

SHARD SHUNNERS

In the Zhentarim's third mission the party must find a young, wealthy halfling who's joined a band of dangerous wererats.

THE MISSION

This mission description assumes that Tashlyn Yafeera has temporarily replaced Davil Starsong as the party's main contact, so if this change hasn't happened in your campaign, make sure you change things accordingly.

In the campaign book it's suggested that Tashlyn sends a note with the mission, but if you want the party to meet Tashlyn, have her send a winged snake with a note – clearly not written by Davil – asking the party to show up at noon by the statue of the god of death, Kelemvor, in the City of the Dead. She starts by explaining Davil's predicament (and perhaps tell the party about Urstul Floxin as described in the Zhentarim section in Chapter 2) before giving the characters their newest mission:

"Waterdeep's richest halfling family, the Snobeedles, is offering 500 gold pieces for the safe return of a missing family member named Dasher Snobeedle. We'll need additional funds to keep us afloat while Davil's away and the Watch have their eyes on us, so I want you to give it a shot."

Sticking to the campaign book, the characters would only need to ask around for three days and make a Charisma check to arrange a meeting with Dasher, who refuses to return to his family. In this take on the mission, that brief is expanded upon, infusing the mission with more intrigue and offering several (more rewarding) potential outcomes. Have Tashlyn give the following additional information:

"I've gotten my hands on some information I think might lead us to Dasher. One of my constables thinks he saw a halfling fitting Dasher's description – scrawny, a mess of curly red hair – at The Pickled Fisherman in the Dock Ward. He's been reported missing by his family six months ago, so I'll have to send a patrol to follow up eventually, but I can delay a day or two. Meanwhile, you head over to the Fisherman, find the little bugger and cart him off to his family. But be subtle, yeah? With so many eyes on us, I won't be able to get you of any pickle you get yourselves into."

True enough, Dasher has been frequenting The Pickled Fisherman with his new buddies from the Shard Shunners – a nefarious gang of wererats led by the Rat Queen, Rottina Reedfellow. Dasher joined up with the gang about six months ago, tired of his mother nagging him to become a druid and his older siblings teasing him about not contributing to the family's business: the Snobeedle Orchard and Meadery.

Finding Dasher and returning him to his family can be as easy as talking his Shard Shunner-buddies into setting up a meeting and then convincing Dasher to return of his own volition, or as hard as venturing into the sewers and taking on the entire gang of wererats on their home turf. On the next pages several locations and scenarios are detailed, giving you a framework for running this mission, but how – and if – your players complete their mission, depend on their actions and the luck of the dice. Regardless of everything else, the quest likely starts with a visit to The Pickled Fisherman.

THE PICKLED FISHERMAN

The Pickled Fisherman is a large tavern on Boat Street run by the homely female halfling **commoner** Antonetta Stubtoe, who's pickled delights draws in halflings from as far away as Amn and Luiren. Most the tavern's tables are occupied by halflings gorging themselves on brined cheese, pickled crab meat, and other such delicacies. Most know little or nothing about Dasher Snobeedle. Here's some inspiration on patrons the party can find in The Pickled Fisherman:

- Antonetta Stubtoe, who's way too busy to answer the party's questions. A few pieces of silver will get her to pause and speak. She doesn't know Dasher by name, but know of the Snobeedles and has seen a young, redhead halfling in the tavern from time to time. He usually sits by the table in the back when he's in.
- Perigan Copperkettle, a middle-aged halfling in a dapper outfit, and Kyressa Larksong, the beautiful half-elf woman he's wooing. It's their first time visiting The Pickled Fisherman and they know nothing of Dasher Snobeedle.
- Dogan, Lars and Helmut, three dwarven dockworkers who's here to enjoy fermented eggs and bitter schnapps, "not answer questions about halflings with silly names!"
- Callie, Willow, Fildo and Harol, four young halflings celebrating Willow's 19th birthday. They're friendly and will freely admit to knowing Dasher Snobeedle by name, but are nervous about telling characters that they've sometimes seen him with the three dangerous halflings at the back of the tavern. A few drinks and a successful DC 13 Charisma (any) check will loosen their tongues.

BAD COMPANY

In the back of The Pickled Fisherman sits a trio of rough-looking halflings underneath a thick cloud of pipesmoke. They're wearing silk vests, tailored pants, leather shoes and gaudy jewelry, but their scarred faces and hard eyes reveal that they're no soft-handed dandies.

Alton Tosscombe (a male **halfling wererat** with thick black sideburns and broad shoulders) is the clear leader of the bunch, his barking laugh drowning out his two companions, Roscoe Underbough (a male **halfling wererat** with a thin moustache) and Brynn Hilltopple (a female **halfling wererat** with an angry scar closing one eye).

