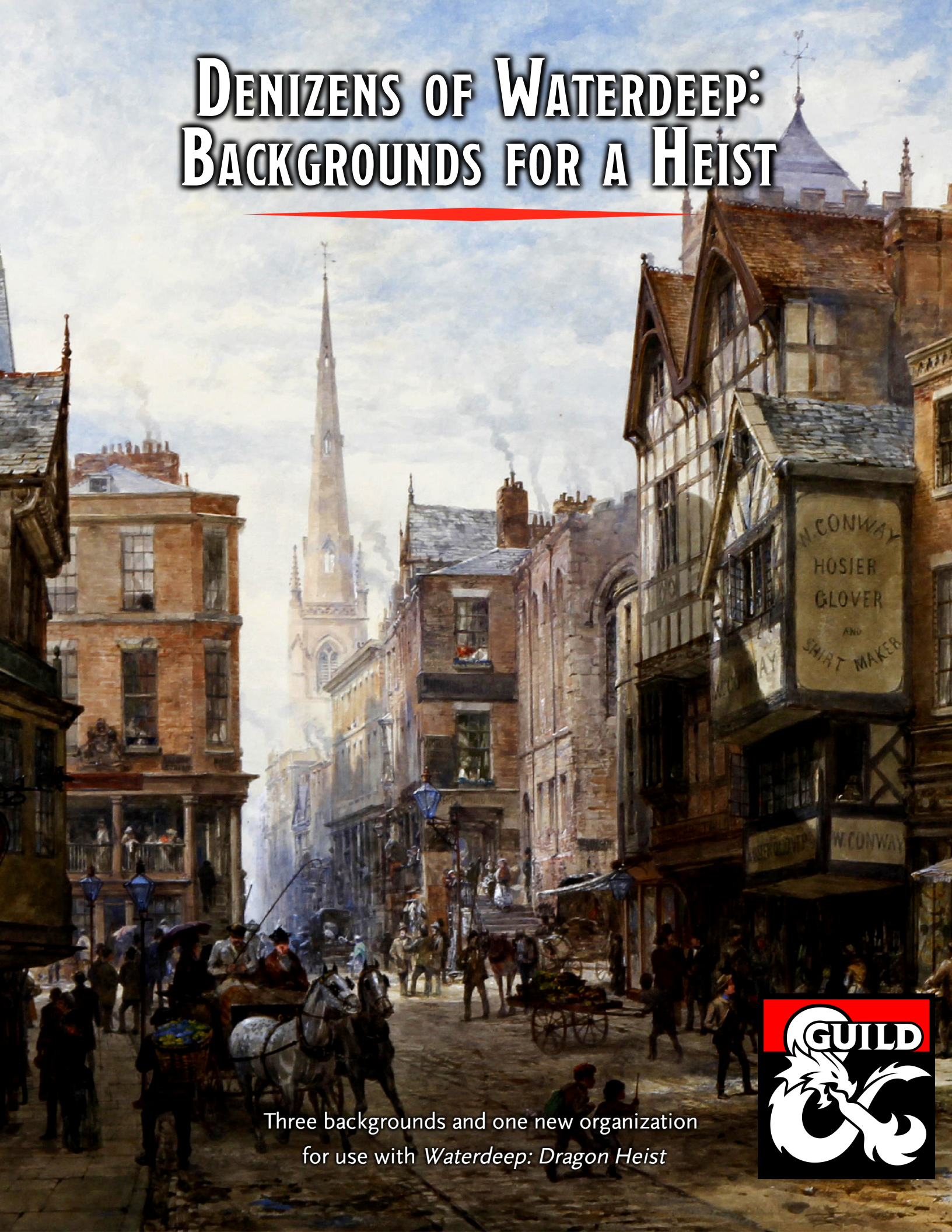


DENIZENS OF WATERDEEP: BACKGROUNDS FOR A HEIST



Three backgrounds and one new organization
for use with *Waterdeep: Dragon Heist*



INTRODUCTION

With the release of the new storyline "Waterdeep: Dragon Heist" from Wizards of the Coast, players are unleashed upon an urban adventure unlike any other in 5th edition. While the adventure can present many hours of story and excitement at the table, more importantly it presents an entire city that becomes the playground for our heroes.

To celebrate this milestone, both for gamers and Wizards of the Coast, this supplement has been created to help players integrate their characters.

