

SHADOWS AND WHISPERS



CHRISTOPHER WILLETT

THE SECRETS OF HOUSE DIMIR

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR CHRISTOPHER WILLETT IS A HIGH SCHOOL SOCIAL STUDIES TEACHER AND FACULTY LEADER OF BOARD GAME CLUB. HE IS THE AUTHOR OF *HUNTING THE IRON WOLF* WHICH CAN BE FOUND ON AMAZON. HE IS ALSO THE AUTHOR OF *LIFE AND DECAY*, *ORIGINAL GANGSTER*, AND *SHADOWS AND WHISPERS*. HE HAS BEEN A RABID DUNGEONS AND DRAGONS FAN SINCE 2002.

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Foreword

While in the past House Dimir's very existence was unknown by the average citizen of Ravnica, today they operate in the open. However, most people are under the impression that they are a relic of a bygone era. Everyone believes the Dimir are past their prime. This is the image House Dimir has cultivated. They have created a carefully tuned facade in the minds of the average person. Few realize how powerful they really are.

On the public face, Dimir is a guild of couriers, investigators, reporters, and archivists, but that's just a front. When people hire guildless mercenaries to spy, smuggle, steal, or assassinate they usually do not realize they are employing agents of House Dimir. Even their agents may not know who they are working for. Everything is compartmentalized.

This book is about finding ways to inject House Dimir into your Ravnica campaign setting. They can make suitable antagonists, or alternatively, one of the players may wish to create a character who is a Dimir operative. If they do, they must keep their true allegiances a secret.

If you are going to inject House Dimir into your campaign, you should realize you are creating more than just a hack and slash game of killing monsters. It is now a cold war spy thriller. There are forces at play outside of the view of the players, and clues and secrets that will lead them to the truth: an outsider is trying to take over Ravnica.

House Dimir could also fit into other campaign settings. In Waterdeep, the Lords of Waterdeep utilize espionage all the time. It would make sense that there would be a secret guild of spies. In Eberron, the various dragonmarked houses are constantly competing with one another. The Five Nations are currently locked in a cold war, and each employ their own spies. In Ravenloft, House Dimir could be a house of lords and their agents who are loyal to Count Strahd, acting as his eyes and ears.

"Who are the agents of the Dimir? No one and everyone."

-Lazav, Dimir guildmaster

This book includes secrets obtained by Dimir Agents as well as illicit goods that can be purchased from Bane Alley. It is also full of the strange and bizarre monsters who serve the guild of secrets from the shadows.

Inspirational Reading and Viewing

The following books and movies will help to inspire you to create campaigns filled with paranoia and danger. You may want to add some of the super spy action from *Mission Impossible* too.

Books

- *Agent Zigzag* by Ben Macintyre
- *Casino Royale* by Ian Fleming
- *The Hunt for Red October* by Tom Clancy
- *The Odessa File* by Frederick Forsyth
- *The Official CIA Manual of Trickery and Deception* by H. Keith Melton
- *The Spy Who Came in From the Cold* by John le Carre

Movies

- *Argo* (2012)
- *The Lives of Others* (2006)
- *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* (2011)
- *Three Days of the Condor* (1975)
- *Red Sparrow* (2016)

Assets

In spycraft, assets are informants who provide information for spies. A character who is a House Dimir agent can have 2 NPC assets they have cultivated all over Ravnica. These assets have no idea that you are an agent of House Dimir. It is important that when working an asset that you give less than you get. The key to manipulating an asset is to have secret information to blackmail them with. The House of Shadows deals in information. A Dimir Agent will know several unsavory secrets about anyone operating in their area.

d6 Why is the Asset Cooperating

- 1 You are blackmailing them. You have information that would ruin their lives.
- 2 You are paying them. They'll tell you anything they know for 1 gp.
- 3 They willingly work for you. They think they are doing the right thing.
- 4 They think that you're their friend. You've done nice things for them in the past.
- 5 The asset is in love with you. Either you have promised them a relationship or you have had a relationship in the past.
- 6 The asset is cooperating to help someone they love.

d6 Who is the Asset

- 1 A banker.
- 2 A local gang member.
- 3 A member of another guild.
- 4 A shopkeeper.
- 5 A medical professional.
- 6 A school teacher.
- 7 A server at a fancy restaurant.
- 8 A street urchin.

