

MISSION 1: THE MEETING AT DEEPNIGHT

The party is summoned to receive a mission from a Harper agent.

You were told that Madame Freona's Tea Kettle was the place where adventurers could find work and avoid the hassle associated with other places in Phlan. So far, that has been true. Madame Freona, a stout and officious halfling who runs the establishment with her five daughters, has proven an excellent hostess.

Although you have had to share a common bunkroom with several other adventurers, the evening meal was excellent and the atmosphere pleasant. You are preparing to bunk down for the evening when one of Freona's daughters peeks into the room. She calls a few of the adventurers, including you, into the hall.

"Pardon my interruption," says the halfling girl named Reece, one of Freona's five daughters, just shy of adulthood. "A chap just came into the common room downstairs and asked me to fetch you. Something about some coin needing to change hands for an easy job." She plays with her curly red hair nervously.

Reece cannot tell the characters anything more, since the mysterious stranger kept his hood pulled low.

HELPING THE HARPER

When the characters go to the common room, they see a hooded figure alone at a large table. The figure motions to them as they descend the stairs. Use the bullet points below to guide the conversation. Remember to keep this brief to finish the mission in time.

- The figure keeps his face obscured by his hood and speaks in a low voice, obviously disguising it. If he must reveal himself, he is an older half-elf with close-cropped grey hair. He refuses to provide a name.
- The figure identifies himself as a member of the Harpers, an organization dedicated to fighting evil wherever it hides. He wears a brooch that confirms his ties to the Harpers.
- He has a mission that the characters are in a unique position to complete. The Harpers have captured a merchant that was going to illegally purchase a red dragon egg. The Harper wants the characters to

pose as the merchant and any hirelings, go to the buy site, make the transaction, and place a magical device on one of the sellers so that Harpers can track them back to their place of residence.

- One of the characters (chosen at random) bears enough of a resemblance to the captured merchant that the sellers (who have never seen the merchant) can be easily fooled. The rest of the characters can act the roles of bodyguards, assistants, porters, etc. The merchant can be male or female at your discretion.
- The Harper provides a small sack of fake diamonds that the characters should use to buy the egg. The "diamonds" are basically worthless, but good enough to pass a cursory inspection.
- At some point during the exchange, one of the characters must place a small silver pin infused with magic on the seller or one of the crew. Once that is done, the Harpers can more easily scry on the sellers and learn more about their operation.
- No real names are used in these transactions, so the two parties will refer to each other as "the buyer" and "the seller."
- Once the transaction is complete, the characters are to bring the egg back to the stables behind the Tea Kettle, where the Harper will meet them and take possession of it.
- Under no circumstances should the characters fight the sellers or harm the egg. The point is to track the sellers, so killing or capturing them is counterproductive.
- For completing the task successfully and as instructed, the Harper offers the group 200 gp. The sum will be paid upon delivery of the egg.

The Harper agent gives the characters the small pouch of fake diamonds, the magical silver pin, and directions to an abandoned barn on the northern outskirts of Phlan. Answer other questions as best you can. Remember the time pressure, and use that as an in-game excuse to keep the players moving forward. The meeting is scheduled for right now, so there is no time to plan further. The characters must hurry!

THE MEET AT THE BARN

It is a 20-minute walk to the meeting place. When the characters arrive, the sellers are already waiting at the abandoned barn.

The barn itself is a simple, open structure, 30 feet wide and 80 feet long. A ladder at the end of the barn

opposite the open doorway leads to a hay loft 10 feet above the barn floor. The loft is 40 feet long and the entire width of the barn, directly above the end of the barn opposite the door. Rusty farm implements lean against the barn walls. A **secret exit** (known by the sellers) is obscured by burlap sacks on the wall near the ladder opposite the main entrance.

Although neither the characters nor the sellers are aware, two **bandits**—members of Phlan's thieves' guild called the Welcomers—hide in the loft. They can only be spotted with a successful DC 20 Wisdom (Perception) check, and only by someone in the loft above.

The seller is an elf **spy** who waits with three human **guards**. They have no reason to expect trouble during the sale, but they are wary nonetheless.

When the characters enter the barn, the seller calls for the characters to halt when they get within 20 feet of her.

A sinewy elf in gray clothes smiles at three humans behind her. "I told you they would come. A dragon egg is much too valuable to pass up."

The elf turns back to you. "Now, let's do this quickly. Here is what you asked for." She holds a very large hide backpack toward you.

"You throw the payment over to me, and we will leave the egg here. We will exit the barn, and then you can leave after five minutes have passed. No fuss, no muss." She pauses and looks at you more closely. "Hold on. Something is not right here."

Inevitably, the elf seller notices something is amiss, namely a single aspect of the character posing as the merchant that looks wrong. It might be the seller expected someone shorter or taller. She might have expected the merchant to have a mole or birthmark—or perhaps she expected the merchant to have a facial tic or strange speech pattern. Whatever you choose, make it something fun or interesting for the characters to have to roleplay or think of an excuse for.

At this point, two skill checks are going to be most relevant during the exchange: a DC 10 Charisma (Deception) check and a DC 10 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check.

One successful Deception check is enough to convince the sellers that the characters are the legitimate buyers. Feel free to give a bonus to the check, or even automatic success, based on outstanding roleplaying.

