



Syndicates & Ichor Pits

An original D&D 5e adventure
For characters of any level
By Nick Glunt



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ABOUT THIS ADVENTURE

An illegal, underground fighting pit has orchestrated nonlethal fights in an undisclosed location in a big city. Over the years, it has grown from minor nuisance to a secretive, political cabal that controls and terrifies almost everyone in the know. However, its nonlethal fights seem to have become more dangerous. A woman rumored to be one of the combatants has disappeared, prompting a world faction and the woman's disabled father to seek help.

If you're not a DM, look no further!

ANY PARTY SIZE, ANY LEVEL

The nature of this adventure allows the DM to run this story for any level party, regardless of how many players there are. That said, it works best for lower-level characters, because the DM will have to control NPC adventurers, and higher-level characters have so many class options that it can be overwhelming.

VARIABLE SETTING

The setting of this adventure could fit any big city. You could pick a city in the lore like Waterdeep, Baldur's Gate, or Neverwinter, or you could make up your own city.

DOWNTIME AS ADVENTURE

In order to earn an invitation to the Ichor Pits fighting arena, the players will have to earn the trust of the cityfolk or gain their attention. To do that, they'll have to assimilate into the city — which takes the form of downtime. This means the group will have a lot of time to craft, gamble, buy and sell magic items, make spell scrolls and simply work in the city. That's a lot of opportunity for good roleplaying!

CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

To gain the trust of the movers and shakers in town, the PCs will have to focus their downtime activities on certain people in town. The twist is that each of the PCs, through chance or divine intervention, know one of these NPC contacts from their past. This offers some interesting options to develop the characters in ways they weren't expecting.

PLAYER VS. PLAYER BATTLES

The most exciting part of this adventure is when the players eventually fight in the Ichor Pits. They'll square off against each other in one-on-one fights, meaning one of the players will win bragging rights against all the others.

Author's Notes

- You'll find notes like this one throughout this book. These author's notes are meant to provide you with extra information about characters, places, and events.
- Read over these notes carefully, and pay attention to them as your players advance through the adventure in this book.
- Occasionally, this book will reference the D&D 5e sourcebooks, rather than listing information easily obtained in those books. *PHB* refers to the *Player's Handbook*, *MM* refers to the *Monster Manual*, *DMG* refers to the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, *VGM* refers to *Volo's Guide to Monsters*, and *XGE* refers to *Xanathar's Guide to Everything*.

CALL TO ADVENTURE

The main quest of this adventure is finding out who the Ichor Pits boss is so the group can deal with them directly — cutting off the head of the snake, so to speak. How they get this quest depends on the group...

The secondary quest is finding out what happened to Akolore, a woman rumored to be a combatant of the Ichor Pits who has gone missing. This quest likely comes from her father, Fisher.

ADVENTURE HOOK

There are a lots of ways the group can get the quest to find out who the Ichor Pits boss is. Here are some suggestions:

- ❖ A spy with the Lords' Alliance world faction or a representative of the local government might seek out the group to help shut down the Ichor Pits due to safety and/or corruption concerns.
- ❖ Fisher, Akolore's father, might have accepted that his daughter died in the Ichor Pits and tasks the group with getting revenge on the Ichor Pits boss.
- ❖ Agents of the Ichor Pits intimidate or blackmail local businesses to provide them weapons, armor, potions of healing, spell scrolls, magic items, or other supplies for use by the Ichor Pits combatants and leaders. The business leaders ask the group to help them.
- ❖ The group might hear rumblings about the Ichor Pits and gain an interest in fighting, only to be approached by one of the NPC combatants with the mission of shutting it down out of concern after Akolore's death in the arena.
- ❖ A criminal organization or perhaps even a government official in the city might ask the group to identify the Ichor Pits boss so they can assassinate him or her and take the leadership role.
- ❖ The party hears that a recurring enemy of theirs has been competing in the Ichor Pits arena to win money and fame. They enter to challenge their enemy, only to find out about Akolore's death.

WHAT THE PARTY KNOWS

The group learns a few facts about the Ichor Pits very early on in the adventure.

The Ichor Pits are a secretive fighting pit. It's a nonlethal tournament, but the unsanctioned gambling, secretive nature, and elites-only access of the Ichor Pits makes the operation illegal. It's often described as an "underground fighting pit," but no one will say if it's literally underground or if it's just a heavily guarded secret. Those who compete in the tournaments earn fortune and fame. The event occurs monthly, and only the biggest movers and shakers in town get invitations.

Akolore had been a regular combatant in the Ichor Pits tournaments, often winning second or third place — but never first place. She was a crowd favorite. She disappeared after the last Ichor Pits tournament.

The leader of the Ichor Pits operation is an unknown individual, even to the people who attend regularly. The Ichor Pits boss shrouds themselves in secrecy, operating from the shadows. The group learns either from their own investigation or from the giver of their quest that the leader is one of six people, who the author details later in this book.

The Ichor Pits boss plans and controls the monthly events, and also maintains the secrecy of the entire operation. The boss sends agents and enforcers to intimidate those who speak openly about the events. They also publish propaganda in town to lend credence to the Ichor Pits being just a local urban legend. Finally, agents have been known to shake down or form alliances with local businesses to ensure steady access to necessary supplies.

WHAT THEY DON'T KNOW

Firstly, the Ichor Pits are not literally underground. In fact, they're not even in the city. When the movers and shakers get their invitations, they're instructed to meet at a secret location in the city. There, a wizard meets them and teleports them offsite to a remote fighting arena. The fights occur outdoors, far away from the city. After the tournament, wizards return the spectators and combatants using similar teleportation magic.

The Ichor Pits boss is most certainly one of the six people they identify as suspects. However, the boss isn't static — it's determined by the party's actions, in an effort to make the reveal more dramatic. (To clarify, whoever is determined to be the Ichor Pits boss was the boss from the beginning.)