The three Shard Shunners meet approaching strangers with detached disdain. Alton shoos away annoying busybodies without direct aggression, gruffly stating that "We's havin' a private conversation here – we prefer it stays that way". A good reason and a DC 13 Charisma (Deception or Persuasion) check is needed to get the halflings talking at all (halfling characters have advantage on this check).

Mentioning Dasher Snobeedle piques Alton's interest. If asked about the young halfling, he responds: "Don't know that I be knowin' anyone by that name, but if I did, I'd be wonderin' who's askin' and why?" If the characters reveal that they want to return Dasher to his family, Alton asks the party to meet him by the Lady's Statue at midnight, where he says he'll tell them what he knows about Dasher (see 'Meeting at Midnight'). This is a lie – Alton wants to lure the characters away from witnesses before ambushing them.

FOLLOWING THE SHARD SHUNNERS

All is not lost even if the characters fail to strike up a conversation with Alton or refuse to meet with him later. A few hours after midnight, the trio leaves the tavern and head toward a nearby sewer grate to return to Rats' Nest. If they succeed on a DC 12 Dexterity (Stealth) group check, the party can follow the wererats to Rats' Nest without being noticed.

MEETING AT MIDNIGHT

The Lady's Statue in the Dock Ward is a bronze statue depicting the human woman Midnight before she became the goddess of magic Mystra more than a century ago. Tucked away in a shadowy square between tall warehouses, the statue is a popular meeting spot for the ward's seedier inhabitants, who refer to it as 'meeting at midnight'.

If the characters show up to meet Alton here, they find him standing alone next to the statue. Four more **halfling wererats** in hybrid form hide in nearby alleys or on top of the surrounding buildings. An alert character can spot the halflings with a DC 18 Wisdom (Perception) check.

Alton Tosskobble is still in halfling form, but the moon's presence is making it hard for him to suppress his affliction. A character with passive Insight or passive Perception more than 15 notices that his nose is making rat-like twitches and that his fingernails have grown longer.

When the party has come as close as they'll get, Alton says:

"Ha! Seems I owe Roscoe five gold dragons. You really was dumb enough to show up. Aye, well, now that you're here, let me tell you how this is gonna go. We's the Shard Shunners and we run these here streets. Dasher's with us now – by his own choice, don't you worry. Now, we ain't much likin' that you're running around askin' questions about one of ours. In fact, I've half a mind to stick some holes in you and silence you for good. If I was you, I'd start coming up with reasons why I shouldn't, eh?"

Alton's question is followed by loud clicks of hand crossbows being loaded and menacing sounds of sharp claws being dragged across brick walls in the nearby alleys.

The Shard Shunners

The Shard Shunners are a gang of halfling wererats, named so because they detest silver. They have a steady gig extorting businesses for money ("or you might soon have a pest problem, eh?)" and perform odd jobs ranging from vandalism to robbery and murder. Their base, Rats' Nest, lies underneath the Dock Ward sewers and they have a tenuous alliance with the Xanathar Guild. Their leader is **Rottina Reedfellow**, a female halfling wererat wizard both cunning and ruthless. She's not well-liked among most of the other Shard Shunners, but her magical powers has insured her continued leadership. Her second-in-command is Alton Tosskobble, who's also her – somewhat reluctant – lover.

Each Shard Shunner carries a hand crossbow, a shortsword, and a pouch with 1d10 gold pieces and 1d20 copper pieces, unless otherwise noted.

If the characters want to avoid a violent confrontation they have to present a clever lie, a credible threat, or a good argument followed by a DC 15 Charisma (Deception, Intimidation or Persuasion) check. Examples include:

- "We're friends of Dasher and just want to speak with him. I don't think he'd like it if you harmed us!" (Deception)
- "We're with the Zhentarim. Harm us and you'll have the entire Black Network out to get you." (Intimidation)
- "There's a big reward for bringing Dasher to his family. If you're clever about this, we can make an arrangement that will make everyone happy." (Persuasion)

A good argument convinces Alton to let the party leave unharmed, but the right words might even persuade him to bring the party to meet Dasher and Rottina Reedfellow in the Rats' Nest. If the party can't convince him, he whips out his *pipes of the sewer* and signals the Shard Shunners to attack.

Night Dock Ward Map. If combat breaks out, you can use the Night Dock Ward Map. Place Alton Tosskobble by the statue in the bottom left corner and the other **halfling wererats** in the alleys and on the roofs around the small square. The surrounding buildings are 20 feet tall, requiring a DC 13 Strength (Athletics) check to climb and a DC 15 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check to jump down from unharmed. Crates, barrels and even streetlamps can grant cover.

