

each consisting of four **guards** and four **mastiffs**. Crates and equipment piled along the docks can provide cover, potentially allowing the characters to make a stealthy approach. Various booms and scaffolding can also grant access to the larger ships, from which the characters can work their way to *Dangerous Business*. The players might also devise any number of ways to talk their way on board. Dran Enterprises is often hiring, so the characters could pose as expert sailors or specialized consultants. Give the players and characters the freedom to develop a plan, gather information, and fail or succeed spectacularly!

If any of the guards see the characters as a threat, they shout out, raising the alarm and imposing one failure point. The alarm alerts all other guards on the docks, and can draw an endless supply of reinforcements from other ships over time. As such, the characters should realize quickly that a stand-up fight will involve more foes than they can handle.

The party can retreat and come back when the heat dies down, but this delay imposes another failure point. Or they can push past any threats to get to *Dangerous Business* and the portals within.

PORTAL NEXUS

When the characters step through into the cabin on *Dangerous Business*, read:

The small square cabin's interior is far larger than its exterior, opening up as an oval room thirty feet long and fifteen feet wide. Crumpled on the floor before an iron door on the far side of the room, the body of a guard lies in a pool of blood. Standing closed between you and the body, six other oval-shaped iron doors are the only features in the room. Each door has a heavy latch that bears the insignia of Dran Enterprises, but no lock is visible. Above each of the iron doors, a differently shaped and colored glowing stone is set.

The characters can examine the dead guard or investigate the doors and stones. However, the amount of time they have to do so depends on whether they had other guards in pursuit. If the characters were pursued, give them a round or two to investigate the portal nexus, then have an increasing number of guards burst into the area each round, forcing the characters to enter a portal.

If the characters infiltrated the ship without raising the alarm, they have five minutes before they hear a guard patrol approaching. If they leave this area to go back onto the deck of *Dangerous Business* for any reason, they immediately attract the attention of nearby guards.

DEAD GUARD

The dead guard is a male half-orc. Lying on his chest is a black business card bearing unintelligible symbols. More notable is that the unfortunate guard's brain has been removed from his shattered skull. The guard was killed by the mind flayer leading the Six operatives (see

"Portal 4" and later for more information). The condition of the guard's head makes it impossible to talk to him with *speak with dead*.

Aside from his grievous head wound, the guard's body is untouched except where his shirt is torn over his chest. A successful DC 10 Intelligence (Investigation) check confirms that a brooch or pin was ripped from that location. If a character thinks to check, the size of the round metal pin claimed from Hoffman after the fight with the Dran Enterprises strike team matches the size of the torn hole. (If the characters didn't claim the pin from the strike team and you haven't already arranged for a replacement to be found, this guard has a second pin in his pocket.)

PORTAL DOORS

Each portal door is made of reinforced iron. A successful DC 14 Intelligence (Arcana) check reveals that the doors are mundane, but that each is magically trapped. A *detect magic* spell or similar effect reveals an aura of evocation on a door's latch. If a latch is opened by anyone not wearing the round metal pin bearing the symbol of Dran Enterprises, the trap goes off. Each creature within the room must make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw, taking 16 (3d10) cold damage on a failed save or half as much damage on a successful one. Each trap can be disarmed with a successful DC 13 Intelligence (Arcana) check or a Dexterity check using thieves' tools.

Each of the seven doors has a glowing semiprecious stone above it, carved into a different shape: a green turquoise square, a red feldspar triangle, a white pearl circle, a purple amethyst oval, a blue aquamarine rectangle, a black hematite pentagon, and an orange tiger-eye hexagon. A *detect magic* spell reveals an aura of conjuration on the space beyond each door and on each of the stones.

The stones are coded markers indicating which doors lead to specific portals. That coding is changed regularly, with the portals reassigned to different locations and the stones swapped around to help keep their destinations a secret. As such, a portal still functions if its stone is removed, and a stone can be reattached to a door with a successful DC 12 Intelligence (Arcana) check. Placing a stone over a different door makes it harder for the operatives of the Six to know which doors they've already gone through as they make use of the portal network. Swapping one or more stones thus removes one of the party's failure points. If the players don't work out that the stones can be moved, a character infers this with a successful DC 14 Intelligence (Arcana) check.

Treasure. If the stones are removed, they lose their magical properties but are worth 25 gp each.

PORTAL ENCOUNTERS

Each portal door leads to a different encounter. Opening any door transports all characters in the portal nexus into the area beyond, with the entrance portal disappearing behind them. The characters must navigate the scene that takes place in the new location, then find an exit portal (another iron door identical to the doors in the nexus) to return to the portal nexus. (Portal 1 is an