THE BACKGROUNDS

Three new backgrounds are imagined here for your players:

Noble Scion. A variant of the Noble found in the *Player's Handbook* or the Waterdhavian Noble found in the *Sword Coast Adventurer's Guide*, the Noble Scion puts characters into the boots of a young noble who has grown up in Amphail.

Indentured. A variant of the Criminal found in the *Player's Handbook*, Indentured outlines the unfortunate life of the lower class found of Waterdeep's lower class. Owing a favor to another is never a great idea, but owing the illegal element of the city is often folly.

Orphan. A variant of the Urchin found in the *Player's Handbook*, the Orphan is a suitable background for characters who want a backstory filled with tragedy tinged with hope, as the orphan is raised by one of the churches in Waterdeep.

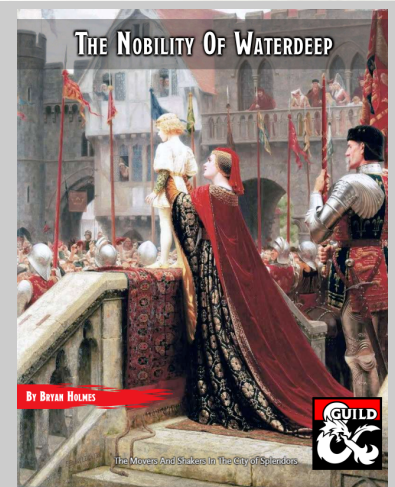
THE HERALDS

Also presented here is an additional organization the characters can work for while within Waterdeep. The Heralds are an independent group of historians who record, preserve, and police the various coats of arms, flags, and other sigils that belong to the nobility across all of Faerûn.

Should the players choose to work with (or for) the Heralds, they could find themselves getting involved in disputes of blood, tales of deception, and even earn the good faith of the noble class.

If you enjoy this free supplement, consider checking out the **Nobility of Waterdeep**, a paid product available on the DMsGuild. Inside you'll find a listing for many of the major houses of Waterdeep, their interests, locations, and ideas for quests related to those houses.

<https://www.dmsguild.com/product/249464/The-Nobility-of-Waterdeep>



Credits:

Author: Bryan Holmes

Editor: Chirs Walz

Artwork:

Cover: The Cross looking towards Watergate Street by Louise Rayner, 1886

Lord Thond: Bartek Blaszczyk

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NOBLE SCION

Amphail is a common summer destination for many noble families, but more so as a place for young nobles to learn the value of hard work. Spending much of your time here has given you a valuable perspective on how commonfolk lives, a viewpoint you have come to appreciate.

Skill Proficiencies: Athletics, History

Tool Proficiencies: One set of artisan's tools of your choice, and one gaming set or musical instrument.

Equipment: A set of fine clothing, a signet ring belonging to your house, a gaming set or instrument, a set of artisan's tools with which you're proficient, a trinket that reminds you of the last summer you spent in Amphail, and a belt pouch with 20 gp.

FEATURE: FRIEND OF THE PEOPLE

Your position in life is one of privilege, but you do not let that go to your head.

Commoners will come to you with their problems, treating you as an earnest friend. When you run into trouble, they stand by you and will do whatever they can to assist your cause including feeding you, and hiding you from the law or other noble families if required. If you decide to hide with common folk, they'll hide your identity from any who seek you out.

There are some nobles who consider this an offensive attitude.

SUGGESTED CHARACTERISTICS

You've spent much time away from the nobility, and recognize the common folk as the lifeblood of the world. You have a humble way about you, even though your noble bloodlines gives you the right to treat others as inferior.

D8 Personality Trait

- 1 My judgment of others is determined entirely by their actions, not their blood.
- 2 If you go out of your way to help others, you'll have me right beside you.
- 3 I use my influence to improve the conditions of the city I love for everyone.
- 4 I can't decry the actions of others if my own aren't impeachable. I always ask first if my own actions are just before passing judgment on others.
- 5 It matters less to me what is just, than what is fair.
- 6 Yeah I'm a noble and I flaunt it, but that showmanship makes for a great spectacle.
- 7 I work hard, I play hard. Once the job is done, libations are on me!
- 8 I spend my downtime disguised, pretending to be a commoner. Being with nobles makes me feel like an outsider.

