

A woman with her hair in a braid, wearing chainmail armor, is shown in profile aiming a bow. The background is a blurred forest. A dark grey decorative frame with a white border is overlaid on the top half of the image, containing the title and subtitle.

WATERDEEP MONSTER SQUAD

Power Plays II

Monster Squad

Monster Squad is a short scenario designed for a party of four characters of level 2 or 3. The characters are hired to protect a noble's wilderness holdings. His holdings have been under attack by monsters that are not normally found in this region. In Act One, the characters have been hired and are travelling from Waterdeep to the noble's walled compound on the edge of the Westwood forest. In Act Two, the characters defend the compound from a nighttime raid. In the final act, the characters go on the offensive to determine who is behind the attacks.

As written, the characters are assumed to be based in Waterdeep, but this can easily be changed to any town or city. Monster Squad is a sequel to Guard Duty, but can be played as stand-alone adventure. The adventure does provide hooks for future adventures and is part of the Power Plays story arc that will take characters to level five.

by EBrun

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Monster Squad

“That’s how you tell a merc is dead; he just stops collecting paychecks.”

— Mercedes Lackey, *By the Sword*

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Introduction

The Talmost family has a storied past in Waterdeep’s nobility, famous as clothiers and furriers. They operate hunting and trapping operations throughout the region. The family uses Waterdeep’s Bronze Talons mercenary company to provide security for the family holdings.

Over the past few weeks, an increase in the number of attacks on the Talmost’s hunting and trapping operations near the Westwood forest (3-4 days from Waterdeep) is threatening to disrupt the Talmost’s businesses. Even more concerning, the attacks are perpetrated by monsters that are not normally found in the region.

Jos Hawkwood, the captain of the Bronze Talons, suspects that this is a deliberate attempt to either disrupt trade or make the Bronze Talons look bad and has hired the characters to support the Westwood compound and determine the cause of the attacks.

This adventure is divided into three acts. **On the Road Again** covers the character’s travels to the Talmost compound on the edge of the Westwood Forest. In Act Two, **Seige**, the characters reach the compound and help defend it from a nighttime attack. During the final act, **Showdown**, the characters attempt to track the attackers and put an end to the threat.

This adventure is designed to stand by itself. However, the following **DM’s Guild** resources can help you round out a campaign based in Waterdeep.

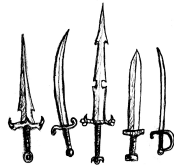
- Faction Folio: Waterdeep DM’s City Guide
- Faction Folio: Waterdeep Players’ City Guide (free)
- City Encounters
- Road’s End Robbery
- Guard Duty

Monster Squad is the second adventure in the **Power Plays** story arc, but can easily be run as a stand-alone. **Guard Duty** provided a start to this campaign by introducing the characters to Waterdeep and the start of a conflict between major players in the city. The broader story arc is described in the **“What’s Next?”** section at the end of the adventure.

Getting Started

This scenario starts a few days after the end of **Guard Duty**. If the characters played that adventure, start with them relaxing at their favorite tavern (possibly the Spyglass Tavern). Give them a few minutes to share (in character), what they have been up to the past few days. Foster good storytelling by giving an appropriate reward. For example, if they describe a few nights of carousing, give them a handful of gold pieces in gambling winnings, a female merchant contact, and her husband as an enemy. Once they are done sharing, a runner sent by Mac Bondo (a gruff Zhentarim agent) approaches them and asks them to meet with Captain Jos Hawkwood at the Bronze Talons guildhall. Hawkwood will explain the problems at Talmost compound. He expects that it will take roughly a tenday for him to muster additional mercenaries to secure the compound. He will pay the characters 60GP each if they can leave today to support the garrison. He adds that he will pay a bonus (an additional 50gp each) if they can determine who, or what, is behind the attacks.

If the characters have not played through **Guard Duty**, you have two options to begin this scenario. The first option is to use the same set-up as described earlier, but have the runner be from a contact in the city that they know. The second option is to start in the middle of the action. The characters have already accepted the job and are on the road to the compound. In this case, have each player tell a “road story” to introduce their character’s past to the rest of the group.



Act One: On the Road Again

The characters have been traveling for a couple of days and just left the small town of Amphail that morning. They have left the main trade route (The Long Road) and are now traveling on a much more rustic – and shoddy – road. Have the characters roll a perception check. The results don’t really matter, but it will keep the players guessing...

As the sun begins to set, you round a bend in the road and spot an overturned wagon ahead. All seems quiet, and you do not see anyone near the wagon or on the sides of the roadway.

