

Safehouse

The characters are hired to retrieve relics of the ancient Ebondeath Sect from a safehouse maintained by the Cult of the Dragon. After the events of the Rise of Tiamat, the characters' employers expect that opposition at the safehouse is limited. However, he would like the characters to act quickly in case the cult comes looking for the relics.

Safehouse is side trek for a party of four characters of levels 4-5. The module is based in Waterdeep, but can easily be changed to any large town or city. The module also includes a subtle (and optional) connection to the White Plume Mountain adventure in the Tales from the Yawning Portal publication.

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Safehouse

“She lifted her veil slowly. What a sight presented itself to my startled eyes! I beheld before me an animated corpse”

- The Monk by Matthew Lewis (1796)

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Introduction

Five hundred years ago Strongor Bonebag, a Priest of Myrkul, became fascinated with the burgeoning Cult of the Dragon. He merged the teachings of Myrkul and Sammaster and formed a cult cell at the Uthtower in the Mere of Dead Men. The charismatic priest convinced the ancient black dragon, Ebondeath, that the dragon was chosen by Myrkul to become part of a pantheon of ascended dracoliches. Although Strongor died a few years later, his cult - the Ebondeath Sect - continued serving Ebondeath. As Myrkul's powers waned, so did those of the cult. Ebondeath's body disintegrated into a pile of dust and bones, but his spirit remains tethered to his skull.

When Myrkul died, the cult collapsed and the Uthtower sunk into the mere. A hundred years ago, a band of adventurers found the tower and retrieved Strongor Bonebag's Dark Sermons and the skull of Ebondeath (see *Dungeon Magazine* #73). Over the years, these relics changed hands multiple times before making their way to an agent of the Cult of the Dragon based in Waterdeep.

Through his previous associations with the Cult of the Dragon, Thayzar Ontak - a Red Wizard rebel - knows that the Ebondeath Sect's Dark

Sermons are held by the Cult of the Dragon at a safehouse in Droxnir's apothecary. Ontak hires the characters to retrieve the sermons.

In **Casing the Joint**, the characters can uncover rumors about the Dark Sermons of the Ebondeath Sect and the safehouse. **Break In** describes the safehouse and opposition. The **Aftermath** provides a wrap-up and describes any unique treasures.

Thayzar Ontak is the quiet, male, human Thayan proprietor of the musty Ontak's Antiquities in the Castle Ward. Ontak is friendly and often lets his customers in on conspiracies - especially those involving the Red Wizards. It doesn't take long for a customer to realize that Ontak harbors a burning hatred of Szass Tam.

The smell of cloves is thick and the shelves of his shop are crammed with oddities, antiques, and religious artifacts from many denominations (good, evil and in-between). The shelf above his desk holds a silver skull and a lacquered skeletal arm fitted with thin wires that allow the hand to be manipulated (a religious icon of Myrkul). On occasion, a lucky shopper can find a low-value magic item in his shop. Ontak is assisted by Grebak (use the **berserker** entry), a silent and dim-witted half-orc. This description of Thayzar is from **Faction Folio: Waterdeep DM's City Guide** found on www.DMsGuild.com. Additional notes on Ontak are found at the end of this module.



Casing the Joint

The characters receive a note at their normal hangout with a request for them to meet at Ontak's Antiquities later that afternoon. Ideally, Thayzar Ontak is a contact of one of the characters. If not, a different contact can vouch for Thayzar and has set up the job opportunity.

When the characters enter the small shop, Thayzar invites them to a back room, barely large enough to hold Thayzar's desk and a few chairs for the characters. He states-

Welcome, thank you for coming. I need your help. As you know, the Cult of the Dragon is reeling from their mishaps over the past months. I don't know what happened, but every villain is now trying to pick over the ruins of the cult. I need you to retrieve one of their relics, hidden at a safehouse here in Waterdeep. I know the Red Wizards are looking for it, and I can't let it fall into the hands of Szass Tam. Will you do it? I can pay 100gp to each of you.

A **persuasion** check (DC 15) will allow the characters to negotiate for an additional 50gp each. If the characters agree, read the following.

Oh, thank you...thank you! I need you to retrieve a book of sermons from the ancient Ebondeth Sect. It is bound in dark leather and has a silver dragon skull embossed on the cover. It is being held in a safehouse in **Droxnir's Apothecary** in the Trade Ward. I don't know what safeguards they have, but I don't think you should have much trouble. The Cult of the Dragon has collapsed, so they have almost completely abandoned Waterdeep.

Observations

The characters can learn information about the safehouse through observation. **Droxnir's Apothecary** is adjacent to the **Crooked Tooth Tavern** in a four-story building (see the **map** on page 10). The building is located on a fairly busy side road in the Trade Ward. The shop is open from late morning until late evening. The second

floor consists of a common sleeping room managed by the tavern and an apartment (Droxnir's). The third and fourth floors are comprised of apartments.

