

# Bounty Hunters

A module for 4 characters, levels 2-4.

By Jim Gillispie

Version 1.09

## Credits

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Dedicated to: My good friend Mike, who taught me the importance of role-playing in role-playing games.

Jim  
Gillispie's **Module**  
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A mischievous halfling thief has gotten himself into BIG trouble! He has stolen a valuable gem from a powerful noble, who has now put bounty hunters on his trail. Now his only way out is to get help from a group of adventurers.

**Bounty Hunters** is a short adventure for use with the d20 system by Wizards of the Coast®. It requires the use of the Dungeons & Dragons® Player's Handbook, Third Edition, published by Wizards of the Coast®. Dungeons & Dragons® and Wizards of the Coast® are Registered Trademarks of Wizards of the Coast, and are used with Permission under the d20 system license (see the LICENSES APPENDIX).

This adventure is optimized for 4 player characters, all between character levels 2 and 4, but can be adapted for play with almost any number of characters of any level.

### **Preparation**

If you are a player, STOP READING NOW! The following info in this module is for the Dungeon Master(DM)'s eyes only! You, as the DM, should have a copy of each of the core rule books.

This adventure is designed to be used as a side-quest or interlude adventure when the PCs (Player Characters) are resting or between adventures in town.

You should read through this adventure thoroughly, at least once, before you begin running it for your players. Shaded boxes are designed to be read directly to your players, but all other information is just for the DM.

The adventure starts out in a (at least somewhat) civilized and urban setting of the large village of Threshold, but can easily be

inserted into any ongoing campaign by placing it in an equivalent town in your game.

**👑 Threshold (large village):** AL NG; 200 gp limit; Assets 8,000 gp; Population 850 (human 58%, elf %21, half-elf 10%, halfling 5%, dwarf 3%, gnome 2%, half-orc 1%).

*Authority Figures:* Magistrate Aaron Eradmith, male human Ftr5.

*Important Characters:* Barkan Falkirk, male human Ftr 3 (Captain of the Guard); Landril Greenleaf, female elf Ftr2 (Lieutenant of the Guard); Shasta Silverglade, female elf Clr 6 (Ehlonna); Karr Kandar, male human Clr3 (Kord); Valner Zaldane, male human Exp6 (blacksmith); Twonder Lightheart, male halfling Com3 (owner of the Dancing Badger Inn)

*Others:* Town guards, War2 (6), War 1 (24); Clr2 (3); Exp3 (2); Exp1(52); Ari1 (6); Com1 (750).

### **Adventure Background**

Kiro the halfling thief was always a mischievous sort, getting himself into all kinds of trouble. He would try to steal almost anything from anybody... more as just a game than as any real crime. If caught, he would smile, and return the stolen item with a sheepish grin.

One day, Kiro got himself into too much hot water. A traveling noble merchant named Lord Galivar arrived in the city of Caronis from the exotic lands far to the west. In the confusion of the Caronis marketplace, Kiro managed to get close enough to "accidentally" bump into Lord Galivar and simultaneously steal his pouch from him. After deftly vanishing among the crowded throng, Kiro later examined the contents of the pouch. It contained a large diamond, which Kiro estimated to be at least 10,000 gold pieces in value!

Knowing that this was a very hot item and not knowing how to get rid of it, the halfling rogue fled the city of Caronis. He traveled for a week before stopping in the village of Threshold, which was a way stop for travelers and adventurers.

Anxious to be rid of the gem, Kiro sold it to a traveling wizard for a fraction of the cost (although still making a tidy sum of gold). The wizard then left with some traveling companions to explore an old ruined castle supposedly hidden somewhere in the woods to the east of Threshold. The wizard and his group never returned.

Kiro has been lying low in Threshold for several weeks now, bidding his time. But he has just learned of some dark and dangerous-looking individuals who are asking about him in town. He fears (correctly) that they were sent by Lord Galivar to retrieve the gem or at least to settle the score with the halfling. Kiro is not able to pay even a tiny fraction of the gem's value back, because he spent all the money he got for selling it on masterwork pieces of equipment he had custom-made for himself.

The three new arrivals in town are bounty hunters sent by Lord Galivar through his underground connections with the Assassin's Guild. They are led by a human female. They are ruthless mercenaries and assassins. Their first goal is to retrieve the diamond. Should that prove impossible, they are to bring back the head of the halfling thief to Lord Galivar.

Kiro has spotted the three bounty hunters on his trail. They are closing in quickly on him. He figures his only chance is to find some protection. Like from a group of adventures in town...

### Adventure Summary

Once the adventures arrive in Threshold, they will eventually encounter the halfling thief, Kiro. The little rogue has already scouted them out as possible protectors. Kiro will use any story or ploy to get the adventures to help him.

The adventures will encounter the bounty hunters, who are now after them for protecting Kiro. They will have to bargain with or run from the bounty hunters to save their own lives and the life of the halfling.

Kiro eventually tells them the whole story and tries to convince them to help him recover the diamond, so that he can get the bounty hunters off his trail.

Finding out where the wizard who bought the gem last traveled to will lead the party into the dangerous woods nearby Threshold. They will venture into the lost ruins to retrieve the diamond from the body of the wizard, who was slain by the dangers of that ancient place.

### Adventure Hooks

Every campaign and every set of player characters are different. But here are some ideas on how to get your party involved in this adventure.

- The group is resting in the town of Threshold after a previous adventure. They are staying at the Dancing Badger Inn when Kiro approaches them, asking for help.
- One of the party members can know Kiro already, and so he comes begging for help.
- A traveling, high-ranking priest of the same religion as one of the clerics or paladins in your party approaches the group. He asks the adventurers to talk to Kiro, who has recently confessed his

sins (not out of piety, but out of desperation), and see if they can straighten the matter out with Kiro's "debt collectors" so that the "sinner" may have "a chance to redeem himself".

- Kiro attempts to steal from one of the group, but gets caught. If the adventurer accuses Kiro, he breaks down and cries, telling them his whole story. If the adventurer lets Kiro go, the halfling is impressed, and will follow the character around and will eventually confide his problem to the group.

## THE HALFLING SNEAK THIEF

Whatever you do to introduce the Kiro to the group, play that out (Note: Kiro's statistics are listed in the NPC APPENDIX). Then when Kiro is ready to confide in the group, read the following passage:

"You've got to help me!" sobs the small halfling. "I never meant any real harm! I never knew what I was getting into! Please!" He pauses to blow his ruddy nose in a lace handkerchief. "I've spotted some bounty hunters on my trail. I'm sure that they are sent by that merchant noble I stole the gem from," he says. "I can't get away with hiding much longer! Please protect me or hide me from them!" Kiro gazes around, at each of you in turn, with a truly pitiful look in his eyes.

