

- Neverember has levied heavy taxes against wealthy merchants and the aristocracy. Acquisitions Incorporated maintains significant financial holdings in Neverwinter. Given the current political climate in the city, those holdings are going to be overtaxed if they are discovered.

On Omin's orders, Oppal DeScart, a **doppelganger** in the employ of Acquisitions Incorporated, has been working to move Acq Inc treasure out of Neverwinter. By consolidating caches of treasure and using them to purchase rare diamonds, she's been able to convert a great deal of wealth into portable form, ready for secure retrieval. Unfortunately for her—and unknown to Omin Dran—Oppal was recently arrested for murder in a case of mistaken identity. She's currently being held in the dungeons beneath the ruins of Castle Never, awaiting execution.

THE STABLE QUIVER

When the characters arrive in Neverwinter, they find themselves in a city divided—quite literally. Part of the metropolis is magnificent, with breathtaking architecture, marvelous spires, and opulent decorations. And amid that beauty is a terrible scar caused by the eruption of Mount Hotenow years before. Citizens are still rebuilding from that disaster, largely thanks to the extra taxes Lord Neverember levies against the wealthy. The city's poorer residents benefit from the rebuilding work, and live in hope that the artisans and builders in the City of Skilled Hands can turn their home into the Jewel of the North once again.

The Stable Quiver is a nondescript, well-built tavern in the Blacklake District, an area that covers the northwest part of the city. The tavern boasts a mixed clientele of lesser nobles, artisans, middle-class merchants, and skilled laborers. It's a perfect meeting place for citizens engaged in activities they wish to keep out of the public eye. The low-life element normally eschews the place, except in cases where they meet with the tavern's regular patrons—who are no less criminal in many cases.

Locating Oppal. When the characters enter the tavern, all the tables are occupied, but several empty stools stand at the bar. The barkeep is Squid (N male half-elf **commoner**), so-called by the locals because of a squid-shaped birthmark on his face.

If the characters ask Squid about Oppal by name, or about any shapechangers working in the area, the half-elf initially denies knowing anything about such a person. A character who succeeds on a DC 10 Wisdom (Insight) check notices that the barkeep is clearly concealing something. If the characters push the issue, a successful DC 10 Charisma (Deception or Persuasion) check causes Squid to dish up information. Any Charisma (Intimidation) check inspires him to first direct the characters toward some random character who he swears is Oppal, just to lighten the mood. He also spills if the characters offer him a bribe of 5 gp or more.

"Afraid Oppal got herself nicked. Funny bit was, with all the laws she's broke, she gets picked up for somethin' she didn't do. Murder no less! But I'll tell you true, Oppal ain't the murderin' type.

"See, Oppal was pretending to be a local orc thug, gettin' some information for a client. But in the meantime, that orc kills somebody on that very same night Oppal's pretendin' to be him. The guards know the orc, then they find Oppal lookin' like him, arrest her, and throw her in the holes under Castle Never. Even though they know she's a changer, they still blame her. Easier work for them. That's the lot of a usual suspect in Neverwinter."

If the characters can't convince Squid to talk to them, they can chat with others in the tavern. With the right motivation, another NPC can point the group in the right direction.

Interested Bystander. One of the patrons at the Stable Quiver when the characters arrive to inquire about Oppal is Moguhl Vloot. This petite human wears a nicely tailored suit and has slicked-back gray hair, even though she appears no older than thirty. Being a wererat keeps one looking young.

Moguhl works for a local thieves' guild and keeps tabs on illicit goods going into and out of the city. Her guild has brokered some of the treasure Oppal has been selling, and Moguhl's bosses want to find out where the doppelganger has been hiding the cash she's been stockpiling. With Oppal set for execution, they know they need to work fast, but are still weighing whether trying to get to her in the dungeons of Castle Never is worth the risk.

Moguhl notices the characters asking about Oppal. She tries to hide her interest, but any character who succeeds on a DC 14 Wisdom (Insight) check notes her surreptitiously remaining close and listening in when the group acquires the information they need. Moguhl leaves the tavern before the characters can confront her. She slips down an alley and turns into a giant rat if anyone attempts to follow her.

Moguhl quickly gathers five **bandits** to assist her in "questioning" the characters about their knowledge of or dealings with Oppal. A short while after the characters leave the tavern, this gang challenges them, setting Moguhl up to ask who Oppal is working for and where she hid her treasure.

Naturally, the characters are unable to answer Moguhl's second question. But unless the characters also deny knowing the doppelganger's employer and are particularly convincing about their ignorance, Moguhl and her bandits attack in hopes that a good beating can convince them to tell what they know.

Moguhl uses the **wererat** stat block and wields a *+1 shortsword* she calls Piercer, which grants her a +1 bonus to her attack and damage rolls.

Moguhl flees before the adventurers can kill or capture her, using her Shapechanger trait to escape or to slip her bonds if subdued and tied up.

As my documancer, Walnut, is so fond of saying: Ignore Head Office's missives at your own peril. (She says it more like, "This is a task from Omin, so we're going to drop everything and do it TODAY!!!")

—Rosie Beestinger