

DDAL08-13



# THE VAMPIRE OF SKULLPORT



Something is wrong in the endless gloom of Skullport, and the Baron of Blood has tasked you with setting things right. Part One of the *Undying Threat* trilogy. A Four-Hour Adventure for Tier 3 Characters. Optimized for APL 13.

# CREDITS

**Lead Designer:** Cindy Moore

**Additional Design:** Alan Patrick

**Editing:** Claire Hoffman, Travis Woodall

**D&D Adventurers League Guildmaster:** Chris Lindsay

**Art Director & Graphic Design:** Rich Lescouffair

**Stock Art:** Publisher's Choice Quality Stock Art © Rick  
Hershey/ Fat Goblin Games

**Cartography:** Cartography Stock Art © Derek Ruiz / Elven  
Tower Cartography (all maps)

**D&D Adventurers League Wizards Team:** Adam Lee, Ari  
Levitch, Chris Lindsay, Mike Mearls

**D&D Adventurers League Administrators:** Alan Patrick,  
Amy Lynn Dzura, Travis Woodall, Lysa Chen, Claire Hoffman,  
Greg Marks

**Playtesters:**

DUNGEONS & DRAGONS, D&D, Wizards of the Coast, Forgotten Realms, the dragon ampersand, *Player's Handbook*, *Monster Manual*, *Dungeon Master's Guide*, D&D Adventurers League, all other Wizards of the Coast product names, and their respective logos are trademarks of Wizards of the Coast in the USA and other countries. All characters and their distinctive likenesses are property of Wizards of the Coast. This material is protected under the copyright laws of the United States of America. Any reproduction or unauthorized use of the material or artwork contained herein is prohibited without the express written permission of Wizards of the Coast.

©2018 Wizards of the Coast LLC, PO Box 707, Renton, WA 98057-0707, USA. Manufactured by Hasbro SA, Rue Emile-Boéchat 31, 2800 Delémont, CH. Represented by Hasbro Europe, 4 The Square, Stockley Park, Uxbridge, Middlesex, UB11 1ET, UK.

## ADVENTURE PRIMER

*“Sooner or later, every curse is a prayer”*

—Terry Pratchett, *Wintersmith*

### BACKGROUND

The vampire **MASKED LORD OF WATERDEEP**, **ARTOR MORLIN**, has found a temporary home in Skullport. After having his home frequented by treasure hunters, he has employed adventurers to find him a new home.

Rumors have reached Artor concerning vampire activity in **VANRAKDOOM**. This lair is led by **KERESTA DELVINGSTONE**, a vampire cleric of **SHAR** who currently resides in Vanrakdoom. Artor believes that all the vampires found in **SKULLPORT** and Waterdeep are because of her order to spawn more of their kind.

Under the guise of finding some missing adventurers, Artor seeks to ruin the haughty vampire’s plans while also securing access to a secret passage from Skullport to Vanrakdoom for his own future purposes.

What Artor does not know is that Keresta is not the one directing the creation of more vampires. It is an acolyte of Keresta’s, **SEABORDT**, who aspires to win Shar’s favor away from Keresta.

### EPISODES

The adventure’s story is spread over **three story episodes** that take approximately **four hours** to play. These episodes are introduced by a Call to Action Episode. The adventure also includes **two 1-hour bonus episodes** that can be played if time permits, that are introduced anywhere in the adventure.

If you’re planning to play the entire adventure at once, you only need to introduce the **Call to Action** once. However, if you plan to play them over several sessions, you’ll want to revisit the **Call to Action** each time you play.

- **Episode 1 (Call to Action): Secret Ways.** Artor enlists the characters to find a few “lost associates”, and to keep an open eye for a method by which to enter Vanrakdoom. He warns that vampire activity in Skullport has been increasing. This is the **Call to Action**.
- **Episode 2: Rumors Abound.** The characters inquire at the Flagon and Dragon in Skullport and its proprietor Cal’al Claddani as to the disappearances. They interact with several notable

(for better or worse) residents of Skullport and learn the truth of the kidnappings.

- **Episode 3: The Lair of the Cult of Midnight.**

Exploring a formerly-sealed temple in the cavern walls around Skullport reveals horrible truths—including that the portal to Vanrakdoom is being guarded by a vampire in the employ of Keresta Delvingstone, Austra Trumaine. This is **Story Objective B**.

### BONUS OBJECTIVES

This adventure also includes two, 1-hour bonus objectives that the characters can pursue if they have additional time to do so—earning additional **advancement and treasure checkpoints** in the process. These bonus objectives are found in this adventure’s appendices, as follows:

- **Bonus Objective A: The Worm’s Gullet.** A visit to The Worm’s Gullet reveals that there may be a more nefarious purpose for the kidnappings than initially thought. **Appendix 6**.
- **Bonus Objective B: Glorious Retaliation.** After pushing back a threat from the Cult of Midnight, one of the residents of Skullport makes a humble request of the characters: strike back at the Cult and make it hurt. **Appendix 7**.

### EPISODE SEQUENCE

Depending on your time constraints, play style and environment, this adventure takes approximately four to six hours to play.

### HOW WILL YOU PLAY?

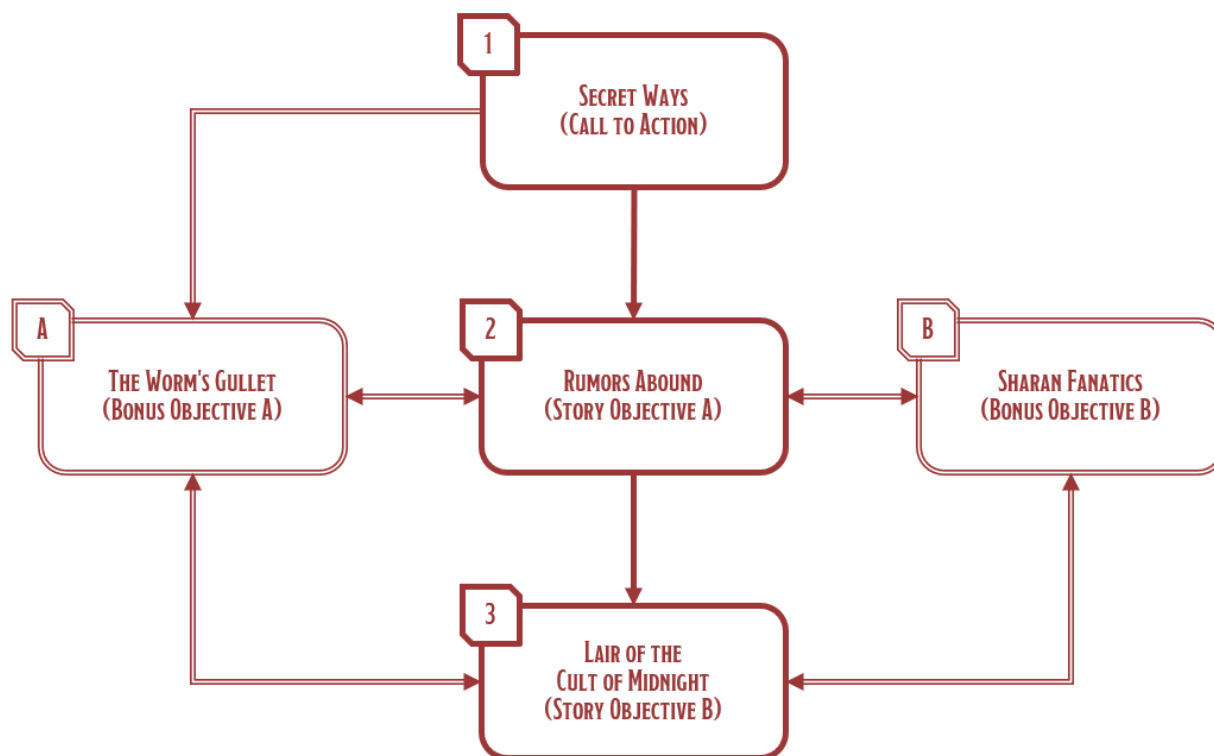
The duration of your session depends on how much of this adventure you utilize. At the very least, your session will last approximately **4 hours**. However, if you wish, you can provide a longer experience for your players by utilizing the **bonus objectives**.

**Story Objectives Only.** To complete the both of the adventure’s story objectives, the characters play in Episodes 1 through 3 in order.

**Bonus Objectives.** You can extend this adventure by **one or two hours** by utilizing the bonus objectives provided in the appendices. **Bonus Objective A** can be introduced if the players follow the rumor that people have gone missing after visiting The Worm’s Gullet. **Bonus Objective B** is used if the characters follow up on Lara Vu’s request for retaliation against the Cult of Midnight.

## EPISODE FLOWCHART

This section provides a basic understanding of not only the flow of the adventure, but also the outline of the different paths that your players may take in reaching their stated objective.



## EPISODE 1: SECRET WAYS (CALL TO ACTION)

*Estimated Duration:* 30 minutes

### THE FLAGON AND DRAGON

The adventure begins in Skullport, where Artor Morlin has taken a temporary lair until adventurers are able to find him a suitable home. Artor is a masked Lord of Waterdeep, as well as a vampire, charged with keeping any vampiric threat from the city. The Flagon and Dragon is on the lower level of Skullport. It offers its fair share of rumors and information as well as local spirits.

- **Played Previous Adventure.** Having previously met Artor Morlin, the characters have been given a list of missing persons (**Appendix 4**) and instructed to meet with a half-elf named Cal'al Claddani to learn about recent disappearances in Skullport. Additionally, Artor believes that a portal to Vanrakdoom—one of the many levels of the Undermountain dungeon complex—exists somewhere in the port city and has charged the characters with securing it.
- **Didn't Play Previous Adventure.** The characters' evening at the Flagon and Dragon is interrupted when they the proprietor, Cal'al Claddani brings word of a nest of vampiric devotees of Shar because they're "clearly quite capable" and "it would be a real boon if someone were to just up and clean those creatures up". She hands the characters a flyer (**Appendix 4**) and explains that another group of adventurers never came back to square up their bill and she believes that they have been taken. Other, similar flyers can be seen—apparently it's not uncommon for patrons to just walk out on their tab here.

#### AREA INFORMATION

This area has the following features:

**Dimensions & Terrain.** The Flagon and Dragon is a mid-grade tavern. It is a sturdy building made of stone with a beautiful fireplace as its main aesthetic feature. Many sturdy wooden tables and chairs fill the space and a long bar takes up the entire far wall.

**Lighting.** The establishment is well lit by the fireplace and lanterns that hang low from the rafters.

#### NPC/CREATURES

**Cal'al Claddani** is here, tending the establishment. So too, is a **cult fanatic of Shar** named Fergus.

**Objectives/Goals.** Cal'al loves to talk about Skullport and her people, and fancies herself as the go-to person for information. She's grown concerned about kidnappings and vampire cult. **Fergus** on the

other hand puts on the pretense of simply being at the Flagon and Dragon to have a drink but is looking for more victims for the cult. Any character that succeeds on a DC 16 Wisdom (Insight) check realizes that the cultist is attempting to covertly listen to Cal'al's explanation of the vampire nest. If discovered, he leaves the establishment and, if confronted, denies any involvement

**What Does Cal'al Know?** Cal'al suspects that a cult ("because it's always Shar") has been preying upon visitors and residents alike. She explains in a very gossipy manner that people have been going missing. "Sure, Skullport is no tourist destination but we have a life here. We have rules here—an accord, even!" She goes on to say that even powerful adventurers have gone missing.