Those who win the Ichor Pits tournaments are the only people to meet the Ichor Pits boss. They earn a one-on-one meeting, where the boss invites the combatants to become one of their enforcers in the city. The boss coerces the winners to join them using a well-known rule: Anyone who wins the tournament is precluded from participating again. The boss pays their agents very handsomely, which is a further effort to entice them to join up. No one has ever refused the offer, meaning the boss has a small army of skilled and well-armed enforcers at their disposal.

For most of the Ichor Pits' history, magic was strictly prohibited in the arena. The rule was an effort to keep combatants alive. It was unlikely, after all, that combatants could die outright from a weapon attack when there were potions of healing stockpiled nearby. The last tournament to be held, however, introduced magic to the Ichor Pits to draw more excitement from the crowd. That's how Akolore died. She went up against a powerful sorcerer who killed her outright with magic. Potions of healing couldn't help her. The Ichor Pits boss promptly disposed of her body, and her father registered her as missing. The boss heavily intimidates anyone who even whispers about Akolore's death.

SECRETS AND FEAR

However the group learns about the Ichor Pits, they also learn very quickly that very few people will talk about it.

FEAR AND WORRY

Anyone the group asks about the Ichor Pits responds with fear or feigned ignorance. Others might brush off the party's questions by saying the Ichor Pits are just an urban legend. Indeed, many people in town will believe wholeheartedly that the Ichor Pits aren't real, because only the most elite people and skilled combatants in town are invited to attend. No one will talk about it, except the people who give the group the quest.

After the group questions a few people and learns this trend, the quest giver will suggest they should try to earn the trust of the city without mentioning the Ichor Pits again. Let the invitation come; don't push for one.

AKOLORE'S DISAPPEARANCE

One of the only people in town who openly talks about the Ichor Pits is Fisher, who is Akolore's father.

Fisher lives alone at the outskirts of town. He is a late-middle-aged human who has a missing leg. He uses crutches to get around.

If questioned, Fisher explains that Akolore's mother died shortly after her birth. He supported his daughter by working as a woodcutter (or another similar labor-intensive profession, if wood is scarce in your chosen setting). Last year, though, he suffered a serious injury in a workplace accident — which caused him to lose his leg. Akolore, who was a young adult, stepped up to be the breadwinner.

Caring for her father after his injury proved very expensive. She began fighting in the legally sanctioned fighting pits in town to earn some extra money. After she won a few fights, Akolore began vanishing once a month — only to return the next day with vast sums of gold. Fisher suspected Akolore was fighting in the Ichor Pits and worried about her, but the money was good, so he never tried to stop her.

Last month, though, she left to fight and didn't return the next morning. He hasn't seen

her since, and everyone he talks to in town says they haven't seen her either. There are many people in town who he considered friends, who he also has heard attends the Ichor Pits, and he feels betrayed by those people.

Fisher might suspect that Akolore is dead or he might believe she is still alive somewhere. That's up to the DM to decide. What's important is that he tells the group she was probably fighting in the Ichor Pits. He might even tell the group he's done research, revealing the six people who he suspects to be the Ichor Pits boss. Those people are detailed later in this book.

HOME AWAY FROM HOME

To gain an invitation to the Ichor Pits, the party must earn the trust of the movers and shakers and prove themselves worthy of attendance. To do so, they'll have to assimilate into the city's workforce and social groups.

The city is a bustling place with lots to do. Each PC will have different priorities when they're given downtime, and this city offers options for all of them.

Before they get to work, though, the PCs must decide where to stay while they get in the city's good graces. The place where the PCs live determines how much clout they must gather with the city's elite to score an invitation to the Ichor Pits. Renting an aristocratic home draws attention to the PCs quicker than renting a room at the local inn. However, it will cost more for the PCs to rent each week.

If the PCs live together during their stay in the city, they'll gather clout as a household and will be invited to the Ichor Pits together. If they live separate from each other, each separate household earns clout on its own. If this happens, some PCs might be invited to the Ichor Pits before the rest. For this reason, try to encourage the PCs to rent a home together.

Each of the homes that follows falls into one of the lifestyle options (*PHB* pgs. 157-158).

Lifestyle	Accommodations	Cost/Week	Clout Goal
Wretched	Streets and Alleys	Free	40/PC
Squalid	The Drunken Eel	1 gp	30/PC
Poor	Milil's Temple Inn	2 gp	25/PC
Modest	The Prancing Pony	5 gp	20/PC
Comfortable	Glowside Cottage	10 gp	15/PC
Wealthy	Proudstar Manor	20 gp	10/PC
Aristocratic	The Gilded Rose	50 gp	5/PC

STREETS AND ALLEYS

Rather than spend their hard-earned coin, the PCs might opt to simply live on the streets during their stay in the city. If this happens, the PCs will have to work hard to gain clout, possibly spending months trying to get noticed.

Living on the streets is very difficult. Describe the inhumane conditions by which they live. Ask them how they get food and

where they sleep. Describe how dirty the streets are. Explain that they keep seeing fellow homeless people who seem to be sick with an illness that leaves them absolutely exhausted and incapable of performing work. Generally, try to convince the PCs to take up residence somewhere.

If they stay on the streets, the PCs will have to gain clout equal to 40 times the number of PCs before they are invited to the Ichor Pits. And even then, they might be required to bathe before they arrive.

At the end of each week, after the PCs have completed their downtime activities, have each of them attempt a DC 11 Constitution saving throw. Whether they succeed or not, explain that they keep getting nipped by rats while they sleep. If they fail the roll, they contract a disease called sewer plague (*DMG* pg. 257).

THE DRUNKEN EEL

The cheapest shelter the PCs can find in the city is a common room above a loud, raucous inn in the poorest and shadiest part of town. The patrons of the Drunken Eel are mostly criminals and ne'er-do-wells. Staying there might attract the wrong kind of attention.

The Drunken Eel is a small tavern with very few workers. They're not a friendly bunch, and there are rumors that even the tavern itself is a front for smuggling or other crimes. The people who work there aren't good folks, but they're willing to hand over the keys to the common room above the tavern for a modest price. It's a small space with no beds, but there's room to sleep and a roof over their heads — though it does leak when it rains.