If the characters approach, have them make appropriate rolls (e.g. stealth, additional perception rolls, etc). When they get closer, they see three Halfling bodies lying on the ground around the wagon. Two of the bodies – an older male and a young boy – appear to have been killed by crossbow bolts. The third, an older female, has had her throat slit. The wagon has been emptied – all that is left are a few broken boxes and other debris. They also notice three rectangular human sized holes dug along the side of the road.

A successful **investigation** check (DC 10) reveals that the rectangular holes seem to too perfectly

dug to be done by shovel. Additionally, the character(s) find woven brush that was likely used to cover someone hiding in the holes.

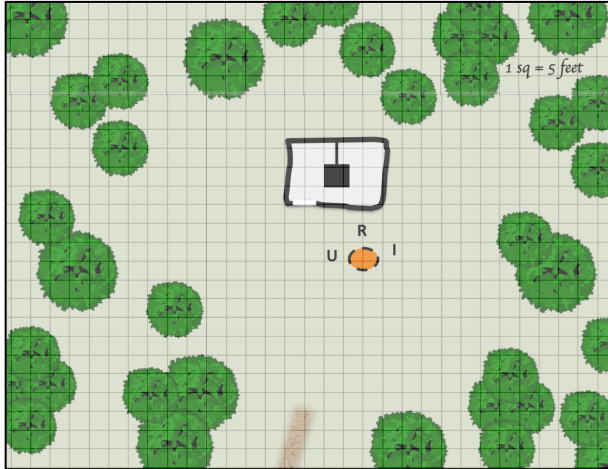
Finally, the characters find a fairly obvious trail of trampled undergrowth leading away from the road. A **survival** check (DC 10) reveals that the attackers have led a pony or mule away from the road. If the check succeeds (DC 15) the characters know that there were at least three human-sized attackers. A (DC 20) check indicates that these attackers appear to be heavily armored.

A **perception** check (DC 15) also allows the characters to realize that something is moving through the trees and tall grass on the other side of the road from the trail. An **owlbear** smells the blood of the dead and is observing the characters, trying to decide if the characters are planning on stealing its dinner. If the characters leave the site (either along the road, or trail), the owlbear will wait a while before retrieving the bodies. If the characters approach the owlbear or appear to be removing or eating the bodies, it will attack.

If the characters choose to follow the attackers, the trail is easy to find. If they decide not to, skip the rest of this section.

After an hour of following the trail, the characters will hear arguing ahead. One voice – a bit nasally and high pitched – is arguing to, “kill the girl and be done with it.” A second voice – gruff and deep – insists that, “she will bring a good price if we sell her to the Drow.”

These criminals are not overly cautious and the characters can get within sight (and long missile weapon range) with a **stealth** check against a DC of 12. See the map on the next page for the layout of their encampment.



The leader of the criminals, **Rowan Stonebender**, is a **Black Earth Priest**. He is accompanied by **Ungred** and **Igan** (use **guard** statistics). Rowan, Ungred, and Igan are survivors of the Cult of the Black Earth. Since the cult's destruction near Red Larch, these three have lived as bandits – preying on travelers along the Long Road. They are using a dilapidated two-room cottage as their hideout. When the characters arrive, the three criminals are sitting around a fire in front of the cottage.

Rowan Stonebender - Human

AC 17 (splint), Hit Points 37, Speed 30 ft,
STR 15(+2) DEX 11(+0) CON 14(+2)
INT 12(+1) WIS 10(+0) CHA 16(+3)

Skills: Intimidation+5, Religion+3, Persuasion+5

Senses: passive perception 10

Challenge 3 (700xp)

Spellcasting: 5th- level spellcaster using Charisma (spell save DC 13, +5 to hit with spell attacks).

Cantrips: acid splash, blade ward, light, mending, mold earth

1st level (4slots / **1 slot available**): earth tremor, expeditious retreat, shield.

2nd level (3 slots): shatter, spider climb

3rd level (2 slots / **1 slot available**): slow

Actions.

Multiattack: The priest makes two melee attacks.

Glave: Melee Weapon Attack: +4 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. Hit: 7(1d10+2) slashing damage.

Reactions.

Unyielding. When the priest is subjected to an effect that would move it, knock it prone, or both, it can use its reaction to be neither moved nor knocked prone.

Aftermath

If interrogated, the criminals will identify the drow as Xaret Nightshade, a trader in illicit goods that visits Amphail monthly. A small Halfling girl is bound and gagged in one corner of the back room. The girl, **Frocey Brambledale**, is still in shock from the brutal slaying of her family. If the characters show compassion, she will reveal that her family was traveling to Amphail to sell some of their harvest.