**BONUS OBJECTIVE A.** Cal'al tells the characters that she's heard of people going missing soon after visiting the Worm's Gullet, and suspects that any investigation should start there.

**What Does Fergus Know?** Fergus won't share any information unless magically compelled or reduced to 0 hit points and healed, as the cult would "do far worse". Should this happen, he admits to worshiping Shar but swears that he detests vampires. In truth, he idolizes them—no check is needed to determine this.

**BONUS OBJECTIVE A.** Fergus lets slip that "The Worm's Gullet is definitely not where the victims get marked." (lie)

#### CALL TO ACTION

Cal'al stresses that even powerful adventurers have been taken (or so she's told), and to be wary: here, things like the worship of Shar are the norm and violent retaliation draws the ire of the Skulls. She suggests that the characters perform their own investigation and says that a visit to the Scent and Stone—"a diviner's haven"—may be in order (**Episode 2, Scene C**).

#### THE FLAMESKULLS

Over a century ago, these flameskulls were arbiters of their own mad version of law and order in Skullport. While they have deteriorated and are now generally incomprehensible, they can be a tool for the DM to add some weirdness to the adventure. They can interrupt fights with powerful magic, suddenly appear to give the characters bizarre quests, or claim that the party is violating some nonsensical law. Feel free to use them in whatever way enhances your adventure!

## EPISODE 2: RUMORS ABOUND (STORY OBJECTIVE A)

*Estimated Duration:* 2 hours

### SKULLPORT

Powerful denizens of Skullport have noticed the arrival of the characters. If possible, consider using the Skullport appendix in *Waterdeep Dungeon of the Mad Mage*. For a more direct experience, the characters are observed by group of cultists devoted to Shar.

#### PREREQUISITES

This episode is pursued after receiving the Call to Action from Cal'al Claddani in **Episode 1**.

#### STORY OBJECTIVE A

Identifying who is kidnapping people in Skullport and why they are doing this is **Story Objective A**. This adventure's **Bonus Objectives** are interwoven into the core story: **Bonus Objective A** can be explored and completed at any time during this Episode, while **Bonus Objective B** can be explored and completed any time after the characters learn about it from Lara Vu in **Scene C**.

#### DM'S NOTE

This section is very free-form. **Scenes A, B, and C** can be run in any order—use them to create a more fully-realized Skullport experience for everyone. Advance to **Scene D** when the characters have enough information—of if they dally or go off-track, consider springing **Scene D** as an ambush!

Be mindful of any timing needs and adjust sections as needed, especially where combat is concerned or if the characters lose track of the investigation. In general, the Cult of Midnight is more eager than they are prepared.

Skullport isn't like the surface cities that the characters are likely familiar with—here, races like duergar and mind flayers rub shoulders with dwarves, humans, and beady-eyed halflings. It is a den of villainy, but everyone holds their aggressions in check due to the protection that the thirteen ancient **flameskulls** offer to the city (see sidebar).

The characters will need to blend in while they investigate, lest they run afoul of those that live here. **Scenes A, B, and C** can be run in any order; **Scene D** should be run when characters have learned about the Sharan cult or when you determine that the cultists are ready to ambush them.

#### AREA INFORMATION

The area has the following features:

**Lighting.** The street lanterns shed dim light in a 10-foot radius and are spaced 30 feet apart. A few buildings have candles in their front windows.

#### CREATURES/NPCs

Travelers are uncommon on the streets of Skullport, but feel free to describe some fantastic sights: a **mind flayer** with a pair of leashed **intellect devourers**; a **minotaur** flanked by two halfling **wererats**, a quartet of confused dwarven street musicians from a band named "The Foundation", and so on. While these are not intended to be combat encounters, it may happen—consult the Scene notes and the Skulls handout for more direction.

## PLAYING THE PILLARS

#### COMBAT

Open combat in the streets of Skullport draws 1d3 **flameskulls** at the beginning of the second round. Repeated infractions bring an additional 1d3 flameskulls until all 13 are present; should this happen, the flameskulls do not hold back and attempt to expel the characters from the city—by any means necessary. Add combatants as needed in each Scene.

#### EXPLORATION

Skullport is almost certainly like no place that the characters have visited before. They can spot remnants of dwarven and Netherese architecture together with drow and Waterdhavian influences. For exploration-focused groups, help them identify potential ambush sites and either set a trap or allow them to prevent such an event from taking place.

#### SOCIAL

Drive home the strange, villainous feel of the city. If the characters remain respectful in their exchanges, consider treating them all as if they had the All Eyes on You feature (from the Far Traveler background) if you have access to it, or simply allow them to make some erstwhile "friends" during their visit here.

## SCENE A. I GOT WHAT YOU NEED

Skullport has its fair share of street vendors just like any other city. The characters may observe and interact as needed and find a valuable clue. This encounter takes place at a street vendor's stall just outside the Flagon and Dragon.

### CREATURES / NPCs

Vyraxxan, a darkling, is selling (mostly broken) equipment and trinkets “from the Realms above” for a few silver pieces each. A few are bloodstained, and among them is an entire hornet's nest (**Appendix 4**).

**Objectives/Goals.** Vyraxxan wants to unload as much of his wares as he can—including selling the stall if needed. As a member of the Xanathar Guild he can procure another one with little effort. If the characters spend 25 gp or more with him, he whistles between broken teeth “Well now I don't have to deal with those suckers from the Cult of Midnight anymore today!”

**What Do They Know?** The darkling is dodgy and adept at convincing people to buy goods that they don't actually need (Deception +8). If any of the characters are members of the Xanathar Guild or play into his ego, he shares his information with little more than a wink and nod or perhaps a small bribe. He's hesitant to speak of his suppliers but claims that he receives lots of product from “them” because he doesn't ask questions and understands that the best business is the one where everyone makes money. If pressed for information on this, he simply says “Oh, the Cult of Midnight is nobody, really. One with the shadows and all that” and adds “but they're resourceful and bring me all sorts of exotic goodies”. If confronted with evidence (such as

the pendant), Vyraxxan panics and claims that Cutie (**Scene B**) sold it to him “for a few lousy copper”.

### DEVELOPMENT

Vyraxxan's tactics become more urgent if the characters appear to be disinterested, going so far as to apologize profusely while making (likely hollow) promises about finding them additional gear or providing “special contacts” for whatever rare or exotic wares that he doesn't, himself, carry.

He can sell any item on the Weapons or Adventuring Gear tables found in the *Player's Handbook*, and several of his stocked items have one of the following properties. Feel free to roll randomly, or simply choose an item that the characters would find interesting and add one of these properties. The cost of items bearing these properties are 50% higher than those without.

### VYRAXXAN'S WEIRD GEAR

D6	Quirks & Minor Properties
1	<b>Gleaming.</b> This item never gets dirty. <b>Blissful.</b> While in possession of the item, the bearer feels fortunate and optimistic about what the future holds. Butterflies and other harmless creatures might frolic in the item's presence.
2	<b>Unbreakable.</b> The item can't be broken.
3	<b>Frail.</b> The item crumbles, frays, chips, or cracks slightly when wielded, worn, or activated. This quirk has no effect on its properties, but if the item has seen much use, it looks decrepit.
4	<b>Covetous.</b> The item's bearer becomes obsessed with material wealth.
5	<b>Confident.</b> The item helps its bearer feel self-assured.
6	

## PLAYING THE PILLARS

### COMBAT

Vyraxxan isn't a fighter and begs to trade information for his life. If combat breaks out, 1d3 flameskulls arrive immediately.

### EXPLORATION

If the characters hide and observe him, they can watch Vyraxxan receive new goods from a member of the Cult of Midnight. They might then wish to trail the cultist to **Scene C**.

### SOCIAL

Vyraxxan is a self-serving, opportunistic merchant. He is no fool, but large sales can loosen his lips and he is privy to a fair amount of gossip about both the Xanathar Guild and the Cult of Midnight.

## SCENE B. RED HOTS AND SAUSAGES

---

As the characters explore the city and ask questions, one or more of the monstrous residents pushes back with something along the lines of “unwanted meat sometimes turns up at The Bin”. The characters quickly discover that the Bin is a foul and thoroughly dingy butcher shop.

### AREA INFORMATION

The area has the following features:

**Dimensions & Terrain.** The interior is comprised of a large number of shelves, buckets, and stone-slab tables where her employees hack apart chunks of (thankfully unidentifiable at a glance) meat.

**Lighting.** A small number of greasy oil lamps emit dim light throughout the building, with one lamp giving bright light at the front counter.

### CREATURES / NPCs

There are four **goblins** and two **quaggoths** in The Bin. The proprietor is Cutie (a female **minotaur**) whose fur is matted and caked with debris of questionable origin.

**Objectives/Goals.** **Cutie** isn't the talkative sort and prevents her employees from engaging in conversation through threats and the occasionally bit of percussive maintenance. She sells the

characters cooked “stuff” (a mixed sausage of questionable origin that smells oddly sweet but has a mustard-like flavor). A serving of “stuff” costs 2 sp and comes on an unleavened onion roll.

**What Does She Know?** She is direct in that she says that she no longer pays her team to hunt—the Cult of Midnight recently entered a contract to supply her with raw materials. She knows nothing more about them than this but adds that she “serves all kinds here”. Should the characters mention the missing people, or seem to be at a loss for words, Cutie grunts that “Lost things can be found at the Scent and Stone, not here” (**Scene C**).

### DEVELOPMENT

The characters can watch one of the quaggoths carry rubbish out the back door every 30 minutes. Near the front door can be found flyers for Vyraxxan's stand (**Scene A**).

### TREASURE

The following can be found here:

- A suit of non-functional bone armor (**Appendix 4**) has been discarded in the trash behind The Bin.

## PLAYING THE PILLARS

### COMBAT

The staff at The Bin aren't capable of putting up much of a fight. Instead, they attempt to fling meat and juices in the hopes of marking the characters and making life difficult for them outside of here.

### EXPLORATION

If the characters hang back and wait, they see a small group from the Cult of Midnight bring a tarp-covered cart to the back door of The Bin. If they take care to remain hidden, they see that the bodies are humanoids and hear Cutie mutter “Sure, raw sausage.”

### SOCIAL

Cutie calls for guards or signals for the **flameskulls** if the characters pester her or her customers. She uses few words, preferring instead to rely on her actions.



## SCENE C. THE SCENT AND STONE

This shop is the home of a gynosphinx-turned-human “oracle” named Lara Vu.

### AREA INFORMATION

This area has the following features:

**Dimensions & Terrain.** This building is both home and business for Lara Vu. The furnishings are sparse, and a large crystal ball sits on the table in the main room. A DC 14 Wisdom (Insight) check reveals that everything feels deliberately placed to minimize the comfort of visitors.

