time the master crystal pulses, as if the curse is trying to transform them on the spot. They don't suffer any ill effects from this, but if you have time to play this scene up, go ahead and make them sweat a little bit.

### UNMAKING THE CRYSTAL

There are three ways for the PCs to undo the ritual that the Abolethic Sovereignty has placed upon the people of Athkatla. (Well, four, if you count waiting for everybody who's got one of the tainted crystals to transform into an aboleth servitor and rampage through the city, but presumably that isn't an option the PCs want to pursue.)

One option is for the PCs to let the Cowled Wizards take over from here. The authorities weren't interested when the problem was just about some vanishing street urchins and panhandlers, but the PCs certainly have more than enough evidence now to convince the right people that something serious is going on here. The warehouse is actually warded in such a way that it blocks the Cowled Wizards' ability to sense the use of arcane magic, but the PCs could draw attention to themselves by going outside and casting a bunch of spells, which will bring a Cowled Wizard within 10 minutes to investigate the use of power. Alternatively, they could enlist the help of Sulima Selemchant, who will get her family to send a detachment of Cowled Wizards to deal with the crystal.

The second option is for the PCs to destroy the crystal by main force. This will take a while, and requires the PCs to overcome the crystal's damage resistance with every attack, but they can eventually destroy it, and doing so will end the controlling ritual.

The third, and perhaps most interesting option, would be for the PCs to end the ritual themselves. This makes the most sense if you have at least one PC with

the Ritual Caster feat, but you can stretch it a bit as long as there is at least one PC trained in at least one of the three primary skills needed to unmake the ritual (see below). If the PCs succeeded at the History check in Encounter 3, then the information they need is found within the pages of the book they discovered at Madroon's Curios; if not, they can still surmise the basics with a successful DC 15 Arcana check. Run this like a skill challenge, but don't tell the PCs how many successes or failures they need to unmake the ritual. Your goal is to keep them nervous and make this seem like a tense battle against the evil magic of the Abolethic Sovereignty that could very easily end with all of the characters suffering a horrifying and quite possibly fatal transformation into servitors or worse.

Each round, every character participating in the ritual must make one of the following skill checks:

**Arcana (DC 17 / 18):** The character attempts to attack the magical structure of the master crystal, tearing down the energy lines that make up the aboleths' ritual.

**Endurance (DC 12 / 13):** The character attempts to lend his strength to the other participants in the ritual, absorbing more of the evil energy being emitted by the crystal. This doesn't count as a success or failure, but it lets this character give any other character a +2 bonus on his or her skill check, or absorb the loss of a healing surge that another character would have suffered this round.

**Heal (DC 17 / 18):** The character attempts to undo the harm caused by the ritual, reaching out through the master crystal to touch the bodies and souls of those who have been tainted by the smaller crystals, repairing the damage that the ritual has already done to them. (A character might also channel healing powers through the master crystal in place of making Heal checks.)

**Religion (DC 17 / 18):** The character pits the strength of his faith and the power of his deity against the alien evil of the aboleths, seeking to banish the energies of the Far Realm.

Each time a character fails a skill check, the crystal lashes out at that character with dark energy, inflicting the power of the aboleth curse. The character loses 1 healing surge, and you should describe some kind of mutation that the character suffers (skin turns clammy and pale, mucus begins oozing from the character's eyes, one of the character's limbs is replaced by a fish fin, and so forth - let your creativity run wild). Furthermore, every character participating in the ritual loses 1 healing surge per round to represent the energy that they are pouring into the crystal in an effort to destroy its evil power. A character that runs out of healing surges falls to the ground, gasping for air, in the throes of a full-

blown transformation into an aboleth servitor. (Of course, the other PCs will complete the ritual before this character's transformation is complete.)