Secrets

d10 Minor Secrets

- 1 They are cheating on their taxes.
- 2 They tell their spouse they are at church, instead they are at the bar.
- 3 They have a drinking problem.
- 4 They have a gambling problem.
- 5 They are receiving bribes from the goblin mafia.
- 6 Their spouse is cheating on them.
- 7 They are constantly shoplifting. They don't need the stuff, they are just addicted to the thrill.
- 8 They have a secret family.
- 9 They hate everyone at their guild and are willing to betray them.
- 10 They are dying of a disease. They don't have any symptoms yet.

d10 Devastating Secrets

- 1 They believe you have incriminating evidence on them. You in fact have no proof of anything.
- 2 They are having a scandalous affair.
- 3 They were once someone really important until their mind was wiped.
- 4 They are secretly working against their guild.
- 5 They owe 10,000 gp to the goblin mafia.
- 6 They murdered their best friend.
- 7 They moved to this part of town, changed their name, and want to start a new life.
- 8 They are adopted. They don't know that.
- 9 You have the evidence to free their loved one from prison.
- 10 They are a hideous creature who uses glamours to appear beautiful.

Bane Alley Black Market

Illicit Goods and Services

Item	Cost
Thought Crime. Read Mind	100 gp
Thought Crime. Removing a Memory	250 gp
Thought Crime. Planting a Memory	500 gp
Thought Crime. Thought Erasure	1,000 gp
Assassination. Amateur	100 gp
Assassination. Professional	1,000 gp
Assassinate. Poisoning	500 gp
Poison. Suggestive Serum	150 gp
Poison. Madness Mist	300 gp
Forgery.	100 gp
Disguise	150 gp

Assassinations

Sometimes you just need someone to die. At the Bane Alley Black Market, it is easy to find sharp knives and bold rogues to wield them.

Amateur. A **Bandit** (See MM) is dispatched to hunt down and try to kill your target. They will try to follow them and strike at the best opportunity down a dark alley. It is up to the DM to determine whether they were successful.

Professional. An **Assassin** (See MM) is dispatched to hunt down and try to kill your target. Since they have a CR of 8, they are more likely to kill their target.

Poisoning. An **Assassin** (see MM) is dispatched to poison the target using the cocktail of your choice. They will try to mix it into their drink, or hit them with a poisonous dart. Their success depends on how many precautions your target takes against poison (poison tasters for example).

Poisons

There are several “tea” shops or “spice” stands that also offer more nefarious offerings.

Suggestive Serum (Ingested)

Adventuring Gear, Poison 150 gp

A creature subjected to this poison must succeed on a DC 11 Constitution saving throw or become poisoned for 1 hour. The poisoned creature is easily influenced, as if under the effect of a *suggestion* spell.

Madness Mist (Inhaled)

Adventuring Gear, Poison 300 gp

A creature subjected to this poison must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or become poisoned for 1d4 hours. The poisoned creature becomes temporarily mad. (roll on **Short-Term Madness** chart found in DMG).

Forgery

A cobbler is a skilled artisan can make you forged documents, identification papers, guild sigils, even forged artwork that can pass all but the most expert inspections.

Disguise

A House Dimir mage will use advanced magic to change your appearance. You can look just like anyone for a fee. Anyone inspecting your superb disguise needs to succeed on a DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check.

“Every guild dreads infiltration. I should know—I’ve been a member of all of them.”

-Lazav

“Memory is such a precious and fickle thing. We depend on it, even though it is wholly undependable.”

Thought Crimes

Agents of House Dimir often manipulate the memories of others. They can erase specific memories, add new ones, or even steal them. House Dimir agents offers these services to those willing to pay. When procuring these services, the request is made, and the Dimir Agent will contact you within 48 hours about how successful they were.

A popular method used by House Dimir is to steal a precious memory and hold it ransom. Sometimes the victim can purchase their memory back, usually the price involves information.

Read Mind. The Dimir Agent will attempt to probe the target’s mental defenses. The target must make three DC 14 Intelligence saving throws. You learn a key memory based on the number of failed saving throws.

Failures	Key Memory in the Past...
1	12 hours
2	24 hours
3	48 hours

With one failed saving throw, you learn the target’s key memories from the past 12 hours. With two failed saving throws, you learn its key memories from the past 24 hours. With five failed saving throws, you learn its key memories from the past 48 hours.

Planting a Memory. The Dimir Agent will attempt to plant whatever idea or memory you want in the mind of your target. It can be trivial or personality-defining (such as “I hate magic and will never use it” or “Dr. Thresh P. Mono is my friend”). The target must make three DC 14 Wisdom saving throws. The duration of the false memory is based on the number of failed saving throws.

Failures	Duration of False Memory
1	12 hours
2	24 hours
3	48 hours

Removing a Memory. The Dimir Agent will attempt to wipe a specific memory from the mind of your target. It can be trivial or personality-defining. The target must make three DC 14 Wisdom saving throws. The duration of the removal is based on the number of failed saving throws.