If the characters want to take the girl to Amphail, remind them of the urgent nature of their mission. If they still delay, adjust the remaining sections – it is likely that the compound will be overrun if the characters are not present.

The criminals are each carrying d20 silver pieces and d10 gp. Rowan also is carrying two small rubies (100gp each) in a secret pocket near his waist. The criminals have a small cart with two horses. The cottage contains a healer's kit and a variety of grains and vegetables, a small crate of horseshoes, a crate of farming tools, and four bolts of cloth. At market, these goods could fetch 35 gp. The cottage also holds a small lockbox with 300 cp, 60 sp, 20 gp, a Potion of Giant Strength, and a Potion of Healing.

Experience

Black Earth Priest 700xp

Guards 25 each

Owlbear 700xp

Story Award 500xp (If the characters take the girl with them to the compound.)

Note: The characters should be third level by the time they reach the compound.

Act 2: Siege

The characters arrive at the Talmost estate late in the afternoon. The **Talmost Estate** is approximately 115 feet on a side and sits in a large clearing. The Talmost's have cleared approximately 150 feet to the tree line in each direction. The walls are 20 feet tall and ringed by a narrow walkway to serve as battlements. Each gatehouse is two stories tall (even with the walls) and the tower stands 30 feet tall with crossbow slits facing in each direction. The internal structures are single story buildings, with the exception of the two-story bedchambers.

Read the following.

As late afternoon begins to turn to evening, the road you are following approaches the open gates of a stone-walled estate. You hear the sounds of construction ahead. The land around the estate has been cleared in all directions. To the west of the estate, a large body of some creature lays dead, peppered with crossbow bolts and arrows. The damaged wall and positioning of the clawed feet, hook-ended arms, and beak-mouthed head, shows that the body was dragged from the wall to its current location.

As you near the gatehouse, two armored men approach you and you spot another guard standing watch in the corner tower.

The two men that approach the party are Rhys Horne, the captain of the Bronze Talons detachment (use **Veteran** stats) and Jayden, a Bronze Talon (use **Guard** stats). Rhys is pleased to see that reinforcements were sent, but was hoping for more. He explains that the troubles started with the harassment of hunters and trappers employed by Talmost. A few days ago, the problems escalated and have now become nightly attacks. They have lost over a dozen men. Only Rhys, Dharamst Talmost (use **knight** stats), six Bronze Talons (Jayden, Justus, Grey, Kolby, Asher and Darrien – use **Guard** stats), three

hunters (Finlay, Sebastian, and Kieran – use **Scout** stats) remain to defend the estate.

All of the defenders look tired, bloodied and desperate. It is obvious that they are worried that the characters will not provide enough reinforcements.