Renting the room at the Drunken Eel and living a squalid lifestyle costs each PC 1 gp per week. Staying at the Drunken Eel requires the PCs to earn clout equal to 30 times the number of PCs to gain invitations to the Ichor Pits.

At the end of each week, after the PCs have completed their downtime activities, have each of them attempt their choice of a DC 12 Charisma (Deception), (Persuasion), or (Intimidation) check. Whether they succeed or not, explain that they have to walk through the tavern to get to the stairs that lead to the common room above — so they have to

converse with the criminal clientele. If at least half the PCs fail the check, they return to their lodgings only to discover they've been robbed. Each member of the group loses 1d20 gp.

MILIL'S TEMPLE INN

The god Milil is a deity of creativity and music, and his temples often serve as performance venues and schools of music. In this city, though, the temple also runs an inn to supplement its income. (If your campaign setting does not include the god Milil, any god of music will do.) The inn is comfortable, though its rooms are small, and the sound of music can be heard all through the night — so it can be hard to sleep. Each room has two beds, so PCs are encouraged to pair up. The priests double as servants for guests of the inn, cleaning up and serving food, but the food is cheap and bland. When the PCs take these lodgings, they are warned that their rooms are vacant right now – but students of music have priority, so they might be asked to find other lodgings during their stay.

Renting a room at Milil's Temple Inn and living a poor lifestyle costs each PC 2 gp per week. Taking these lodgings requires the PCs to earn clout equal to 25 times the number of PCs to gain invitations to the Ichor Pits.

At the end of each week, after the PCs have completed their downtime activities, have each of them roll 1d6. On a result of 1, a student of music arrives in the city seeking lodging. As a result, the PC who rolled a 1 is asked to find other accommodations. This might result in the PCs shifting rooms or finding new lodgings. The priests do not allow more than two people per room.

THE PRANCING PONY

One of the most typical and accessible inns in the city, the Prancing Pony is as standard as accommodations come. It is a moderately sized inn with both private and double rooms. The rooms are practical and cozy, each with space for a bed, wardrobe, and desk. The rentable rooms are nonetheless a little bit cramped, and they're located on the second floor of a tavern. The tavern, however, is not open late and is

usually not busy beyond the breakfast, lunch, and dinner hours.

Renting a room at the Prancing Pony and living a modest lifestyle costs each PC 5 gp per week. Taking these lodgings requires the PCs to earn clout equal to 20 times the number of PCs to gain invitations to the Ichor Pits.

No negative event occurs at the end of each week while the PCs stay at the Prancing Pony.

GLOWSIDE COTTAGE

If the PCs decide they don't want to stay at an inn at all, they can rent a cozy cottage in a somewhat upscale neighborhood. Glowside Cottage is named for the luminescent ivy that grows up the eastern, outside-facing wall. The cottage is old but well-maintained. It usually serves as a rentable space for vacationers visiting the city. The building is modest in size, with a small garden at its entrance. The cottage includes servants, though they do not live on site. The owners (who live in town) hire cleaning, cooking, and maintenance staff while Glowside Cottage has tenants.

The interior of Glowside Cottage is filled with antique furniture and baubles. Despite its beautiful appearance and location in an upscale part of town, the cottage is humble in size and has only the essentials – two sleeping chambers (one master bedroom and one room with two bunk beds) that include wardrobes and writing desks, an indoor privy and bath, a small kitchen, a dining room, and a foyer. It is not suitable for hosting many guests, and members of a large party will have to double-up in the bedrooms to allow a place for everyone to sleep.

Renting Glowside Cottage and living a comfortable lifestyle costs each PC 10 gp per week. Taking these lodgings requires the PCs to earn clout equal to 15 times the number of PCs to gain invitations to the Ichor Pits.

At the end of each week, after the PCs have completed their downtime activities, have each of them roll 1d8. On a result of 1, rumors of the group's goal – to infiltrate the Ichor Pits – begin circulating through the city. Unbeknownst to the group, the servants who work at Glowside Cottage overheard the PCs talking about their mission when they thought they were alone.

The servants then spread the rumors. For each PC who rolled a 1, the group loses 1d6 clout. The PCs don't know how the rumors started unless someone in the group also rolled an 8.

PROUDSTAR MANOR

One of the nicest places to live in the city, Proudstar Manor is the regular home of a very wealthy human family. While the PCs remain in town, though, the Proudstars are vacationing elsewhere — so they rent out their home to visitors. Proudstar Manor is a rather large estate, complete with a courtyard and sprawling gardens, a home with many rooms and parlors, extravagant decor, and a full staff of loyal servants that live on site.

PCs who live at Proudstar Manor each get a private bedroom. A kitchen staff on site cooks extravagant meals each day, and the home includes access to a fully stocked wine cellar. In addition, the group shares a large library, living quarters, and parlors. The estate is suitable for entertaining guests. Perhaps the most striking room of the entire manor is its foyer — a great hall with high ceilings and a huge, silver chandelier lit with magic candles.

Renting Proudstar Manor and living a wealthy lifestyle costs each PC 20 gp per week. Taking these lodgings requires the PCs to earn clout equal to 10 times the number of PCs to gain invitations to the Ichor Pits.

At the end of each week, after the PCs have completed their downtime activities, have each of them roll 1d10. On a roll of 1, the PCs accidentally break or damage something in the manor that belongs to the Proudstars (perhaps a family heirloom or a one-of-a-kind piece of art). The Proudstars allow the PCs to continue staying there, as long as they pay to replace the object. The payment is 2d4 x 20 gp. If they can't pay, all the PCs are ejected from the home and must find other lodgings.

THE GILDED ROSE

The Gilded Rose is the city's most premier, luxury inn. Only those with social standing among the aristocracy are allowed to rent a room at the Gilded Rose — even if they can afford it.