The players are likely to question Kiro extensively at this point. Role-play Kiro talking to them. He will respond to any question the PCs put to him. He will tell them whatever they want to know, based on his knowledge from the Adventure Background section. He will downplay his crime, of course, making it out to be more of a big joke or a mistake. Kiro will obviously

not know any details about the bounty hunters, except that they "look scary". While the players are questioning him, insert a sentence like "I'm sure they are getting closer even as we speak!" or "Please, will you help me?" to keep his pitiful status going.

Make sure that the group learns from Kiro that he sold the gem to a traveling wizard. Kiro has inquired after the wizard, in the hope of retrieving the gem, but he has learned that the wizard never returned from an expedition into an old castle ruin in the nearby Eastern Woods. He will share all this knowledge with the PCs, hoping that they will recover the diamond for him.

If the group refuses to help Kiro, have the halfling tell the group he is going to hide at a nearby church. Then, as the PCs are traveling about town, they will meet the bounty hunters (go to the next encounter). The bounty hunters will simply assume that the party is protecting Kiro, so the PCs will have to find a way out of the situation after all.

If you allow the PCs time before going on to the next section, make sure that Kiro tells the party he wants to be hidden or protected by them. Kiro will no longer move about on his own in Threshold.

If you wish, allow the characters time to equip themselves for fighting or traveling. They should be fully rested and healed before encountering the bounty hunters. If they wish to spend their time researching the bounty hunters, they can use a Gather Information check. Depending on their results, the PCs will learn:

**DC 12** – Sure enough, a group of three are asking after Kiro in town. A human female, a human male, and a half-orc male.

**DC 15** – The bounty hunters were in a bar fight several days ago. Everyone was seriously injured in the tumble, except for the three of them, who emerged without a scratch. (This should hint to the players that they are dealing with rather powerful opponents).

**DC 20** – An underground contact reveals that the bounty hunters are assassins from Caronis. They are very deadly, and accustomed to dealing with powerful opponents who get in their way.

Nobody can tell the characters where the bounty hunters are staying or where they can be found now.

## BOUNTY HUNTERS (EL 10)

First off, these bounty hunters should be very powerful compared to the PCs. The idea is that the players will have to find another solution rather than “hack-and-slash” to win this adventure. And it will give them the idea that they aren’t the biggest fish in the pond...

Have the PCs encounter the bounty hunters in the city or just outside the city at the edge of the Eastern Woods. The encounter should happen at night or in a deserted area, so there should be no other people around.

When the group encounters them, read the following:

In your path ahead, you see three figures move to block your way. They are all dressed in black cloaks and have dark expressions on their faces. A woman is in the middle, flanked on either side by a man. One of them appears to be a half-orc. They stare at you with humorless eyes. The woman raises her hand, gesturing for you to stop where you are.

If the PCs are willing to talk and have Kiro with them, read this section:

The woman in the center of the group throws back her hood. She is an attractive, dark-haired woman, but she has a stern face. “Well, well...” she says to you. “We’ve finally found our little sneak thief. And he thinks he’s found some protection, eh?” She looks over all of you and sneers with a contemptuous expression. “Sorry little halfling... it’s obvious they aren’t enough to stop us. It’s time for you to return what you’ve stolen.” The woman draws a dangerous looking sword out from under her cloak, while the others do the same. “Just give us the item,” she says, “and we will leave you and your friends alone. Resist, and we’ll make do with just bringing your head back as our prize.”

If the PCs are willing to talk, but do not have Kiro with them (he would be hiding somewhere), read this section instead:

The woman in the center of the group throws back her hood. She is an attractive, dark-haired woman, but she has a stern face. “Pardon us,” she says to you, “but we’ve heard that you’ve taken up with someone we’re looking for.” She looks over all of you and sneers with a contemptuous expression. The woman draws a dangerous looking sword out from under her cloak, while the others do the same. “You’re obviously not going to be enough to protect the little halfling, so you might as well tell us where he’s hiding, or where he’s hidden the item we’re after.”

### Talking with the Bounty Hunters

Here is where the PCs have some fast thinking to do. Allow them to be creative

and reward any good ideas and good role-playing with appropriate success in talking down the bounty hunters.

If Kiro is with the party, he will cower in the back of the group and refuse to talk to them. The PCs will have to handle any conversation for him. The bounty hunters will be willing to talk before they attack, so if the group is willing to role-play, flesh out this scene. Use your discretion, but allow them a good chance to reason with the bounty hunters. Have one character make a Diplomacy check at DC 12 (you can modify this DC depending on how convincing the character's argument is). Zalaria (see the NPC APPENDIX) is in charge of the group, and she will do most of the talking for the bounty hunters.

If the party explains to them that Kiro no longer has the gem, they can be negotiated with. The bounty hunters will get more reward for bringing back the gem. They will get only half that reward if they just bring back the halfling, so they can be convinced to allow the party time (not more than a week) to find the diamond and return it to them. However, as insurance, they will not allow Kiro to leave town, so if the party has him with them, they will have to leave him behind when they go to the castle ruins (unless they want to try to sneak the halfling out of town, but Kiro won't be keen on any ideas that may anger the bounty hunters further).

### **Fighting the Bounty Hunters**

If the party is foolish enough to try to fight the bounty hunters, they have chosen a dangerous course. If any fighting breaks out, Kiro will attempt to hide and then flee (returning to wherever the PCs first met him). The bounty hunters together should be more than a match for the PCs. If your party has chosen to fight without negotiating, you

may wish to educate them that “hack-and-slash” is not always a good solution to every problem. See the NPC appendix for the bounty hunter's stats and individual tactics. See below for their group tactics.

If the PCs start losing the fight, allow them to flee (You can't teach them a lesson if they all end up dead here!). Remember that this encounter should be to teach them how strong the bounty hunters are, not to slaughter them. If they flee, the bounty hunters will give chase, even split up their forces.

If the PCs miraculously win somehow, well... they are either very lucky or very skilled. I would try to scale the bounty hunters to your party to make sure this is VERY unlikely (see SCALING THE ADVENTURE at the end of the module). But if they do win, they've earned the bounty hunter's equipment and money! Through underground rumors, let them find out that more assassins are on their way, so that the party is still likely to help Kiro find the diamond.