Failures	Duration of Lost Memory
1	12 hours
2	24 hours
3	48 hours

Thought Erasure. The Dimir Agent will attempt to steal a specific memory from the mind of your target and return it to you. You can then ransom it back to the target for a fee or favor or simply destroy it. The target must make a DC 15 Intelligence saving throw. On a failure, their memory is stolen and they cannot recall it.



Tradecraft

Blackmail. Blackmail works best on people who are essentially good. If they have made a mistake they regret, it's easy to make them regret it more.

Bribery. The key to espionage is to get more than you give. Bribery is tricky. You can't comparison shop for prices, and there's no return policy for bad information.

Cobblers. These are people who create fake passports, visas, identification papers, and other credentials.

Cover IDs. Some cover IDs are about blending in, others are about getting attention. It all depends on whether you want to fool them or impress them.

Dead Drop. To deliver your illicit goods to your client choose a neutral receptacle. This could be the hollow of a tree, a bookshelf in a library, a trashcan, or a mailbox. Deposit the goods and leave. The target picks up the goods and leaves.

Double Agents. The key to turning someone into a double agent is ensuring they are in a fragile psychological state. The target needs to believe betraying their friends is their only key to survival. The more secretive and ruthless their side is, the better. Work on their fear that any hint of disloyalty will have them killed by their own people.

Fear. Fear is your friend, just be careful not to push the target too far. Their paranoia will make them erratic and dangerous.

Hiding. A good hiding place is hard to find but easy to access. Hiding something in a sewer drain is hard to find and hard to access. Sock drawer is easy to find and easy to access. Hidden holes where no one will look are hard to find and easy to access.

Interrogation. The key to interrogating a target is to put them in a weakened psychological state. Put them off balance. Drag them somewhere hidden and unfamiliar.

Kidnappers. Kidnapping is a business transaction. They have negotiating power since they are selling the life of a loved one. However, remember that it is a very limited market. They must work with you. One strategy is to let them think you are willing to walk away.

Kidnapping. When you need to take a valuable hostage, corrupt employees are key. With a bribe to the wrong person you can bypass any security.

Listening Devices. If you find a listening device planted in your domicile, the last thing you should do is turn it off. Find out who it belongs to and start giving them false information.

Nursemaid. Some guilds are so concerned about defectors that they use their own agents to watch over their own people.

Other Operatives. Assume any other spy or assassin is at least as good as you are, if not better. If you could have cut through your bonds in an hour, so have they.

Playback. You can give false information in the hopes of receiving accurate information. The risk is that your partner may be doing the same to you.

Pocket Litter. If you are going to maintain a cover, add tiny details to add authenticity. Coins, receipts, and theater tickets are all good examples.

Stealing Secrets. It is often better to steal secrets than pay for them. It is more cost effective.

Torture. Pain implied is pain applied. What the target thinks you're about to do to them is more effective than anything you could do to them.

Vulnerabilities. Every facility's biggest vulnerability are the people at the bottom. No one pays attention to janitors. Most places will hire a window washer after just a 20-minute interview. Even better if you can steal a uniform and look like you belong there.

Expendable Assets

"Fear not. Your life will not go unlived."

Dimir Doppelganger

The Dimir doppelganger is a terrifying predator. It moves through society unseen, until it comes upon its target. Fortunately, there are very few of these creatures loose on the streets of Ravnica, and they are all loyal to Lazav, the mysterious guildmaster of House Dimir. He deploys them like chess pieces in his intricate schemes. Anyone could be a doppelganger. The friendly tavern keeper from the first adventure, the local lord, or any other number of random NPCs. No one can be trusted.

Using Doppelgangers

Replace one of the players. In one of my campaigns, the heroes were investigating a doppelganger who was pretending to be the rogue. Then the imposter joined the party while the rogue was away. I spoke with the player, and he was in on it. He played as the doppelganger until he tried to assassinate the king, revealing his true form. Then the actual rogue showed up.

One of the players leaves. Sometimes we have players who drop out of the campaign. Instead of having his character pack up and leave or die, have him replaced by a doppelganger. Have his character become an NPC (just to balance the party out). Then when it is most amusing, it attacks the party.

DIMIR DOPPELGANGER

Medium monstrosity (shapechanger), neutral

Armor Class 14

Hit Points 187 (25d8+75)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	20 (+5)	16 (+3)	16 (+3)	14 (+2)	16 (+3)

Skills Deception +6

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 12

Languages Common

Challenge 8 (3,900 XP)

Ambusher. In the first round of combat, the doppelganger has advantage on attack rolls against any creature it surprised.