**Lighting.** The room is brightly lit by a *continual flame* spell that has been cast in the fireplace.

### CREATURES / NPCs

**Lara Vu** (a **gynosphinx** trapped in human form) owns this small building. She verbally welcomes visitors, but her tone is matter-of-fact and direct.

**Objectives/Goals.** Lara Vu would like to see the Cult of Midnight driven out of Skullport. She feels that the characters may prove worthy allies in this endeavor but needs to be convinced (see the Adjusting the Scene sidebar).

**What Do They Know?** If the characters engage Lara in discussion about the missing persons, she locks the door and engages them in conversation. She says that the Cult of Midnight sometimes takes people, visitors, villains, and heroes alike. She is unsure of how the Cult can evade the gaze of the skulls as their laws are inviolable, but she believes that the characters are the key to resolving this conflict—she saw their coming, and their coming conflict against the Cult of Midnight.

### DEVELOPMENT

If the characters followed a member of the Cult of Midnight (**Scene A**), the cultist barges in and delivers a menacing missive to Lara Vu. In it, the

oracle is threatened with dismemberment for interfering in “Midnight’s Matters”.

If the characters did not follow the cultist, one barges in during their conversation with the oracle, yelling screaming. Lara sighs, proclaims “Well, this is now breaking and entering” and unless the characters interfere, she uses a legendary action to cast *banishment* on the cultist, saying “I’ll just save that one for later.”

Once the characters have had some time with Lara Vu, a group from the Cult of Midnight rushes in. This group includes two human **war priests of Shar** and one human **blackguard**. They seek to render everyone unconscious so that they can be taken back to the nest (Episode 3). She is likely to assist them with her own formidable abilities.

### BONUS OBJECTIVE B

If Lara Vu survives the attack and the characters did not attack her, she asks them to retaliate against the Cult of Midnight. She hands them a writ that will absolve them from one crime in Skullport (she takes a moment to explain that defacing a temple is quite illegal) and directs them to a specific building in the city that houses a portion of their cult.

### TREASURE

The following things can be found here:

- The writ is beneath her crystal ball. The characters can use this writ to send away the flameskulls one time, should they arrive at any point for the remainder of the adventure.
- An oddly-colored feathered cap (see **Appendix 4**). If Lara is alive, she says that she felt drawn to this bauble and purchased it from Vyraxxan, a smarmy merchant elsewhere in Skullport (**Scene A**).

## PLAYING THE PILLARS

### COMBAT

If the Cult or the flameskulls have already attacked the characters, consider using enemies that provide a greater challenge. Alternately, Lara Vu may hold back so that she can see what strengths the characters bring to the coming conflict.

### EXPLORATION

The crystal ball is a mundane device that is an extension of her power. If the characters remain outside her home, they can easily spot the cultists as they draw near. In this case she is reluctant to attack other than to defend herself—she wishes to hide her true nature.

### SOCIAL

Lara Vu is knowledgeable about the history and nature of Skullport. She gladly assists them in this combat, and afterwards urges them to visit The Bin (Scene B) as she can’t think of anywhere else that would definitely get rid of bodies.

## SCENE D. LOVING EMBRACE

The Cult of Midnight has had enough of these troublesome champions.

### AREA INFORMATION

This combat encounter can take place in any appropriate location (see **Development**):

**Dimensions & Terrain.** There is broken furniture littered throughout this 25-by-30-foot room among which are a few beds made of the cushions and an old, stained mattress on the floor. A set of stairs on the leading down and a door on the western wall.

**Lighting.** There is no light in this room.

### CREATURES / NPCs

One human **blackguard**, two **vampire spawn**, and one human **war priest of Shar** are prepared to attack the characters.

**Objectives/Goals.** The Cultists seek to knock the characters unconscious—Skullport has laws, after all, and murder in the streets is still a crime.

**What Do They Know?** The Cult of Midnight realizes that the characters are powerful and fight as intelligently as they can (consider what the characters have done in the city, how they've talked to the residents, and what gear they flaunt).

### DEVELOPMENT

This scene can be modified as-needed depending on how many of the key items the characters have:

**All Three Items.** If the characters have gathered all three of the key items (the pendant, the Harper pin, and the feathered helm), they should be reasonably convinced that the Cult of Midnight is conducting the kidnappings. Allow the characters to craft a reasonable and interesting situation—perhaps the character lure them in with a trap or

employ one of the NPCs to act as their emissary. In this situation, the combat should take place in a location where the characters have significant advantage.

**Fewer Than All Three Items.** If the characters have dallied or aren't attached to the investigation, consider using this scene to expedite their involvement. If you do, it's strongly suggested that you simply move to **Episode 3** at the conclusion of this combat, which should take place in a location where the Cult has significant advantage. Throughout the combat, the Cult of Midnight members call out how the characters would make "fine additions to the nest", "are more delicious than anticipated", and so on. When only a single cultist remains, they beg for mercy and blurt out "I'll take you to the nest—just let me live!" The cultist gladly shares the nest's location (**Episode 3**) and the nature of the secret door that leads to the Entry Chamber. If given a chance, they attempt to escape; if successful, they leave Skullport for parts unknown.

### ADJUSTING THE SCENE

Here are some suggestions for adjusting this scene:

- **Very Weak:** Replace a **war priest** with a **vampire spawn**.
- **Very Strong:** Add a **war priest** and two **vampire spawn**.

### TREASURE

One of the cultists carries a stack of wrinkled parchments with the face of one of the characters on each page. Below each portrait, the words "demanded by the Cult of the Midnight" can be read in common. Any damage that the character has suffered is magically added to the parchment. This parchment counts as a trinket.

## EPISODE 3: LAIR OF THE CULT OF MIDNIGHT (STORY OBJECTIVE B)

*Estimated Duration:* 1 hour 30 minutes

### SETTING DESCRIPTION

The Cult of Midnight's lair is in an old temple that is hidden inside the cave walls that surround Skullport. The temple doesn't exist on any current maps of the city.

#### PREREQUISITES

This episode can't be utilized until the characters complete **Episode 2**. They may pursue the **Bonus Objectives** before or after this episode.

#### STORY OBJECTIVE B

Finding the portal to Vanrakdoom is **Story Objective B**.

#### AREA INFORMATION

This area has the following features:

**Lighting.** The inside of the temple is dark, as there are no light sources unless specifically noted.

**Ceilings & Walls.** The temple is originally of Netherese construction and is still preserved by some of their magic. It is in fine shape, despite being swallowed up by the stone.

**Entry Caves.** These caves are largely unremarkable. If the characters have a guide (such as a cultist that surrendered in **Episode 2, Scene D**) they reveal and open the secret door to the temple easily. Otherwise, locating the catch to open the secret door requires a successful DC 24 Intelligence (Investigation) check.

#### DON'T GET LAZY!

Thanks to the latent Netherese enchantments and the magic that has been worked by the Cult of Midnight, only members

of the Cult may rest inside the temple or cave immediately outside of it. If the characters enter the temple and then leave to resupply or rest, the Cult clears out and leaves nothing behind.

#### ENTRY CHAMBER

The walls of this small chamber are covered in drapery with the holy symbol of Shar stitched upon them. The stones are clean, and the candles are unlit.

#### OBSIDIAN BUSTS

The five obsidian busts in this hallway appear to bear the visage of Shar. Anyone investigating the busts that succeeds on a DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check notices that (counting from east to west) the **first** and **third** busts can be rotated. The other three **busts** are **trapped** with nearly invisible magical *glyphs* triggered by the touch of a living creature. Detecting a glyph requires a successful DC 17 Intelligence (Arcana) check and can be removed with *dispel magic* or similar effects. If anyone other than a vampire touches one of the busts of Shar, a *glyph* is triggered (spell save DC 18):

- **Bust 2.** This bust emits a high-pitched shriek that echoes throughout the complex—alerting the residents of intruders.
- **Bust 4.** *Hold person*
- **Bust 5.** *Abi-Dalzim's horrid wilting* or *feeblemind*

If the characters rotate the first and third busts to face the wall, the secret passage in the southern wall slides quietly open.

## PLAYING THE PILLARS (LAIR OF THE CULT OF MIDNIGHT)

#### COMBAT

Keep the characters in initiative order for the full duration of their visit. Consider adding more **vampire spawn** if needed to keep the dice rolling. A little mayhem may be exactly what the heroes need!

#### EXPLORATION

The temple offers many places to hide and explore. Create a list of book titles for the Reading Rooms, allow the characters to set ambushes, and so on. Encourage and reward their involvement with Advantage and Inspiration!

#### SOCIAL

The characters may feel that the Cult is a very strong adversary—but with a DC 16 Wisdom (Insight) check, they realize that the skulls could be brought to this place to mete out their own brand of justice. They may also consider bringing Fergus (if he is alive) or bring Lara Vu along.

## SCENE A. LIVING QUARTERS

The cultists spend the majority of their time here.

### DINING ROOM

While the cultists still feed here, the cookware and stove are caked in dust from years of disuse. Streaks of blood cover the tabletop in patterns that appear to be made from humanoid fingers and hands.

**Creatures / NPCs.** Eight **vampire spawn** surround the table, ravenously devouring raw meat.

### MANTRAP

A pressure plate is set into the floor just before the southern doors and can be spotted with a DC 18 Intelligence (Investigation) check. Similarly, *detect magic* reveals that the urns radiate a powerful aura of conjuration magic. Once detected, the pressure plate is easily avoidable. Alternatively, *dispel magic* (DC 15) disables the trap. The trap is triggered when more than 20 pounds is placed on it or if the urns are physically destroyed. If triggered, thick, shadowy tendrils snake out from the urns beside the southern doorway in a 30-foot cone. Each living creature in the cone must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw, taking 55 (10d10) necrotic damage on a failed save, or half as much on a successful one.

### WEST LIBRARY

This room has a number of bookshelves that contain hundreds of tomes detailing the worship of Shar across the world throughout various cultures and historical periods, the history of Waterdeep, Skullport, and Undermountain; and even a collection of works about vampires (many of which are sensationalized, romantic works of trashy fiction).

### EAST LIBRARY

The shelves in this chamber are largely empty—the only items here are ledgers documenting how many people have been taken, who they were, and the status of their transformation into vampires. Those that survived have a checkmark in a column titled “Vanrakdoom.” Otherwise, the desk is piled with papers. A character that spends five minutes reviewing the docs find a letter reading:

*“My dearest Austra,*

*Exemplary work! You have acquired so many converts in such short a time. Onward to Vanrakdoom!*

*Seabordt”*

Based on this missive, it is simple to determine that this “Austra” has been in charge of the kidnappings.

### READING ROOMS

The reading rooms offer some privacy for the cultists, though they are empty at the moment.

**Creatures / NPCs.** If the characters are here for more than five minutes, a vampire spawn enters each of the reading rooms. This may happen earlier if the characters set off the alarm.

### EVIL ALTAR

A statue of Shar in her human form stands atop an altar at the eastern side of this chamber. Emanating from it and filling this room is a modified *hallow* spell; until the statue is destroyed, the chamber is filled with magical darkness and silence; undead creatures are unaffected by this *hallow*.