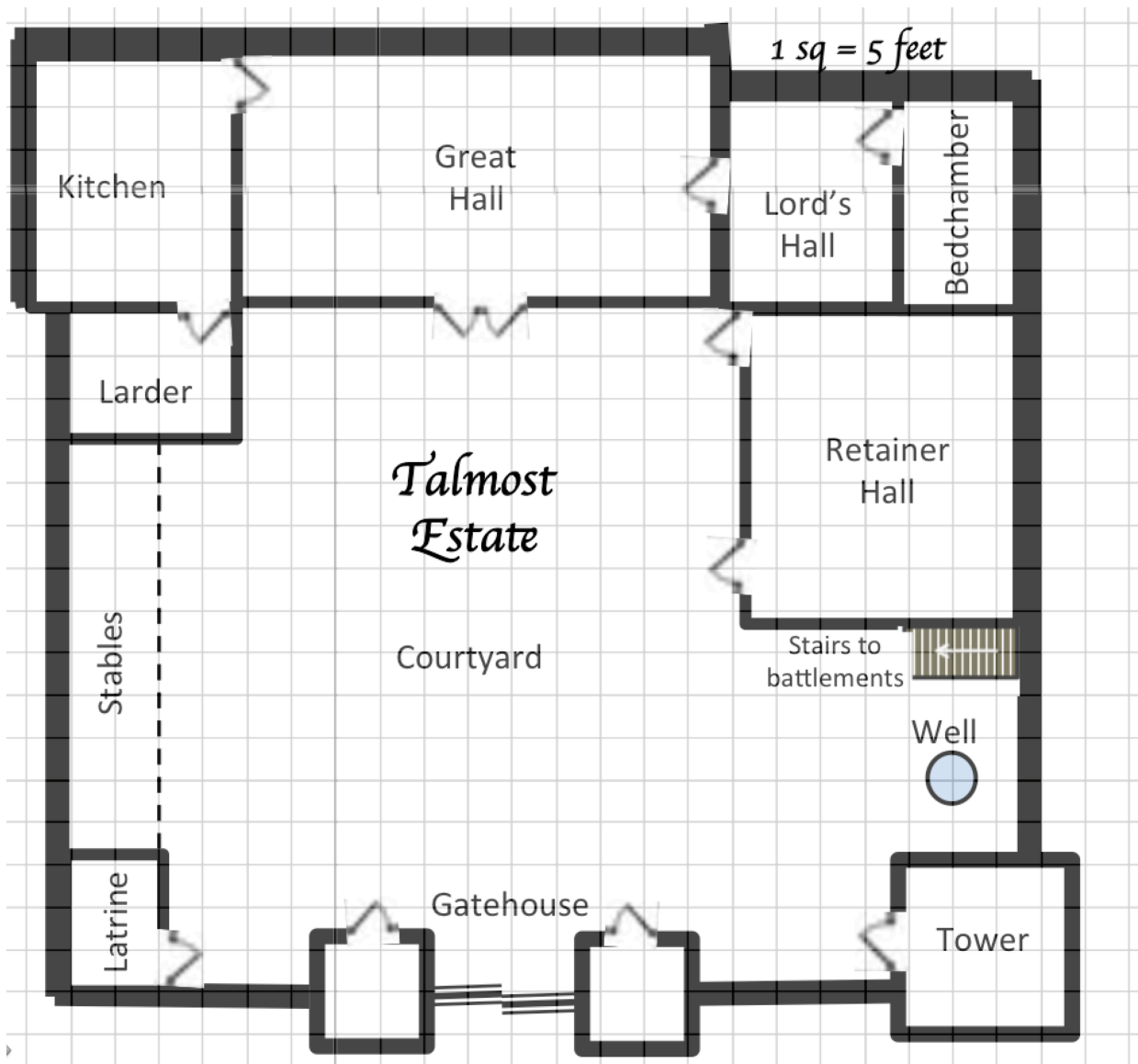
When Rhys introduces the characters to Dharamst Talmost, he is obviously irritated that the reinforcements were so small. Rhys tells the characters to stow their belongings in the retainer hall and get some rest.

If the characters explore the estate, Dharamst stays in the Lord's Hall with his wife (Layla) and young son (Rohan). Layla will take charge of Frocey if the characters brought her with them. They eat a simple dinner in the Great Hall, prepared by Kieran, before Rhys calls everyone into the courtyard at dusk.

Rhys informs the assembled group that they will be sleeping on the battlements again tonight, with a two-hour watch rotation on each wall. The characters are assigned to the west wall. Dharamst and his hunters will watch the north wall. Rhys, Jayden and Justus are stationed along the gate and the remaining Bronze Talons watch the eastern wall.

Have the characters determine their watch order (four watch periods) and roll four perception checks for the night. Record the value for each check. These will be used during the encounter below.

All is quiet until early in the third watch. Check the perception roll for the character on watch. If it is successful (**DC 12**), the character on watch notices the attack before it starts. He is able to wake his companions and take an action during the first round of the encounter. The companions can begin acting on the second round. If the check is failed, the character on watch acts in the second round and companions can act in the third round.



Attack!

The attacking forces consist of two **Quagoth Thonots**, **Xaret Nightshade** (see stats in the **Showdown** section, page 9), and two **rust monsters**. A table summarizing the attack is included on the next page

One Quagoth Thonot attacks from the west and one from the east. Before attacking, each **Quagoth Thonot** casts **mirror image** prior to charging the wall. The characters hear yelling from the other walls and see four stone-grey ape-like humanoids break from the tree line in a

ferocious charge towards them. It takes two rounds for the monsters to reach the base of the wall. At the end of the second round, they cast **enlarge** on themselves (growing both themselves and their duplicates). In their enlarged forms, they can scale the wall in one turn and still make one claw attack. If the characters need help with the attackers on their wall, Dharamst will come to their aid at a dramatic point in the combat. Rhys and the other combatants are engaged on the eastern wall or front gate.

When the **Quagoth Thonots** begin their attack, **Xaret Nightshade**, in the form of a small black cat, will sprint to the gatehouse and climb the wall unobserved by the guards on the south wall. By the end of the third round, Rhys has left to help with fighting on the eastern wall. During rounds four and five, Xaret changes into his Drow form and incapacitates Jayden and Justus with his poisoned hand crossbow. During rounds six and seven, two **rust monsters** charge from the tree line as Xaret opens the gate. Once the gate is open, Xaret returns to his cat form and flees.