Shapechanger. The doppelganger can use its action to polymorph into a Small or Medium humanoid it has seen, or back into its true form. Its statistics, other than its size, are the same in each form. Any equipment it is wearing or carrying isn't transformed. It reverts to its true form if it dies.

Surprise Attack. If the doppelganger surprises a creature and hits it with an attack during the first round of combat, the target takes an extra 10 (3d6) damage from the attack.

Telepathic Shroud. The Doppelganger is immune to any effect that would sense its emotions or read its thoughts, as well as all divination spells.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The doppelganger makes two attacks with its slam.

Slam. Melee Weapon Attack: +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target, Hit: 5 (1d6 + 2) bludgeoning damage.

Consume Identity: A doppelganger who consumes the brain of a victim absorbs the mind, memories, and personality of that victim. After consuming a victim's identity, the doppelganger can assume the victim's form with 100% accuracy and possess the victim's memories, abilities, and alignment.

A doppelganger can consume up to three identities, if it tries to consume a fourth, it must make a DC 14 Wisdom saving throw. On a failure, it permanently loses an identity at random. A doppelganger can only access detailed memories and the abilities of one of its identities when it is in that identities shape.

Dimir Houseguard

The necrosages of Duskmantle utilize special skeleton guardians to protect their safe houses, guild hall, and other important holdings. The houseguards only turn their frightful presence on trespassers.

Creating houseguards. Any member of House Dimir who can cast *create undead* can create their own Dimir houseguard. You can choose to create Dimir Houseguards instead of ghouls.

DIMIR HOUSEGUARD

Medium undead, lawful evil

Armor Class 13 (natural armor)

Hit Points 65 (10d8+20)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
7 (-2)	14 (+2)	15 (+2)	6 (-2)	8 (-1)	5 (-3)

Damage Vulnerabilities bludgeoning

Damage immunities poison

Condition immunities poisoned, exhaustion

Saving Throws Dex +6

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 9

Languages understands all languages it spoke in life but can't speak

Challenge 1 (200 XP)

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The Dimir houseguard makes two attacks with its scimitar.

Scimitar. Melee Weapon Attack: +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target, Hit: 5 (1d6 + 2) slashing damage and 4 (1d6) necrotic damage.

Frightful Presence. Each creature of the houseguard's choice that is within 120 feet of the skeleton and aware of it must succeed on a DC 12 Wisdom saving throw or become frightened for 1 minute. A creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success. If a creature's saving throw is successful or the effects ends for it, the creature is immune to the houseguard's Frightful Presence for the next 24 hours.

Dimir Spybug

These tiny constructed flies zip all over Ravnica reporting back what they overheard to their masters. They literally are the fly on the wall. They are very simple creatures who cannot receive complex orders. They are not usually dangerous, but sometimes, Dimir agents will coat their stingers in deadly poison.

DIMIR SPYBUG

Tiny construct, unaligned

Armor Class 15 (natural)

Hit Points 10 (4d4)

Speed 30 ft. Fly 50 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
4 (-3)	16 (+3)	10 (+0)	2 (-4)	10 (+0)	1 (-5)

Skills Stealth +6,

Damage Immunities poison, psychic

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages Understands common

Challenge 0 (0 XP)

Record Conversation. The Dimir Spybug records any conversations heard within 30 ft. of it. It can then playback those conversations.

ACTIONS

Stinger. Melee Weapon Attack: +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target, Hit: 5 (1d4 + 3) piercing damage.

Dimir Spybug

Wondrous Item, Rare

A Dimir Spybug is small enough to fit in a pocket. If you use an action to throw the figurine in the air it animates and flies around. The Spybug activates for 2 hours then returns to its master's pocket to report what it has overheard. Once it has reported it falls inert. Once it has been used, it can't be used against until 7 days have passed.

Dream Eater

House Dimir maintains several strange and terrifying creatures that live in the shadows. The dream eater is one of these horrors. Perhaps it was a normal sphinx once, now it is a twisted and corrupt nightmare. While most sphinxes are obsessed with learning secrets and esoteric knowledge. The dream eater consumes dreams, which leaves the dreamer a broken babbling madman.

Dream eaters are found in the deepest Dimir enclaves, they rarely travel in the open. They can only be seen flying on gloomy moonless nights.