### **The Bounty Hunters:**

Zalaria (female human Ftr4/Rog3 44hp); Trunko (male half-orc Ftr7 58hp); Gorr (male human Rog5/Assassin1 35hp). See the NPC APPENDIX for their complete stats.

**Tactics:** When fighting together as a group, these bounty hunters are very good at gauging the power of their opponents. If they do not feel threatened by their enemies, they are likely to split up and each try to fight a member of the PCs one-on-one. If they are more worried, or things start to go against them, they will team up to take down the more powerful PCs first. If Kiro has not escaped yet, they will first try to reach him to either capture or kill the halfling. If Kiro is gone or the party is covering his escape, then the bounty hunters will just fight the PCs. They will focus on obvious wizards

and sorcerers first. Then focus on heavily armored fighter types. Then they will mop up the rest. Remember to let the party have a chance to flee once they've had enough of the bounty hunters. Each bounty hunter will fight according to their individual tactics (see the NPC APPENDIX).

### **Fleeing from the Bounty Hunters**

If your group failed to get creative in dealing with the bounty hunters earlier, this is their chance to make it up. Allow escaping characters to climb a building or a tree, or make hide checks in nearby shadows, etc. Make the chase exciting, but be generous now that you've proven how tough the bounty hunters can be in a fight. Eventually, allow most (if not all) of the characters to escape (although they may have to split up to accomplish this). If the bounty hunters fell any characters, don't have them coup de grace or stand guard over that body. The bounty hunters will keep searching, so this should allow surviving characters the chance to double back and heal their friends in time to save their lives.

### **Escape Hatch**

Depending on what kind of players you have, you may end up in a situation that will kill off all your characters. The bounty hunters are designed to be powerful and intimidating, as well as a plot entrance. They are not designed to kill off all your PCs (unless you are feeling really evil for some reason...). If your group winds up in a situation and it looks like there is no way to avoid their death, you can design an escape hatch for them. It might be a good idea to prepare one of these just in case. The following are some suggested escapes:

- The town guard shows up. The bounty hunters want to avoid a situation, so they flee, but not before hissing to the

characters that they will be back if the diamond is not brought to them.

- A bunch of drunken dwarves are looking for a fight. They stumble upon the PCs fighting the bounty hunters and start to attack the assassins (maybe even the PCs too). In this pandemonium, it should be easy to escape or drive off the bounty hunters.
- The bounty hunters begin using subdual damage on the PCs while mocking them. If the characters are knocked out, the bounty hunters will take Kiro (if they can find them) and depart. They will leave a note that says that the PCs have one week to find the diamond before they turn in Kiro.

Try to avoid these deus ex machina situations, if you can. But don't hesitate to use one if your characters have no way to win or escape.

If you plain just don't like the idea of an encounter that is more powerful than your characters, or you just want them to always win against their opponents, scale the bounty hunters to be a tough, but possible fight. Then hint that more assassins are on the way until they retrieve the diamond.

## **EASTERN WOODS (EL various)**

The Eastern Woods are visible from Threshold, and can be reached with a short walk. The town locals call it the Haunted Forest and refuse to go there. The woods are not really haunted, but since most people who venture into those woods never return, the locals are wary of the place.

Any inquires about the castle to the local townsfolk won't reveal much. They know it once belonged to a powerful baron-knight or

a paladin centuries ago, but no one has gone there since.

The ruins are directly east of Threshold, in the heart of the woods. Going on foot, the party can reach it after traveling for a day and half (meaning they will need to spend a night in the woods before they reach it). If they all travel on horses, the group can make it there in one day's travel.

In the Woods, there is a 10% chance every hour of an encounter. Check every hour, both at day and at night. If there is an encounter, roll 1d8 on the following table:

**Eastern Woods Wandering Monsters:**

- 1 – 1d6 orcs
- 2 – 1d4 gnolls
- 3 – 1d4 stirges (2d4 at night)
- 4 – 1 displacer beast
- 5 – 1 owl bear
- 6 – 1d2 worgs
- 7 – 1d3 medium-sized giant spiders
- 8 – 1 large viper snake

**CASTLE RUINS**

This is indeed the place where the wizard that bought the gem from Kiro ended up. Unbeknownst to the party (although they can probably guess), the wizard and his adventuring companions met their demise in these ruins, and the gem can be found near the wizard's body.

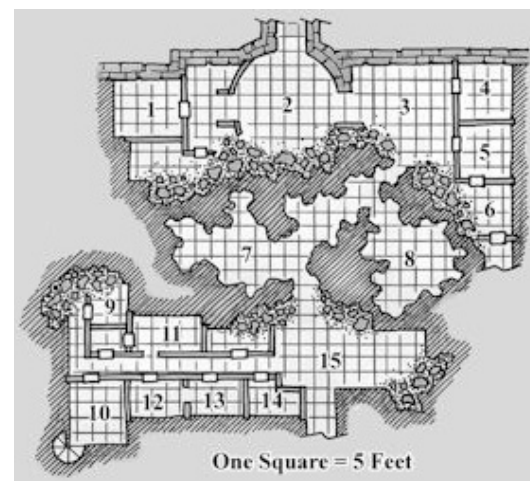
The castle ruins can be found in a roughly circular clearing approximately 600 feet in diameter. Allow the PCs to stumble upon this clearing after traveling through the Woods. Read the following section to the group once they come upon the clearing:

The woods open up here into a large

clearing. The broken ruins of what was once a mighty castle lie in the center of this open area. Most of the castle has crumbled into useless piles of rubble. One part of the castle, near what must have once been the main gate, is still mostly intact, although it appears a nearby tower fell across this area. The main gate keep tower seems to be missing its door.

The intact section of the castle mentioned above is the ruins that the party can enter and explore (this is the part detailed on the map below).

The map for this area is part of the Ruins map on the Wizards of the Coast Map-a-Week archive from 8/31/2000 (<http://www.wizards.com/dnd/article.asp?x=dnd/mw/archive>). On the map, up is north, right is east, etc.



There are two entrances to the intact part of the castle. The characters should immediately spot the entrance via Area 2 (this is the main gate entrance described in the box above). The entrance through Area 15 is covered by rubble, and can only be found if the characters scout around the castle (Spot check, DC 12).