Use the characters' previous rolled perception checks (**DC 20**) in round six to notice the charging rust monsters and (**DC 15**) in round seven to notice the opening gate. It is unlikely (**DC 25**) that the characters will notice Xaret. If Xaret ever feels endangered, he will cast darkness and turn into a spider to hide in cracks until he is able to safely flee.

On round eight, the **rust monsters** enter the courtyard and begin rampaging for metal!

Combat Summary

Round	
1	Quagoth Thonots (with mirror image) break from the tree line to attack the eastern and western walls.
2	Quagoths reach the base of the walls and casts enlarge.
3	Quagoths scale the wall and makes one claw attack. Rhys leaves the gate to help on the eastern wall.
4	Quagoths' continue attack. Xaret attacks the two guards remaining at the gate.
5	Quagoths' continue attack. Dharamst aids PCs as needed. Xaret completes attack.
6	Quagoths' continue attack. Xaret begins opening the gate and Rust Monsters charge.
7	Quagoths' continue attack. The Rust Monsters are at the open gate.
8	Xaret flees and the Rust Monsters rampage in the courtyard.
9+	Quagoth's Enlarge spell expires. Fight continues...

Aftermath

Rhys, one hunter, and three guards were killed during the combat. It takes about ten minutes to revive Jayden and Justus after combat. Narrate the damage to the courtyard based on how long the rust monsters were able to rampage before being put down.

It would be in poor taste to attempt to pilfer loot from the dead hunter and guards. If a character tries, have them roll sleight of hand (**DC 15**) to get away with it. The hunter and three guards each have d10 gold pieces and d20 silver pieces. Rhys has d20 gold and a small garnet worth 100 gp.

Experience

- Quagoth Thonot 700 xp
- Rust Monster 100 xp each



Act 3: Showdown

The next morning, Dharamst meets with the survivors in the courtyard. The ragged group consists of the PCs, two hunters (Finlay and Sebastian – **scout**), three guards (Jayden, Justus and Asher – **guard**), Dharamst Talmost and his family. Talmost is insistent that the PCs track and put a stop to the attackers. The estate can't face another night raid without being overrun.

The tracks to the south, east, and west are all easy to find. They loop around and connect about $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile north of the estate and then continue northeast together. A survival check (**DC 15**) shows that the group consisted of two 4-legged creatures, 2 heavy bipeds with large clawed feet (Quagoth) and one lighter humanoid.

After two miles of travel through thick forest, the trail crosses an overgrown clearing. The ruins of a small cottage sit in the middle of the clearing – the roof and at least one wall have crumbled away. If the characters search the ruins, they find the remnants of a campsite with charred rodent bones in a cold fire pit. A **survival (DC 10)** check shows that the camp is likely weeks, if not months, old.

After another mile, the trail continues along a narrow pathway up a steep rocky outcrop. A rutted wagon trail heads off to the southeast. A **survival check (DC 10)** allows a character to determine that there are no signs of recent use of the wagon trail.

The pathway twists upwards for 200 feet before taking a sharp turn around a large boulder. The trail continues past a narrow cave entrance (6 ft wide x 4 ft tall) 100 feet from the boulder. A human head, complete with reddish brown hair (shoulder length...if there were shoulders) and shaggy beard is impaled on an upright spear 20 feet from the cave entrance. The yellowish-red eyes of the head stare unblinkingly down the path towards the boulder.

If the characters want to avoid the head, it is possible to leave the trail – either above or below - and scramble across the rocky slope. Ask the characters to determine how much space they give the head. An **Acrobatics (DC 10)** check is needed to successfully navigate the slope. A failed check means that the character tumble either back to the pathway, landing directly in front of the head, or (if crossing below), 1d4 x 10 feet down. Sliding characters take 1d4-1 points of damage per 10 feet. Each character crossing above the head should also make a **stealth check (DC 15)**. A failed check means that debris slides down the slope and awakens the head.