Shard Shunner Tactics. Alton Tosskobble carries *pipes of the sewer* which he uses to summon three **swarms of rats**. The other **halfling wererats** use hand crossbows, blades and bites to deathly effect. They prefer to swarm one foe at a time, singling out weak targets while actively avoiding characters wielding silvered blades. If Alton or at least half of the wererats are defeated, the rest flees toward the nearest sewer grate, jump down below and make their way to Rats' Nest, quickly scurrying to alert Rottina.

A Rat in the Trap. A caught Shard Shunner is easily convinced (DC 10 Charisma (Intimidation or Persuasion) check) to tell the party anything they want to know about Rats' Nest and its inhabitants. Even Alton can be convinced to turn on Rottina, as he eyes an opportunity for a change in leadership. If caught, he tells the party about the sewer pipe (area R4 of Rats' Nest) leading into Rottina's audience chamber and offers to keep the halflings who are dissatisfied with Rottina's leadership (halflings in areas R5 and R8) at bay while the characters fetch Dasher, get rid of Rottina and make him the Shard Shunners' new leader.

RATS' NEST

Rats' Nest is the Shard Shunners' base in the sewers beneath the streets of the Dock Ward. Once a base of operations for the guild of Cellarers' and Plumberers Guild, the decrepit complex was abandoned by a few years ago and soon taken over by the wererats. Not all Shard Shunners live in Rats' Nest, but all frequent the complex from time to time to receive directions from the ruthless **Rottina Reedfellow**.

The following features apply to the sewers and Rats' Nest.

Alert. If the Rats' Nest has been alerted that someone is coming, the wererats in area R8 join the wererats in R5, hiding in doorways and shadowy nooks to ambush intruders, while Rottina prepares herself with *mage armor* and makes sure the three wererats in R10 are ready to defend her.

Ceilings. Ceilings are 10 feet high unless otherwise noted.

Light. The sewers are completely dark with empty lanterns hanging at regular intervals. Lit lanterns provide bright light in most of the Rats' Nest complex (see map).

Sewer Pipes. Underwater sewer pipes indicated by black dotted lines connect different areas. Small characters can swim through these pipes unhindered, but Medium characters must succeed on a DC 13 Dexterity check or become stuck. A creature stuck this way can attempt a DC 13 Strength or Dexterity check at the end of each round to slip free, taking 1d8 bludgeoning damage with each attempt.

Sewer Water. 5-foot-deep canals of sewage run through this part of the sewers. Sewer water heavily obscures anything beyond 10 feet. A creature that becomes submerged in the water must succeed on a DC 11 Constitution saving throw or become poisoned for 1 minute and contract *sewer plague* (see the *Dungeon Master's Guide* p. 257). Shard Shunners automatically succeed on this saving throw.

R1. SEWER INTERSECTION

Whether coming from the western or northern sewer grate (indicated by white dotted lines) the characters soon arrives at an intersection where four rusty grate bridges span the canals of foul-smelling sewage below.

Trapped Bridges. All four bridges have been sabotaged to hinder anyone snooping around the area (a DC 13 Intelligence (Investigation) check finds this sabotage). Each bridge collapses if a load of 100 lbs. or more is placed upon it, causing any creatures on the bridge to fall into the sewage below, unless they succeed on a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw. While the short fall itself deal no damage, landing in the sewage is unpleasant at best (see 'Sewer Water' above).

R2. ABANDONED BASEMENT

The door to this old basement is unlocked and rests uneven on broken hinges. The debris-filled room within reeks of decay. The building that once connected to this basement has been torn down and the hatch leading up is bricked shut.

Corpse Disposal The Shard Shunners dump dead bodies in this room, trusting the carrion crawler that lairs here to take care of any evidence. At the moment, two dead bodies – a human Zhentarim spy who happened upon the Rats' Nest and a halfling wererat who challenged Rottina's leadership – are decomposing on the floor. A large, pale worm with flailing appendages feasts on the human corpse. The **carrion crawler** has made the basement its lair, eagerly awaiting the meals regularly brought to it by the halflings. It has grown too large to exit the chamber, but attacks any creature that ventures inside and disturbs its meal.

Treasure. A perceptive character (passive Perception 13 or higher, or a DC 13 Wisdom (Perception) check) notices a silvered dagger (50 gp) sticking out of the halfling's boot.

R3. RATS' NEST ENTRANCE

A small platform marks the entrance to Rats' Nest. A partially faded inscription above the heavy, iron door reads: "Cellarers' and Plumberers' Guild – Workstation 35 – No trespassing".

Trapped Door. The door leading into the Rats' Nest isn't locked, but it is trapped. If a character attempts to open the door by pulling down on the handle, poisonous gas spills forth from small vents in the ceiling. Each character on the platform must make a DC 13 Constitution saving throw or take 3d8 poison damage and be poisoned for 1 minute. The vents are noticed by a character who succeeds on a DC 13 Wisdom (Perception) or Intelligence (Investigation) check. A DC 13 Intelligence (Investigation) check on the door itself reveals that the handle can be turned counter-clockwise, which opens the door without setting off the trap.