D6 Ideal

- 1 **Respect.** Respect is a two-way street, without respect, commoners will simply revolt against you. (Good)
- 2 **Justice.** No one, not even nobles, are above justice. (Lawful)
- 3 **Love.** There's nothing more powerful than the bonds of love. (Any)
- 4 **Power.** Having power means having responsibility while wielding it. (Lawful)
- 5 **Privilege.** Use the benefits society affords you to make things better for all. (Good)
- 6 **People.** If not for the people, nobles would rule empty streets. People are the most valuable resource. (Good)

D6 Bond

- 1 Life in Amphail taught me many lessons but none as important as love. It didn't last, but my first lesson about true love was learned there.
- 2 I've embarrassed my family with my antics, and now I am trying to make reparations for my actions.
- 3 My whole life is defined by broadening my horizons. I'm always looking to learn a new trade or skill.
- 4 While in Amphail, our house fell. I returned penniless. It's time to recover what I've lost.
- 5 I face the challenges of our bloodline without hesitation, no matter what that challenge is.
- 6 I am the sentinel that guards our city against whatever endangers it.

D6 Flaw

- 1 Favoring commoners gets me into trouble with nobles.
- 2 My own family is constantly trying to marry me off to keep me away from my adventures.
- 3 I tend to run away from the responsibility of nobility.
- 4 I'd rather make a name for myself, rather than relying on my family.
- 5 Criticism is often leveled at me for overspending family riches.
- 6 I'm in love with a member of a rival house.

INDENTURED

Some Waterdhavians have charmed lives. The gods have blessed them with riches, skills, or allies. You did not have such luck and it seems like every step of your life has been under Beshaba's torment.

But perhaps with determination and hard work, you'll escape the shadow of ill-fortune and earn a glorious reward for toiling under such suffering.

Skill Proficiencies: Insight, Perception

Tool Proficiencies: One type of artisan's tools (your choice) and one gaming set.

Equipment: A set of common clothing, a token as a reminder from the people you owe, a set of tools or gaming set that you are proficient with, and a belt pouch with 10 gp.

FEATURE: A LIFE OWED

You owe a great debt to a person or organization that wants to see a return on their investment. Perhaps you spent too much gambling, or you stumbled upon something you shouldn't have.

Work with your DM to flesh out this shadowy group or figure. What fatal moment did they save you from? What form does repayment take, money or a favor?

While you still owe this figure or group, they can call upon you to perform jobs for them. If you should require, they can get you nonmagical gear or information relevant to the jobs you are asked to do, as well as feed you and provide shelter.

Once the debt is paid off, you are seen as a friend and offered greater things. In an organization, this means membership but for an individual, they might take you in as family.

SUGGESTED CHARACTERISTICS

Being indentured often makes characters paranoid, overly alert, and highly sensitive.

D8 Personality Trait

- 1 Looking over my shoulder has become second nature to me.
- 2 I wasn't much of a planner before, but now I'm always thinking three steps ahead.
- 3 I've got nothing left to lose, and that makes me a dangerous person.
- 4 My emotions change as quickly as the wind.
- 5 I keep personal information close to my chest, I'm afraid of getting hurt again.
- 6 I challenge others who try to enforce their wills onto the downtrodden.
- 7 I can't help but gamble whenever the chance arrives.
- 8 I'm working as hard as I can to pay off my debt.

D6 Ideal

- 1 **Community.** We live together, we die alone. Build a community you can trust. (Any)
- 2 **Luck.** Our lives would be dull and routine if not for fate, embrace the will of Tymora. (Chaotic)
- 3 **People.** When you're down on your luck, turn to your friends for support. (Good)
- 4 **Strength.** If you have the strength to take what you want, none can stop you. (Evil)
- 5 **Power.** Those who have power should use it to make others into their pawns. (Chaotic)
- 6 **Fate.** The gods have defined what will happen, so just go with the flow. (Any)

D6 Bond

- 1 I hide my family from those I owe, to keep them safe.
- 2 My debt is owed because of a failed grift, but after it's paid off I've got new plans I'm sure will be successful.
- 3 My life has been put on the straight and narrow, no more crimes for me!
- 4 Debt, no debt, I still have a gambling problem.
- 5 One day I'll be the one with people indebted to me!
- 6 I string my debtors along, so that I might betray them to authorities.

D6 Flaw

- 1 I've been treated badly for so long, I only know how to give or take suffering.
- 2 Gambling is a hard habit to break.
- 3 I'm ever alert, I barely sleep, I don't ever feel safe.
- 4 I'm willing to say or do anything to get out of trouble.
- 5 I'm defined by my vices.
- 6 I run away from responsibility.