The Gilded Rose is an inn that uses the same sort of magic used by a bag of holding (DMG pg. 153-154). As an extradimensional space, bags of holding and similar items instantly explode into a gate to Astral Plane upon a PC bringing their item inside a room, as described in their item entry. Those who run the inn are well aware of this fact, so PCs are warned before bringing such items inside.

The Gilded Rose is a large building on the outside, though the main hall is used mostly as a ballroom of sorts. Behind a concierge desk toward the back of the hall are about a dozen doorways. Each door opens up into an extradimensional space that's even larger than the ballroom. These spaces are guest rooms.

Each guest room includes all the amenities a guest could ask for: a large bed, supremely soft fabrics, a luxury bath, a large dining area, an audience chamber, a fully stocked library, a staff of unseen servants (PHB pg. 284), and more. The windows in these rooms look out into an illusory landscape of the guest's choice. Note that the unseen servants that serve these rooms cease to exist when they exit the space.

Renting a room at the Gilded Rose and living an aristocratic lifestyle costs each PC 50 gp per week. Taking these lodgings requires the PCs to earn clout equal to 5 times the number of PCs to gain invitations to the Ichor Pits.

No negative event occurs at the end of each week while the PCs stay at the Gilded Rose.

CHANGING LODGINGS

The PCs are free to change lodgings at the end of any week. When they do, the clout requirements change to whatever the new lodgings are. However, changing lodgings costs the PCs 1d6 clout for each lifestyle level they change —whether they're moving up or down the scale. If they were living in a lower-tier lodging and then move to an upper-tier lodging, the Ichor Pits see them as cheap. If they move from an upper-tier to a lower-tier lodging, the public views them as irresponsible.

Note that if the PCs have the required amount of clout immediately after changing lodgings, they must wait until the end of the next week to gain their invitations.

LIFE IN THE BIG CITY

The goal for the PCs in this part of the adventure is to have them get in with the big wigs of the city. To do this, they'll have to integrate themselves into the lives of the cityfolk. Engaging in downtime activities is the best way this is done.

BLENDING IN, EARNING RESPECT

At the start of each week, ask the PCs what they'd like their characters to do that week. Each activity is detailed later in this section.

Downtime options in the city include anything listed in the "Downtime Activities" section of *Xanathar's Guide to Everything* (XGE pgs. 125-134).

Each downtime option includes an "Ichor Pits contact" — someone with a connection to the Ichor Pits who might put in a good word for the PCs when they've obtained enough clout among the city's elite. Note that the PCs might gain more or less clout, depending on a PC's performance in the various downtime activities.

The contacts and their associated downtime activities are listed below. After that is a detailed breakdown of the activities.

ICHOR PITS CONTACTS

Each downtime activity matches an Ichor Pits contact. These are the people the PCs will have to impress if they want to get an invitation to the Ichor Pits. The PCs learn early on that one of them is actually the boss of the Ichor Pits. However, the boss will vary as they are decided based on the PCs' actions.

As you track how much clout the PCs have gathered, also track which contact was involved with each clout reward. Once the PCs have acquired the amount of clout required, the Ichor Pits contact with who earned the PCs the most clout is secretly the Ichor Pits boss. Do not tell them who the boss is when you've made this determination, as none of the NPCs know. The only way to learn their identity is to win the Ichor Pits tournament.

PERSONAL CONNECTIONS

When the PCs learn the six people who might be the Ichor Pits boss, they also learn

that each of them knows one of the contacts. You can either assign the PCs one of the contacts that makes sense to the character, or you can allow the PCs to pick which one they know and how they know them. It's up to the DM. The goal of making the PCs have a connection to these people is to make the reveal of which one is the Ichor Pits boss all the more exciting and dramatic.

Contact	Associated Downtime
Harbek Fireforge	Carousing, crafting an item, relaxation
Jingle	Carousing, crime, relaxation
Leshanna Melinora	Carousing, pit fighting, relaxation
Mara Shemov	Gambling, relaxation, religious service
Victor Lianacia	Research, training, working
Zoryn Follick	Buying a magic item, scribing a magic scroll, selling a magic item

HARBEC FIREFORGE

Harbek is a skilled blacksmith and the guildmaster of the city's finest crafters' guild. He is a taller-than-average dwarf man with a short red beard. He is well-spoken and tough. Both innovative and resourceful, he gathered almost all of the crafters of the city into a single guild about a decade ago, rather than having an individual guild for each trade. This way, he reasoned, the city's artisans have even more power and sway. He has had his detractors, who believe a singular guild means more centralized power, but he has largely crushed them under the political power his guild commands.

A self-made man, Harbek is hard to impress. He views himself above most people, but he is receptive to crafters — even ones without much talent. To Harbek, everyone has a place, and his place is ahead of the rest. He doesn't shy from making his views clear, and he instantly gains respect for anyone who shares a similar worldview. That said, he'll give anyone a chance to prove themselves.

CONNECTION WITH THE ICHOR PITS

Harbek earned his first invitation to spectate the bouts at the Ichor Pits long before becoming guildmaster. He began selling his fine weapons and armor to combatants, which resulted in a massive boom to his sales – and therefore his political power in the city. Some say he never would have become guildmaster if not for his involvement with the Ichor Pits. Others say a man of such talent was bound to earn the position Harbek holds today.

If Harbek is determined to be the Ichor Pits boss, it's a very recent appointment. When the previous boss moved on to bigger and better things, he was tapped to take over. Harbek believes he shouldn't fix what's not broken, so he largely lets the Ichor Pits govern itself. As leader, his primary role is to have the final say in who gets invited.

ASSOCIATED DOWNTIME EVENTS

The PCs encounter Harbek when they engage in the following downtime activities: carousing with the middle class (*XGE pg. 127*), crafting an item (*XGE pg. 129*), and relaxation if the PCs are living at Glowside Cottage or Proudstar Manor (*XGE pg. 131*).