**Creatures / NPCs.** Two **shadow assassins** are pressed against the walls, waiting for a chance to strike at living targets. They follow the characters out of the room and fight until destroyed.

### SECRET ROOM (NORTH)

While the *hallow* spell is active in the Evil Altar room, the entrance to this small chamber can be only be found with a successful DC 20 Intelligence (Investigation) check. Once the spell has been ended, the outline of the doorway is plainly visible.

The room contains piles of discarded items from the people that the Cult has kidnapped. Very little of it remains in a usable state.

**Treasure & Rewards.** The characters find the following amidst all of the clutter:

- A *potion of gaseous form* in a dusty glass vial
- A clay pot containing *oil of slipperiness*

### SECRET ROOM (SOUTH)

While the *hallow* spell is active in the Evil Altar room, the entrance to this small chamber can be only be found with a successful DC 20 Intelligence (Investigation) check. Once the spell has been ended, the outline of the doorway is plainly visible. The room contains two sharply-made beds, but they do not appear to have been slept in for quite some time.

## SCENE B. SECRET PASSAGE TO AUSTRAS QUARTERS

This narrow passageway is slick with moisture but is otherwise unremarkable.

### HIDDEN ARMORY

A suit of ancient, rusted plate mail stands on wooden display rack here. A *glyph of warding* has been set into the floor in the hallway (*detect magic* or a DC 18 Investigation or Perception check required to spot this). If a living creature crosses the glyph—they needn't be walking on the floor—a *mage hand* is released from the *glyph*; it knocks over the armor stand. The creature that triggered the glyph must succeed on both a DC 14 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check and a DC 14 Strength (Athletics) check to catch the armor and prevent it from making an ungodly racket. Other characters can't Help unless they're affected by *haste* or similar magic.

### TELEPORTATION CIRCLE

The center of this room is dominated by a huge circle of spidery runes. Motes of shadow drift in the air.

**Creatures / NPCs.** Unless the characters have encountered her elsewhere, **Austra Trumaine** is here preparing her next sacrifice. She holds one of the Cult's more recent kidnapped victims by the throat—draining their blood into the outline of the teleportation circle on the floor. At the beginning of the third round of combat (or if the characters delay before entering combat), the ritual reaches its completion point and reinforcements become to come through. If the characters triggered one or

more of the alarms, Austra has already finished her ritual and the portal to Vanrakdoom is already open—and reinforcements are coming through.

**Objectives/Goals.** The Cult of Midnight seeks to fill Skullport with vampires loyal to Keresta Delvingstone, the reigning vampire of Vanrakdoom. Austra is Keresta's agent here in Skullport and has been personally tasked with protecting the portal at all costs.

**Development.** Once begun, the ritual needs no further effort from the caster and completes at the beginning of the third round of combat. Once the ritual is complete, the portal to Vanrakdoom opens. Reinforcements can come through and should be tailored to the party in a manner that is engaging but challenging. Add one of the following **reinforcement** options: one **blackguard**, one **war priest**, or two **vampire spawn**.

### SCALING THIS ENCOUNTER

Here are some suggestions for adjusting this scene:

- **Very Weak:** Remove three **flickering shadow runes**
- **Very Strong:** Add two **flickering shadow runes** and an additional **reinforcement**.

**Treasure & Rewards.** Austra wields a *staff of withering*. They also find that she wears a signet ring that bears a heavily stylized symbol of Shar. If worn, the ring causes the wearer to crave rare meat.

## PLAYING THE PILLARS

### COMBAT

Each time Austra would take damage from a source, instead remove one flickering shadow rune and prevent that damage; if no runes remain, she takes damage as normal. She may use a bonus action to magically consume a rune; if she does, she may immediately use her **bite** attack (even if she has already used her Action this round).

### EXPLORATION

Although the ritual will automatically complete, it can be delayed with *dispel magic* or similar effect (once per round, no DC needed). If the portal is subjected to an *antimagic zone*, Austra does everything in her power to destroy whomever or whatever caused that effect.

### SOCIAL

Austra knows that if the characters defeat her, she is better off dead as Keresta's retribution will be both terrible and prolonged. She firmly believes that vampires represent the future of Skullport and Undermountain.

## MAGE'S ROOM

This is Austra's bedchamber. Her bed and sheets are crisp and clean, with a surprising light floral fabric that looks like silk from Kara-Tur.

**Treasure & Rewards.** Austra's traveling spellbook containing only her prepared spells is tucked into a drawer in her desk. She also has a small silver dagger emblazoned with the symbol of Shar; it is entirely ceremonial and is not a functional weapon.

## LARDER

This small space has a number of chains and butcher's hooks hanging from the ceiling. Six bodies can be seen; three of them have been dead for some time, but the other three are the adventurers that Artor (or Cal'al) has sent the characters to retrieve (**Appendix A**).

If the characters set off the alarm trap in the obsidian bust or hidden armory, or if they took more than ten hours in-game to get to this point, then these adventurers are also dead.

If the characters did not set off the alarm and arrived at this point before ten hours have passed, then they are alive and although greatly weakened, they are excited and thankful for the rescue.

**Treasure & Rewards.** The larder has an array of items contained inside:

- Austra's *staff of withering* is here unless she was defeated by the characters or fled with it.
- A large number of cast-off personal effects such as journals, baubles, gold teeth, and a few pieces of ruined armor. These things are enough to remove any shadow of doubt that may have remained for the characters in regard to the Cult of Midnight being responsible for the kidnappings.

## WRAP-UP: BACK TO ARTOR MORLIN

---

The characters secure the portal to Vanrakdoom and let Artor Morlin know where it is. Artor thanks them and lets them know he may need them to go through the portal at a later time. For now, he uses his own minions to make sure that no more vampires come through to threaten Skullport.

If the characters destroyed the neonate vampires (**Bonus Objective A**) and tell Artor about this, he pauses before responding. "For the better, I suppose. Pitiful wretches. Such a waste."

If the characters saved the neonate vampires (**Bonus Objective A**) and tell Artor about this, he seems pleased. "As a true hero, yes. Though I'm sure these events will haunt them. Skullport has a way of ensuring that the past doesn't stay buried long."

If the characters discovered that Seabordt is ramping up efforts to create a second nest of vampires (**Bonus Objective B**), Artor is keenly interested and vows to hunt down this upstart and bring him to the swiftest of justices. A DC 14 Wisdom (Insight) check confirms that Artor is more excited by this prospect than he should be, given the dire nature of this news.

## ADVENTURE REWARDS

At the end of the session, the characters each receive rewards based upon their accomplishments. These rewards include advancement and treasure, and may include player rewards—magic item unlocks, story awards, or new downtime activities, as follows:

### ADVANCEMENT AND TREASURE CHECKPOINTS

---

The characters receive 2 advancement checkpoint and 4 treasure checkpoints for each **story** objective that they complete, as follows:

- **Story Objective A:** Free the prisoners.
- **Story Objective B:** Find the portal to Vanrakdoom!

The characters receive 1 advancement checkpoint and 2 treasure checkpoints for each **bonus objective** that they complete, as follows:

- **Bonus Objective A:** Investigate the Worm's Gullet.
- **Bonus Objective B:** Deliver glorious retaliation.

### PLAYER REWARDS

---

The characters earn the following player rewards for **completing the adventure**:

#### MAGIC ITEM UNLOCKS

Characters completing the adventure unlock:

**Staff of Withering.** This staff is made of human bones wrapped in mithral wire. Whenever a charge is expended your eye alights with cosmetic black flames for a round. This item can be found in **Appendix 8**.

### DUNGEON MASTER REWARDS

---

In exchange for running this adventure, you earn **advancement and treasure checkpoints** and downtime as though you played the adventure, but none of the adventure's **player rewards**.

However, this adventure may qualify for rewards earned by completing DM Quests. See the ALDMG (*Adventurers League Dungeon Master's Guide*) for more information about DM Quests.

## APPENDIX 1: LOCATIONS & NPCs

The following NPCs and locations feature **prominently** in this adventure.

- **Artor Morlin (Arr-TORR More-LIN)**. A handsome, dark-skinned vampire who favors fitted armors and the color red.

**Personality:** *He is a wary and pragmatic tactician.*

**Ideal:** *He wishes to gain the most for the least effort.*

**Bond:** *He calls on his fellow masked lords for support and favors.*

**Flaw:** *He lacks imagination, favoring straight-forward plans and preparation.*

- **Austra Trumaine (AWE-stra tru-MANE)**. Now a vampire, this elf cleric came to Skullport in search of adventure—and found it! Unfortunately she also found Keresta Delvingstone (see *Waterdeep Dungeon of the Mad Mage* and the Vanrakdoom level).

**Personality:** *Given a choice between feeding on you, sending you to Keresta's larder, or selling you to the Xanathar... let's start at the beginning.*

**Ideal:** *I desire only to feed in peace. This works better when you're dead.*

**Bond:** *I can hear the comforting thump of the heartbeats of Skullport. My garden is healthy, my crop bountiful.*

**Flaw:** *My minions are exclusively, explicitly loyal to me because my power is immense.*

- **Cal'al Claddani (Kale-ALL CLAW-donny)**. A half drow woman with long silver hair and green eyes. She is the proprietor of The Flagon and Dragon. Her cheery disposition and welcoming smile make her a ray of sunshine in this underground town. Cal'al is always willing to tell a secret or two if she feels she can trust the receiver. Spending a bit on the drinks she has behind her bar will go a long way toward winning that trust.

**Personality:** *I'm haughty, yet pleasant.*

**Ideal:** *A light in the darkness is good for business.*

**Bond:** *The people of Skullport are misunderstood.*

**Flaw:** *I'm a sucker for the latest gossip.*

- **Seabordt (SEE-bort)**. Seabordt is referenced in this adventure but does not appear. The residents of Skullport are not familiar with him, and the Cult of Midnight fears him—so much so that they will not speak of his appearance, only his demands and goal of turning everyone into a vampire.

- **Cutie (CUE-TEE)**. A hulking, grunting minotaur, Cutie's name certainly does not reflect her physical form – she is covered in dried blood and gore more often than not.

**Personality:** *\*grunt\**

**Ideal:** *Sure, I'll do it. Nobody else will, right?*

**Bond:** *I make my own luck. The future is bright for me, so don't get in the way.*

**Flaw:** *I get confused easily when people try to outsmart me. It makes me angry. \*grunt\**

- **Lara Vu (LA-ra VU)**. Lara is a gynosphinx but has been magically turned into an old human woman. She appears to be one of the Shou people, though she isn't very familiar with them.

**Personality:** *I'd love to engage in conversation, but Skullport isn't known for being a haven for poets and authors. Perhaps you need my services?*

**Ideal:** *Sure, I'll do it. Nobody else will, right?*

**Bond:** *Secrets are a way of life. Your life, not mine – secrets are beneath me, unless you're paying.*

**Flaw:** *I can't leave Skullport or Undermountain looking like this!*

- **Vyraxxan (VY-rax-ZAN)**. This darkling speaks with a quick cadence and always keeps his skin hidden deep within his voluminous garments.