ORPHAN

There are many who are saddled with responsibilities they cannot manage for one reason or another. Uncommonly, this includes the life of another. Be it an accidental pregnancy from professional night workers, indentured parents who cannot care for their children, or from deaths in the family, orphans are an all too common staple in Faerûn. Often, these abandoned children are left in the care of a temple.

Skill Proficiencies: Insight, Religion

Tool Proficiencies: Brewer's supplies

Languages: One of your choice

Equipment: A set of common clothing, a religious icon belonging to your temple, a set of robes, a small trinket belonging to your parents, and a belt pouch with 10 gp.

FEATURE: RAISED BY PRIESTS

Raised by the church, you find it's a supportive part of your life. While not a priest, you're familiar with all the rituals and rites of their gods. You can take residence with the priests, and they will provide meals for you. While they won't risk their own security, they will do their best to assist in protecting you.

SUGGESTED CHARACTERISTICS

Orphans are taught by the church, but that doesn't make them acolytes. You understand and respect the values of the ones who raised you, but that spurs you on to find your own place in the world.

D8 Personality Trait

- 1 I approach all opportunities with a smile, and politeness.
- 2 The priests taught me respect. My conduct honors them.
- 3 Not being a priest, I still learned to respect all religions.
- 4 The church rubbed me the wrong way. I think they're all out to brainwash the masses.
- 5 I'm angry for not being raised by my parents, that anger is still present in me.
- 6 I often spend my free time doing charitable work in the community, a value granted to me by the church.
- 7 Strict and pious rules guide us to the best versions of ourselves. I continue to follow strict rules as an adult.
- 8 I take care of abandoned and unwanted people. They deserve the same opportunities that I had.

D6 Ideal

- 1 **Respect.** Put your own ego aside, and show respect when others deserve it. (Lawful)
- 2 **People.** It took many hands to raise you, showing you the value of working together. (Good)

D6 Ideal

- 3 **Honesty.** Be true to yourself, or you're no good to anyone. (Any)
- 4 **Aspiration.** The gods teach us and grant us their favor. True wisdom is taking those teachings into the world. (Any)
- 5 **Suffering.** You grew up with no family to call your own, and cold callous teachers. Suffering defines you. (Evil)
- 6 **Freedom.** You spent years under the watchful eye of others, now it's time to find your own destiny. (Chaotic)

D6 Bond

- 1 I wasn't an only child, my sibling is still being raised by the church. I adventure to provide for them.
- 2 The church provided for me, and now I make sure to pay them whenever fate allows.
- 3 My parents had a secret they only told one person, who I am searching for.
- 4 I was dropped off on the step of the church, but the priests told me I wasn't the only one. I wander to find this lost sibling.
- 5 I try to seek out and help orphans and other discarded folk to give them the same help I was given.
- 6 My anonymity is my strength: without a past to tie me down, I can be whomever I want to be.

D6 Flaw

- 1 I tend to be overprotective regarding what little I own.
- 2 No matter how bad a hand someone else has been dealt, I'll always try to one up them.
- 3 Trusting others has been difficult for me.
- 4 The voices of the priests who raised me are always at the back of my head, making me feel bad for my actions.
- 5 My family was known for great acts of heroism, which got them killed. I avoid anything to do with heroics.
- 6 I'm a neophobe, afraid of anything unfamiliar.

THE HERALDS

The Heralds maintain, police, and record all the various bloodlines and family records across the Realms. They operate across the entire Sword Coast, as well as beyond in the Moonsea and much of the Sea of Fallen Stars regions.

They operate in conjunction with the Harpers, although they do not belong or answer directly to that group. The Heralds prefer to operate openly and transparently. They are on good terms with nearly every noble family as many families see it a badge of honor to be important enough to record.

Within Waterdeep their role is mostly ceremonial, however disputes that arise over marriages and bloodlines are often presided over by agents from the Heralds. Additionally, they're allies with New Olamn, the college of bards.

Anyone can join The Heralds, although they tend to prefer people who either have no importance (for dangerous jobs) or are powerful nobles (their jobs become a lot easier with such connections).

SUPPORT FROM THE HERALDS COME IN THESE WAYS:

- The Heralds are well regarded by most factions. With the exception of Breagan D'aerthe, the Zhentarim, and the Xanathar. If the characters are in bad standing with any of the other factions, or with the various guilds of the city, the Heralds can arrange to clear the characters' names.
- Players with the *Noble*, *Waterdhavian Noble*, or *Noble Scion* background will have their facts checked and verified, granting their word exceptional backing.
- Their vast library holds a wealth of information. Any Arcana, History, Investigation, Nature, or Religion check made within the Herald's library is made with advantage.
- The mansion in the Castle District has many rooms and servants, should the players wish to stay overnight.
- If on official "Heralds Business", guards will often stay out of the way and overlook minor transgressions, should none abuse this power.