Once the PCs have accumulated an appropriate number of successes among the three primary skills (Arcana, Heal, and/or Religion), their attempt to unmake the ritual succeeds. In this case "an appropriate number" is based on the number of PCs who are participating. Two or three successes per character should be sufficient, but if you and the players are having fun, feel free to draw this out for maximum dramatic effect. If things somehow go horribly wrong and all of the PCs are about to be turned into aboleth servitors, then the Cowled Wizards arrive just in the nick of time and complete the process, saving everybody.

Regardless of how they do it, once the crystal has been destroyed, it shatters in a massive explosion of purple light. Dark energy races out from the master crystal, seeking out all of the tainted crystals that still exist within the city, and causing them to crumble to dust (including any crystals still carried by the PCs). Those victims of the curse who are still alive are cured of all the taint effects they have suffered, returning to normal. (This also washes away any minor transformations that the PCs themselves might have suffered during the ritual, of course - they have no lasting deformities or other ill effects, even if they were nearly transformed into servitors.) Each character does, however, still retain a small echo of the energies of the curse, as explained by the *Aboleth Taint* story object. To truly cleanse themselves of the curse, the PCs will have to go to the heart of the Sovereignty's incursion.

## CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

The city authorities are grateful to the PCs for their efforts in ending the threat of the aboleth plague, although of course the official word is that the entire matter was nothing more than a strange disease that cropped up on a few worthless beggars in the Low Market. Such lives are accounted little in Athkatla and the unpleasant matter is quickly forgotten amidst the hustle and bustle of the city's daily life. If the PCs struck a deal with Sulima Selemchant, then she makes sure they get a payment that is delivered by retainers from her House, and each character also receives the *Favor of House Selemchant* story object; otherwise, the payment simply comes from the High Houses collectively. The total amount is the same in either case.

The Cowled Wizards, at the quiet urging of House Selemchant, make a few magic items available to the PCs. Those characters who wish it may have a *weapon*

+2, *suit of armor* +2, or *implement* +2 of any type they wish created for them at the city's expense. (These items do not have any special properties beyond their basic enhancement bonus, but this can be a good option for a character who has not yet had the opportunity to pick up a +2 item of the specific type that she or she prefers.)

If any PC wants to find out how one becomes a member of the Cowled Wizards, or at least how one can become a licensed practitioner of arcane magic in Amn, the good news is that the *Favor of House Selemchant* comes with a limited license to use arcane magic in self-defense or in defense of others. Actually becoming a full-fledged member of the Cowled Wizards, however, is something that the PCs will have to wait to pursue after they have gained a bit more experience.

Finally, the PCs are asked if they would be interested in helping the High Houses further investigate the source of the tainted Iomic crystals. There's only one place that these crystals could have come from, and that's the mining colony of Ioma Town itself. The authorities need to gather some more information before they will be ready to launch an expedition, because they don't want to tip off whoever might be behind the recent thefts of crystals until they are truly ready to strike. They promise that the Cowled Wizards will provide the PCs with transportation to Ioma Town when the time comes.

Because they have come in contact with one of the master crystals, the PCs have an extra incentive to want to continue their investigation. Each character receives the *Aboleth Taint* story object, which continues the Major Quest that began with CORE1-3 *Sense of Wonder* and concludes in CORE1-7 *Sovereign of the Mines*.

## TREASURE

The PCs get a cash reward of 75 / 100 gp each, whether from House Selemchant in particular or from the city authorities in general. They also gain access to the "generic item" treasure bundles (F, G, and H) if they earned the *Favor of House Selemchant*.

## EXPERIENCE POINTS

For destroying the master crystal and undoing the ritual, regardless of how it is accomplished, each PC earns a Minor Quest reward of 20 / 35 XP.