**Personality:** *There's always a better deal, and I'll find it.*

**Ideal:** *I can keep people happy by selling them bits of foreign happiness. Who cares where it came from?*

**Bond:** *Money. Always money.*

**Flaw:** *I frighten easily when faced with physical altercations.*



## APPENDIX 2: CREATURE STATISTICS

### AUSTRA TRUMAINE (SPELLCASTER VAMPIRE)

*Medium undead (shapechanger), lawful evil*

**Armor Class** 16 (natural armor)

**Hit Points** 144 (17d8 + 68)

**Speed** 30 ft.

---

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	18 (+4)	18 (+4)	17 (+3)	15 (+2)	18 (+4)

---

**Saving Throws** Dex +9, Wis +7, Cha +9

**Skills** Perception +7, Stealth +9

**Damage Resistances** necrotic; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

**Senses** darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 17

**Languages** the languages it knew in life

**Challenge** 15 (13,000 XP)

**Shapechanger.** If the vampire isn't in sunlight or running water, it can use its action to polymorph into a Tiny bat or a Medium cloud of mist, or bat into its true form

While in bat form, the vampire can't speak, its walking speed is 5 feet, and it has a flying speed of 30 feet. Its statistics other than its size and speed are unchanged. Anything it is wearing transforms with it, but nothing it is carrying does. It reverts back to its true form if it dies.

While in mist form, the vampire can't take any actions, speak, or manipulate objects. It is weightless, has a speed of 20 feet, can hover, and can enter a hostile creature's space and stop there. In addition, if air can pass through a space, the mist can do so without squeezing, and it can't pass through water. It has advantage on Strength, Dexterity, and Constitution saving throws, and it is immune to all nonmagical damage, except the damage it takes from sunlight.

**Legendary Resistance (3/Day).** If the vampire fails a saving throw, it can succeed instead.

**Misty Escape.** When it drops to 0 hit points outside its nesting place, the vampire transforms into a cloud of mist (as in the shapechanger trait) instead of falling unconscious, provided that it isn't in sunlight or running water. If it can't transform, it is destroyed.

While it has 0 hit points in mist form, it can't revert to its vampire form, and it must reach its resting point within two hours or be destroyed. Once in its resting place, it reverts to its vampire form. It is then paralyzed until it regains 1 hit point. After spending 1 hour in its resting place with 0 hit points, it regains 1 hit point.

**Spellcasting.** Austra is a 9th-level spellcaster. Her spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 15, +7 to hit with spell attacks). She has the following wizard spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *blade ward, prestidigitation, ray of frost*

1st level (4 slots) *chromatic orb, fog cloud, Tasha's hideous laughter*

2nd level (3 slots) *blindness/deafness, detect thoughts, mirror image*

3rd level (3 slots) *glyph of warding, haste, hypnotic pattern*

4th level (3 slots) *blight, greater invisibility*

5th level (1 slot) *animate objects*

**Regeneration.** The vampire regains 20 hit points at the start of its turn if it has at least 1 hit point and isn't in sunlight or running water. If the vampire takes radiant damage or damage from holy water, this trait doesn't function at the start of the vampire's next turn.

**Spider Climb.** The vampire can climb difficult surfaces, including upside down on ceilings, without needing to make an ability check.

**Vampire Weaknesses.** The vampire has the following flaws:

**Forbiddance.** The vampire can't enter a residence without an invitation from one of its occupants.

**Harmed by Running Water.** The vampire takes 20 acid damage if it ends its turn in running water.

**Stake to the Heart.** If a piercing weapon made of wood is driven into a vampire's heart while the vampire is incapacitated in its resting place, the vampire is paralyzed until the stake is removed.

**Sunlight Hypersensitivity.** The vampire takes 20 radiant damage when it starts its turn in sunlight. While in sunlight, it has disadvantage on attack rolls and ability checks.

### ACTIONS

---

**Multiattack (Vampire form only).** The vampire makes two attacks, only one of which can be a bite.

**Unarmed Strike (Vampire form only).** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5ft., one creature. *Hit:* 8 (1d8+4) bludgeoning damage. Instead of dealing damage, the vampire can grapple the target (escape DC 18)

**Bite (Bat or Vampire form only).** *Melee Weapon*

**Attack:** +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one willing creature, or a creature that is grappled by the vampire, incapacitated, or restrained. **Hit:** 7 (1d6+4) piercing damage plus 10 (3d6) necrotic damage. The target's hit point maximum is reduced by an amount equal to the necrotic taken, and the vampire regains hit points equal to that amount. The reduction lasts until the target finishes a long rest. The target dies if this effect reduces its hit point maximum to 0. A humanoid slain in this way and then buried in the ground rises the following night as a vampire spawn under the vampire's control.

**Charm.** The vampire targets one humanoid it can see within 30 feet of it. If the target can see the vampire, the target must succeed on a DC 17 Wisdom saving throw this magic or be charmed by the vampire. The charmed target regards the vampire as a trusted friend to be heeded and protected. Although the target isn't under the vampire's control, it takes the vampire's requests or actions in the most favorable way it can and is a willing target for the vampire's bite attack.

Each time the vampire or the vampire's companions do anything harmful to the target, it can repeat the saving throw, ending the effect on itself on a success. Otherwise, the effect last 24 hours or until the vampire is destroyed, is on a different plane of existence than the target or takes a bonus action to end the effect.

**Children of the Night (1/Day).** The vampire magically calls 2d4 swarms of bats or rats provided that the sun isn't up. While outdoors, the vampire can call 3d6 wolves instead. The called creatures arrive in 1d4 rounds, acting as allies of the vampire and obeying its spoken commands. The beasts remain for 1 hour, until the vampire dies, or until the vampire dismisses them as a bonus action.

**LEGENDARY ACTIONS**

The vampire can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. The vampire regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

- **Cantrip.** The vampire casts a cantrip
- **Move.** The vampire moves up to its speed without provoking opportunity attacks.
- **Unarmed Strike.** The vampire makes an unarmed strike.
- **Bite (Cost 2 actions).** The vampire makes one bite attack.

**BLACKGUARD**

*Medium humanoid (any race), any non-good alignment*

**Armor Class** 18 (plate)

**Hit Points** 153 (18d8+72)

**Speed** 30 ft.

---

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	11 (+0)	18 (+4)	11 (+0)	14 (+2)	15 (+2)

---

**Saving Throws** Wis +5, Cha +5

**Skills** Athletics +7, Deception +5, Intimidation +5

**Senses** passive Perception 12

**Languages** any one language (usually Common)

**Challenge** 8 (3,900 XP)

**Spellcasting.** The blackguard is a 10th-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 13, +5 to hit with spell attacks). It has the following paladin spells prepared:

1st level (4 slots): *command, protection from evil and good, thunderous smite*

2nd level (3 slots): *branding smite, find steed*

3rd level (2 slots): *blinding smite, dispel magic*

**ACTIONS**

**Multiattack.** The blackguard makes three attacks with its glaive or its shortbow.

**Glaive.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. **Hit:** 9 (1d10+4) slashing damage.

**Shortbow.** *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, range 80/320 ft., one target. **Hit:** 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage.

**Dreadful Aspect (Recharges after a Short or Long Rest).** The blackguard exudes magical menace. Each enemy within 30 feet of the blackguard must succeed on a DC 13 Wisdom saving throw or be frightened for 1 minute. If a frightened target ends its turn more than 30 feet away from the blackguard, the target can repeat the saving throw, ending the effect on itself on a success.

## CULT FANATIC

Medium humanoid (any race), any non-good alignment

**Armor Class** 13 (leather armor)

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

**Speed** 30 ft.

---

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (+0)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)	13 (+1)	14 (+2)

---

**Skills** Deception +4, Persuasion +4, Religion +2

**Senses** passive Perception 10

**Languages** any one language (usually Common)

**Challenge** 2 (450 XP)

**Dark Devotion.** The fanatic has advantage on saving throws against being charmed or frightened.

**Spellcasting.** The fanatic is a 4th-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC11, +3 to hit with spell attacks). The fanatic has the following cleric spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *light, sacred flame, thaumaturgy*  
1st level (4 slots) *command, inflict wounds, shield of faith*

2nd level (3 slots) *hold person, spiritual weapon*

### ACTIONS

---

**Multiattack.** The fanatic makes two melee attacks.

**Dagger.** *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 4 (1d4 + 2) piercing damage.

## FLAMESKULL

Tiny undead, neutral evil

**Armor Class** 13

**Hit Points** 40 (9d4 + 18)

**Speed** 0 ft., fly 40 ft.

---

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
1 (-5)	17 (+3)	14 (+2)	16 (+3)	10 (+0)	11 (+0)

---

**Skills** Arcana +5, Perception +2

**Damage Resistances** lightning, necrotic, piercing

**Damage Immunities** cold, fire, poison

**Condition Resistances** charmed, frightened, paralyzed, poisoned

**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 12

**Languages** Common

**Challenge** 4 (1,100 XP)

**Illumination.** The flameskull sheds either dim light in a 15-foot radius, or bright light in a 15-foot radius and dim light for an additional 15 feet. It can switch between the options as an action.

**Magic Resistance.** The flameskull has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

**Rejuvenation.** If the flameskull is destroyed, it regains all its hit points in 1 hour unless holy water is sprinkled on its remains or a *dispel magic* or *remove curse* spell is cast on them.

**Spellcasting.** The flameskull is a 5th-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 13, +5 to hit with spell attacks). It requires no somatic or material components to cast its spells. The flameskull has the following wizard spells prepared:

Cantrip (at will): *mage hand*  
1st level (3 slots): *magic missile, shield*  
2nd level (2 slots): *blur, flaming sphere*  
3rd level (1 slot): *fireball*

### ACTIONS

---

**Multiattack.** The flameskull uses Fire Ray twice.

**Fire Ray.** *Ranged Spell Attack:* +5 to hit, range 30 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (3d6) fire damage.

## LARA VU, GYNOSPHINX

*Large monstrosity, lawful neutral*

**Armor Class** 17 (natural armor)

**Hit Points** 136 (16d10 + 48)

**Speed** 40 ft., fly 60 ft.

---

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	15 (+2)	16 (+3)	18 (+4)	18 (+4)	18 (+4)

---

**Skills** Arcana +14, History +14, Perception +9, Religion +9

**Damage Resistances** bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons

**Damage Immunities** psychic

**Condition Immunities** charmed, frightened

**Senses** truesight 120 ft., passive Perception 19

**Languages** Common, Sphinx

**Challenge** 11 (7,200 XP)

**Inscrutable.** The sphinx is immune to any effect that would sense its emotions or read its thoughts, as well as any divination spell that it refuses. Wisdom (Insight) checks made to ascertain the sphinx's intentions or sincerity have disadvantage.

