Finding the Dead Three

Depending on your preferences, you may find Chapter 1 a bit too linear – going from Elfsong Tavern to the Dungeon of the Dead Three to Low Lantern and then to the Vanthampur Villa. You can use these two encounters – both inspired by information provided in the Baldur's Gate Gazetteer – to give the characters more options and extend Chapter 1.

Using the Encounters

Below are two additional ways the characters can learn the location of the cultists' dungeon underneath the bathhouse: by speaking with the Guild leader, Nine-Fingers Keene, or by ambushing a band of Dead Three cultists. These two encounters work well when presented immediately before or after the encounters in Elfsong Tavern:

- Instead of just sending the characters to Elfsong Tavern, Captain Zodge can present three options for learning more about the Dead Three cult: "go to Elfsong Tavern and ask Tarina about the Dead Three", "speak with Nine-Fingers Keene at the Blushing Mermaid, she owes us a little gratitude", or "there's been a lot of murders by the Maiden's Statue, go there at night, catch the cultists red-handed and follow one of the bastards to find out where they're hiding."
- After dealing with Tarina's old friends, the informant admits that she doesn't know where the Dead Three cultists, but that she has some information that may help the party find out. She suggests they either go see Nine-Fingers Keene at the Blushing Mermaid, who knows everyting that goes on in the city, or that they stake out the Maiden's Statue, where there's been a lot of murders lately, wait for the cultists, and either catch or follow one of them.

Seeing Nine-Fingers Keene

The crafty leader of the Guild can be found in a luxurious backroom in the Blushing Mermaid (*BG:DiA, pg. 187*), a rowdy tavern in the Heapside District in the Lower City.

Asking for Keene and/or mentioning Captain Zodge at the Blushing Mermaid quickly gets the characters hauled up and down several flights of stairs and through multiple long hallways before being allowed into a large room, where Nine-Fingers Keene is seated at a lone table in the middle of the room, eating a luxurious meal. Four **veterans** stand by the sides of the room, crossbows at the ready.

Keene is polite and courteous, but tolerates no disrespect. She calmly asks the party why they're asking for her. If they explain that they're looking for the Dead Three cultists or that Captain Zodge sent them, Keene folds her hands and says:

> "Sure, I can scratch your back. But first you need to scratch mine. Down by the harbor, you'll find a teahouse called Jopalin's. Just behind the place, in an alley, there'll be a band of ruffians, selling illicit substances and profiting off the misery of Baldur's Gate's most miserable wretches. I can't in good conscience allow that. Go make sure that they never come back to poison our streets – I don't care how – and I'll tell you where you can find your cultists, no problem."

The band of ruffians answer to the kingpin Straightstick (*BG:DiA, pg. 171*), who's been getting uppity lately. Without permission from the Guild, Straightstick's thugs have started selling *sight* behind Jopalin's, interfering with the tavern's sale of moonflower-spiked tea. Hesitant to move against Straightstick on his own, Jopalin has reached out to Keene, who's now using the party to deal with the problem.

Straightstick's Ruffians

As the characters approach the alley behind Jopalin's teahouse, a disheveled nobleman stumbles out from it, fumbling with something small in his hands. With trembling hands – and in full view of the characters – he picks up a red grain from a small tin can and drops it into his open eye. With a sigh of satisfaction and a wide grin, the man shudders once, nods to the characters, and walks off.

Within the alley are three **bandits** led by the **thug** Tobias, standing idly around, waiting for desperate customers to come to them while they discuss Guild politics or tell tall tales. If the characters approach peacefully, the thugs can be convinced to leave peacefully with a successful DC 15 Charisma (Intimidation) check. If the characters opt to attack, you can use the 'Harbor Map' when running the encounter.

Treasure. If the characters defeat the criminals, they can take their weapons – mace, scimitars and crossbows – as well as pouches containing a total of 202 gp, 22 sp and 17 cp, and a small tin can containing 10 doses of *sight*.

Getting the Information

Keene is a woman of her word. When the characters return, she tells them that the Dead Three cultists are holed up in a secret dungeon underneath a public bathhouse not far from the Blushing Maiden. If the characters have behaved well, she also informs them to seek her out if there's anything else – and warns them that Straightstick – the kingpin sponsoring the thugs they just beat – isn't the forgiving type.

Sight

Rare illicit substance

In the deep mines of Dis, second circle of Hell, tormented slaves hack away at unyielding rock to produce pieces of fine, red crystal. Grinning pit fiends mutter profane curses as they grind the crystals into crimson sand and distribute the finished product to unscrupulous vendors all across the planes.

Recognizable by the tinge of red in their pupils, sight users are often wealthy (or trying desperately to acquire wealth), since a Sight-user without gold is not long for this world. Regardless of their economic situation, all sight users are slaves to their drug and (often without their knowledge) the Archdevil Dispater, who oversees the production of sight – and who'll collect the soul of any unfortunate user who succumbs to the dangerous drug. Sight is also known as 'devil's promise', 'the final sin' or 'traveler's dust'. Users often refer to the consumption of sight as 'traveling the crimson road'.