In the intact part of the castle, the walls have a hardness 8, hp 80 (for a 10 ft. section), break DC 32, Climb DC 15. All doors are wood and have a hardness of 5, hp 20, break DC 23 and are unlocked (unless otherwise noted). The ceilings in all enclosed areas are 10 ft. up (unless otherwise noted). During the day enough indirect light streams in through holes to see normally, except in Area 8. At night, any character without darkvision will need a light source to see inside an enclosed area.

There are no wandering monsters within the ruin itself, but feel free to have the existing monsters roam about if you wish.

Read the shaded boxes out loud to the PCs as they enter each room.

### 1. Armory

This square room is in relatively good condition compared to the rest of the castle. Along the north wall is a rack of spears with warped wooden hafts. Swords of various sizes hang from a rack along the south wall, all showing signs of rust. Two rusted suits of armor lie against the far west wall.

**Treasure:** There are 6 short spears, 2 long swords, 2 short swords, and a greatsword. All are in very poor condition. They will not sell for much and any attempt to use them as weapons suffers a -1 penalty to hit. The armor is human-sized splint mail, but it is so fully rusted that it is useless (any attempt to pick up the armor or move it will just break off rusty pieces).

### 2. Entrance Way (EL 1)

You see what must have once been the primary gate keep for this castle. The large wooden doors must have been

knocked off their hinges by a great force, as they lie in the center of this circular tower. The ceiling overhead has collapsed, as well as the south wall of this tower. The ground is littered with rubble. An archway leads to the west into a covered area, where the ceiling is still intact. What appears to be a courtyard is visible to the east.

If the PCs are looking for tracks of the wizard and his party, then a successful Track check (DC 22) will reveal some very faint booted footprints of three individuals proceeding into the castle.

3 dire rats live in a nest under the fallen doors. They will not attack unless their home is disturbed. The doors are heavy, requiring a strength check (DC 20) to move. Several characters can help in the attempt. Trying to move the doors provokes the rats to slid out of a narrow tunnel and attack.

### **☛ Dire Rats (3)**

CR 1/3 each; Small Animals; HD 1d8+1 (5, 5, 6 hp); Init +3 (Dex); Spd 40 ft. (climb 20 ft.); AC 15 (+1 size, +3 Dex, +1 natural); Atks Bite +4 melee (1d4 dmg); Face/Reach 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.; SA Disease; SQ Scent; AL N; SV Fort +3, Ref +5, Will +3; Str 10, Dex 17, Con 12, Int 1, Wis 12, Cha 4.

*Skills:* Climb +11, Hide +11, Move Silently +6.

*Feats:* Weapon Finesse (bite).

SA-Disease(Ex): Filth Fever (see DMG p. 75), Fort Save DC 12, incubation 1d3 days.

SQ-Scent(Ex): Can detect the presence of enemies within 30 ft. by smell (15 ft. if enemy downwind, 60 ft. if enemy upwind).

**Tactics:** The dire rats will hide until someone disturbs their nest. They will be aware of the PCs by scent. The rats will attempt to gang up on one PC at a time. Before they initially come out from under the door, have PCs roll a listen check opposed by the rats' Move Silently check. Any PC that does not make their Listen check will be surprised (unless that player specifically said that their character was

prepared for something to come out from under the door).

♣ **Treasure:** The dire rat nest is a hole mostly filled up with old leather and cloth fragments. A successful search (DC 15) reveals a small red gem (garnet) worth 100gp.

### 3. Courtyard

You stand in what was apparently once an open courtyard in this castle. The ground is packed dirt, with occasional weeds sprouting up here and there. Immense amounts of rubble lie to the south.

There is nothing of interest here in the courtyard.

### 4. Storage Room

The wooden door to this room is closed, but not locked or stuck.

This is a smaller room, perhaps once used for storage. It is completely empty except for mortar dust on the ground.

There is nothing of interest here.

### 5. Storage Room

The wooden doors to this room are closed, but not locked or stuck.

This is a smaller room, perhaps once used for storage. There are wooden crates stacked in this room.

♣ **Treasure:** One wooden crate contains 4 light crossbows that are in good shape. Another crate contains crossbow bolts, but many are warped from water damage. A character spending time searching through

the crate can find 10 bolts that are still useable. The rest of the crates are empty.

### 6. Storage Room (EL 2)

Even though the west wall of this room has collapsed, the ceiling is intact. Rubble from the fallen tower in Areas 7 and 8 have filled the wall breach, so that the only way into this room is the door from Area 5, which is closed but not locked.

This is a smaller room, perhaps once used for storage. Part of the western wall has collapsed and is now just a pile of rubble. The room is completely empty except for mortar dust and rocks on the ground. You see what appears to be another wooden door in the south wall.

A choker waits above the doorway into this room. It will attack the first character that enters this room, attempting to gain surprise (Make the choker's hide check opposed by the lead PC's spot check).

The door to the south leads to an empty closet.

### ♣ **Choker**

CR 2; Small Aberration; HD 3d8+3 (16 hp); Init +4 (Improved Init); Spd 20 ft. (climb 10 ft.); AC 16 (+1 size, +5 natural); Atk 2 slaps +6 melee (1d3+3 dmg); Face/Reach 5 ft. by 5 ft./10 ft.; SA Haste, Improved Grab, Constrict 1d3+3; AL CE; SV Fort +2, Ref +1, Will +4; Str 16, Dex 10, Con 13, Int 4, Wis 13, Cha 7.

*Skills:* Climb +16, Hide +7, Move Silently +4.

*Feats:* Improved Initiative.

SA-Haste(Su) extra partial action, as per the spell, SA-Improved Grab(Ex) to use this ability the choker must make a successful hit against a Large or smaller creature. If it gets ahold, it can constrict.

SA-Constrict(Ex) the choker causes 1d3+3 dmg with a successful grapple check and victim cannot speak or cast spells with verbal components.

**Tactics:** The choker will use its 10 ft. reach to its maximum advantage. It will try to stay on the ceiling and attack the lead party

member from there. If it can grab the lead PC, it will try to force it to block the doorway to prevent more PCs from entering the room until it has constricted its victim into unconsciousness or death.

### 7. Collapsed Tower

A large stone tower that was part of the castle must have fallen over here, across the courtyard. Picking your way through the rubble, you can see that you are in the hollowed out remains of that tower. You can see bits of the sky through broken holes above you. There is debris everywhere.

If the characters spend some time searching through the rubble, they have a chance to find (Search DC 20) a locked iron box that looks like it survived the tower's collapse

❖ **Treasure:** A small locked iron box (Open Lock DC 25) that contains 200 gp, a *ring of warmth*, and a broken glass potion vial (it's contents have since evaporated).

