

**Development.** If the characters question the defeated bandits, the criminals admit to working for Moguhl from time to time, but they can provide no other actionable information. If Moguhl is captured and convinced to talk, she can provide intelligence on the prison beneath Castle Never, which she has been gathering in case she needs to break in to talk to Oppal.

Characters who contract lycanthropy from Moguhl might have the opportunity to get the curse removed at the Hall of Knowledge later in this episode at a reduced cost, assuming they can help the head priest there with his troubles. See the “Hall of Knowledge” section below.

**Treasure.** Moguhl and her bandits carry a total of 23 gp. The wererat also has a *spell scroll* of *distort value* (a new spell from chapter 3).

Moguhl’s weapon Piercer is a rare magic item that requires attunement. The sword is a *+1 shortsword*, and a character attuned to the sword regains the maximum possible number of hit points from expended Hit Dice. However, the attuned character must eat twice as much food each day (a minimum of 2 pounds) to avoid exhaustion (see “The Environment” in chapter 8 of the *Player’s Handbook*.)

## THE HOLES

If the characters don’t get initial information from Moguhl about the prison beneath Castle Never, they can use whatever means they choose to gather information. This might include employing appropriate backgrounds, digging into rumors spread by the criminal class, talking to city guards, and so forth.

The characters can learn the following details about the castle and the prison beneath it with appropriate roleplaying or ability checks. Easy-to-acquire information comes earlier in the list, while the details that are harder to acquire are provided later. Dispense the following points as you see fit:

- Castle Never was the historical seat of the rulers of Neverwinter. The eruption of Mount Hotenow and various attacks in the years since have reduced the structure to rubble.
- Lord Neverember has made rebuilding the castle his top priority. Much of the city’s steep tax income goes to the rebuilding efforts.
- Neverwinter’s worst offenders—murderers, traitors, and tax cheats—are imprisoned beneath the ruins of Castle Never. Locals call this prison “the holes.” Trying to free someone from the holes is a good way to end up in them.
- Anyone in the holes has already been found guilty by Lord Neverember of high crimes, the punishment for which is death. Executions take place once each ten-day, at noon. The next execution occurs two days from when the characters discover this fact.
- During executions, guards are numerous, and powerful people show up to see justice dispensed. Rescuing one of the condemned from the gallows would be a nearly impossible feat.
- Only one known entrance leads into the holes from the main level of Castle Never. That level is being rebuilt, so bricklayers, stonemasons, and untrained hirelings are common throughout. A minimum of four

**guards** and three **veterans** stand watch at the entrance. Seven more **guards** and three **veterans** do the same within the holes.

- On the day before an execution, friends and family of a prisoner are allowed into the holes to bring the condemned a last meal.
- A secret passage is said to access the holes from a cave on the shore of Blacklake, from which the Blacklake District gets its name. No one the characters can talk to has seen or used this passage, which remains only a rumor.

## RESCUING OPPAL

The first step to rescuing Oppal is to communicate with her in some way. However, if a plan is hatched that allows the characters to message her indirectly through a third party (a bribed guard or worker, for instance), Oppal’s response makes it clear that she is willing to pass along “the information” only if she is liberated. She understands that the characters’ timely appearance is the only thing that stands between her and certain death.

How the characters navigate this tricky dilemma is entirely up to you. Let the players’ resourcefulness and your imagination combine to create a memorable story of legendary triumph or narrow failure, followed by even narrower escapes. Ideas and plans for getting to and rescuing Oppal can cover any of the following options:

- A corrupt member of the Neverwinter city guard might help get the characters into the holes for a price. But that guard might also charge a higher and previously unmentioned price to get them out again.
- The secret entrance offers lots of possibilities, but the characters first need to find it. Then they need to deal with whatever suitable monster is currently lairing in that cave. Moreover, any number of traps, hazards, and monsters might be guarding the passage leading from the cavern to the holes.
- The characters might also try to keep things entirely legal by tracking down the orc who committed the murder Oppal is accused of. Bringing that villain in might easily clear Oppal’s name—and bring the characters a certain amount of notoriety in the city. But where is that orc now? And who else might the characters need to contend with to capture him?
- Pretending to be Oppal’s friends or family gives the characters easy access to the doppelganger as they bring in a last meal. Then once they’re in the holes, it’s up to you to decide how they might pull off a daring escape—including searching for the rumored tunnel from the inside.

## OPPAL’S INFO

If the characters rescue Oppal from the holes, she gratefully provides information on the whereabouts of Omin Dran’s treasure cache, which consists of rare black diamonds mined from the rim of Mount Hotenow. The diamonds are held in a silk bag that’s been placed in a false tome titled *A Layperson’s Book of Common Knowledge*. Oppal hid the book in a vault beneath the Hall of Knowledge—the local temple to Oghma, god of knowledge, invention, and inspiration.