Dose. A speck of red crystal. A single dose of sight costs exactly 100 gp, and bulk discounts are never offered.

Use. You can place a dose of Sight in the corner of your eye as an action.

Effect. Immediately after consuming a dose of sight, your pupils turn crimson and you feel an intense sense of clarity of both mind and vision. For 1 hour, you have truesight out to a range of 60 ft. and advantage on Intelligence, Wisdom and Charisma checks and saving throws.

Withdrawal. 24 hours after your last dose of sight, you must make a Constitution saving throw against a DC of 17 + the number of doses you have used in total. On a failure, your Constitution score is permanently reduced by 1d4. You must repeat this saving throw again one week, one month and one year after your last dose of sight. This reduction can't be reversed except with the *wish* spell, but is temporarily suppressed for 24 hours whenever you use a dose of sight.

If withdrawal from sight causes your Constitution score to become 0, you die and the archdevil Dispater takes possession of your immortal soul. You can't be returned to life unless the archdevil chooses to release your soul.

Cultist Encounter

Speaking with either Zodge or Tarina, the characters can learn that the Dead Three cultists have been particularly active near the Maiden's Statue, a monument dedicated to Selûne, goddess of the moon. Several deaths have occurred there over the last week, and it seems as good a place as any to catch some cultists. You can have Zodge or Tarina suggest that the characters neutralize as many cultists as they can, but allow one to escape, so they can follow them back to wherever the rest of the cultists are hiding.

The Maiden's Statue

The Maiden's Statue stands lonely in a small square in the Brampton-district of the Lower City. At night, only a few people walk around in the area, which is dimly lit by lanterns. Around midnight, a small band of hooded figures also prowl the area – a **fist of Bane**, a **necromite of Myrkul** and a **night blade** – looking for victims to murder. You can use the 'Street Map' included with this download for the encounter.

Ambushers. If the characters try to be stealthy, ask each character to make DC 11 Dexterity (Stealth) check. If at least half the party succeeds, they spot the cultists before the cultists spot them. As a young **commoner** woman (or a character used as bait) walks across the darkened square, the characters can spot the cultists coming out of the surrounding alleys, weapons in hand. If the characters attack, they can surprise the cultists, perhaps even striking fast enough to save the woman's life.

Ambushed. If the characters try to be stealthy, but more than half the party fails, or they don't try to be stealthy at all, there's a chance the cultists notice them first. The cultists make their own Dexterity (Stealth) checks (they have +0, +6 and +1 to the check, respectively) against the highest passive Perception among the characters. If two succeed, the cultists surprise the party instead. They focus their attacks on the weakest looking target first, trying to score a quick kill.

Chance Encounter. If both the characters and the cultists fail to be stealthy, the two groups simply stumble into each other, neither gaining the drop on the other. The cultists waste no words, attacking immediately with murderous glee.

Getting Information

While ridding Baldur's Gate of a few murderous cultists isn't a bad thing, it's not the goal of this encounter. Getting information about the bathhouse is. To do that, the characters must either catch and interrogate a cultist, or follow a cultist back to the bathhouse.

Following the Cultists. If the characters observe the cultists killing a victim, or fight the cultists but allow some to escape, the dark figures slink back to the bathhouse, taking several detours along the way. To follow unseen, the characters must succeed on a DC 11 group Dexterity (Stealth) check.

Interrogating the Cultists. Zealous and half-mad, the cultists are not going to give up the location of the Dungeon of the Dead Three willingly. Only by telling a very convincing lie – DC 15 Charisma (Deception) – can a cultist be tricked into spilling their guts. Magic such as *charm person* or even *friends* can also get a cultist to forget their better judgment and give up the location of the Dungeon of the Dead Three.

Treasure. If the characters kill all the cultists, they find not only their weapons and pouches with a total of 12 gp, 44 sp and 12 cp, but also an expensive flask of bath perfume (200 gp), which one of the cultists have stolen from the bathhouse. If shown the flask, Tarina or Zodge will identify the bathhouse as the only place nearby where such an item would come from.

Scaling Encounter Difficulty

Depending on when you place these encounters, you may find the need to scale their difficulty.

Instead of Elfsong Tavern. If you use these in place of the bandit encounter at Elfsong Tavern, they will serve well as a hard challenge for a party of 1st-level characters.

Immediately After Elfsong Tavern. If you insert the encounters after the characters have fought the bandits at Elfsong Tavern, but before they have rested – and while the characters are still level 1 – you may want to dial them down. You can do so by making Tobias just another **bandit**, and by replacing the **fist of bane** with another **night blade**.