One successful Sleight of Hand check indicates that a

character has planted the silver pin, assuming the characters can come up with a reasonable excuse to get close to the sellers.

If at any point the elf believes she is in danger, she simply drops the egg and flees with her guards. She tries to get the diamonds if possible, but not at the risk of her life. The elf and the guards only defend themselves if pressed to do so.

The egg is a fake. Only after the characters take possession of the hide backpack and investigate closely can they even attempt to verify the authenticity of the egg, and even then it is a DC 20 Intelligence (Nature) check. If the egg is thrown to the ground, it gives off a flash of light accompanied by a loud noise which blinds all creatures within 50 feet who do not succeed at a DC 13 Constitution saving throw until the end of their next turn. The elf and her guards are immune to this because they know what it does and can close their eyes in time.

BLINDED

- A blinded creature can't see and automatically fails any ability check that requires sight.
- Attack rolls against the creature have advantage, and the creature's attack rolls have disadvantage.

UNINVITED GUESTS

Regardless of whether or not the sale goes smoothly, members of the Welcomers—Phlan's thieves' guild—come out of hiding to attempt to steal the egg. (They don't bother with the diamonds or any other valuables. They are only interested in the egg.)

For the mission to run smoothly and in a timely manner, the best time for the Welcomers to interrupt is just after the exchange has taken place, right after the characters likely attempt the Nature check to recognize that the egg is a fake. This lets the sellers leave (or flee) and remain uninvolved in the combat, letting it run more quickly. This also gives the characters the option of simply handing over the egg, thereby avoiding the battle altogether.

The other time to introduce the Welcomers' interruption is if the characters are caught in their deception and are unable to talk their way out of it. The interruption of the Welcomers provides the characters with an opportunity to plant the pin on the seller as she drops the egg and flees with her bodyguards.

The following read-aloud text assumes the Welcomers arrive after the seller and her bodyguards have already left. Adjust as necessary.

A voice interrupts you, and a tough-looking half-orc male brandishing a mace appears in the doorway of the barn. “The toll for passage out of this barn is that egg. I’m sure you will hand it over peacefully so I don’t have to take your lives instead.”

The man in the entrance is a half-orc **thug**, who nominally leads the bandit gang. Four **bandits** are present: the aforementioned two hidden in the loft and two additional bandits waiting outside the barn on either side of the entrance.

The two bandits in the hay loft are armed with nets in addition to their normal equipment. They can drop the nets through holes in the loft as an action; each attempting to entangle one character. A character must make a DC 10 Dexterity saving throw to avoid the net. On a failed save, the targeted creature becomes restrained. To remove the condition, the character must take an action to make a DC 10 Strength (Athletics) or deal 5 points of slashing damage to the net.

RESTRAINED

- A restrained creature's speed becomes 0, and it can't benefit from any bonus to its speed.
- Attack rolls against the creature have advantage, and the creature's attack rolls have disadvantage.
- The creature has disadvantage on Dexterity saving throws.

GIVING UP THE EGG

The characters might realize that the egg is a fake, and therefore there is no harm in simply giving the egg to the Welcomers. If this happens, the bandits are initially suspicious, but eventually accept their good fortune at avoiding a fight. The bandits question the characters about why they wanted the egg and intimidate them in an attempt to deter the characters from following them, but otherwise leave peacefully.

IS THAT ALL?!

If the characters give up the egg without a fight, they might finish the event in half the allotted time—or maybe even less. This is probably not a problem.

However, if you think the players will be upset about not getting a chance to fight during the session, have the four bandits (but not their leader) follow the characters back to Phlan and attempt to waylay them before reaching the city. Perhaps the bandits realized the egg was a fake and think the characters are hiding the real one somewhere.

ADJUSTING THE ENCOUNTER

Here are recommendations for adjusting this combat encounter. These are not cumulative. In addition, you can add one or two of the half-orc's racial traits to the thug statistics if you have access to a *Player's Handbook*, although this is not necessary.

- **Weak party:** remove the two bandits waiting outside with the thug
- **Strong party:** add one bandit in the loft
- **Very strong party:** change one of the bandits in the loft into a human thug

CONCLUSION

The Harper is waiting for the characters, as promised, in the stable behind Madame Freona's Tea Kettle. If the characters successfully planted the pin and have the egg, the Harper recognizes it as a fake after a quick examination. He gives them the promised gold, as well as one *potion of healing*.

If the characters return without the egg but recognized it as a fake, the Harper gives them the promised money but no potion. If they have the egg but failed to plant the pin, he offers this same reward.

If they neither have the egg nor succeeded in planting the pin, he gives them half of the promised coin as a consolation prize for their effort.

In any case, the Harper gives them a warning:

“We have seen an increased interest in all things related to dragons. We have also heard of more dragon sightings in the Moonsea region—and elsewhere. Keep your eyes and ears open for further information on dragons. It might save your life.”

REWARDS

Make sure the players note their rewards on their adventure logsheets. Give your name and DCI number (if applicable) so players can record who ran the session.

EXPERIENCE

Total up all **combat experience** earned for defeated foes, and divide by the number of characters present in the combat. For **non-combat experience**, the rewards listed are per character. Give all characters in the party non-combat experience awards unless otherwise noted.

COMBAT AWARDS

Name of Foe	XP per Foe
Bandit	25
Guard	25
Spy	200
Thug	100

DEFIANCE IN PHLAN