If the characters attempt to observe in a stealthy manner roll an appropriate skill check (e.g. **stealth** for hiding or **disguise** if posing as street beggars) with a DC 10. If the characters fail the check, Droxnir is **alerted** that someone is casing her place. She will not confront the characters, but will be **prepared** when the characters infiltrate the safehouse.

Droxnir, a middle-aged human woman, tends to the store while it is open (Her statistics are included in the **Important NPCs** section **Page 7**). Business is slow. If the characters observe for a full day, they only see 1d4 shoppers enter the store. None stays for more than 10 minutes and usually (75%) of the time leave empty handed or with a small parcel (25%). If characters enter the store, Droxnir is polite and helpful. She has a variety of (non-magic) concoctions and remedies. Characters can also purchase up to 4 healing kits from her.

If the characters observe the shop at night, they observe **Droxnir** retire to her 2nd floor apartment. The rooms are brightened by candle light for about an hour before she heads to bed.

Each night, there is a **33%** chance **Droxnir** will sneak out of her apartment (in disguise) through the tavern's side door. She will sneak out at least once every three nights. If the characters observe her leave (**Perception** check, DC 15), they notice a slim figure carrying a greatsword. If the characters do not follow, she will return in 20-40 minutes. Note: If the characters break in while she is gone, she will return at an inconvenient time (see **Break In**).

Characters can choose to follow **Droxnir**. She winds through alleys, attempting to lose any possible tails (**Perception** or **Survival** skill check DC 15 to keep tracking her). Pursuing characters can attempt to use **stealth** (DC 10) to

remain hidden. If they are spotted, Droxnir will confront them after 10 minutes of being followed. She will attempt to convince them to leave her alone. If she can't, she will attack. If the characters are not spotted, she will continue to walk through alleys until she finds a lone drunk to attack and kill with her black-bladed greatsword.

Rumors

The characters can also learn the following information by asking appropriate contacts (for information about the Cult of the Dragon Ebondeath sect) or customers at the Crooked Tooth Tavern (for information about the apothecary).

Cult of the Dragon & Ebondeath Sect:

- The Cult of the Dragon was almost wiped out a while ago. Apparently, they were trying to raise some dragon goddess.
- The Cult? They believe that undead dragons were the rightful rulers of Faerun. Pretty crazy!
- I did some library research on that Ebondeath Sect you mentioned. Apparently, the cult worshipped the undead dragon, Ebondeath, a few hundred years ago. They were based in the Mere of Dead Men, created by a priest named Strongor Bonebag. He preached some sort of a prophecy based on an amalgamation of the beliefs of the Church of Myrkul and Sannath's Cult of the Dragon.

Droxnir's Apothecary

- Droxnir is nice enough, but kind of creepy.
- Her stuff is pretty good. Some of her concoctions work really well with the ladies...if you know what I mean!
- I'm pretty sure that she has an apartment on the second floor.
- Come to think of it, I have never seen her leave her shop or apartment.
- Business has been really slow for her. I'm not sure how she stays open. It used to be busier, but that stopped a few months ago. No idea why.

Break In

See the map on **page 10**.

Before starting this encounter, have each character roll three **perception** checks. Record their results for use during their explorations.

Droxnir's Activities depend on when the characters break in. During the day, Droxnir will be in her shop, without her greatsword. At night, she will be in her apartment and have access to her greatsword.

If Droxnir observed the characters casing her shop, she prepares by retreating to **Room 5** at night.

If Droxnir was not aware of danger from the previous section, she will be resting in **Room 2**. Droxnir becomes alerted if the characters fail a total of two or more individual **stealth** checks (DC 10). She is immediately alerted if the characters do not attempt to be stealthy (including breaking down doors). Depending on the location of the characters, she will:

- Hide in **Room 2** and prepare to ambush the players. In this case, any character with less than 15 on their perception roll are surprised and can not act during the first round of combat.
- Or - if she has time - she will retreat to **Room 5**.

The Safehouse

Droxnir's shop and apartment has a few access points. The front door of her shop is barred from the inside. It can be quietly shimmed open with a **Thieves' Tools** check (DC 12) or broken open with a **Strength** check (DC 15). Her apartment door is locked **Thieves' Tools** or **Strength** check (DC 10). The outside of the building can be easily climbed (**Athletics**, DC 10) and the windows opened (**Thieves' Tools**, DC 12) or broken.

Room 1: The Apothecary shop is lined with shelving containing all kinds of herbs, kits, and concoctions. If the characters decide to loot, they find 185 gp worth of stuff. If the characters search under the sales counter, they find a locked box (**DC 15**). The box is trapped (**DC 15**) with a poison needle causing 1d10 points of damage, **Constitution** save (DC 10) or become incapacitated for 2d10 minutes. The box contains the following potions:

- 2 potions of extra healing
- 1 potion of fire breath
- 1 potion of hill giant strength
- 1 dose of dust of disappearance.

A rickety stairwell (disadvantage on stealth checks) leads to the second floor.