At Higher Levels If the characters progress beyond 1st level before facing these encounters, you can increase difficulty by replacing **bandits** with **thugs** and by replacing the **necromite of Myrkul** with a **skull lasher of Myrkul.** It's okay if the encounter isn't overly difficult if it comes immediately before the Dungeon of the Dead Three, as that location is already very dangerous.

Developments

Regardless of which of the encounters the party faces, you should take stock of their resources and hit points before they advance to the dangerous Dungeon of the Dead Three. If they go in there at only 1st-level and bloodied, they are likely to have a very bad time. You can have Tarina, Keene, Zodge, or whoever the characters interact with, tell the party to get a long rest before exploring the bathhouse and the dungeon.

Sight Addiction. If the characters get their hands on the 10 doses of *sight* being peddled by Straightstick's goons, there's a chance one of them will become addicted to the dangerous substance. This introduces an interesting element to the campaign. *Sight* is incredibly addictive, and if daily use isn't maintained, can cost the user both their body and soul. Luckily, *sight* is readily available in Avernus, at the mere cost of a soul coin per dose. Kicking the addiction and saving their soul from Dispater's clutches can become a character's secondary motivation for venturing into Hell!

Creatures

On these pages are the creatures the party can face during these two encounters. Note that the bandit and thug have been given additional action options. These changes are colorized in their statblocks.

Bandit

Medium humanoid (any race), any non-lawful alignment

Armor Class 12 (Leather Armor)
Hit Points 11 (2d8 + 2)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (+0)	12 (+1)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)

Senses Passive Perception 10
Languages Any one language (usually Common)
Challenge 1/8 (25 XP)

Actions

Scimitar. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft. *Hit:* 4 (1d6 + 1) slashing damage.

Dirty Blow. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft. *Hit:* 2 bludgeoning damage and the target suffers an additional effect (bandit's choice):

- ***Eye Gouge.*** The target must succeed on a DC 10 Constitution saving throw or become blinded until the start of the bandit's next turn.
- ***Groin Shot.*** The target must succeed on a DC 10 Constitution saving throw or have disadvantage on all attack rolls and ability checks for 1 minute. The target can repeat this saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on a success.
- ***Hair Pull.*** The target is grappled by the bandit.

Light Crossbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, range 80 ft./320 ft. *Hit:* 5 (1d8 + 1) piercing damage.

Thug

Medium humanoid (any race), any non-good alignment

Armor Class 11 (Leather Armor)
Hit Points 32 (5d8 + 10)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
15 (+2)	11 (+0)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	11 (+0)

Skills Intimidation +2
Senses Passive Perception 10
Languages Any one language (usually Common)
Challenge 1/2 (100 XP)

Pack Tactics. The thug has advantage on an attack roll against a creature if at least one of the thug's allies is within 5 feet of the creature and the ally isn't incapacitated.

Actions

Multiattack. The thug makes two melee attacks.

Mace. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) bludgeoning damage.

Headbutt. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft. *Hit:* 3 bludgeoning damage and the target must succeed on a DC 12 Constitution saving throw or be blinded until the end of the thug's next turn.

Heavy Crossbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit, range 100/400 ft. *Hit:* 5 (1d10) piercing damage.

Fist of Bane

Medium humanoid (human), chaotic evil

Armor Class 18 (Chain Mail, Shield)
Hit Points 22 (4d8 + 4)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	11 (+0)	13 (+1)	10 (+0)	12 (+1)	11 (+0)

Condition Immunities Frightened
Senses Passive Perception 11
Languages Common
Challenge 1/2 (100 XP)

Tactical Discipline. The fist of Bane has advantage on all ability checks and saving throws made during combat.

Actions

Mace. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) bludgeoning damage.

Longbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit, range 150/600 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d8) piercing damage.

Night Blade

Medium humanoid (human), chaotic evil

Armor Class 12
Hit Points 11 (2d8 + 2)
Speed 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (+0)	15 (+2)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)	11 (+0)	14 (+2)

Skills Intimidation +4, Stealth +6
Senses Darkvision 60, Passive Perception 10
Languages Common
Challenge 1/4 (50 XP)

Aura of Murder. As long as the night blade is not incapacitated, hostile creatures within 5 feet of it gain vulnerability to piercing damage unless they have resistance or immunity to such damage.

Actions

Dagger. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d4 + 2) piercing damage.

Necromite of Myrkul

Medium humanoid (human), neutral evil

Armor Class 11
Hit Points 13 (2d8 + 4)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	13 (+1)	15 (+2)	16 (+3)	11 (+0)	10 (+0)

Skills Arcana +5, Religion +5
Senses Passive Perception 10
Languages Abyssal, Common, Infernal
Challenge 1/2 (100 XP)

Actions

Skull Flail. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d8) bludgeoning damage.

Claws of the Grave. *Ranged Spell Attack:* +5 to hit, range 90 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (2d4 + 3) necrotic damage.