**Development:** If the PCs have not already dealt with it, searching in this area is 100% likely to bring out the carrion crawler from Area 8. Even just passing through Area 7 may attract the attention of the crawler (see Area 8 for more details on this).

### 8. Crawler Den (EL 4)

This part of the fallen tower has created a cave-like crevice from the rubble. It's very dark inside.

If any character enters this room, the crawler will immediately attack them (no surprise, but because of the darkness the characters won't see the crawler until it is right on top of them unless the PCs have their own light source).

### 🐞 **Carrion Crawler**

CR 4; Large Aberration; HD 3d8+6 (19 hp); Init +2 (Dex); Spd 30 ft. (climb 15 ft.); AC 17 (-1 size, +2 Dex, +6 natural); Atk 8 tentacles +3 melee (paralysis dmg), bite -2 melee (1d4+1); Face/Reach 5 ft. by 10 ft./5 ft.; SA Paralysis; SQ Scent; AL N; SV Fort +3, Ref +3, Will +5; Str 14, Dex 15, Con 14, Int 1, Wis 15, Cha 6.

*Skills:* Climb +10, Listen +6, Spot +6

*Feats:* Alertness

SA-Paralysis(Ex) Those hit by the tentacles must make a Fort save (DC 13) or be paralyzed for 2d6 minutes.

SQ-Scent(Ex) Can detect the presence of enemies within 30 ft. by smell (15 ft. if enemy downwind, 60 ft. if enemy upwind).

**Tactics:** The carrion crawler is largely a mindless brute. It will rush out of the darkness and attack the nearest character it sees with its tentacles. If it paralyzes a victim, the next round it will attempt to bite that person, as they will be a helpless defender.

❖ **Treasure:** The crawler's latest victim was an armored fighter (who was a companion of the lost wizard). The fighter was separated from his group, paralyzed, then dragged in here and killed. On his body the PCs can find human-sized *+1 scale armor*, a masterwork longsword, a large steel shield, and a leather backpack that contains 50 ft. of silk rope and a *potion of cure moderate wounds*. He also has a small leather belt pouch that contains 33 gp, 21 sp, and 5 cp.

**Development:** Any character not moving silently between Areas 3 and 7 is 50% likely to be noticed by the carrion crawler, which will come out and attack that character. Any character attempting to Move Silently past the opening to Area 8 must make a check opposed by the crawler's listen check. If they are heard, they are still only 50% likely to draw it out of Area 8.

### 9. Closet

The door to this room is slightly ajar and can be opened easily, although doing so will make it fall off its hinges.

Opening the door to this room, you see that it only narrowly avoided being destroyed when part of the castle collapsed.

Although there is much rubble here, there is nothing interesting to be found.

### **10. Stairs**

The door to this room is closed, but not locked. Any character can open it easily.

Upon opening the door to this room, you immediately see a dead human body lying on the center of the floor. It is face down, with its feet toward you. It appears to be long dead and you catch a slight stench of decay coming from the corpse. The body wears tattered robes that look like they were torn in a struggle. On the far side of the room, you see the bottom steps of a circular stairway leading upwards into darkness.

The body is that of the wizard which bought the gem from Kiro. He was killed in this room by a harpy that has taken up residence here. The harpy often flies off to accost travelers in the nearby woods, but considers this her lair, and will defend it as such.

The harpy hides in the stairwell that once led up to a tower in the castle. Now the stairway ends, blocked off by rubble. But there is enough room for the harpy to hide out of sight around the corner of the stairwell.

### **Harpy**

CR 4; Medium-Sized Monstrous Humanoid; HD 7d8 (31 hp); Init +2 (Dex); Spd 20 ft. (fly 80 ft. - average); AC 13 (+2 Dex, +1 natural); Atk Club

+7/+2 melee (1d4 dmg) or 2 claws +2 melee (1d3 dmg); Face/Reach 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.; SA Captivating Song; AL CE; SV Fort +2, Ref +7, Will +5; Str 10, Dex 15, Con 10, Int 7, Wis 10, Cha 15.

*Skills:* Bluff +8, Listen +7, Perform (buffoonery, chant, epic, limericks, melody, ode, storytelling) +9, Spot +6

*Feats:* Dodge, Flyby Attack

SA-Captivating Song(Su) Every creature within 300' must succeed at a Will Save (DC 15) or be captivated. Captivated creatures walk toward the harpy, taking the most direct route possible. If this takes them through a dangerous area, they get a second save attempt. A victim can take no other actions except to defend itself. A victim within 5 ft. of the harpy offers no resistance to the monster's attacks. The effect lasts as long as the harpy sings. A bard's countersong ability allows the captivated creature a new Will Save. If a Save is successful, than that creature cannot be affected by the harpy's song for 1 day.

*Possessions:* club

**Tactics:** The harpy will remain hidden around the corner in the stairwell until most of the PCs have entered the room. She hopes that they will be interested in the dead body first. She will listen, and when she thinks they are in the room, she will begin her song. She plans to lure them into the stairwell where she can bash their helpless heads open with her club. Any characters not affected by the song can tell where it is coming from. However, only two characters can fit in the stairwell abreast, so if 2 other captivated PCs beat them there, they will have to find some way to get their friends out the way before it is clear to attack the harpy. If she doesn't get the results she wants, the harpy will fly out into the room to engage the party with her club. She will continue to sing, and this will produce an interesting effect. The other surviving creatures in the ruin hear the song and each must make a Will Save or be drawn toward this room. That could lead a messy situation for the PCs, who would have to deal with these other monsters while trying to kill the harpy. The assassin vine, while not immune, cannot move into this room under its own power, so there is no need to roll its Save.

🔍 **Treasure:** The harpy has hidden her treasure under a loose brick in the staircase (Search DC 12). This includes the diamond of Lord Galivar (a clear-blue fist-sized stone, perfectly cut, and about 10,000 gp in value), which the harpy recovered from the wizard after she killed him, and hid it here. Also the harpy has secured 5 other gems (white pearls) of 100gp value each, a *wand of light* (29 charges left), and a pair of *gloves of swimming and climbing*.

### 11. Common Room (EL 1)

This room has no door.

Looking in through this doorway, you see a room with some wooden crates in the northeast corner. The door that belongs in this doorway appears to be missing.