JINGLE

Perhaps the most dangerous of the Ichor Pits contacts, Jingle is a criminal ringleader. A kenku woman, she leads a band of thieves, smugglers, fences, and burglars. Though she discourages her employees from engaging in violence, they have been known to extort, blackmail, and occasionally threaten their victims to get their way. Born on the streets of the city, Jingle gained respect among criminal syndicates while also maintaining an air of secrecy about her activities. The city's guards know of her involvement in crime, but they can't prove any of what she does because she leaves no paper trail.

Jingle, as a kenku, cannot speak words of her own. Instead, she speaks by replicating what other people have said and other sounds, not unlike a raven. Even her name is a replicated sound – that of keys jingling on a keyring, though many mistake her name as the sound of coins in a coinpurse. In personality,

Jingle is a woman of two faces. She is commanding to her employees, threatening to ruin anyone who falls out of line. But in private, she is exceedingly polite and soft-spoken – though what she says and does is often more nefarious than she lets on. There's a saying in the city: Jingle always collects her debts.

CONNECTION WITH THE ICHOR PITS

Many years ago, Jingle searched for and discovered the entrance to the Ichor Pits by following clues she uncovered. These were days when it's existence was less protected, but her discovery led the Ichor Pits boss at the time to take extra precautions – while also continuing to invite Jingle out of fear of her exposing them. She attends often, occasionally bringing along her higher-ranking cohorts, and usually places exorbitant bets on the matches.

If Jingle is determined to be the Ichor Pits boss, she was handpicked by the previous boss, who retired. She was chosen because of her secretive yet effective activities as a criminal ringleader. She treats her job as the Ichor Pits boss in much the same way she treats her day job: Keep it secret, but rule with authority. And always collect your debts.

ASSOCIATED DOWNTIME EVENTS

The PCs encounter Jingle when they engage in the following downtime activities: carousing with the lower class (*XGE pg. 127*), crime (*XGE pg. 130*), and relaxation if the PCs are living on streets and alleys or the Drunken Eel (*XGE pg. 131*).

LESHANNA MELINORA

A very old high elf with silver-blond hair and dark skin, Leshanna Melinora is the consummate socialite. Hailing from a family of old money, Leshanna has no personal concept of what it's like to lack wealth. Her family's wealth is generated from hiring others to invest in business ventures. As a result, Leshanna herself has never worked a day in her life. However, she is fascinated by those who have worked hard, and she loves to hear stories of their troubles. Her favorite stories are those of adventurers.

Leshanna spends her days socializing at balls and galas, parties and feasts. Her family

owns the Gilded Rose – the finest inn in the city – and she lives there in the most immaculate of rooms. She enjoys mingling with the other guests there, longing to hear their stories of life outside the city, largely as a spectacle and not at all out of envy. Leshanna can also be found quite often at the city's legal pit fighting arena, watching and betting on fighters. For Leshanna, such shows of skill are too fascinating to wait until another Ichor Pits tournament – even with the efforts the legal fighting pits take to ensure the safety of their combatants.

CONNECTION WITH THE ICHOR PITS

It's long been rumored that Leshanna's family founded the Ichor Pits. It's not known for sure whether that rumor is true. What is known, though, is that Leshanna has been attending Ichor Pits tournaments for most of her long life. She enjoys the drama of the competition, often swapping gossip about the combatants. She watches the bouts from a private viewing box, where she drinks fine wine and invites esteemed guests to join her. Such an invitation from Leshanna is quite the honor.

If Leshanna is determined to be the Ichor Pits boss, she confirms her family's connection with the Ichor Pits. The boss has always been the matriarch or patriarch of her family, so it was just natural progression that she would take over. She's been the boss for decades. For Leshanna, leading the Ichor Pits is a family duty. However, she let's the Pits operate on their own, following the tradition set forth by her ancestors when the Pits were established.

ASSOCIATED DOWNTIME EVENTS

The PCs encounter Leshanna when they engage in the following downtime activities: carousing with the upper class (*XGE pg. 127*), pit fighting (*XGE pg. 131*), and relaxation if the PCs are living at the Gilded Rose (*XGE pg. 131*).

MARA SHEMOV

Mara Shemov is perhaps the most unusual of the movers and shakers in the city. She is a priestess of Tymora, the goddess of good fortune. Also known as Lady Luck, Tymora has few priests and priestesses because her tenets don't require much intervention. Those who

become her clergy – like Mara – believe that a healthy combination of skill and luck is a recipe for success. Gambling halls occasionally attract clergy of Tymora, and the city's gambling hall is no exception. Mara is the resident priestess there.

A middle-aged human woman, Mara puts off an air of innocence and humility – but it's at least partly a show. She wears traditional priestly robes and blesses gamblers who donate a coin or two at the makeshift temple. Many people view these blessings as a sign that their efforts will be guided entirely by skill (since everyone receives fortune from Lady Luck), but Mara insists that "fortune favors the bold" among them for taking the most calculated risks. Mara says she uses the donations she receives to keep herself fed, but occasionally she'll place a bet of her own. When she places a bet, she usually wins. As she says, she has Lady Luck on her side; but in reality, Mara has a cunning, calculating, and ambitious mind. As a result, she lives comfortably – especially for a priestess.

CONNECTION WITH THE ICHOR PITS

Mara was naturally attracted to the Ichor Pits when she learned of their existence because she viewed them as the consummate place for people to rely on both chance and skill. She sought clout in much the same way as the PCs do in this adventure and eventually earned a regular invitation. Today, she serves as a sort of master of ceremonies, introducing the contenders before each match, blessing each bout, and announcing the winners.

If Mara is determined to be the Ichor Pits boss, it's because she was already the master of ceremonies – the most recognizable face of the Ichor Pits – when the preceding boss died several years ago. She rules with a more hands-on approach than the other potential bosses, though she keeps her identity as the boss a secret. She prefers to hand pick those who deserve invitations, while the other potential bosses simply pick the city's most powerful and influential people.