**Magic Weapons.** The sphinx's weapon attacks are magical.

**Spellcasting.** The sphinx is a 9th-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 17, +9 to hit with spell attacks). It requires no material components to cast its spells. The sphinx has the following wizard spells prepared:

Cantrip (at will): *mage hand*, *minor illusion*, *prestidigitation*

1st level (4 slots): *detect magic*, *identify*, *shield*

2nd level (3 slots): *darkness*, *locate object*, *suggestion*

3rd level (3 slots): *dispel magic*, *remove curse*, *tongues*

4th level (3 slots): *banishment*, *greater invisibility*

5th level (1 slot): *legend lore*

### ACTIONS

---

**Multiattack.** The sphinx makes two claw attacks.

**Claw.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 13 (2d8 + 4) damage.

### LEGENDARY ACTIONS

---

The sphinx can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. The sphinx regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

- **Claw Attack.** The sphinx makes one claw attack.

- **Teleport (Costs 2 Actions).** The sphinx magically teleports, along with any equipment it is wearing or carrying, up to 12 feet to an unoccupied space it can see.
- **Cast a Spell (Costs 3 Actions).** The sphinx casts a spell from its list of prepared spells, using a spell slot as normal.

### CHANGES TO THIS STATBLOCK

Lara Vu is a gynosphinx that has been subjected to a true polymorph spell. Due to the odd magic of Undermountain, this effect can only be dispelled by Halaster (or the death of the Mad Mage). The following changes need to be implemented when using Lara Vu during play:

- Lara Vu's size is medium
- Lara Vu does not have a fly speed in her human form

## SHADOW ASSASSIN

Medium undead, chaotic evil

**Armor Class** 14

**Hit Points** 78 (12d8 + 24)

**Speed** 40 ft.

---

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
6 (-2)	19 (+4)	14 (+2)	13 (+1)	12 (+1)	14 (+2)

---

**Saving Throws** Dex +8, Int +5

**Skills** Perception +9, Stealth +12

**Damage Vulnerabilities** radiant

**Damage Resistances** acid, cold, fire, lightning, thunder; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

**Damage Immunities** necrotic

**Condition Immunities** exhaustion, frightened, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, restrained

**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 19

**Languages** understands the languages it knew in life but can't speak

**Challenge** 9 (5,000 XP)

**Amorphous.** The assassin can move through a space as narrow as 1 inch wide without squeezing.

**Shadow Stealth.** While in dim light or darkness, the assassin can take the Hide action as a bonus action.

**Sunlight Weaknesses.** While in sunlight, the assassin has disadvantage on attack rolls, ability checks, and saving throws.

### ACTIONS

---

**Multiattack.** The assassin makes two Shadow Blade attacks.

**Shadow Blade.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5ft., one creature. *Hit:* 7 (1d6 + 4) piercing damage plus 10 (3d6) necrotic damage. Unless the target is immune to necrotic damage, the target's Strength score is reduced by 1d4 each time it is hit by this attack. The target dies if its Strength is reduced to 0. The reduction lasts until the target finishes a short or long rest.

If a non-evil humanoid dies from this attack, a shadow rises from the corpse 1d4 hours later.

## VAMPIRE SPAWN

Medium undead, neutral evil

**Armor Class** 15 (natural armor)

**Hit Points** 82 (11d8 + 33)

**Speed** 30 ft.

---

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16(+3)	16 (+3)	16 (+3)	11 (+0)	10 (+0)	12 (+1)

---

**Saving Throws** Dex +6, Wis +3

**Skills** Perception +3, Stealth +6

**Damage Resistances** necrotic; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 13

**Languages** the languages it knew in life

**Challenge** 5 (1,800 XP)

**Regeneration.** The vampire regains 10 hit points at the start of its turn if it has at least 1 hit point and isn't in sunlight or running water. If the vampire takes radiant damage or damage from holy water, this trait doesn't function at the start of the vampire's next turn.

**Spider Climb.** The vampire can climb difficult surfaces, including upside down on ceilings, without needing to make an ability check.

**Vampire Weaknesses.** The vampire has the following flaws:

**Forbiddance.** The vampire can't enter a residence without an invitation from one of its occupants.

**Harmed by Running Water.** The vampire takes 20 acid damage if it ends its turn in running water.

**Stake to the Heart.** If a piercing weapon made of wood is driven into a vampire's heart while the vampire is incapacitated in its resting place, the vampire is paralyzed until the stake is removed.

**Sunlight Hypersensitivity.** The vampire takes 20 radiant damage when it starts its turn in sunlight. While in sunlight, it has disadvantage on attack rolls and ability checks.

### ACTIONS

---

**Multiattack.** The vampire makes two attacks, only one of which can be a bite.

**Claws.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5ft., one creature. *Hit:* 8 (2d4+3) slashing damage. Instead of dealing damage, the vampire can grapple the target (escape DC 13)

**Bite (Bat or Vampire form only).** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one willing creature, or a creature that is grappled by the vampire, incapacitated, or restrained. *Hit:* 6 (1d6+3) piercing damage plus 7 (2d6) necrotic damage. The target's hit point maximum is reduced by an amount equal to the necrotic taken, and the vampire regains hit points equal to that amount. The reduction lasts until the target finishes a long rest. The target dies if this effect reduces its hit point maximum to 0.

## WAR PRIEST

Medium humanoid (any race), any alignment

**Armor Class** 18 (plate)

**Hit Points** 117 (18d8+36)

**Speed** 30 ft.

---

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	10 (+0)	14 (+2)	11 (+0)	17 (+3)	13 (+1)

---

**Saving Throws** Con +6, Wis +2

**Skills** Intimidation +5, Religion +4

**Senses** passive Perception 13

**Languages** any two languages

**Challenge** 9 (5,000 XP)

**Spellcasting.** The war priest is a 9th-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 15, +7 to hit with spell attacks). It has the following cleric spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *light, mending, sacred flame, spare the dying.*

1st level (4 slots): *divine favor, guiding bolt, healing word, shield of faith*

2nd level (3 slots): *lesser restoration, magic weapon, prayer of healing, silence, spiritual weapon*

3rd level (3 slots): *beacon of hope, crusader's mantle, dispel magic, revivify, spirit guardians, water walk*

4th level (3 slots): *banishment, freedom of movement, guardian of faith, stoneskin*

5th level (1 slot): *flame strike, mass cure wounds, hold monster*

### ACTIONS

---

**Multiattack.** The war priest makes two melee attacks.

**Maul.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (2d6+3) bludgeoning damage.

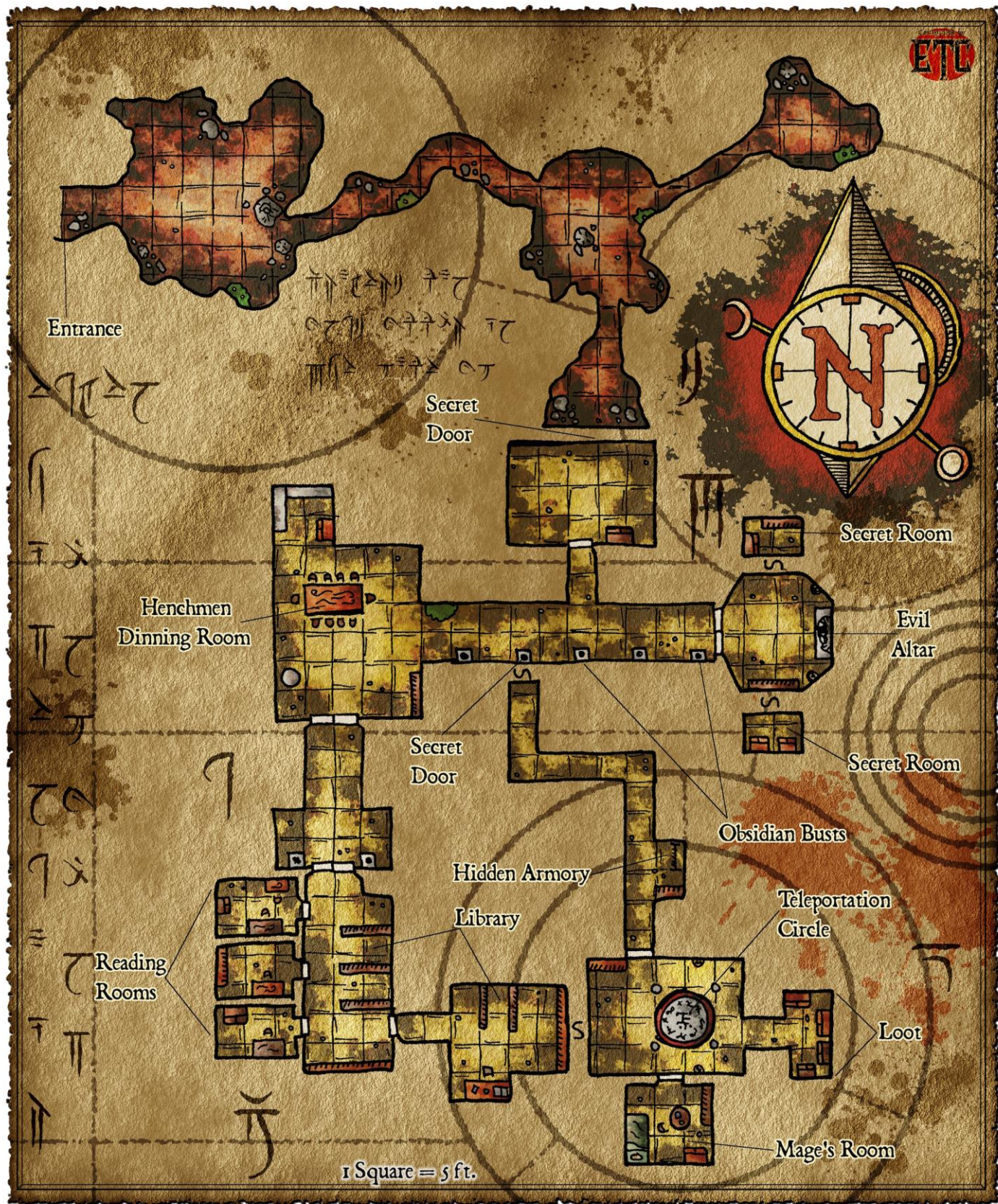
### REACTIONS

---

**Guided Strike (Recharges After a Short or Long Rest).**

The war priest grants +10 bonus to an attack made by itself or another creature within 30 feet of it. The priest can make this choice after the roll is made but before it hits or misses

# APPENDIX 3: CULT LAIR MAP



## APPENDIX 4: MISSING PERSONS

**Zarraen.** This female tiefling is never far from her aasimar-bone armor. “If it is truly made of aasimar bones or not, I neither know nor care.”



**Brimble.** Brimble is a female dwarf druid from the Field Ward of Waterdeep and is described as “an odd one”. Nobody is quite sure why someone would carry a live hornet’s nest with them at all times.



**Lord Crackle.** “The Batiri goblin bard is not truly a lord, though they believe they are. Their headdress is almost magnificent in its courage, though; the colors are both out of season and yet bold enough to show in court.”