The crates are all closed, but empty inside. In order for the characters to enter, they must pass over a 10 ft. x 10 ft. covered pit trap. They can avoid the pit trap (if they notice it) by jumping over it, or by simply taking the pair of doors to the west.

🚧 **Pit Trap**, 20 Ft. Deep: CR2; (2d6 points of damage); Reflex save (DC 20); Search (DC 21); Disable Device (DC 20).

🔍 **Treasure:** The crates are all closed and empty inside, except for one. One contains a large rotted leather sack that has 964 cp in it. Any attempt to pick up the sack will rip it and empty the coins onto the floor.

### 12. Sitting Room

The door to this room is locked (Open Lock DC 20), although there is an open archway leading from Area 13.

This was once a fine room with

tapestries on the walls and expensive furniture. Now the tapestries are decayed to the point where you can no longer discern the scenes. A small table and some sitting chairs are scattered about this room, but they look rotted and unsafe to use.

The tapestries were once valuable, but are too damaged to be worth anything now. Any attempt to remove them will destroy them completely. The furniture will collapse if anyone attempts to sit on them or put any weighty object on them.

### 13. Bedroom (EL 2)

The door to this room is locked (Open Lock DC 20), although there is an open archway leading from Area 12.

A large, four-poster bed dominates the center of this room. Most of its linen appears to be in sad shape, however, and there is a definite sag in the mattress. A large wooden chest in good repair lies at the foot of the bed.

There is nothing special about the bed.

The chest is locked (Open Lock DC 25). It is also trapped. Any attempt to force the lid or open the lock without the proper key (which is long since missing) will set off the needle trap. The chest is extremely strong and durable because it is made from Ironwood, thus is difficult to force open (Hardness 8, hp 30, Break DC 26).

🚧 **Poison Needle Trap:** CR 2; +8 ranged (1 dmg + greenblood oil poison, injury DC13, 1 con dmg/1d2 con dmg); Search (DC 22); Disable Device (DC 20).

🔍 **Treasure:** The chest itself is valuable because it is made out of Ironwood, although an Appraise check may be required to notice this fact. It weighs 50 lbs empty

and (if intact) can be sold for 300 gp. The chest contains 29 pp, 231 gp, 107 sp, 2 *potions of cure light wounds*, a *divine scroll of silence* (scribed by a cleric of Heironeous, although this isn't obvious from just reading or identifying the scroll).

#### **14. Shrine**

The door to this room is closed, but not locked.

This room must have once been a small shrine or chapel for use in the castle. A stone altar is secured against the far east wall. There seems to be some sort of ceremonial weapon mounted above the altar. Stone carvings of various heroic-looking and armor-clad figures can still be made out along the walls.

This is a shrine to Heironeous. It has long been abandoned, but it is still sanctified. A cleric or paladin of Heironeous will immediately recognize the significance of the carvings and deduce the nature of the shrine. Other characters may make a Knowledge(Religion) check (DC 16) to identify the patron god of this small chapel.

🔱 **Treasure:** The weapon is a *+1 heavy mace* and is mounted on brackets in the wall directly above the altar. It can be easily lifted out of those brackets. Any character examining it before removing it will notice that it is remarkable free of dust and rust (which should hint at its magical nature).

**Development:** The party may rest safely here, as none of the denizens of the castle ruin will venture inside this room.

#### **15. Grand Hallway (EL 3)**

The PCs can enter from exploring Area 7 or if they found the hidden entrance in the

rubble outside that leads into this room. That exit should be obvious once in this room.

This was once a grand hall with a vaulted ceiling supported by arches. Most of the ceiling is intact, but it has many holes in it. This must have been a great feasting hall. Now the ground is covered in dirt and stone. Many plants and vines are found all about this room; apparently they grew their way in here over the years through the passageway to the south and the crumbled wall to the east. The passageway is strewn with rubble but seems to lead outside. A dark corridor leads to the west, into a rather intact looking part of the castle.

There are plants throughout this room. One of them is an assassin vine, which waits along the south wall, right to the east of the tunnel that leads south, out into the ruin. The vaulted ceiling rises 20 ft. above at the center of the room, 15 ft. at the edges of the room.

#### 🔱 **Assassin Vine**

CR 3; Large Plant; HD 4d8+12 (30 hp); Init +0; Spd 0 ft.; AC 15 (-1 size, +6 natural); Atk slam +7 melee (1d6+7 dmg); Face/Reach 5 ft. by 5 ft./10 ft. (20 ft. with vine); SA Entangle, Improved Grab, Constrict (1d6+7 dmg); SQ Camouflage, Electric Immunity, Cold and Fire Resistance 20, Blightsight; AL N; SV Fort +7, Ref +1, Will +2; Str 20, Dex 10, Con 16, Int -, Wis 13, Cha 9

SA-Entangle(Su) can animate plants within 30ft. as a free action. The effect lasts until the vine dies or decides to end it (also a free action). The ability is otherwise similar to entangle as cast by a 4<sup>th</sup> level druid (save DC 13).

SA-Improved Grab(Ex):To use this ability, the assassin vine must hit with its slam attack.

SA-Constrict(Ex) An assassin vine deals 1d6+7 points of damage with a successful grapple check against Medium-size or smaller creatures.

SQ-Blindsight (Ex): Assassin vines have no visual organs but can ascertain all foes within 30 feet using sound, scent, and vibration.

SQ-Camouflage (Ex): Since an assassin vine looks like a normal plant when at rest, it takes a successful

Spot check (DC 20) to notice it before it attacks. Anyone with Wilderness Lore or Knowledge (plants or herbs) can use those skills instead of Spot to notice the plant.

**Tactics:** The vine will attack any creatures that try to move through the southern tunnel or try to move to explore the east half of the room. It will leave alone any creature simply moving from Area 7 to the west corridor or vice versa. Once it begins its attack, it will use its Entangle power on the other plants in the room to keep the other PCs busy so it can focus on the victim who originally got too close.

◆ **Treasure:** The body of a dead half-elf rogue can be found hidden under the plants near the assassin vine. He was another of the wizard's traveling companions and the assassin vine's latest victim. The rogue's body has a *+1 cloak of resistance*, a masterwork rapier, 5 throwing daggers, leather armor, and a backpack with 329 sp, 15 gp, and one dose of *dust of illusion*.

## CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

If the PCs take the diamond to Threshold and return it to the bounty hunters, the three assassins will take it and leave without further comment. Kiro the halfling will be extremely grateful to the party and claims he will completely reform from any criminal activities (which he won't, of course). If you choose, Kiro may tag along with the party on future adventures, if you want a troublesome sidekick for the PCs.