Disturbing the Nest. Setting off the trap alerts the two **halfling wererats** in area R5. One halfling moves to investigate, while the other notifies the Shard Shunners in areas R8 and R10, putting Rats' Nest on alert. If battle breaks out here, the **halfling wererats** from area R8 join the fight.

R4. SEWER PIPE ENTRANCE

An underwater sewer pipe connects this tunnel to area R10. The sewer pipe is easily spotted by anyone who comes by, but a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check is required to hear the muffled voices of Rottina and her retinue in area R10. The sewer pipe is barely large enough to accommodate Medium or smaller creatures (see 'Sewer Pipes').

R5. SEWER HALL

Two bored **halfling wererats** loiter in this central hall.

Sewer Pipe. An underwater sewer pipe leading from this hall to area R10 is blocked off by a heavy iron grate. A DC 25 Strength check is necessary to remove the iron grate without making noise – on a result of 20 to 24, the grate comes loose, but makes enough noise to alert creatures in R5 and R10, who quickly come to investigate.

R6. WAREHOUSE BASEMENT

This rat-infested basement goes largely unused by its owners, who've left behind only a few crates of rotten rope, rusty crane hinges and shattered glass panels. A small, unlocked door opening directly into a sewer tunnel allows for quick waste disposal.

Secret Tunnel. Taking advantage of the basement's disuse, Rottina has dug a secret tunnel leading from her private chambers to the basement. The small tunnel sits low to the floor and is hidden by fabric painted to mesh in with the basement's grimy walls. The tunnel is easily found with a thorough search of the room, or noticed by a perceptive character (DC 13 Investigation or Perception) at a quick glance. The tunnel will only fit a Small or smaller creature.

R7. STORAGE ROOM

This storage room contains crates, barrels and baskets with mundane equipment and foodstuffs, such as rope, hooks, oil, clothes, wine, ale, sausages, barley, plums, rice, and so on.

R8. COMMON ROOM

A fully-stocked kitchen, a large dining table and six halfling-sized beds fill this chamber. This is where the Shard Shunners eat, sleep and entertain themselves, when they've nothing better to do. At any time, 4 **halfling wererats** reside within.

Treasure. Besides the gold and copper they're carrying, the wererats have a cache of 12 shortswords, four hand crossbows and 120 bolts stashed in this room.

R9. MASTER BEDROOM

Rottina Reedfellow has converted this utility closet into her private bedroom, which she often shares with her lover and second-in-command, Alton Tossobble. Within is a queensize (by halfling standards) bed, a big chest and two bookshelves stocked with cookbooks, books on lycanthropy, stories about halflings and tomes filled with obscure arcane lore.

Trapped Chest. Rottina has taken it upon herself to safekeep the Shard Shunners' treasures, which she stores in a big chest by the foot of her bed. Opening the chest using lockpicks (DC 13 Dexterity (Thieves' Tools) check) or brute force (DC 18 Strength check) triggers two magical traps set on the chest. The first is a spell of *hypnotic pattern* (DC 13) targeting everyone in the room and the other is an *alarm* spell notifying Rottina Reedfellow of the intrusion. Two rounds after the trap has been triggered, Rottina and the **halfling wererats** from R5 and R10 arrive to investigate. The two magical traps can be found with a DC 10 Intelligence (Arcana or Investigation) check. A DC 15 Dexterity (Thieves Tools) check (or the *dispel magic* spell) is required to destroy the magical glyphs without triggering the traps.

Treasure. The chest contains 14pp and 182gp, a single emerald (500 gp) and two silvered shortswords (50 gp each) which Rottina keeps in case she needs to defend herself against her underlings. A scroll of *dispel magic* can be found on top of one of the bookshelves by a character that succeeds on a DC 10 Intelligence (Investigation) check.

R10. MAIN HUB

Once a central hub for the Cellarers' and Plumbers' Guild operations in the Dock Ward, this large room has been converted into the Shard Shunners' club house. Sewage flows freely through sewer pipes to the west and north, and a large basin of sewage fills the southwestern corner of the room. Two stairs lead 5 feet up to a platform in the middle of the basin, upon which stands a large oak desk and two braziers. The ceiling in this room is 20 feet high.

Shard Shunners. Three **halfling wererats** – one of them Dasher Snobeedle – loyal to Rottina lounge in plush chairs, gather at the dinner table or attend to the Rat Queen's needs.

Rottina Reedfellow. Rottina Reedfellow spends most of her time in this room. Whether she's studying, eating, or barking orders at the other Shard Shunners, Rottina can usually be found behind her desk on the raised platform. If the characters enter with diplomatic intentions – either led by Alton or another wererat, or by their own accord – Rottina is willing to at least hear them out (see 'Dealing with Rottina Reedfellow'). If negotiations fail – or are never initiated – Rottina orders the Shard Shunners to attack the party while she stays on her platform, using spells like *hold person* and *stinking cloud* to control the battlefield.

