



# ZHENTARIM



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You're one of us now.

. . . one of the Zhentarim. We are the purveyors of your fondest wishes and darkest dreams.

You don't even know how grand your life's about to be. Gone are the days of waiting for your turn; from now on, it's always your turn. Gone, too, are the days of wanting what you can't have. If you can't see it, you can have it. It's yours. There's only one rule, and it's a simple one: Zhentarim first. Follow that rule, and yours will be a life of favor and fortune.

The world is full of sheep and our role is not to shepherd, but to shear. Those who'd call themselves shepherds are liars and charlatans, and cowards besides. Of course, this is not a world of only sheep and shepherds; there are wolves too. Wolves that would feast on our sheep, denying us our claim to wool and meat—and anything else we might desire. If those

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wolves try to keep us from our rightful bounty, we'll defend what is ours, so that all others might look upon the Zhentarim and see the price of their folly.

So go out, my brethren, and do what you will. Pluck whatever fruit you desire from any orchard, and drink deeply the wine of power; you'll find your glass is now bottomless. There is nothing, any longer, that can be denied to you. No longer have cause to fear anyone nor want for anything—just so long as you remember that it is the Zhentarim that granted you these things.

Tiril Longfangs



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## The Zhentarim

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The Zhentarim is an unscrupulous shadow network that seeks to expand its influence and power throughout Faerûn. The organization is ambitious, opportunistic, and meritocratic. Rogues and warlocks of neutral and/or evil alignments are commonly drawn to the Zhentarim.

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*Membership in the Zhentarim is like a key to a thousand doors, each one a gateway to fulfilling a personal desire. Most people shy away from this kind of freedom. They like their restraints, laws, and swaddling – it gives them the illusion of security.*

*The Black Network provides what I need to explore realms and dimensions that would tear apart minds accustomed to limits. Only in such places can I find magic powerful enough to defeat beings that know no such thing as time, fear, or mercy. You might not like the Zhentarim's methods, but when a demon crawls out of the Abyss and comes for your family, you'll be glad that I have gone*

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*to the darkest of realms to find the answer to your problem.*

*— Ianna Asterion*

The Zhentarim, or Black Network, is an organization of well-trained mercenaries, savvy rogues, and crafty warlocks who seek to expand their influence and power throughout Faerûn. Agents of the Zhentarim feel that if they play by the rules, nothing gets done. Ultimately, they want to make the rules – and, in some cases, they already do. They walk a fine line when it comes to the letter of the law and don't shy away from the occasional shady deal or illicit activity to get what they want.

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To the Zhentarim, wealth is power. Its agents know that nothing else inspires such confidence and dispels doubt so well. In an instant, wealth speaks louder than a thousand bards. Zhentarim agents routinely carry the finest weapons and armor, with no expense spared. When a merchant needs an escort for a caravan, when a noble family requires bodyguards to protect its holdings, or when a city is desperate for trained soldiers to defend its walls, the Zhentarim provides the best warriors money can buy.

The organization encourages individual ambition and rewards innovators who take matters into their own hands. Results are all that

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matter. Those who come into the Black Network with nothing can become major players within the organization through their own moxie and hard work.



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## Member Traits

A Zhentarim member thinks of itself as a member of a large group, and relies on the Black Network for resources and security. However, members are granted enough autonomy to pursue their own interests and gain some measure of personal power or influence. The Black Network is a meritocracy. As a whole, it promises “the best of the best,” although in truth, the Zhentarim is more interested in spreading its own propaganda and influence than investing in the improvement of its individual members.

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## Goals

- \*Amass wealth.
- \*Seize power.
- \*Gain influence over important people and organizations.

## Beliefs

- \*The Zhentarim is your family. You watch out for it, and it watches out for you.
- \*You are the master of your own destiny. Never be less than what you deserve to be.
- \*Everything – and everyone – has a price.

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## High Lord of the Zhentarim

The Network has a militant leadership with everything ultimately controlled by the High Lord; however, it is currently in turmoil. Fzoul Chem-bryl slew the previous High Lord and founder, Manshoon, and then passed on control of the Zhentarim to a knight clad in chalk-white armor known only as the Pereghost, who had been a dutifully led of the Network for years.

With the reemergence of Manshoon through one of his clones, splits in the Network occurred and several regions have splintered off (including Water-davian members as the Doom Raiders); some following Manshoon, some following the Pereghost, and

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some developing their own leadership. Who will ultimately claim control of the Black Network has yet to be determined.

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## Faction Deities

These are likely the most common deities worshiped by an agent of the Zhentarim.