If the party fails to find the diamond, or fails to return in time, or fails to hide or protect Kiro, then they learn of the grizzly murder of Kiro. The bounty hunters have taken the halfling's bloody head back to their master. They could keep or sell the gem, but

eventually the bounty hunters will be back on their trail.

If the PCs decide to take Kiro and/or the diamond and flee, they will be chased by the bounty hunters. This could be the beginning of a reoccurring theme in your campaign. The bounty hunters will eventually locate the PCs and confront them. If these NPCs are eliminated, more assassins will be sent. The PCs must find a way to get these bounty hunters off their backs for good. And there are very few safe places from a guild of assassins...

Award 500 XP to the group for successfully negotiating with the bounty hunters. Award an additional 75 XP to any character that was pivotal to accomplishing this (through good role-playing or a good Diplomacy check). You should only award the full CR experience points for the bounty hunters if the PCs actually defeat them in combat! If the characters got into a fight with the bounty hunters and lost, or simply ran, they get nothing for this part.

If the PCs find the diamond in Area 10 of the ruined castle, award a story bonus of 200 XP to the group. For actually returning the diamond in time to save Kiro's life, award an additional 500 XP story bonus to the party.

The PCs should, of course, receive XP for any creatures or traps they encountered and defeated at the castle ruins or traveling through the forest.

## SCALING THE ADVENTURE

Use the table below to scale the module for your PCs. If you have more than four PCs or a mixture of levels, figure out what their equivalent level total would be for a party of four and use that section. (e.g. If you have 6

PCs, all 2<sup>nd</sup> level, they have a total of 12 levels. That is the same as a group of 4 PCs, all 3<sup>rd</sup> level. Use the 3<sup>rd</sup> level party scaling.)

**1<sup>st</sup> level party** – If most of your PCs are first level, leave the bounty hunters as they are. They aren't supposed to win that fight anyway, but be careful not to wipe the PCs out too quickly if they get into a tussle with the bounty hunters. In the castle, replace the carrion crawler with 2 ghouls, replace the assassin vine with a darkmantle, and replace the harpy with a quasit.

**2<sup>nd</sup> level party** – Play the module as-is. But be sure to allow the party a chance to rest in the castle, either by retreating to the nearby woods or hiding in Area 14.

**3<sup>rd</sup> level party** – Play the module as-is. It is optimized for this type of group.

**4<sup>th</sup> level party** – A group like this may have an easier time in this module. Be sure that the bounty hunters are tough enough, perhaps adding a level onto each NPC if you feel your party is good enough to warrant it (or you just want to be safe). Run the castle as-is, but if the battle against the harpy is going too easy on the PCs, have her song bring in a wandering monster from the nearby woods.

**5<sup>th</sup> level party** – Add 2 levels to the prestige class of each NPC bounty hunter and re-compute their stats. Put another choker in Area 6. Make the carrion crawler a 5HD (Huge) version. Give the harpy 2 levels of Sorcerer and have her use spells instead of her song on the party.

**6<sup>th</sup> or 7<sup>th</sup> level party** – Add 5 levels to the prestige class of each NPC bounty hunter with appropriate new magic items for those levels and re-computer their stats. Double

the dire rats in Area 2. Put another 2 chokers in Area 6. Make the carrion crawler a 8HD (Huge) version. Give the harpy 5 levels of Sorcerer and have her use spells instead of her song on the party. Put another assassin vine in Area 15, anywhere in the room you want. Increase any treasure that those monsters have to fit their new EL.

**8<sup>th</sup> level party or higher** – Add enough levels to the NPC bounty hunters to make them at least 4 character levels higher than the highest PC (more, if you really want to make sure the PCs don't win), with appropriate new magic items for those levels. Triple the dire rats in Area 2. Replace the chokers with 2 cloaklers. Replace the carrion crawler with a roper. Make the assassin vine a 9HD (Huge) version. Replace the harpy with a succubus. Increase any treasure that those monsters have to fit their new EL.

## FEEDBACK

*Module Workshop* needs your input! Did you enjoy this adventure? Did you run it with your party? How did it go? Any comments (good or bad) about the writing or the adventure itself? We want to hear your honest opinions. E-mail your feedback to:

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## NPC APPENDIX

☞ **Kiro:** Male halfling Rog3: CR 3; Small humanoid (2 ft. 11 in. tall); HD 3d6+3 (hp 17); Init +3 (+3 Dex); Spd 20 ft.; AC 16 (+3 Dex, +2 armor, +1 size) or AC 17 (with Dodge); Atk +4 melee (1d4/crit 19-20, masterwork dagger); or +7 ranged (1d4/crit 19-20, masterwork hand crossbow); or +7 ranged (1d6/crit x3, masterwork shortbow); SA Sneak Attack(+2d6); SQ Evasion, Uncanny Dodge(Dex bonus to AC); AL N; SV Fort +3, Ref +7, Will +5; Str 10, Dex 17, Con 13, Int 13, Wis 8, Cha 15.

*Skills:* Appraise +5, Bluff +6, Disable Device +3, Escape Artist +9, Gather Information +4, Hide +18, Listen +4, Move Silently +9, Open Lock +8, Pick Pocket +9, Search +5, Spot +4.

*Feats:* Dodge, Mobility.

*Languages:* Common, Halfling, Elven.

*Possessions:* Masterwork leather armor (size S), masterwork dagger, masterwork hand crossbow, 20 bolts, masterwork shortbow, 20 arrows, *cloak of elvenkind*, thieves' tools, *potion of cure moderate wounds*, 36 gp, 12 sp, 2 50 gp-value gems (jaspers).

*Description:* Kiro is a portly-looking halfling. He has curly brown hair and brown eyes. He usually wears a mischievous smile. He tends to shy away from heavy exertion, preferring to eat and live in luxury when he can.

*Tactics:* In battle, Kiro is mostly a coward. He won't fight unless he has to, and if he does, he prefers to hit targets from afar with ranged weapons. Kiro usually prefers to try to use his *cloak of elvenkind* to help him hide and escape.