Developments. Rottina Reedfellow might be arrogant, but she isn't a fool. If she's clearly losing the battle, she turns into a rat and dives for the pool of sewer water, intending to swim out to area R4. Unless stopped or closely pursued, she disappears into the sewers without a trace. Should the Shard Shunners gain the upper hand in the fight, Rottina tries to keep the characters alive, preferring to steal their valuables and extort them for as much wealth or power as she can, instead of killing them outright. She might keep one character hostage while releasing the rest of the party to fetch a ludicrous ransom or perform some task for her – thus giving them an opportunity for a daring rescue mission.

Treasure. Rottina Reedfellow carries a pouch with 12pp and nine pearls (25 gp each), a component pouch, a spellbook with all the spells she has prepared and a big, brass key that unlocks her chest in area R9.

Dasher Snobeedle

Dasher Snobeedle is a scrawny halfling with a bushy top of fiery red hair and a face full of freckles. The runt of the litter, Dasher has had to endure endless amounts of good-natured teasing from his five older siblings. About six months ago, the impressionable young halfling fell into conversation with a pair of Shard Shunners. It didn't take long for Dasher to allow one of his new friends to bite him and grant him the gift of lycanthropy. Even though he's since had his doubts about this decision – knowing how much it would hurt his mother if she knew about his affliction – Dasher enjoys the power and respect lycanthropy affords him, as well as the camaraderie among the Shard Shunners.

Dealing with Dasher Snobeedle. Although he secretly harbors some regrets, Dasher Snobeedle refuses any suggestion to return home if other Shard Shunners are present and he hasn't been given permission by Rottina. Even if talked to alone, a persuasive argument (DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion or Deception) check) is required to change his mind, and unless the Shard Shunners have been exterminated, he still insists that the party first speak with his family. Dasher won't return home until he's sure that he'll be treated as an equal by his siblings and that his mother will accept his lycanthropic curse. If the party can get his family to make these promises (see 'The Snobeedles'), he'll return home willingly.

Rottina Reedfellow

Rottina Reedfellow, or the Rat Queen, as her closest followers have amicably dubbed her, is a raven-haired halfling with stark white skin and sharp, red eyes. She leads the Shard Shunners by virtue of her arcane powers and her shrewd intellect, but her bossy demeanor and ruthless pragmatism has won her few friends among the other halfling wererats.

Dealing with Rottina Reedfellow. Rottina is a clever negotiator, who is perfectly willing to eschew sentiment for profit. If the party tries to speak with Dasher Snobeedle while she's present, she orders him to shut up and takes over the negotiation. Clever characters might convince her (DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion) check) to allow Dasher Snobeedle to return to his family, if they offer her at least half of the 500 gp reward (Rottina expects Dasher to return back to the Shard Shunners soon after anyway). If facing great peril or caught in a position of weakness, Rottina will say and do anything to save her hide, including promising to end her alliance with the Xanathar Guild in favor of the Doom Raider Zhentarim. However, Rottina isn't above reneging on a promise if she finds it in her best interest, so the party might find that any deal they make with the Rat Queen only lasts until she finds it more profitable to betray it.

THE SNOBEEDLES

During their search for Dasher Snobeedle – or after finding him – the party might decide to pay the Snobeedles a visit. The entire family live and work at the popular Snobeedle Orchard and Meadery in Undercliff just outside Waterdeep.

SNOBEEDLE ORCHARD AND MEADERY

This picturesque orchard lies just a few mile from the eastern city wall, easily accessible by foot. Sprawling cross several hundred acres, a dazzling variety of colorful fruit trees provide the Snobeedles with all the ingredients they need to make their famous meads and ciders. Nested in the middle of a copse of golden dwarf apple trees, a rustic drinking hall built from heavy cedar logs offers visitors a place to sit and enjoy the halflings' specialties, including tasting menus with prices ranging from one silver piece to several gold pieces. A large shop next to the drinking hall sells all the halflings' brews – including popular choices like the Snobeedle Summer Cider and Mother Blossom's Favorite Stout.

THE SNOBEEDLE FAMILY

The matriarch of the Snobeedle family is Blossom Snobeedle, a tireless old halfling **druid**. She built the orchard – and her family's fortunes – from nothing with her husband, Egart Snobeedle, who passed away a few years back. While Blossom's fiery red hair has dulled and grayed over the years, the kind-hearted druid remains sharp of mind and spends most her days tending diligently to the large orchard.