As soon as any humanoid comes within 15 feet of the head, its eyes shift to focus on the creature. A bloated and cracked black tongue licks its purplish lips before it loudly moans in a hoarse voice, “**Turn back...only...your death...awaits ahead...**”

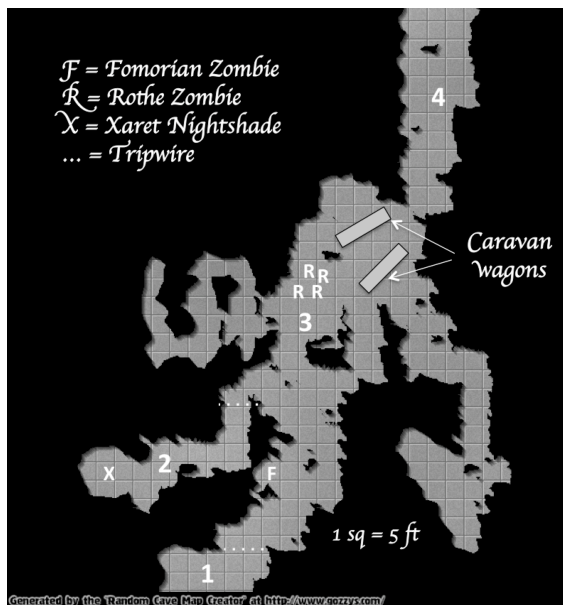
Every other round while humanoids are within range, the head moans additional threats.

- **Ulgath the undying...will tear...your arms...from your body.**
- **Trespassers...shall perish.**
- **Your head...will be...upon a spike.**



The Cave

The cave is dark, damp, and permeated with the stale stench of decay. The occupants starting points are shown on the map below. If the head bellows a warning, none of the occupants are surprised. If the head does not provide a warning, Xaret is only surprised if the party can get past the Fomorian Zombie without it howling in rage. A larger map of the cave is found on page 13.



1. Entry

The entrance to the cave widens to 25 feet and a height of 20 feet. Light quickly fades as the characters move away from the entrance. A **tripwire** (Investigation DC 10, Dexterity DC 15 to disable, or just step over it) will drop a 10ft x 10 ft net from the ceiling. A **strength** (DC 15) check can be made each round to free a character or two rounds to cut free with any sharp edged weapon. The **Fomorian Zombie** will charge into combat with a roar when the party passes the tripwire (or trips the net trap). **Xaret**, in the form of a **giant spider** will also charge into combat if previously alerted. Xaret takes 2 rounds to get from his chamber to the tripwire area. (*Combat Note: Xaret enters combat as a giant spider. When dropped to 0 hp, he will revert and flee – using his second shape change if available.*) See aftermath for loot!

Fomorian Zombie – Huge giant, undead

AC 14, Hit Points 67 Speed 30 ft,
STR 18(+4) DEX 11(+0) CON 15(+2)
INT 6(-2) WIS 8(-1) CHA 5(-3)

Immunities: Poison, exhaustion

Senses: darkvision 120 ft, passive perception 18

Challenge 2 (450xp)

Undead Fortitude: If damage reduces the zombie to 0 hp, it must make a constitution check with DC 5+damage taken, unless damage is radiant or a critical hit. Upon success, the zombie is reduced to 1 HP instead.

Appearance. The fomorian stands 12 ft tall. It's dark form is twisted, lumpy, and bloated. It wears rotting and ragged furs.

Actions.

The fomorian makes one attack with his greatclub.

Greatclub: Melee Weapon Attack: +6 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. Hit: 17(1d10+2) bludgeoning.

Xaret Nightsshade – Dark Elf Druid, Circle of the Moon

AC 12 (16 with barkskin), Hit Points 26, Speed 30 ft,
STR 10(+0) DEX 14(+2) CON 13(+0)
INT 12(+1) WIS 15(+2) CHA 12(+1)

Skills: Stealth +4

Senses: darkvision 120ft, passive perception 14

Challenge 2 (450xp)

Fey Ancestry: advantage on saving throws against charm, can't be put to sleep.

Sunlight Sensitivity: disadvantage on attack and perception rolls while in sunlight.

Innate Spellcasting: Charisma (DC 11), at will: dancing lights, 1/day: darkness, faerie fire.

Spellcasting. 4th-level spellcaster, Wisdom (DC 12), +4 to hit with spell attacks.

Cantrips (at will): druidcraft, produce flame, shillelagh

1st level (4 slots): entangle, longstrider, speak with animals, thunderwave

2nd level (3 slots): animal messenger, barkskin)

Appearance: black skinned with pale copper hair pulled into a ponytail. Steal nose ring. Staff carved with skulls.

Actions.

Quarterstaff. Melee Weapon, +2 to hit (+4 w shillelagh), reach 5ft, one target. Hit: 3(1d6) or 4(1d8) sith shillelagh or two hands, bludgeoning damage.

Hand Crossbow: Ranged Weapon, +4 to hit, 30/120, Hit: 5 (1d6+2) piercing plus poison. DC 13 Con saving or poisoned for 1 hr. If fails by 5 or more, unconscious until shaken or damaged.

