

Shadows Bite

Assassinating your party

Synopsis

After sunset, on a quiet, urban street, dhampir assassins and their shadow mastiff companions teleport into position, where they set an ambush for the player characters (PCs). The assassins will not parlay or give quarter.

Shadows Bite is a Dungeons & Dragons encounter. It takes about 45 minutes to complete and is designed to provide a deadly challenge for a 4th level party.

NPC and Monster Details

This encounter deploys two assassins, two shadow mastiffs, one citizen, and a squad of city guards. They use the following statblocks:

- **Assassins** use the spy statblock (MM), and they have the dhampir lineage (*Van Richten's Guide to Ravenloft*). They use the dhampir's Spider Climb ability as 3rd level characters.
- **Shadow mastiffs** use the shadow mastiff statblock (VGtM).
- **Citizen** uses the commoner statblock (MM).
- **City guards** use the guard statblock (MM).

The Scene: a Lonely Street

To set the scene, read the following text to the players.

Smokey clouds obscure the night sky. Warm shafts of light escape from shuttered shop windows and cut across the cobblestones. The day's bustle has quieted, and the aromas of evening cooking mix with the settling odors of industry. A solitary citizen, lighting their way with a torch, shuffles toward you down the narrow street. Abruptly, you feel the breeze die.

Ask the players to make a **DC 15 Wisdom (Perception)** check. If at least one of the players succeeds their roll, read the following text before combat starts, and give the players a moment to react. Otherwise, read the following text immediately after combat starts.

Jutting perpendicular from the second story walls up ahead of you, two slender humanoid figures appear - one up to your left, and the other up to your right. They defy gravity by walking on the smooth faces of the walls in the same way that you would walk on the ground. Their long hair hangs sideways off their heads, towards the cobblestones. As you look on, they draw bows, readying to shoot. Roll initiative...

When the assassins and mastiffs attack, read the following text to the players.

You hear snarling behind you. Two sets of teeth wreathed in shadow leap out at you. Then, two twangs as arrows whistle toward you.

If the PCs have a bright light source, read the following text.

The fangy masses of shadow coalesce into large black hounds as they enter the field of your light.

Note: If the PCs are NOT carrying a bright light source, the street is dimly lit with patches of darkness.

Dramatic Developments

Urban settings are densely populated and dynamic, which makes them rich with possibility, and fraught with risk.

Urban risks

Be prepared for any of the following to occur:

- City folk may emerge from their homes or open their windows to check on the commotion.
- Buildings may catch fire if the PCs are not careful with magic and torches.
- The fight may spill into alleys, shops, or onto rooftops.

The Clock

This encounter uses a narrative clock to increase tension. At the first sign of violence, the shuffling citizen with the torch will flee into an alley and begin calling for the guards. If the PCs don't stop the citizen, they will soon hear whistles and shouts. The guards are signaling each other to converge on the PCs' location.

The PCs will **notice the first signal at the start of the third round** of combat. Each round, the signals will get closer. The **guards will arrive at the start of the seventh round**. The dhampirs and shadow mastiffs will then flee, leaving the PCs to deal with the guards.

Conclusions and Hooks

The party may have killed or captured the dhampirs. Or, the dhampirs may have fled. The guards may have arrived and aided, or detained the party. There may be collateral damage to the surrounding structures and population, which could lead to fines or even imprisonment.

If the party searches either of the dhampirs, they will find folded pieces of paper, each bearing a sketch of one of the PCs. These sketches indicate that the PCs are being targeted. Alternatively, the sketches could look merely similar to the PCs, indicating that the PCs were targeted by mistake.

Credits

Encounter design, writing, document design:
Benjamin Rohlfing
Art:

redacted

Playtesting:

redacted