Dasher's three older brothers – Cade, Bobbin and Perry – and two older sisters – Lidda and Marigold – all live and work at the orchard. Perry manages the business' finances and deals with suppliers and vendors, Cade and Lidda run the popular drinking hall, and Bobbin and Marigold is in charge of the family's shop. They're all easily recognizable by their curly, red hair and joyous demeanors.

SPEAKING WITH THE SNOBEEDLES

If the party seek out the Snobeedles before having found Dasher, his brothers and sisters swiftly fetch their mother. The old druid explains with sadness how Dasher disappeared about six months ago: "He'd been restless for a while. I'd been trying to teach him the ways of Yondalla, so he could take my place when I return to the soil. He showed great promise, but becoming a druid is not something you do overnight. He lost patience, I think, and began going into the city more and more, until one night, he didn't come back."

While Blossom is saddened by her son's disappearance – and blames herself for pushing him too hard – she harbors no doubt that her son still lives: "Yondalla shows him to me in my dreams. I see him on a dark path, a dangerous path, surrounded by foul beasts with menacing red eyes and hearts as black as coal. He's alive, I'm sure, but in grave danger."

If the party has met with Dasher Snobeedle and tells Blossom about his affliction, she is mortified, explaining that lycanthropy is deeply offensive to Yondalla and the natural balance. She promises to accept Dasher back to the family, but is hellbent on beseeching Yondalla to remove her son's curse. Changing her mind on this is exceedingly hard (requiring a DC 20 Charisma (Persuasion) check).

Dasher's siblings are ashamed to hear that their teasing was partly to blame for their brother's disappearance. They promise to lay off if the party can convince Dasher to return.

Giving Notice. If the party notifies the Snobeedles about Dasher's whereabouts, but can't or won't convince the young halfling to return, Blossom thanks them for their aid and gives them half of the 500 gp reward.

This mission can end in several different ways, depending on the party's choices and their luck with the dice.

Family Reunion. If the party manages to return Dasher Snobeedle to his family – either by force or by diplomatic means – the Snobeedle's happily give the characters the 500 gp reward. Depending on the party's discussions with Dasher and his mother, Blossom Snobeedle will either be oblivious about her son's affliction (although she soon senses a wrongness about him), accept that Dasher wants to be a wererat but hope that he'll come to his senses eventually, or use a *remove curse* spell to cure her son's affliction. If the party and Blossom properly convinced Dasher that his place is with his family, he begins embracing the teachings of Yondalla and becomes a respectable druid – and a faithful ally to the party. If Dasher was never properly convinced and Rottina and the other Shard Shunners still wait for him in the sewers, he's likely to return to them after a few days, perhaps carrying with him a portion of the family's fortunes.

Making Alliances. The party might have convinced Rottina Reedfellow (or any wererat that replaced her as leader of the Shard Shunners) to abandon the Xanathar Guild and ally the wererat gang with the Doom Raider Zhentarim instead. Tashlyn Yafeera (or Davil Starsong) welcomes this alliance, realizing the need for friends in these troubled times. Precisely what this alliance entails and how long the untrustworthy Shard Shunners keep their word, is up to you.

Reward. If the party is successful, Tashlyn Yafeera lets them keep 100 gp plus any valuables they have secured themselves along the way. Each Zhentarim character also receives 2 renown.

CONCLUSION

DM's CHEATSHEET

THE MISSION

- Tashlyn/Davil tells the party about the 500 gp reward for returning Dasher Snobeedle to his family.
- Dasher disappeared six months ago, he is young and has red curly hair. He was seen recently at The Pickled Fisherman in the Dock Ward.

THE PICKLED FISHERMAN

- A large tavern that specializes in pickled food and is very popular with halflings.
- Patrons can include: Antonetta Stubtue, the busy proprietor, who has seen Dasher sitting by a table in the back from time to time. Perigan, halfling, and Kyressa, half-elf, who knows nothing. Dogan, Lars and Helmut, dwarven dockworkers, who know nothing. Callie, Willow, Fildo and Harol, who know Dasher by name and has seen him with the dangerous halflings in the back of the tavern (DC 13 Charisma check to convince them to speak).
- Alton Tosskobble, Roscoe Underbough and Brynn Hilltopple sit by a table in the back. Can be engaged in conversation with DC 13 Deception or Persuasion. Won't say anything about Dasher, but Alton asks the party to meet him by the Lady's Statue at midnight.
- The **halfling wererats** can be followed back to Rats' Nest with a DC 13 group Stealth check.

MEETING AT MIDNIGHT

- A bronze statue of Mystra in a shadowy square.
- Alton is alone by the statue, but four **halfling wererats** hide in alleys and on roofs (DC 18 Perception to spot).
- Passive Insight or Perception 15 or higher notices Alton's nose twitching and fingernails growing longer.
- Alton reveals his dire intentions – DC 15 Charisma check to avoid violence. Can even be convinced to lead the party to Rats' Nest.
- If violence breaks out, Alton uses his *pipes of the sewers* while the other **halfling wererats** attack. They flee if Alton or half the wererats are defeated.
- A caught wererat can be convinced (DC 10 Charisma) to divulge information about Rats' Nest, including traps and secret entrances.