ASSOCIATED DOWNTIME EVENTS

The PCs encounter Mara when they engage in the following downtime activities: gambling

(*XGE pg. 130*), relaxation if the PCs are living at Milil's Temple Inn or the Prancing Pony (*XGE pg. 131*), and religious service (*XGE pg. 131*).

VICTOR LIANACIA

An eccentric, wealthy half-elf man, Victor Lianacia hails from a middle-class origin. He was ordinary in every way, even working simple labor jobs and living a modest lifestyle in his youth. But then a very distant relative of his died and he was named the sole surviving heir – and that's how Victor obtained more wealth than he could dream of. Still, with his humble roots, Victor decided against an extravagant lifestyle. Instead, he dedicated himself to lifelong learning. Now describing himself as a dilettante of sorts, Victor spends his days managing a troupe of laborers (who he pays very fairly) and his nights spending his money to learn seemingly random skills and lore.

Despite his status as one of the wealthiest people in town, Victor is an extremely down-to-earth man, dedicating his vast wealth to the common good. In his eyes, he did not earn the money he has, so it's not his to spend foolishly. He does not dress in fancy clothes or purchase expensive wine. He lives in a very modest home and frequents the common taverna and restaurants. Instead of extravagance, he tries to spend his money to help people who were like him in his youth – simple laborers and the common folk. As a result, he is by far one of the most well-liked figures in the city. The poor like him because he helps them, and the wealthy like him because he doesn't threaten them. He views himself as a man of the world, and he loves sharing stories of personal growth and learning. He's the kind of guy who encourages everyone to follow their dreams – and he's been known to fund education for those he trusts to repay him.

CONNECTION WITH THE ICHOR PITS

Victor was not invited to the Ichor Pits until several years after he came into his money. Only after he began managing his labor company – and therefore began to earn some political power – was he extended an invitation. He found the displays of skill shown

at the tournaments to be extraordinary, so he kept on going. He does not place bets or gossips; he's there as an observer and fan.

If Victor is determined to be the Ichor Pits boss, he spent a great deal of his money to buy out the previous boss several decades ago. Before he took over, they were much more dangerous than they are now. He wanted the Ichor Pits to be a safer experience for the combatants, so he made himself the boss so he could make it happen in his vision.

ASSOCIATED DOWNTIME EVENTS

The PCs encounter Victor when they engage in the following downtime activities: research (*XGE pg. 132*), training (*XGE pg. 134*), and working (*XGE pg. 134*).

ZORYN FOLICK

Zoryn is a magic item dealer. A rock gnome, Zoryn has earned a vast amount of wealth from dealing with adventurers of all kinds. Originally an adventurer himself, Zoryn retired when he received a serious leg wound and sold all his magic items. As a result, he learned all of the magic item enthusiasts in the city and beyond, and he started taking orders from clients who were looking for something special. He buys items and sells them at exactly the price at which he purchases them, except he applies a “procurement fee” surcharge to the price. He sustains all his business on these procurement fees. He also procures and sells rare inks for scribing magic scrolls.

Zoryn is a friendly man who tries to get his clients to tell him about themselves as much as possible. He knows the magic item market is a hard one to succeed at, so he tries to be as personable as possible. However, he also tries not to pry into his clients' private lives and never asks what for what purpose they sought his products. He's also exceedingly private about his own life. He walks with a limp and has a habit of fidgeting with whatever small objects are nearby.

CONNECTION WITH THE ICHOR PITS

Zoryn's activities naturally drew the attention of the Ichor Pits leaders, since regular combatants sought magic items to boost their chances in the ring. He became a favored

contact and began earning invitations on the regular.

If he is determined to be the Ichor Pits boss, Zoryn was promoted to the position a few years ago when the previous boss died. He views the job as a means to gaining more business: If spectators see combatants wielding magic items in battle, they're more likely to want magic items of their own. Thus, he tries to get magic items into the hands of every combatant.

ASSOCIATED DOWNTIME ACTIVITIES

The PCs encounter Zoryn when they engage in the following downtime activities: buying a magic item (*XGE pg. 126*), scribing a magic scroll (*XGE pg. 133*), and selling a magic item (*XGE pg. 133*).

DOWNTIME ACTIVITIES

Different downtime activities earn different amounts of clout, as described below. If you don't have a copy of Xanathar's Guide to Everything, [Wizards of Coast's "Unearthed Arcana" posting for Downtime](#) has essentially the same information and is available publicly on their website.

Generally, for the sake of keeping this section of the adventure moving, avoid introducing complications (as described in XGE) that don't involve rivals. If you consider a complication related to a rival, try to make the Ichor Pit contact the rival listed — or make them a victim of another NPC that the PCs must thwart.

GAINING CLOUT

Start each downtime event with asking the PC what they'd like to do that week. Make sure the activity is a full week's worth of action. Then, play out an encounter between the PC and the associated Ichor Pits contact. the end of the event, have the PC make a check based on the activity for the week, and assign clout based on what happened as described below.

The amount of clout gained shows what sort of impression the contact had of the PC at the end of the week.

Check	Opinion	Clout Change
0	Disappointed	-1d6 clout
5	No Opinion	No clout change
10	Liked	+1d6 clout
15	Impressed	+2d6 clout
20	Admired	+3d6 clout

GAINING AN INVITATION

Once the PCs have obtained the required amount of clout (as determined by their lodgings), a courier delivers a letter to their lodgings instructing each of them to meet in a secluded part of town. There, they're met by a wizard who teleports them all to the distant arena.

THE ICHOR PITS BOSS

After the group has earned their invitation to the Ichor Pits, it's time for the DM to determine who the boss is. Order the Ichor Pits contacts by how much clout the PCs earned with each one. The Ichor Pits boss is the one in the middle of the list (rounded up).

Remember to keep this secret! This is just for the DM to know. Read over the entry in the contacts section that describes the contact's motivations if they are the Ichor Pits boss.

OPTIONAL: BONUS EVENTS

If the DM decides the group needs some help earning the clout required to get an invitation, the DM can introduce some extra events to make things more interesting. This is also a good idea to develop more intrigue or drama in rooting out who the Pits boss is, or to keep the group's interest in the event of a lull.