## APPENDIX 5: THE WORM'S GULLET (BONUS OBJECTIVE A.)

Estimated Duration: 1 hour

### SCENE A. THE WORM'S GULLET

---

The characters have learned that a nest of vampires in Skullport has been taking many people. Rumor has it that the creatures are using The Worm's Gullet, the only restaurant in Skullport, to further their efforts.

#### PREREQUISITES

This bonus objective can be pursued once the characters have completed the **Call to Action**.

#### BONUS OBJECTIVE A

Investigating the disappearances and stopping the schemes of the kidnappers is **Bonus Objective A**.

#### AREA INFORMATION

This area has the following features:

**Dimensions & Terrain.** The Worm's Gullet is an odd establishment in that it is housed inside the hollowed out remains of a petrified purple worm.

**Lighting.** Outside, the street lanterns shed bright light in a 30-foot radius and dim another 30 feet. Inside, the restaurant sports candle-lit tables and dingy oil lanterns along the walls every 20 feet.

**Menu.** The menu is unsavory but creative, with meals costing 5 sp. Additional information can be found in the Skullport appendix in *Waterdeep Dungeon of the Mad Mage*.

#### CREATURES/NPCs

**Gharz Stonedark** seems to be ever-present in the establishment, along with ten **kobold** employees.

**Objectives/Goals.** **Gharz** wants his business to do well, if only to keep the Xanathar Guild happy. Should the situation arise, he values his own livelihood above that of his patrons.

**What Does He Know?** **Gharz** can share the rumor that the vampires have been taking citizens of Skullport in recent weeks. He believes that these things are allowed to happen because Skullport has its own laws, that or someone made the *right* laws. The swears they're not his employers, and offers to mark the characters if they like, as this would allow them to see what happens first-hand. A DC 16 Wisdom (Insight) check confirms that he means no malice by this statement.

#### DEVELOPMENT

Should the characters allow **Gharz** to mark them for the vampires, they learn that the vampires wear long black and purple cloaks and openly display the holy symbol of Shar on thick chains around their necks.

Should the characters decide to attack **Gharz** or prove themselves otherwise uncooperative, the vampire slavers have a surprise round (**Scene A**).

## PLAYING THE PILLARS

#### COMBAT

The slavers are intended to be a difficult combat encounter but be ready to make adjustments for ill-prepared parties. Limiting the poison damage or adding/removing slavers are both appropriate options.

#### EXPLORATION

Encourage the use of terrain, especially if the characters are vocal in their desire to set a trap for the slavers. Reward creativity by adjusting combat or allowing them to escape the notice of the skulls for this Bonus Objective.

#### SOCIAL

**Gharz** wants to save his business, and the neonate vampires likely don't deserve to be killed. If the characters are engaged here, consider reducing the combat's duration or impact. If bribed, he becomes far more pliable and open.

## SCENE A. PRESSGANGERS

The characters confront the vampire slavers.

### AREA INFORMATION

This scene can take place where ever the characters determine that it needs to. Using what they know of the slavers, they may be able to lead the creatures into a trap such as an alley, a small building, or even just in the open street. It takes place a few minutes after they leave The Worm's Gullet.

On the off chance that the characters didn't get this information, the vampire slavers have a surprise round unless more than half of the party has a passive Perception of 19 or higher. Skullport is their home and they are operating with the blessing of Shar.

### CREATURES/NPCs

Vampiric slavers (one **vampire spawn** per character) accost the characters.

**Objectives/Goals.** The slavers seek to capture the characters and turn them into vampires in service to Shar.

**What Do They Know?** The slavers are unwilling to engage in conversation or parley, though they do taunt the characters during combat.

### VAMPIRE SLAVERS

Vampire slavers use the **vampire spawn** stat block, with the following adjustments:

- **Poisoned Claws.** The first time that a slaver hits a creature with a claw attack, the target must succeed on a DC 19 Constitution saving throw, taking 42 (12d6) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.
- **Pack Tactics.** The slaver has advantage on an attack roll against a creature if at least one of the slaver's allies is within 5 feet of the creature and isn't incapacitated.

### TREASURE & REWARDS

Searching the bodies reveals the following items:

- One carries a stack of flyers that are designed to entice poor people to visit "the surgeons" by offering food and shelter
- Each slaver wears bloodstained clothing that is clearly not theirs (strange sizes, odd styles, etc).

## SCENE B. DECISION POINT

Finding the surgeon's shop is simple once the characters have defeated the slavers and acquired the flyers. Once there, they need to determine how to best to deal with the still-transforming monsters.

### AREA INFORMATION

This area has the following features:

**Dimensions & Terrain.** This one-story building has a hidden trapdoor that can be found with a DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check. Give the characters advantage if they muse or reason that the screams don't seem to be coming from anywhere obvious. The basement is lined with bunkbeds.

**Door.** The door to the street is locked but can be picked by a character with thieves' tools that succeeds on a DC 17 check. It can be bashed in with a successful DC 20 Strength (Athletics) check; it is very well reinforced and this risks bringing the Skulls to this location.

**Lighting.** There is no light here.

**Smells.** The entire area reeks of death and decay.

**Sounds.** The sounds of moaning and groaning people are occasionally cut by screams ranging from short and piercing to guttural to prolonged fits of incoherent screeching.

### CREATURES/NPCs

Ten creatures are in the throes of vampirism. None are restrained but all have been infected. There is a mix of races present.

**Objectives/Goals.** The creatures here are all neonate vampires. If a living creature attacks them or lingers here for more than 1 minute, they rise and attack.

**What Do They Know?** Without magical healing, they are mindless, near-feral creatures that desire only to feed. With healing, they remember nothing of their ordeal.

### NEONATE VAMPIRES

Neonate vampires use the **vampire spawn** stat block, with the following adjustments:

- **Neonatal.** The neonate vampires aren't fully tuned into their new form. They act as if affected by *slow* (though it cannot be dispelled).

### TREASURE & REWARDS

The characters find a letter from 'Seabordt' reading:

*"The plan is proceeding better than anticipated" but warning "you should 'ware the Skulls as they don't take kindly to their citizenry getting disappeared too quickly."*

## APPENDIX 6: GLORIOUS RETALIATION (BONUS OBJECTIVE B)

*Estimated Duration:* 1 hour

### SETTING DESCRIPTION

---

Lara Vu, the oracle of Skullport, has asked the characters to retaliate against the Cult of Midnight. She has directed the characters to an abandoned dwarven bank and vault.

#### PREREQUISITES

This bonus objective may be started once Lara Vu gives the characters the information in **Episode 2, Scene C**. It may be completed at any time, including after the events of **Episode 3**.

#### BONUS OBJECTIVE B

Lara Vu has requested that the characters retaliate against the Cult of Midnight for their transgressions. This Bonus Objective can be completed by defeating all three groups of cultists here and telling Artor about what the regular vault contains, or by breaking open the secret vault and telling Artor about what it contains.

#### AREA INFORMATION

This area has the following features:

**Dimensions & Terrain.** The stone is impeccable—a hallmark of dwarven engineering. The hallways are 10 feet wide, and the entire complex has 15-foot ceilings.

**Lighting.** There is no light here.

#### CREATURES / NPCs

As the characters explore this place, there is a cumulative 20% chance in each section of the Cult's hideout to have one of the following random encounters:

- A **war priest** and four **cult fanatics**
- Two **vampire spawn** and a **war priest**
- A hiding **shadow assassin**. Any creature with a passive Perception score of 22 or higher isn't surprised when it leaps from hiding to attack.

Each encounter may only be run once. Once all three have been run, they encounter no other foes unless the characters have gone to great lengths to anger the citizens of Skullport or the skulls themselves.

**Objectives/Goals.** The cultists are angered to see the characters and fight to the death to preserve the truth about what they are doing here.

**What Do They Know?** They are working at the behest of Austra Trumaine (**Episode 3**), but also seek to fulfill Seabordt's goal of turning more people into vampires.

### PLAYING THE PILLARS

#### COMBAT

The request for retaliation is a fairly open-ended request and intentionally lacks additional definition. Murder is illegal in Skullport, but they should have a writ to prevent the skulls from taking action. Even so, multiple murders means multiple violations...

#### EXPLORATION

Lara Vu has asked for retaliation but did not define it. Will the characters simply destroy this location—and if so, how? There are several vulnerable points that could be damaged once discovered, from resources to destroying the building.

#### SOCIAL

Enterprising characters may choose to investigate the hideout and gather evidence, then arrange for the skulls of Skullport to mete out appropriate justice. Encourage and reward this mode of thinking!

## SCENE A. DARK CONGREGATION

---

The Cult of Midnight stages some of their attacks from here, but the valuable secrets are hidden inside.

### ENTRY HALL

While the construction of this place clearly dates back several centuries, the stonework is in near-perfect condition. There is very little evidence of traffic here.

### GATHERING CHAMBER

The walls of this room are covered in wanted posters, missing persons reports, and maps of Skullport that have been covered in ink blotches. Several buildings have been circled—it's likely that these are the locations of kidnappings that have already taken place or are planned for the near future. The Worm's Gullet, a restaurant on the upper level of Skullport, has been circled several times.

### OFFICE

This room contains a desk, an empty shelf, and a black metal lockbox. The lockbox can be unlocked with a set of thieves' tools and a successful DC 20 Dexterity check.

**Treasure & Rewards.** The lockbox contains:

- A stack of identification papers from Skullport, Waterdeep, and major cities from across the world; each paper is from a different person
- A small velvet pouch that contains three platinum teeth. These are all enlarged canine teeth and appear to be from a humanoid.

### WALL SAFES

The Cult of Midnight long ago ripped these safe deposit boxes open. Now they are merely small holes

in the stone block. Each hole contains articles of clothing, many of them bloodstained. Cloaks, shirts, trousers, and more items of all sizes and origins can be found here.

### RECORDS

The shelves here are lined with small trophies, ostensibly taken from the people that the Cult has kidnapped. Necklaces, rings, circlets, and more can be easily seen.

### PLANNING & OPERATIONS

A dwarven statue watches over the two desks here. The desks are covered in scattered notes and missives. If the characters spend ten minutes sifting through the messages, they find a few that contain requests from a "Seabordt" demanding to "up the production". A few are from a person named Austra that appear to indicate that she is pleased to see the steady, measured flow of "volunteers for the Dark Gift".

### REGULAR VAULT

The door leading into the vault is not locked but it is extremely heavy and requires a combined Strength of 30 to open. Up to two characters may work together for this task. The door is extremely cold and has a layer of frost on it.

Inside can be seen a small number of intact, frozen bodies. The shelves are lined with assorted body parts, with many of them sealed into glass jars of various sizes and filled with preservative fluid.

## PLAYING THE PILLARS

### COMBAT

The characters have been tasked with "making it hurt", so a combat-first mentality may be present. Consider having the flameskulls swoop in or adding an additional cultist or two from the earlier list.

### EXPLORATION

Manipulating the statues can be very tricky if there are any cultists left in the area. Consider the echoing sound of the grinding stone and if this would potentially alert people outside of the facility.

### SOCIAL

If the characters are outclassed or overly concerned with combat, they may seek out allies or contacts in Skullport. If motivated, Lara Vu, Cutie, or perhaps even the flameskulls could be persuaded to assist in this effort.