RATS' NEST

- Sewer complex underneath the Dock Ward. Sewers are dark, ceilings 10 feet high, sewer pipes accessible by small and medium creatures (DC 13 Dexterity check). Sewer water 5 foot deep, DC 11 Constitution save or poisoned for 1 minute and contracts *sewer plague*.
- **R1.** Four bridges spanning sewer canals, rigged to collapse under 100 lbs. or more. (DC 13 Investigation to notice, DC 13 Dexterity save to avoid falling into water).
- **R2.** Abandoned basement filled with debris, a human corpse and a halfling corpse. **Carrion Crawler** within. DC 13 Perception notices silvered dagger (50 gp) in halfling's boot.
- **R3.** Small platform, heavy door reading: 'Cellarers' and Plumbers' Guild - Workstation 35 - No trespassing'. Door unlocked but trapped, move handle counter-clockwise or poisonous gas spills out, dealing 3d8 damage and poisoned for 1 minute (DC 13 Constitution save to avoid). Noticeable by DC 13 Perception or Investigation. If triggered, one wererat from R5 investigates, one alerts wererats in R8 and R10.
- **R4.** Sewer pipe grants entrance to R10, DC 13 Perception check to hear muffled voices from within.

- **R5.** Two **halfling wererats** here. Sewer pipe grants entrance to R10, but blocked by heavy iron grate. DC 25 Strength to remove, result of 20-24 makes noise and alarms creatures in R5 and R10.
- **R6.** Little-used warehouse basement, crates of rope, crange hinges, shattered glass panels. DC 13 Investigation or Perception to spot secret tunnel leading to R9, fits only small creatures.
- **R7.** Storage room with food, rope, hooks, oil, clothes, wine.
- **R8.** Common room with beds, kitchen and dining table. Four **halfling wererats**. Also 12 shortswords, four hand crossbows and 120 bolts.
- **R9.** Rottina's bedroom with bed, large chest and bookshelves. Chest is locked and magically trapped, DC 13 Thieves' Tools or DC 18 Strength to open. Triggers *hypnotic pattern* spell (DC 13) and *alarm* spell making **halfling wererats** from R5 and R10 arrive after two rounds. DC 13 Arcana or Investigation to notice glyphs, DC 15 Thieves' Tools or *dispel magic* to remove without triggering. The chest contains 14pp, 182gp, emerald (500gp), two silvered shortswords (50 gp each). A scroll of *dispel magic* lies on top of the bookshelf (DC 13 Investigation to find).
- **R10.** 20-foot-high ceiling, platform 5 feet above water. Three **halfling wererats** including Dasher Snobeedle. Rottina Reedfellow sits on the platform. If combat erupts, Shard Shunners attack while Rottina casts spells. She carries a pouch with 12 pp, nine pearls (25 gp), component pouch, her spellbook and a key for chest in R9.
- If not with other Shard Shunners, Dasher can be persuaded to return home (DC 15 Charisma) only if his family promises to respect him and that his mother will accept his lycanthropy.
- Rottina takes over any negotiation with Dasher, and can be persuaded (DC 15 Charisma) to allow Dasher to return for half the reward. If caught in a bad situation, Rottina promises anything to be free.

THE SNOBEDDLES

- Snobeedle Orchard and Meadery is in undercliff about 1 mile from eastern city wall. Fruit trees, big drinking hall, shop with specialties like Snobeedle Summer Cider and Mother Blossom's Favorite Stout.
- Blossom Snobeedle is the matriarch, a halfling **druid**. Dasher's five siblings are Cade, Bobbin, Perry, Lidda and Marigold.
- Blossom was teaching Dasher the ways of Yondalla when he disappeared six months ago. She dreams of him and is certain he is alive.
- Blossom will welcome back Dasher but insists on removing his curse (DC 20 Persuasion to change her mind). Dasher's siblings promise to lay off their teasing.
- If the party can tell the Snobeddles where Dasher is, but can't get him to return, they still receive 250 gp.

CONCLUSION

- If Dasher is reunited with his family, he might return to the Shard Shunners (if the gang still remains), or he might accept his mother's teachings and allow her to rid him of his curse.
- If the party has convinced the Shard Shunners to ally with the Zhentarim, the alliance is welcomed by Tashlyn/Davil, but lasts only as long as the wererats find it in their interest.
- Tashlyn Yafeera lets the party keep 100 gp of the reward and anything they find along the way. Each Zhentarim character receives 2 renown.