DMs should feel free to pick any or all of the following events, or they can make up their own.

ASSASSINATION ATTEMPT

One of the Ichor Pits contacts might be talking openly about the Pits after having second thoughts about its activities. The contact with whom the group has the lowest clout is the target in this case. The Ichor Pits boss attempts an assassination on the contact in a public place while the group is nearby. Combat results. Afterward, the group earns 3d6 clout with the would-be victim of assassination.

FISHER IN DANGER

Fisher becomes a target of intimidation for talking so openly about the Ichor Pits. The group might find that he goes missing or they might find him beaten up when they visit him next. He's shaken up, unwilling to talk anymore — and he might even beg the group to stop investigating. If he's missing, the group might accelerate their plans. Regardless, Fisher refuses to reveal that the PCs are investigating.

SHAKEDOWN

The PCs might witness Ichor Pits agents shaking down some local businesspeople. Allow the PCs to solve this as they want. Combat might result. If they help the businesspeople, they might earn clout with Harbek or Victor. If they help the agents, they might win clout with the Pits overall (making it an unassigned clout gain).

LOSING FAVOR

If the PCs aren't careful about how they interact with the Ichor Pits contacts, they might face some consequences. If the group flatly or not-so-subtly asks about the Pits, it's very likely that the contacts will cut off contact with the PCs out of fear. If coerced, they'll reveal that people have been punished for far less when it comes to the Ichor Pits. This is a great opportunity to develop some more drama, especially considering the PCs know the contacts. An NPC from a PC's past cutting off contact with the PC is a great source of interest and intrigue in this phase of the adventure.

THE ICHOR PITS

The Ichor Pits arena tournament is the most exciting part of the adventure by far.

THE ARRIVAL

The PCs find themselves in a remote place as determined by the DM. The wizard the group met up with cast the spell teleport (PHB pg. 281), using a permanent circle at the Ichor Pits arena to arrive without fail. The circle is etched on the floor at the arena and is guarded so no one can spend a minute (as described in the teleportation circle spell on PHB pg. 282) to memorize the circle's runes and glyphs.

The wizard who teleported them to the arena acts as a sort of concierge, explaining the rules of the Ichor Pits, revealing that the winners earn money and an audience with the Ichor Pits boss, inviting them to fight if they'd like, answering questions, and explaining they can place bets on who will win.

Remind the group that the more of them that fight, the greater chance they'll have at one of them winning and getting an audience with the boss. Also remind them that there's no entry fee and no penalty for losing. Try your hardest to get everyone to fight.

WINNINGS & PLACING BETS

Whoever wins the tournament earns 100 gp times the PCs' level. The second-place winner gets 50 gp times their level, and the third-place winner gets 25 gp times their level. Alternately, you could give the PCs magic items for winning.

The group is free to place bets on who will win the tournament, either picking an NPC, themselves, or one of their friends. They're free to place as many bets as they'd like. However, they can only place bets on who will win first place. If they choose correctly, they win three times whatever they bet.

TIERED COMBAT

The tournament includes eight combatants. New combatants take precedence over known combatants because the audience likes to see new faces more than they like to see old ones.

The tournament structure is single elimination with a consolation bracket to

determine the third-place winner. You can find a fillable bracket later in this section. The author recommends you print it beforehand.

OTHER COMBATANTS

Before the PCs ever even get to this section of the adventure, prepare NPC characters to fill the other sections of the bracket. It's a good idea to make the other combatants recurring characters in your campaign. Make the PCs care about the rest of the people who are fighting. Bringing up old rivalries is a great way to make the tournament more exciting.

If you can't think of other combatants, determine them randomly using the tables below to determine race and class. Make all of them entertainers with the gladiator sub-background so they're trained in Performance.

3d8	Race	3d8	Race
3-4	Dragonborn	15-16	Hill Dwarf
5	Rock Gnome	17-18	Woof Elf
6	Half-Orc	19	Ltft. Halfling
7-8	Dark Elf	20	Stout Halfling
9-10	High Elf	21	Half-Elf
11-12	Mntn. Dwarf	22	Forest Gnome
13-14	Human	23-24	Tiefling

3d8	Class	3d8	Class
3-4	Sorcerer	16-17	Barbarian
5-6	Rogue	18	Monk
7	Bard	19	Ranger
8-9	Cleric	20	Druid
10-11	Paladin	21-22	Warlock
12-15	Fighter	23-24	Wizard

PLAYING THE CROWD

During a match in the arena, characters (both NPCs and PCs) have another option in combat. As an action, they can attempt to play the crowd to earn inspiration. This is an opposed Charisma (Performance) check between the two combatants. If a character attempts the action and wins the opposed check, they earn inspiration. Otherwise, nothing happens. Whenever a character performs this action, ask them to describe what they do to play the crowd. Note that NPC combatants usually try to play the crowd

instead of attacking outright. This is both an effort to play up the fact that they're fighting in an arena in front of an audience and an effort to get the NPC combatants eliminated early in the tournament. This way, the later fights are just the PCs fighting each other.

FIGHTING UNTIL SUBMISSION

To keep the game moving, note that early fights are supposed to be quick. In the first round of matches, fights last until a character is brought to a half of their maximum hit points instead of knockout. In the second round of matches, characters fight until one of them drops to a quarter of their maximum hit points. Only in the final matches do characters fight until knockout.

HEALING BETWEEN FIGHTS

Characters are provided with potions of healing between each match in order to get their hit points back up to maximum. Note, however, that the fights are at most a half hour apart from each other, so characters can't get a short rest in between matches.

ACTIVITIES FOR ELIMINATED PCs

It's very likely that some of the PCs will be eliminated from the tournament before others. If this happens, try to give the eliminated PCs something to do between fights. Prompt them to investigate what happened to Akolore or distract the guards so they memorize the runes and glyphs of the permanent teleportation circle. Have them interact with eliminated NPC combatants or non-boss Ichor Pits contacts to develop a conspiracy to shut down the Ichor Pits. If an Ichor Pits contact ignored a PC as described earlier in this book, now might be a good time for them to apologize.