2. Xaret's Quarters

This small side cavern serves as Xaret's living quarters. A tripwire (**DC 10** to find and remove) drops acid in a 10 ft square across the entrance. Anyone with exposed skin takes **6 (2d6)** points of acid damage. Clothing and armor is stained a yellow-green color, affecting appearance only.

The alcove to the south holds two wood crates and a large barrel of water. The crates contain three weeks worth of rations for one person.

A raised sleeping pad is located at the end of the cavern. An explorer's pack and two pouches lay near the pad. The first pouch contains 23 gp, 15 sp, a quartz stone (30gp), a bone whistle (3 cp), and a collection of six colored hair ribbons. The second pouch contains a flask (Drow Poison, 10 doses) and a quill and ink set. A scroll tube, change of clothes, and silver hairbrush (4 gp) also sit near the sleeping pad. See **aftermath** for contents of the scroll tube.

3. Cavern

This large cavern smells strongly of decay. Four deep **rothe zombies** (muskox like creatures, use **rhinoceros** stats if you don't have Volo's Guide to Monsters.) mill about the cavern. They can be controlled by the bone whistle (area 2) and simple hand gestures. Two caravans, each consisting of three connected wagons, sit facing area 4. Five of the wagons hold large metal cages, four of which are empty. The fifth cage holds two young **Quaggoths** (half HP and damage). The final wagon is packed with crates (see **aftermath** for contents).

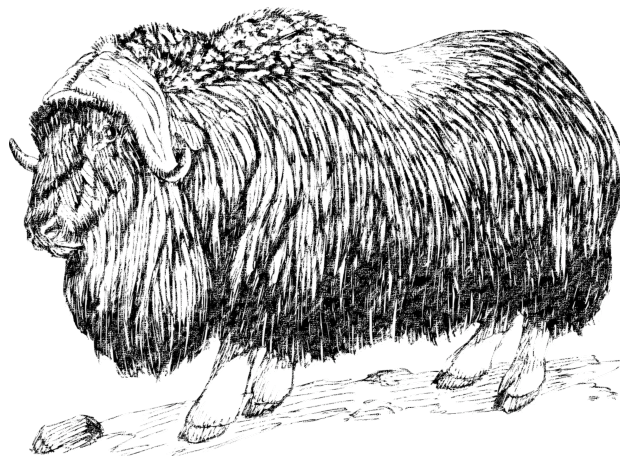
The two young male **Quaggoths** (Shurak and Tharan) understand undercommon. They willingly explain that the Drow purchased them and their parents from the slave pens at Mantol-Derith (in the Underdark). He forces their parents to do things by threatening the kids.

The tunnel to the east ends in a cavern holding six moldy bedrolls. Four large iron rings are bolted to the walls. The rings appear to be able to secure multiple chains and manacles to keep

prisoners from escaping this area. It is currently unoccupied.

4. Tunnel

This wide tunnel leads off into the darkness at a shallow downward slope. Characters can follow this tunnel for about a ½ mile before it ends in an intersection...welcome to the Underdark!



Aftermath

The characters receive 450 XP for killing the fomorian zombie and an additional 450 XP if they kill or capture Xareth. If they only destroy his giant spider form, they earn 200xp). Any character that advocated for humane treatment of the Quaggoth children should also be given 100xp).

Most of Xareth's personal belonging are found in area 2. He has an **alexandrite** gem (200gp) sewn into his belt. Xaret also has a **wand of secrets** (DMG pg 211).

Xareth's scroll tube (area 2) contains a number of sheets of parchment that appear to be a ledger of transactions, with a page each for many of the larger towns in the Dessarin Valley, including Amphail, Red Larch, Triboar, Longsaddle and Yartar. The ledger lists transaction by customer initials, and goes back many months and includes purchases of trade goods, illicit goods, and slaves.

Mixed in with these parchments is a contract titled to **Xareth Nightshade** from someone named **Silver Bursar**. The contract pays Xareth 450 gp in trade goods for harassment of the Talmost hunting and trapping operations in the Westwood Forrest area. The signature is sealed with an imprint of an **eye superimposed on a dagger**.

The final wagon in the **caravan** is packed with wooden crates. Most of these crates contain trade goods: casks of molasses, bags of grain, fine cloth, fur, bottles of wine, reams of parchment paper, dried fruits, and sacks of spices. The total value of these goods is approximately 200 GP.

The wagon also holds three locked chests (**DC 15**).