HALFLING WERERAT

Small humanoid (halfling), lawful evil

Armor Class 12

Hit Points 27 (6d6 + 6)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	15 (+2)	12 (+1)	11 (+0)	10 (+0)	8 (–1)

Skills Perception +2, Stealth +4

Damage Immunities bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage from nonmagical weapons that aren't silvered

Senses darkvision 60 ft. (rat form only), passive Perception 12

Languages Common, Halfling, Thieves' Cant

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Shapechanger. The wererat can use its action to polymorph into a rat-humanoid hybrid or into a giant rat, or back into its true form. Its statistics, other than its size, are the same in each form. Any equipment it is wearing or carrying isn't transformed. It reverts to its true form if it dies.

Brave. The wererat has advantage on saving throws against being frightened.

Halfling Nimbleness. The wererat can move through the space of a Medium or larger creature.

Keen Smell. The wererat has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on smell.

Actions

Multiattack (Humanoid or Hybrid Form Only). The wererat makes two attacks, only one of which can be a bite.

Bite (Rat or Hybrid Form Only). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d4 + 2) piercing damage. If the target is a humanoid, it must succeed on a DC 11 Constitution saving throw or be cursed with wererat lycanthropy.

Shortsword (Humanoid or Hybrid Form Only). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage.

Hand Crossbow (Humanoid or Hybrid Form Only). *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, range 30/120 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage.

SWARM OF RATS

Medium swarm of tiny beasts, unaligned

Armor Class 10

Hit Points 24 (7d8 – 7)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
9 (–1)	11 (+0)	9 (–1)	2 (–4)	10 (+0)	3 (–4)

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, slashing

Condition Immunities charmed, frightened, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, prone, restrained, stunned

Senses darkvision 30 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages —

Challenge 1/4 (50 XP)

Keen Smell. The swarm has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on smell.

Swarm. The swarm can occupy another creature's space and vice versa, and the swarm can move through any opening large enough for a Tiny rat. The swarm can't regain hit points or gain temporary hit points.

Actions

Bites. Melee Weapon Attack: +2 to hit, reach 0 ft., one target in the swarm's space. *Hit:* 7 (2d6) piercing damage, or 3 (1d6) piercing damage if the swarm has half of its hit points or fewer.

ROTTINA REEDFELLOW

Small humanoid (halfling), lawful evil

Armor Class 13 (16 with *mage armor*)

Hit Points 54 (12d6 + 12)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	16 (+3)	12 (+1)	16 (+3)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)

Skills Arcana +5, Perception +2, Stealth +5

Damage Immunities bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage from nonmagical weapons that aren't silvered

Senses darkvision 60 ft. (rat form only), passive Perception 12

Languages Common, Halfling, Thieves' Cant

Challenge 4 (450 XP)

Shapechanger. Rottina can use her action to polymorph into a rat-humanoid hybrid or into a giant rat, or back into her true form. Her statistics, other than her size, are the same in each form. Any equipment she is wearing or carrying isn't transformed. She reverts to her true form if she dies.

Brave. Rottina has advantage on saving throws against being frightened.

Halfling Nimbleness. Rottina can move through the space of a Medium or larger creature.

Keen Smell. Rottina has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on smell.

Spellcasting. Rottina is a 6th-level spellcaster. Her spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 13, +5 to hit with spell attacks). Rottina has the following wizard spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *acid splash*, *light*, *poison spray*

1st level (4 slots): *alarm*, *grease*, *mage armor*, *shield*

2nd level (3 slots): *hold person*, *mirror image*, *misty step*

3rd level (3 slots): *dispel magic*, *hypnotic pattern*, *stinking cloud*

Actions

Multiattack (Humanoid or Hybrid Form Only). Rottina makes two attacks, only one of which can be a bite.

Bite (Rat or Hybrid Form Only). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d4 + 4) piercing damage plus 4 (1d8) poison damage. If the target is a humanoid, it must succeed on a DC 11 Constitution saving throw or be cursed with wererat lycanthropy.

Claw (Rat or Hybrid Form Only). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 4) piercing damage plus 4 (1d8) poison damage.

CARRION CRAWLER

Large monstrosity, unaligned

Armor Class 13

Hit Points 51 (6d10 + 18)

Speed 30 ft., climb 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	13 (+1)	16 (+3)	1 (–5)	12 (+1)	5 (–3)

Skills Perception +3

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 13

Languages —

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Keen Smell. The carrion crawler has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on smell.

Spider Climb. The carrion crawler can climb difficult surfaces, including upside down on ceilings, without needing to make an ability check.

Actions

Multiattack. The carrion crawler makes two attacks: one with its tentacles and one with its bite.

Tentacles. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 10 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 4 (1d4 + 2) poison damage, and the target must succeed on a DC 13 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned for 1 minute. Until this poison ends, the target is paralyzed. The target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the poison on itself on a success.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (2d4 + 2) piercing damage.