## SCENE B. FUTURE, VILE PLANS

---

The characters are not required to access the secret vault but doing so helps them learn more about the vampires plans for Skullport and beyond.

### DWARVEN STATUES

Multiple dwarven statues crafted of flawless marble can be found throughout the complex. It may not be apparent to the characters immediately, but they are the key to opening the **Secret Vault** to the southeast of the complex.

The statues can all be rotated with ease but doing so creates a loud grinding noise which may alert any cultists that remain in the complex.

- **Statue A.** This jovial female dwarf is holding her belly, and her head is thrown back in an eternal laugh. When the characters first arrive here, she is facing west.
- **Statue B.** This dwarf is clad in ring mail and is crouched down, as if in anticipation of an attack. His pouches bulge and he's facing north when the characters first arrive here.
- **Statue C.** This battle-scarred veteran warrior dwarf has had half of his beard broken off. The crafting is so expertly done that it is impossible to tell if it happened after the statue was created or if it was part of the original design. When the characters first arrive here, the statue is facing south.
- **Statue D.** This dwarf may be male or female; there are no truly defining features on which to base an opinion. They wear a monocle and face west when the characters first arrive, seeming to be staring intently at the door of the **Regular Vault**.

Rotating all four statues to face east causes the **Secret Vault** to be revealed as the secret doors grind open.

### SECRET VAULT

Curiously, this vault is wide open. Inside are twelve vials of blood and a family tree showing one Keresta Delvingstone at the top, with lines leading to Austra and Seabordt. From there, dozens of other names—all in fresh ink—can be read. Artor's name is written off to the side, circled and with a large question mark next to it.

**Treasure & Rewards.** The contents of the vault can be taken and dealt with as the characters see fit.

- The family tree is written on a long piece of parchment and can be held in a scroll tube
- The vials of blood are unlabeled, and are a deep, dark red. A DC 18 Wisdom (Medicine) check confirms that the blood is a mix of human, elven, and dwarven but is clearly poisoned. Any character so bold as to drink the contents of one of the vials must succeed on a DC 22 Constitution saving throw or be reduced to 0 hit points and begins dying. A creature drinking a second vial within a tenday immediately dies. *Legend lore* or other similar means of learning information about the blood effect (such as contacting Lara Vu), reveals that it can be used to turn a creature into a vampire without biting them, but the exact process is unknown.

## PLAYING THE PILLARS

### COMBAT

If the characters found their way into the Secret Vault without defeating all of the occupants of this place, any remaining cultists assemble in the hallway and attack en masse.

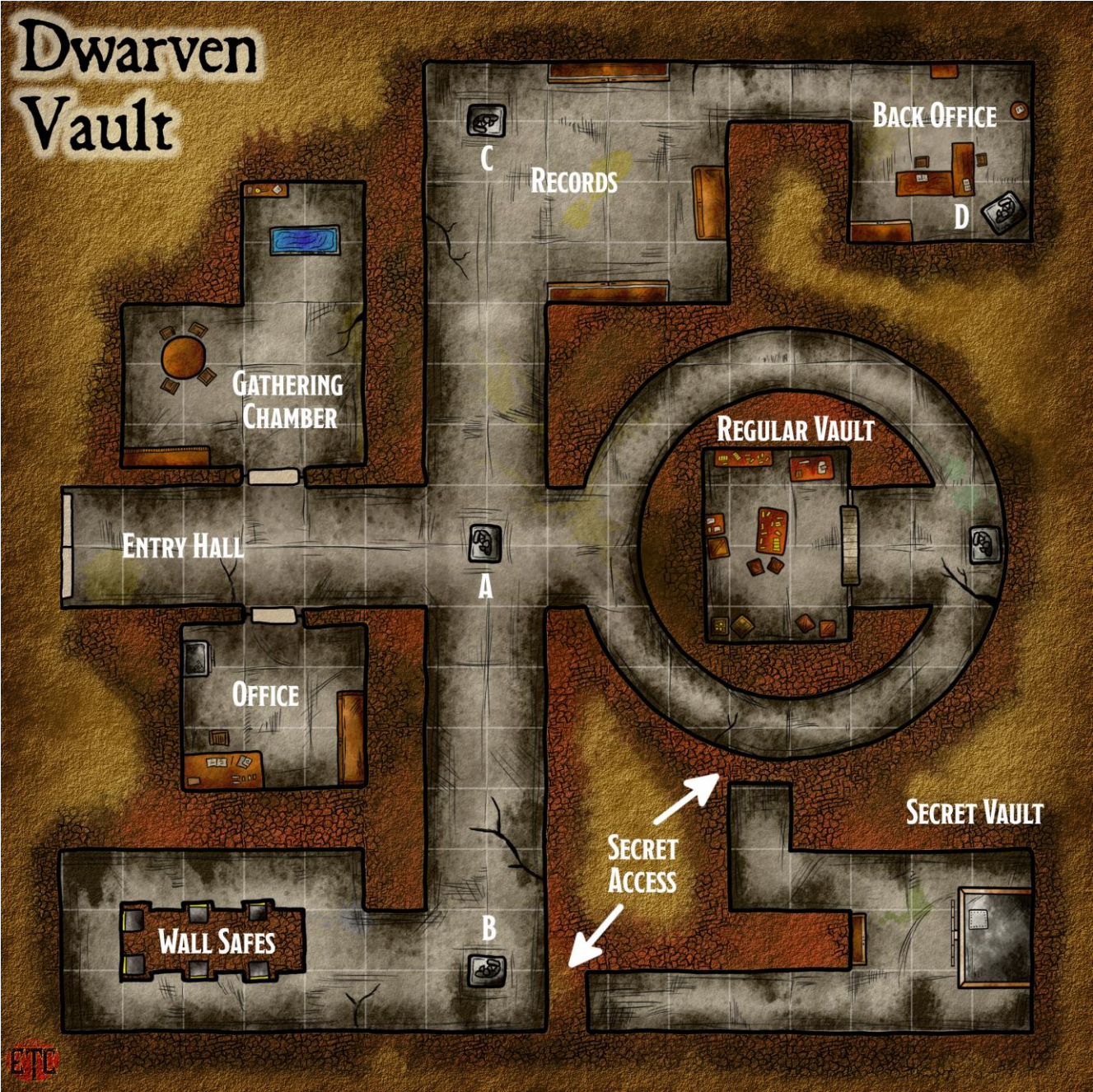
### EXPLORATION

Manipulating the statues can be very tricky if there are any cultists left in the area. Consider the echoing sound of the grinding stone and if this would potentially alert people outside of the facility.

### SOCIAL

The characters should be encouraged to discuss the contents of the Secret Vault with Artor. As a Masked Lord of Waterdeep, he is likely to have more resources at his disposal to deal with things like this.

APPENDIX 7: DWARVEN VAULT MAP



## APPENDIX 8: MAGIC ITEM

Characters completing this adventure's objective unlock this magic item.

### STAFF OF WITHERING

---

*Staff, rare (requires attunement by a cleric, druid, or warlock)*

This staff has 3 charges and regains 1d3 expended charges daily at dawn.

The staff can be wielded as a magic quarterstaff. On a hit, it deals damage as a normal quarterstaff, and you can expend 1 charge to deal an extra 2d10 necrotic damage to the target. In addition, the target must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or have disadvantage for 1 hour on any ability check or saving throw that uses Strength or Constitution. This item is found on **Magic Item Table G** in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

This staff is made of human bones wrapped in mithral wire. Whenever a charge is expended your eye alight with cosmetic black flames for a round.

## APPENDIX 8: DUNGEON MASTER TIPS

This adventure is designed for **three to seven 11th-16th level characters** and is optimized for **five characters with an average party level (APL) of 13**. Characters outside this level range cannot participate in this adventure.

### NEW TO D&D ADVENTURERS LEAGUE?

<http://dnd.wizards.com/playevents/organized-play>

### NEW TO THE ANNUAL STORYLINE?

<http://dnd.wizards.com/story/waterdeep>

<http://dndadventurersleague.org/storyline-seasons/waterdeep-adventures/>

To DM an adventure, you **must** have 3 to 7 players—each with their own character whose level is within the adventure’s level range. Characters playing in a **hardcover** adventure may continue to play to but if they play a different hardcover adventure, they **can’t return** to the first one if they’re outside its level range.

## PREPARING THE ADVENTURE

Before you start play, consider the following:

- Read through the adventure, taking notes of anything you’d like to highlight or remind yourself of while running the adventure, such as a way you’d like to portray an NPC or a tactic you’d like to use in a combat. Familiar yourself with the adventure’s appendices and handouts.
- Gather any resources you’d like to use to aid you in running this adventure—such as notecards, a DM screen, miniatures, and battlemaps.
- Ask the players to provide you with relevant character information, such as name, race, class, and level; passive Wisdom (Perception), and anything specified as notable by the adventure (such as backgrounds, traits, flaws, etc.)

Players can play an adventure they previously played as a Player or Dungeon Master, but may only play it once with a given character. Ensure each player has their character’s adventure logsheet (if not, get one from the organizer). The players fill out the adventure name, session number, date, and your name and DCI number. In addition, the player also fills in the starting values for advancement and treasure checkpoints, downtime days, and renown. These values are updated at the conclusion of the session.

Each player is responsible for maintaining an accurate logsheet. If you have time, you can do a quick scan of a player’s character sheet to ensure that nothing looks out of order. If you see magic items of very high rarities or strange arrays of ability scores, you can ask players to provide documentation for the irregularities. If they cannot, feel free to restrict item use or ask them to use a standard ability score array.

Point players to the D&D Adventurers League Players Guide for reference. If players wish to spend downtime days and it’s the beginning of an adventure or episode, they can declare their activity and spend the days now, or they can do so at the end of the adventure or episode. Players should select their characters’ spells and other daily options prior to the start of the adventure, unless the adventure specifies otherwise. Feel free to reread the adventure description to help give players hints about what they might face.

### NEED MORE MAPS?

Consider picking up the [D&D Dungeon Tiles Reincarnated](#) line. Specifically, the [City](#) and [Dungeon](#) sets can be a huge boon in this adventure!

## ADJUSTING THIS ADVENTURE

When combat is a possibility, the adventure will provide a sidebar that helps you to determine the best mix/number of opponents to provide them with to create an appropriate challenge. While you’re not bound to these adjustments; they’re here for your convenience and consideration.

To determine whether you should consider adjusting the adventure, add up the total levels of all the characters and divide the result by the number of characters (rounding .5 or greater up; .4 or less down). This is the group’s average party level (APL). To approximate the **party strength** for the adventure, consult the table below.

### DETERMINING PARTY STRENGTH

Party Composition	Party	Strength
3-4 characters, APL less than		Very weak
3-4 characters, APL equivalent		Weak
3-4 characters, APL greater than		Average
5 characters, APL less than		Weak
5 characters, APL equivalent		Average
5 characters, APL greater than		Strong
6-7 characters, APL less than		Average
6-7 characters, APL equivalent		Strong
6-7 characters, APL greater than		Very strong