Room 2: Droxnir's sleeping room contains a chair with side table, a bed, and bookshelves. The books are useful to any apothecary and can be sold for 50 gp. The trapdoor can be found on an **investigation** check (DC 10). If Droxnir is unprepared, she may be laying on the bed or sitting in her chair reading. If she is alerted and still in the room, she will be hiding in the corner adjacent to the stairwell wall.

Room 3: Droxnir's sitting room is furnished with five wood chairs and a small table. The furniture is covered with dust and does not appear to have been used in a long time.

Room 4: A ladder from the trap door in the second floor descends to this bare stone room. The room is dimly a greenish color from the glowing eyes of three skulls hung from the walls. The skulls are dragon shaped, but human sized. **Shatterskull Trap:** All three skulls will explode when triggered by anyone crossing the line of sight (e.g. walking to the door) of the skull mounted to the east wall. The explosion causes 3d8 thunder damage to anyone in the room. A **constitution** save (DC 12) results in half damage. The visible door in this room is fake – leading to a brick wall. The **Secret Door** can be found with an **Investigation** roll (DC 10).

Room 5: Characters listening at the secret door in Room 4 hear a soft rustling noise that sounds like shifting wood or bone. The room is lined with heavy red velvet curtains and the floor is tiled a dark grey. Four half-dragon skulls with glowing eyes (not trapped) are mounted to the walls and provide dim light. Ornate wooden double doors, carved in the likeness of a black dragon lead out to the south.

The room is occupied by a **skeletal guard drake**. The skeleton attacks anyone not accompanied by Droxnir. Droxnir herself may also be in this room.

Skeletal Guard Drake - Medium Dragon

AC 14, Hit Points 52 (7d8+21), Speed 30 ft

STR 16(+3) DEX 11(+0) CON 16(+3)

INT 4(-3) WIS 10(+0) CHA 7(-2)

Skills: Perception +2

Damage Vulnerability: bludgeoning weapons

Damage Resistance: Lightning

Immunities: exhaustion, poison

Senses: dark vision 60ft passive perception 10,

Languages: Understands Draconic, but can't speak

Challenge 2 (450 xp)

Attacks.

Multiattack: The drake attacks twice, once with its bite and once with its tail.

Bite. Melee attack: +5 to hit, reach 5 ft. one target. Hit: 7 (1d8+3) piercing damage.

Tail. Melee attack: +5 to hit, reach 5 ft. one target. Hit: 6(1d6+3) bludgeoning damage.

Room 6: The walls of the Temple to Ebondeath are composed of stone, painted bone white. The grey tiled floor is embossed with a giant symbol of the Cult of the Dragon. The west wall is painted with a mural of a black dragon overlooking a broken tower in a swamp. A large black stone altar dominates the south end of the temple. A large black dragon skull rests on top of a horde of coins piled on top of the altar. Two half-dragon skulls (not trapped) mounted on the north wall provide light for the room.

If the characters approach the altar, they hear a faint murmuring in a harsh language (draconic) before the dragon skull, now blurred and glowing a dark purple, rises into the air, growling, "I am Ebondeath, who disturbs me?"

Use **flameskull** statistics for Ebondeath. Before rising, he has cast **blur** on himself (attackers have disadvantage for one minute). He will cast **fireball** (describe as an exploding ball of acid, causing acid damage instead of fire) during the first round. He will then use his **Ray of Fire** attacks (describe as jets of acid instead of fire) during the rest of combat.



Credit: Cover, Dungeon Magazine Issue #73

The horde on the altar consists of the following:
2,388 Copper
1,338 Silver
75 Gold
5 blue jasper worth 50 gp each
9 eye agate worth 10 gp each
2 pale green zircon worth 50 gp each
1 silver bracelet (75gp)
1 stone hourglass w/ dragon etchings (500gp)

Room 7: Droxnir's workshop is lined with benches covered with potion-making equipment (200 gp). A bookshelf holds a variety of mystic books appropriate to crafters (250 gp). Many of the books are written in draconic. A dark leather book (the Dark Sermons), embossed with a silver dragon skull, sits on a pedestal in the northwest corner.

A half-dragon skull sits on one of the benches next to a scroll (in draconic). The scroll describes how to create a shatterskull trap using any humanoid skull and a variation of the **shatter** spell.

A young dwarven girl is unconscious and bound to the table on the northern wall. A small metal tube has been inserted into a vein on her arm and is connected to a set of glass flasks.

A cage in the northeastern corner of the room holds a live **phase spider**. A silvery mesh covers the bars and keeps the spider imprisoned.

Aftermath

Thayzar Ontak happily pays the fee for retrieval of the Ebondeath Sects Dark Sermons. He will also purchase any of the books looted from the safehouse for 50% of value (contested **persuasion** tests can increase his offer to 70% of the value). Ontak is also interested in Droxnir's sword. He will gladly take it from the characters. The sword would rather be with Ontak, so the curse is broken...

Ebondeath is a **flameskull**. If the characters take the skull, don't forget that he will