Chest 1: This chest is filled with bundles of grey roots (about 10 pounds). Any character with a **criminal** background, alignment with the **Zhentarim**, or a successful **Medicine** or **Nature** check (DC 10) knows that these are **styxroots** – an illicit stimulant that causes euphoria and jittery reactions. Any character with an appropriate background knows that this stash is worth around 160 gp. The root is addictive (**Constitution** check DC 5 + 3 for each dose). Any addicted character going for more than a week without a dose suffers disadvantage on physical checks (including attacks).

Chest 2: This chest contains small squares of a hard yellow cheese. The cheese is spotted with green seeds throughout. Similar to chest one, characters with appropriate **criminal** backgrounds or a successful **medicine** check (DC 10) know that this is Luiren Spring Cheese, also called Mind Cheese or just “cheeese.” This drug is popular with halflings, but affects any humanoid with sluggishness of mind and body (disadvantage on physical and mental checks). This too is highly addictive (**Constitution** check DC 10 + 5 for each dose). Withdrawal begins after one day without a dose and includes

cramps, fevers and hallucinations. Addicts in withdrawal gain one level of exhaustion on the first day, a second level on the second day, and are incapacitated with pain on the third day. This stash is worth around 120 gp.

Chest 3: This small chest contains a dozen glass vials wrapped individually in thick cloth. (See DMG Pg 257 for descriptions)

4 vials made from a reddish glass contain a gaseous **Malice** poison (250 gp each vial).

6 vials made from an orangish glass contain **truth serum** (150 gp each).

2 vials made from a brown glass contain a gaseous **Essence of Ether** poison (300 gp each vial).

This is a lot of loot! However, there are a few issues that the characters will have to resolve. First, the wagons can not be taken out of the cave. Crates must be hauled down the rocky outcrop to a waiting wagon. It will cost money to purchase or rent this wagon. Second, characters will likely only receive 50 – 75% of the value of the trade goods (use negotiation checks in a town or city) and 40-60% of the value of the illicit drugs and poisons. They can only sell the drugs and poisons if they have the appropriate contacts (e.g. Zhentarim). In addition, the characters will not be able to move the loot for a few days. They need to return to the Talmost estate and finish their job.

Wrap-up

Dharamst Talmost is pleased when the characters return with evidence that the threat to the estate has ended. He knows the name, Xaret Nightshade, as a shady trader, rumored slaver, and troublemaker that works in the Dessarin Valley and the Underdark. He does not know who the Silver Bursar might be, but asks the characters to report this to their superiors when they return to Waterdeep.

Dharamst sends Finlay to Amphail to recruit additional hunters and trappers and places one of the PCs in charge of guarding the estate (with the rest of the PCs, Jayden, Justus and Asher).

The next few days pass without incidence. Any character that is interested may hunt with Dharamst and Sebastian. On the third day, a detachment of 20 Bronze Talons, led by Artan Stonehammer (dwarf) arrives with additional provisions. He pays the three remaining guards and the PCs (Seven 50-gp Moonstones each) before dismissing them. He asks the guards and PCs to check in with Captain Hawkwood when (or if) they return to Waterdeep.

What's Next?

If the characters return to Waterdeep, they can learn from **Mac Bondo** that the Silver Bursar is an agent of the **Knights of the Shield**, a secret society of merchants based in the south that often uses underhanded methods to disrupt trade in the north. For more information on the Knights of the Shield, visit:

http://forgottenrealms.wikia.com/wiki/Knights_of_the_Shield

This adventure can stand alone. However, it also marks the second module in the Power Plays story arc that will take characters from first to fifth level. The remaining two adventures include:

Mercenary Monkeywrench

This adventure, appropriate for levels 3-4, takes place in Waterdeep. Mac Bondo hires the characters to discredit a rival mercenary band. At the same time, Mac's rivals (from **Guard Duty**) start causing problems again. This module also contains a series of urban encounters that can be used in any city. *Available February 2017.*

Waterdeep at War!

This adventure also takes place in Waterdeep and is appropriate for levels 4-5. Mac Bondo's rivals escalate their attacks in a night of bloody violence that threatens to destabilize the entire city. The characters fight back and eventually come face-to-face with the evil behind the scenes. *Available February 2017.*

Other titles on DMs Guild:

Faction Folio: Waterdeep - A DM's City Guide (5 star - silver seller)

City Encounters (4.5 star - silver seller)

Road's End Robbery (Grave robbers!)

Giant Tales (Two adventures perfect for Storm King's Thunder)

The Weeping Glass (a murderous rampage in a hotel)

Credits

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The title, *Monster Squad*, is taken from the 1987 movie about a group of pre-teen monster movie enthusiasts that save their hometown from evil monsters...

Cave