DREAM EATER

Large monstrosity, lawful evil

Armor Class 17 (natural armor)

Hit Points 199 (19d10 + 95)

Speed 40 ft., fly 60 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
23 (+6)	10 (+0)	20 (+5)	22 (+6)	18 (+4)	16 (+3)

Saving Throws Dex +6, Con +11, Int +12, Wis +10

Skills Arcana +12, Perception +10

Damage Immunities psychic, bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons

Condition Immunities charmed, frightened

Senses truesight 120 ft., passive Perception 20

Languages Common

Challenge 17 (18,000 XP)

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

Magical Weapons. The dream eater's weapon attacks are magical.

Spellcasting. The sphinx is a 12th-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Intelligence (Spell save DC 20, +12 to hit with spell attacks). It requires no material components to cast its spells. The sphinx has the following wizard spells prepared: Cantrips (at will) *Encode Thoughts*, *Toll the Dead**, *Prestidigitation*

1st level (4 slots) *Cause Fear**, *Command*, *Fog Cloud*, *Witch Bolt*

2nd level (3 slots) *Crown of Madness*, *Detect Thoughts*, *Zone of Truth*

3rd level (3 slots) *Counterspell*, *Dispel Magic*, *Gaseous Form*

4th level (3 slots) *Confusion*, *Phantasmal Killer*, *Summon Greater Demon**

5th level (2 slots) *Cloudkill*, *Mislead*

6th level (1 slot) *Disintegrate*

*Xanathar's Guide to Everything

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The dream eater makes two claw attacks.

Claw. Melee Weapon Attack: +12 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target, Hit: 17 (2d10 + 6) slashing damage

Roar (3/day). The dream eater emits a magical roar. Each time it roars before finishing a long rest, the roar is louder and the effect is different, as detailed below. Each creature within 500 feet of the sphinx and able to hear the roar must make a saving throw.

First Roar. Each creature that fails a DC 18 Wisdom saving throw is afflicted with **short-term madness**.

Second Roar. Each creature that fails a DC 18 Wisdom saving throw is afflicted with **long-term madness**.

Third Roar. Each creature that fails a DC 18 Wisdom saving throw is afflicted with **indefinite madness** and the **madness of dimir** and gains a new character flaw from those tables until cured.

LEGENDARY ACTIONS

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

Claw Attack. The dream eater makes one claw attack.

Teleport (Costs 2 Actions). The dream eater magically teleports, along with any equipment it is wearing or carrying, up to 120 feet to an unoccupied space it can see.

Cast a spell (Costs 3 Actions). The dream eater casts a spell from its list of prepared spells using a spell slot as normal.

MADNESS OF DIMIR

If a creature goes mad because of the dream eater, roll on the Madness of Dimir table to determine the nature of the madness, which is a character flaw that lasts until cured.

Madness of Dimir

D100 Flaw (Lasts until Cured)

01-20 I convince myself of various conspiracy theories, even in the face of overwhelming evidence.

21-40 I am filled with the fear that someone is out to get me. It could be anyone, I can trust no one.

41-60 I am hearing voices, they whisper their secrets to me. How long can I withstand their commands? I am terrified I might hurt someone.

61-80 Who cares anymore? I am so overcome with apathy.

81-90 I believe the gods have chosen me for something greater! I see omens and portents in the most meaningless event.

91-00 Everyone around me are ants. I am the greatest that there ever has been and ever will. These peasants should bow down before me.

Nightveil Sprite

These little sprites are deadly assassins. They are small and go easily unnoticed. They are skilled at sneaking in to the most secured locations and delivering a deadly dose of poison. They often coat their tiny needlelike swords and arrows in deadly venom.

“We’re on the fortieth floor, with one window, no balcony. No one could possibly get in.”

-Minosz, Orzhov chief of security

NIGHTVEIL SPRITE

Tiny fey, neutral evil

Armor Class 16 (studded leather)

Hit Points 2 (1d4)

Speed 10 ft., fly 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
3 (-4)	18 (+4)	10 (+0)	14 (+2)	13 (+1)	11 (+0)

Skills Perception +3, Stealth +8

Senses passive Perception 11

Languages Common, Thieves' Cant, Sylvan

Challenge 1/4 (50 XP)

ACTIONS

Rapier. Melee Weapon Attack: +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target, Hit: 1 slashing damage.

Shortbow. Ranged Weapon Attack: +6 to hit, range 40/160 ft., one target, Hit: 1 piercing damage.

Pouch full of Madness Mist (1/day). Ranged Weapon Attack: +6 to hit, range 20 ft. one target, Hit: the target must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or become poisoned for 1d4 hours. The poisoned creature becomes temporarily mad. (roll on **Short-Term Madness** chart found in DMG).

Invisibility. The sprite magically turns invisible until it attacks or casts a spell, or until its concentration ends (as if concentrating on a spell). Any equipment the sprite wears or carries is invisible with it.