## REWARDS SUMMARY

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

## IMPORTANT DM INFORMATION

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

## EXPERIENCE POINTS

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

### Encounter 1: The Low Market

175 / 250 XP

### Encounter 2: Crystal Unclear

0 / 0 XP

### Encounter 3: The Search

105 / 150 XP

### Encounter 4: Shadow Thieves

155 / 230 XP

### Encounter 5: Watery Warehouse

185 / 295 XP

### Encounter 6: Crystal Clear

20 / 35 XP

### Total Possible Experience

640 / 960 XP

## TREASURE

Each PC receives treasure in the form of gold pieces as well as one share from a treasure bundle. The treasure bundle may give the PC more gold, a magic item, or some other item of value. Each player makes one selection for their character; players may choose the same treasure bundle. Mark the one-letter bundle ID on the tracking form next to any character that selects a bundle; note that it is possible (and likely) that some

characters will not select a bundle for each session of play.

If characters buy or sell magic items or other gear during the adventure (or pay for services) add or subtract that amount from the total gold the PC receives at the end of the adventure. If a player selects an option that gives their character more gold, add that to the gold all characters receive, and ensure you enter the total amount of gold gained (minus any expenditures) online. You can have a negative number and enter that negative online. PCs receive 20% of a magic item's purchase price for any item they sell.

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

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

### Gold per PC

100 / 150 gp

(Encounter 4: 25 / 50 gp, Encounter 6: 75 / 100 gp)

### EACH PC SELECTS ONE OF THE FOLLOWING

**Bundle A:** *piercing weapon +2\** (low-level version only, AV, 7<sup>th</sup> level)

Found in Encounter 5

**Bundle B:** *orb of crystalline terror +2\** (AV, 8<sup>th</sup> level)

Found in Encounter 4

**Bundle C:** *amulet of physical resolve +2\** (AV, 7<sup>th</sup> level)

Found in Encounter 5

**Bundle D:** *bracers of bold maneuvering\** (AV, 8<sup>th</sup> level)

Found in Encounter 5

**Bundle E:** *wounding weapon +2\** (high-level version only, AV, 9<sup>th</sup> level)

Found in Encounter 5

**Bundle F:** *magic weapon +2* (PH, 6<sup>th</sup> level)

Found in Encounter 6

**Bundle G:** *magic armor +2* (PH, 6<sup>th</sup> level)

Found in Encounter 6

**Bundle H:** *magic implement* +2 (PH, 6<sup>th</sup> level)

Found in Encounter 6

**Potion plus Gold:** If a player doesn't want to select one of the bundles listed above for their character, they can choose to add a *potion of healing* plus 75 / 200 gp to their total gold. The player should write the potion gained on their adventure log.

**More Gold:** If a player doesn't want to select one of the bundles listed above for their character, they can choose to add 125 / 250 gp to their total gold.

## STORY AWARDS

Award these if the PC completes the condition for the award in the adventure. Pass out certificates to the players for their story awards. Make sure to mark the story award codes next to each character that earned them on the tracking form.

### **CORE08 Favor of House Selemchant**

For your assistance to one of their favorite daughters, the nobles of House Selemchant regard you favorably. As the most powerful of the High Houses of Amn, House Selemchant is certainly in a position to make your future visits to their nation more or less pleasant. The House also controls the Cowled Wizards, and although you are not a full-fledged member of that organization, you have been granted a limited license allowing you to practice arcane magic in Amn without running afoul of the law. You are restricted to using arcane magic only in self-defense, in defense of others, or in furtherance of the goals of House Selemchant. Additional opportunities to increase your influence with House Selemchant and the Cowled Wizards may occur in future adventures.

### **CORE09 Aboleth Taint**

You have put a stop to a powerful ritual that was somehow connected to the Abolethic Sovereignty and that was transmitted via corrupted Iomic crystals. However, in doing so you were exposed to the magical energies of the ritual itself. What effects this might have on you are unknown, but you do radiate a faint unnatural aura similar to that of an aboleth servitor. No ritual or power can remove this taint from you at the present time. The authorities of Athkatla have asked you to be ready to investigate the possible source of the tainted crystals in the future, by visiting the mining colony of Ioma Town. This is the continuation of a Major Quest, which began in CORE1-3 *Sense of Wonder* and will be concluded in CORE1-7 *Sovereign of the Mines*.

