

# Garnering the Cult's Favor

For as long as anyone can remember, a dark cult has plagued the land. Its members gather at night in carnivals of flesh; they perform dark rituals and carnal acts in orgies of necrosis and blood.

## They have been tolerated.

Though sickening, most civilians and authorities have chosen to ignore the cult. Perhaps because of tradition—the cult has been around maybe hundreds of years, or more. Perhaps because of denial—surely no such despicableness takes place in *this city*. Bust most likely it is because the cult sacrifices only other members. Indeed, no one from without the cult has come to harm in anyone's memory. The cultists give themselves freely to their acts and no civilians have been harmed. And so, the cult has continued uninterrupted.

Recently, a faction of the cult has splintered off. This splintered faction has begun unfiltered killing throughout the city. While the ranks of the original cult faction were filled with many lower-class peoples, perhaps seeking nothing more than a good time, the new faction seems to seek power. Members of higher rank within the city are known to have joined up with this faction, and some *powers that be* would like to see this new cult faction stopped. More importantly, the source of this splintering off must be known, so that it may never happen again.

In order to learn the origin of the splinter faction, the PCs must infiltrate them. It is known that the new faction will be attacking a meeting of "innocent" cultists tonight, and the PCs must be there to earn invitations to the new faction headquarters.

**The Skill Challenge:** The original cult never prevented anyone from joining, and so entrance to the flesh orgy is simple. However, convincing the attacking faction to let them join will be trickier. The *powers that be*

know that the original cultists are primarily civilians, and do not want their blood on the hands of the PCs. They know that the cultists will most likely be killed by the new faction, but it should not be at the hands of the PCs. The challenge is therefore run as the PCs take actions to convince the new faction that they are on their side—but without hurting anyone directly.

**This is not a combat encounter.** Though combat is undoubtedly taking place, the players should be participating in a very non-combative fashion. If a player wishes to stray from the skill challenge by outright making attack rolls, remind the player that this is counter to their goals. For evil characters, this may not work well. Also, especially good characters may not be willing to sit back and observe a slaughter. Consider your players and their characters when preparing this challenge, and make sure your players know the goals toward which they are working.

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as of July 18, 2009

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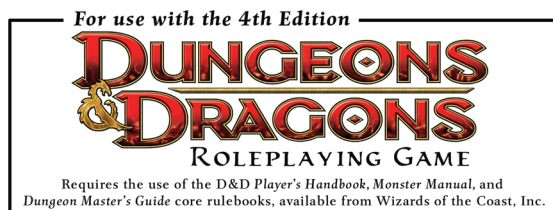
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Garnering the Cult's Favor – A Skill Challenge

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**Garnering the Cult's Favor**  
Skill ChallengeLevel 6  
XP 250

*As the violent brawl comes under way, your actions will determine if the faction begins to trust you.*

Without spilling any blood themselves, the characters try to aid the new faction of cultists in order to gain their favor in an attempt to get crucial information regarding the faction's origin.

**Complexity**

- 1 (requires 4 successes before 3 failures)
- ◆ Each character has a separate challenge to determine the faction's reaction to that individual.
  - ◆ The skill challenge encounter lasts for 6 rounds or until all characters have either succeeded or failed, (whichever comes first).

**Primary Skills**

Athletics, Bluff, Endurance, Heal, Intimidate

**Other Skills**

Insight, Stealth

**Victory**

A character who succeeds is trusted by the cult faction, gaining an *in* with them.

- ◆ The success contributes full XP (250) to be shared amongst the party.
- ◆ The successful character may aid other characters for any remaining rounds in the challenge.
- ◆ After the challenge, for each unsuccessful character, one successful character may make a Diplomacy check to gain the cult's favor for that character. Other successful characters may aid these Diplomacy checks with a DC of 5 less than the Diplomacy DC.

**Defeat**

The cult faction utterly distrusts the unsuccessful character and views that PC as a non-cult member, thus leaving them untouched.

- ◆ The defeat contributes half XP (125) to be shared amongst the party.
- ◆ The Diplomacy DC a successful character may make on the failed character's behalf is reduced by 2 for each success the character received before he or she failed the challenge. This DC starts at 27.

**Special**

A character who neither succeeds nor fails by the time the challenge ends can be viewed either way by the cult faction, but does not initially trust the PC.

- ◆ A character who attempted active checks throughout the challenge on his or her own behalf, but still didn't succeed or fail accumulates half XP (125) to be shared amongst the party.

- ◆ A character who attempted to avoid most of the challenge, such as through Stealth, receives no XP for the challenge.
- ◆ The Diplomacy DC a successful character may make on this character's behalf is reduced by 2 for each success this character received. The DC is increased by 2 for each failure the character received. This DC starts at 22.

**Athletics DC 17** (1 success maximum amongst all characters)

*A single large piece of furniture sits in the center of this room. By repositioning it, the PC grants a significant tactical advantage to the cult faction.*

**Bluff DC 17** (1 success; no maximum successes)

*A feigned swing of the sword or blast from the wand supports the appearance that the PC is aiding in the combat.*

**Endurance DC 17** (1 success; no maximum successes)

**Special:** The PC using Endurance gains a success regardless of the check result. A successful check results in the loss of a healing surge; a failed check results in the loss of two healing surges.

*Taking the brunt of an attack from opposing cultists is a great way to gain appreciation from those who might otherwise take the beating.*

**Heal DC 22** (1 success; no maximum successes)

*The PC sneaks her bandages and salves into the fray, trying to soothe the wounds of a combatant. A failure may draw ire from a cultist who sees the PC as an obstacle.*

**Insight DC 12** (no success; maximum one use per PC)

On a successful Insight check, randomly choose one of the primary skills for this challenge. The PC gets a +4 bonus to that skill on his or her next turn.

*Taking a moment to survey the brawl, the PC finds where he will be most appreciated by the cult faction.*

**Intimidate DC 17** (1 success; no maximum successes)

*A fearsome jeer or roar sends a combatant away, aiding the PC's appearance to the other faction.*

**Stealth DC 17** (no successes)

A PC who starts the challenge hidden may use Stealth each round. A success indicates that he or she stays hidden, while a failure means he or she is dragged into the brawl and must do something else.

*Hiding in a dark corner, the PC tries to avoid the combat.*

**Aid DC -5**

A character who has not yet succeeded at the challenge may not aid other characters, as they must still prove themselves to the cult faction. A character who has already succeeded may aid at a DC of 5 less than the skill DC that the target ally is attempting.

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