It's really up to the DM.

WINNING THE TOURNAMENT

If a PC wins the tournament, they are invited to meet the Ichor Pits boss. Really play up the drama of revealing who the boss is. When they arrive, the boss is flanked by enforcers. The boss congratulates the PC for winning and asks them to be one of their enforcers. This entire scene should be very

tense, with the implication that refusing the offer would be dangerous for the PC. If the PC is hasty to accept the offer, the boss might grow suspicious that this was the PC's plan all along. The goal here is for the PC to worry that they're being caught for infiltrating. Regardless, at the end, they know who the boss is.

Knowing who the boss is allows the PCs to deal with him or her in any way they want. Allow them to handle the boss however they'd like. Don't guide it from this point. Let the group control the narrative and respond as appropriate.

Whatever the case, the Ichor Pits boss won't go down without a fight. And they're likely to have enforcers to guard them.

LOSING THE TOURNAMENT

If the PCs don't win the tournament, they don't get to learn who the Ichor Pits boss is. This might seem like they failed the mission, but in reality, there's another option.

Have the quest giver suggest the group can shut down the Ichor Pits by dispelling the permanent circle at the arena. If they can memorize the runes, they can teleport there with a spell or a spell scroll, and then they can dispel it. If the Ichor Pits boss can't get to the arena, the Ichor Pits are effectively destroyed. Honestly, this might be a good thing to suggest even if the group wins the tournament.

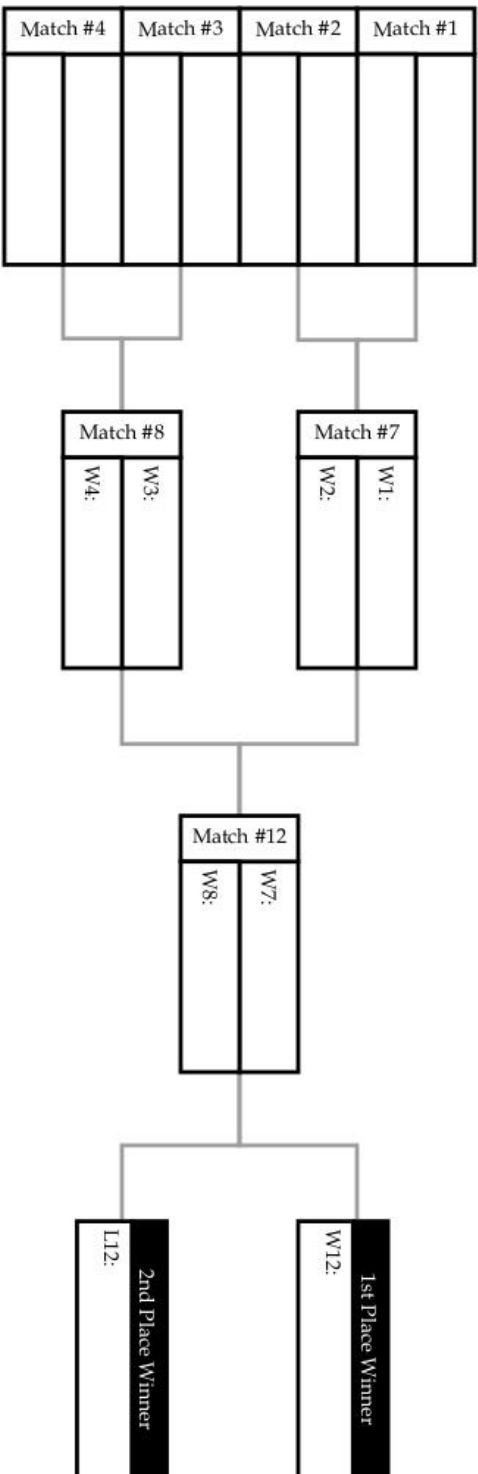
If you feel like there should be a big finale, you could have the Ichor Pits boss and some of his or her enforcers form a final boss battle at the arena. That'd be a good finale.

ADVENTURE'S END

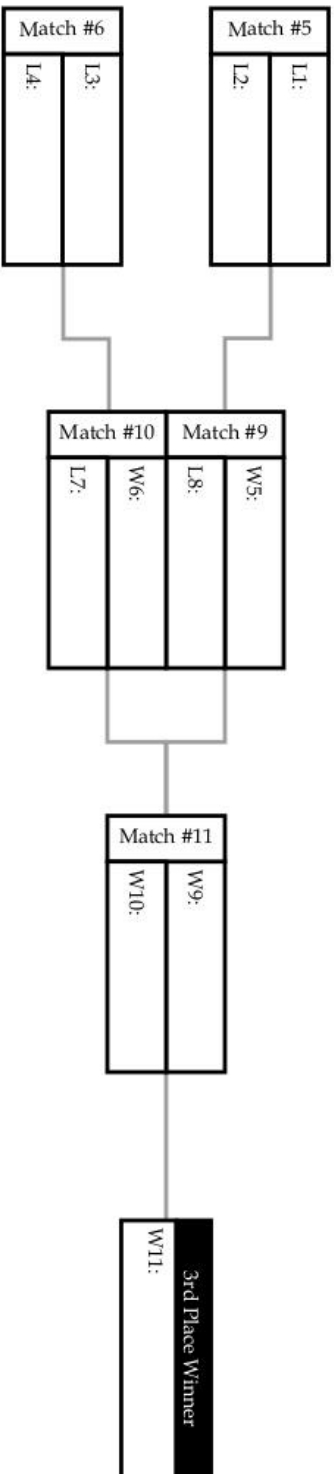
Once all these things are over, the adventure is complete. It's really up to the group to decide how it wraps up.

ICHOR PITS TOURNAMENT BRACKET

MAIN BRACKET



CONSOLATION BRACKET



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