## ADVENTURE QUESTIONS

Mark the answers to the following adventure questions on the tracking form.

### **1. Were the PCs able to put a stop to the ritual?**

- Yes, the PCs defeated the sahuagin and destroyed the master crystal.
- No, the PCs located the warehouse, but were defeated by the sahuagin.
- No, the PCs were defeated by the Shadow Thieves or never located the warehouse for some other reason.
- No, the PCs were defeated by the cursechanged beggar.

### **2. Did the PCs earn the Favor of House Selemchant?**

- Yes, the PCs and Sulima Selemchant established a very friendly relationship.
- Yes, the PCs and Sulima did not get along very well, but they still worked out an agreement.
- No, the PCs and Sulima were not able to come to any sort of an agreement with one another.
- No, the PCs did something else to draw the ire of House Selemchant and so did not earn the favor.

### **3. How do you (the DM) rate this adventure? (Please also feel free to e-mail specific feedback to the author or the campaign staff.)**

- Five stars (best possible rating)
- Four stars (very good)
- Three stars (average)
- Two stars (below average)
- One star (really awful)

### **4. How do the players rate this adventure? (You can average their individual ratings or come up with whatever other method works for everyone.)**

- Five stars (best possible rating)
- Four stars (very good)
- Three stars (average)
- Two stars (below average)
- One star (really awful)

## NEW RULES

### **Amulet of Physical Resolve +2** Level 7

*This striking amulet wards you against effects that leave you physically debilitated.*

Lvl 7 +2 2,600 gp

**Item Slot:** Neck

**Enhancement:** Fortitude, Reflex, and Will

**Property:** Gain a +2 item bonus to saving throws against effects with the poison keyword and effects that render you weakened, slowed, or immobilized.

### **Bracers of Bold Maneuvering** Level 8

*These slick cuffs help maintain your defensive guard as you move around wary foes.*

Lvl 8 3,400 gp

**Item Slot:** Arms

**Power (Encounter):** Minor Action. Gain a +4 power bonus to AC against opportunity attacks until the end of your next turn.

### **Orb of Crystalline Terror +2** Level 8

*The screaming faces of past victims roil within this dread orb, striking fear into your enemy's heart.*

Lvl 8 +2 3,400 gp

**Implement (Orb)**

**Enhancement:** Attack rolls and damage rolls

**Critical:** +1d6 damage per plus, or +1d8 damage per plus if the attack has the fear keyword.

**Power (Daily ♦ Fear):** Free Action. Use this power when an attack with this orb hits the target's Will defense. The target takes a -2 penalty to all defenses (save ends).

### **Piercing Weapon +2** Level 7

*This point of this spear extends, digs deep into an enemy's flesh, and leaves a weeping wound.*

Lvl 7 +2 2,600 gp

**Weapon:** Spear

**Enhancement:** Attack rolls and damage rolls

**Critical:** +1d6 damage per plus

**Power (Daily):** Free Action. Use this power when you hit a target with this weapon. The target takes ongoing damage equal to your Dexterity modifier + this weapon's enhancement bonus (save ends).

### **Wounding Weapon +2** Level 9

*This weapon tears through an enemy's flesh, creating wounds that bleed profusely.*

Lvl 9 +2 4,200 gp

**Weapon:** Axe, Bow, Crossbow, Heavy Blade, Light Blade, Spear

**Enhancement:** Attack rolls and damage rolls

**Critical:** +1d6 damage per plus

**Property:** When an attack with this weapon deals untyped ongoing damage, the target of the attack takes a penalty to the saving throw equal to this weapon's enhancement bonus.

**Power (Daily):** Free Action. Use this power when you hit with the weapon. The target also takes ongoing 5 damage (save ends).