THE HERALDS

Once the characters have assisted at least one of the other factions within *Waterdeep: Dragon Heist* (except for Breagan D'aerthe, the Zhentarim, or the Xanathar), reach level 3, or have the *Noble*, *Waterdhavian Noble*, or *Noble Scion* background, **Lord Essen Thond of Cormyr** will seek an audience with them.

A courier arrives wherever the characters happen to be staying, and drop off a letter with a curious wax seal. Inside the message reads:

The city is in chaos and we seek those who look to right it. If you fit this description, please come to the corner of Shield street and Vondil, in the Castle ward.

-Lord Essen Thond, of Cormyr

If they meet Lord Thond, the messenger they spoke with earlier will be waiting outside for their arrival. This manor, owned by the Heralds, used to belong to a rich and powerful noble who died. Their passion was history and in their will they donated the home to the organization.

LORD ESSEN THOND, OF CORMYR

Once escorted inside, they're announced by the messenger (a low level Herald operative). If possible, announce any and all titles that might have been gained thus far, to impress upon the players that they've been watched.

Essen Thond is a stern man, who believes that nobility is nothing more than living history and currently, it's under attack.



THE HERALDS

Party

Level Mission Brief

Mission Requirements and Reward

2nd	"In the City of the Dead, there was a recent excavation into an old tomb by the Belbranta family, gules griffon on azure is their crest. In doing so, they found a nest of undead which were dispatched by the city watch and the crypt boarded up. However, the ghoul wore a crest not of the Belbranta family, and in fact not of any family I can find. I'd like someone to unboard the crypt, go inside, and find evidence of a lost family of Waterdeep."	Travel to the City of the Dead, and meet with the some of the city guard. Convince them to let you in (A DC 13 Charisma check), or go in via subterfuge using stealth. Find the ghouls and search for any other a signet ring in the tomb the players should bring back to Lord Thond. <i>Reward:</i> each character in The Heralds gains 1 renown.
3rd	"The heraldry you found seems forged, and yet on the back it denotes as having come from the Sea ward, in a home currently owned by House Zulpair. They've azure waves on purple, I'm sure you know. Speak with my ally, Yitra Keese who works at Piergeiron's Palace. I want the documents detailing how Zulpair got that house and who owned it before."	Characters can find Yitra, but she's currently unwilling to work with the players, as "unsavory people" (the Zhentarim) control her. She's been secretly aiding with false documents, specifically those turning over ownership of abandoned buildings to whomever she is told. This debt needs to be settled for her assistance to be gained. The characters can turn to the Zhentarim, the city guard, or work this out on their own. <i>Reward:</i> each character in The Heralds gains 1 renown.
4th	"We found within the document, it seems this 'lost house' was called Welkus but we have no records of a House Welkus. However we do know they had two holds, both in the Sea Ward. Using this, we've deduced that both were sold by Yitra to different families and while Zulpair is a true noble house, I have concerns about the other, House Ammek. Two guards have been assigned to go with you. Please, arrest and bring a member of the hold to me."	House Ammek is actually a food bank for a powerful vampire. Within the house walls, is nothing but a soundproof basement. Going within, there are many dead and dying homeless people who have been abducted over the last few months. The head vampire, Count Welkus, is not here but his brainwashed subjects (use the statistics for Commoner) are there. They kill the guards that come with the players. The players should find evidence of vampire activity and bring it back. <i>Reward:</i> each character in The Heralds gains 2 renown.
5th	"We've contacted diviners and mages alike. This house Welkus has been removed from nearly the entire history of Waterdeep. The crypt where you found their heraldry is the start of a larger complex where this vampire lord can be found. Gather allies, slay this evil and let it fester no longer!"	The crypt was indeed the start of a much larger complex where Count Welkus operates from. The Welkus name was once known for their dark attraction to undeath, and upon attaining the status of a vampire, Oliender Welkus slew his family and began working to hide in plain sight. If the players kill Welkus (use the statistics for Vampire Spawn), the threat is over. <i>Reward:</i> each character in The Heralds gains 2 renown, and each character that took part in taking the vampire down is given 150 gp.