☞ **Zalania:** Female human Ftr4/Rog3: CR 7; Medium humanoid (5 ft. 2 in. tall); HD 4d10+8 plus 3d6+6 (hp 44); Init +8 (+4 Dex, +4 Improved Init); Spd 30 ft.; AC 17 (+4 Dex, +3 armor) or AC 18 (with Dodge); Atk +10/+5 melee (1d6+2/crit 18-20, scimitar); or +11 ranged (1d4+2/crit 19-20, dagger); SA Sneak Attack(+2d6); SQ Evasion, Uncanny Dodge(Dex bonus to AC); AL N; SV Fort +9, Ref +10, Will +5; Str 14, Dex 18, Con 14, Int 14, Wis 13, Cha 12.

*Skills:* Appraise +4, Balance +6, Climb +8, Forgery +3, Gather Information +7, Hide +8, Intimidate +3, Jump +7, Listen +9, Move Silently +9, Sense Motive +3, Spot +8, Tumble +6, Use Rope +7.

*Feats:* Improved Initiative, Dodge, Expertise, Weapon Focus (scimitar), Mobility, Alertness, Improved Disarm.

*Languages:* Common, Elven, Gnome.

*Possessions:* Masterwork scimitar, masterwork studded leather armor, masterwork dagger, *potion of blur*, 2 *potions of cure serious wounds*, +2 *cloak of resistance*, 18 pp, 101 gp.

*Description:* Zalania is a rather beautiful woman, with long dark hair that she keeps tied back. She has a stern nature, but is not cruel. Zalania is the soul of efficiency, and thus makes an excellent leader for the bounty hunters. She never lets anger or revenge cloud her judgment. Because of this nature, she will be the one most likely to speak with the PCs and the most likely to accept their attempt to recover the diamond.

*Tactics:* Zalania will use all her feats, as well as her sneak attack, to maximum advantage. If a fighter or a barbarian is pounding her, she will use her Improved Disarm to knock that character's weapon out of their hands. She will assign her Dodge to whoever is attempting to cause damage to her from afar, such as a spellcaster or an archer. Zalania will use her cure potions as necessary to keep herself actively in the fight.

☛ **Trunko:** Male half-orc Ftr7: CR 7; Medium humanoid (6 ft. 1 in. tall); HD 7d10+14 (hp 58); Init +7 (+3 Dex, +4 Improved Init); Spd 30 ft.; AC 17 (+3 Dex, +4 armor) or AC 18 (with Dodge); Atk +13/+8 melee (1d8+4/crit 19-20, longsword); or +10/+4 ranged (1d4+4/crit 19-20, throwing dagger); SQ Darkvision; AL CE; SV Fort +7, Ref +5, Will +3; Str 18, Dex 16, Con 14, Int 13 Wis 12, Cha 7.

*Skills:* Climb +5, Craft(Weaponsmith) +3, Hide +14, Jump +5, Knowledge(Weaponry) +4, Listen +4, Sense Motive +4, Spot +4, Swim +4.

*Feats:* Improved Initiative, Dodge, Mobility, Combat Reflexes, Expertise, Weapon Focus (longsword), Whirlwind Attack.

*Languages:* Common, Orc, Draconian.

*Possessions:* Masterwork longsword, 10 throwing daggers, +1 shadow studded leather armor, 2 potions of cure serious wounds, potion of bull's strength, black wool cloak, 21 pp, 20 gp.

*Description:* Trunko is obviously a half-orc, although he is not an especially large specimen of that race. He has trained hard to become a master of the longsword, and thus is a very dangerous foe in combat. He is also exceptionally cruel and likes to torture his victims. However, he will obey Zalania because he has been impressed with her results in the past. He may attempt to argue with her sometimes, and Trunko would be the hardest bounty hunter for the party to convince.

*Tactics:* Trunko will charge, unafraid, into combat. He will automatically go for the most dangerous looking fighter, to challenge himself, but he won't pass up an opportunity to attack a weaker-looking foe. He will use his Mobility to move around in combat, to position himself to his best advantage. He will try to be where he can maximize his Combat Reflexes. If he gets surrounded or flanked, Trunko will respond with a Whirlwind Attack. Trunko will assign his Dodge to whatever opponent he is squaring off against. He will step back momentarily to use his cure potions if his hit points begin to get low.

☛ **Gorr:** Male human Rog5/Assassin1: CR 6; Medium humanoid (5 ft. 8 in. tall); HD 6d6+12 (hp 35); Init +7 (+3 Dex, +4 Improved Init); Spd 30 ft.; AC 16 (+3 Dex, +3 armor) or AC 17 with Dodge); Atk +7 ranged (1d8+poison, light crossbow); or +6 melee (1d6+2+poison/crit 19-20, +1 Venom Short Sword); SA Sneak Attack(+3d6), Death Attack, Poison Use; SQ Evasion, Uncanny Dodge (Dex bonus to AC); AL NE; SV Fort +3, Ref +9, Will +2; Str 13, Dex 17, Con 14, Int 14, Wis 13, Cha 9.

*Skills:* Balance +6, Bluff +6, Climb +9, Disguise +6, Escape Artist +9, Hide +13, Intimidate +3, Listen +9, Spot +8, Move Silently +13, Open Lock +12, Pick Pockets +7, Read Lips +8, Sense Motive +7, Tumble +6.

*Feats:* Improved Initiative, Dodge, Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot.

*Languages:* Common, Orc, Halfling.

*Possessions:* +1 short sword of venom (same as a dagger of venom, except a short sword instead), masterwork light crossbow, 12 poisoned bolts, 20 normal bolts, masterwork studded leather armor, masterwork thieves' tools, 2 potions of cure serious wounds, black wool cloak, 6 vials of Medium-Sized Spider Venom poison, 10 50gp-value gems (bloodstones), 5 gp, 20 sp.

*Description:* Gorr is a thin and oily-looking fellow that doesn't say much. He usually keeps his cloak and hood on and lets Zalania do the talking.

*Tactics:* When working on his own, Gorr is a master of the stealthy kill. In a big fight he prefers to stay back and shoot opponents with poisoned crossbow bolts. His short sword and his bolts are both coated with Medium-Sized Spider Venom (Injury, DC14, 1d4 Str dmg/1d6 Str dmg). If forced into melee, he will draw his magical short sword. If Gorr makes a successful hit with the sword, he will use up the poison he coated the blade with. If the bounty hunters are severely pressed by the PCs, he will use his trump card... the *poison* spell power of the sword itself and then attempt to escape. If he can flank a PC with another bounty hunter, Gorr will do so to gain his Sneak Attack bonus. He will assign his Dodge to whatever PC looks like they can hit him from afar or to whatever character injured him last. He will use his cure potions if he goes below 50% hit points.

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