✱ **Bane**, god of tyranny

✱ **Cyric**, god of lies

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## Zhentarim Ranks

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The Zhentarim rank structure is somewhat different than the other main factions due to the predatory nature of the faction.

***Items.*** Items can not be sold, traded, or gifted. All items disintegrate upon the character leaving the faction.

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# Rank 1, Fang

*Requirement: 1 renown*

This is the rank a character receives when first joining and pledging service to a faction. Perks include:

***Faction Agent Background.*** [Safe Haven.](#)

***Group Patron Benefits.*** [Assignments](#) and [Criminal Contact.](#)

***Magic Items.*** A faction insignia ([Zhentarim tattoo](#)) that provides a bonus to Intimidation attempts.

***Downtime activity.*** [Faction Jobs.](#)

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## Rank 2, Wolf

*Requirement: 3 renown and 3rd level*

Characters have shown that they're aligned with the faction's goals, and are able to take on more responsibility. Perks include:

***Magic Items and Spells.*** The agent can choose to receive one of the following, and can choose a different option upon gaining a new faction rank:

- ✱ A [banesword](#)
- ✱ Learn the [Manshoon's mage hand](#) cantrip.
- ✱ Learn the *find familiar* spell and be able to cast it once per day. The familiar takes the form of a **flying snake**.

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## Rank 3, Viper

*Requirement: 10 renown and 5th level*

Characters are reliable faction members, entrusted with many secrets and deserving of additional support. Perks include:

***Underling.*** Agent gains an underling with the stats of an **acolyte**, **apprentice wizard**, **scout**, or **thug** that can go adventuring with the agent or be tasked with accomplishing minor tasks on behalf of the agent.

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## Rank 4, Ardragon

*Requirement: 25 renown and 7th level*

Characters are experienced, influential leaders within the faction. Perks include:

***Magic Items.*** The agent receives two personalized [assassin's glasses](#).

***Poisons.*** An agent may purchase any poison in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, chapter 8 at a 10 percent discount, delivered by a **flying snake**.

***Task Force.*** An agent may command a personal task force composed of four underlings (see prior rank) that can be tasked with accomplishing minor tasks on behalf of the agent.

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They do not go adventuring with the agent.

## Rank 5, Dread Lord

*Requirement: 50 renown and 11th level*

Characters are ensconced within the leadership of the faction and have a great degree of influence, guiding faction decisions. Perks include:

**Commander.** With Dungeon Master approval, agents may commandeer branches of the Black Network to further its aims, solicit magic from the church, or command raid-sized mercenary forces (typically 3 **veterans**, 27 **guards**, a **priest**, and a **mage**). These forces do not go adventuring with the agent.

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## Patron Benefits

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Having the Zhentarim as a Group Patron provides the following benefits to the entire party.

***Assignments.*** Your group may be assigned quests to further the factions goals. See next section for available faction Assignments.

***Criminal Contact.*** Throughout their adventures, a party is likely to come across a criminal or two. Though some lawbreakers are sure to oppose the party during their adventuring career, others may prove to be valuable allies. An alliance with a criminal contact pays for itself in the

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form of information, influence, and specialized services.

Every criminal has a specialty. Though the contact might mask their illicit activities under the guise of a legitimate business, their true expertise is known to the party. The criminal contact could be someone the party regularly does business with, such as a thief selling their plunder to a fence. Or perhaps the contact is a rival with which a party member shares a specialty, such as a pair of assassins who crossed blades in the past. The party can use the Contact Specialty table to determine what the contact does best.

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# Contact Specialty

## d8 Specialty

- 1 **Assassin.** When someone delivers a name to your contact, it may as well be engraved on a tombstone.
- 2 **Burglar.** Your contact has mastered the art of breaking and entering.
- 3 **Fence.** Your contact is an expert in dealing with stolen goods and throwing off the heat.
- 4 **Fabricator.** Ah, good old white-collar crime! Your contact has an eye for detail and a collection of inks that would make a notary's head spin.
- 5 **Smuggler.** Your contact knows how to get contraband in and out of a location without tipping of the Watch or their hounds.
- 6 **Spy.** It pays to listen. Your contact is a people person who can blend into any crowd.
- 7 **Sweeper.** Committing a crime is easy—the hard part is getting away with it! Your contact makes the evidence disappear.

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8     **Ruffian.** Every once in a while, someone doesn't hold up their part of the bargain. Your contact is the enforcer comes knocking.

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## Assignments / Faction Jobs

Faction Jobs include a handful of short generic missions that a character can reasonably complete within the span of a workweek. To complete a job, a character must accumulate three successful ability checks before accumulating three failures. The player chooses the skill for each of these checks. Once the character has attempted an ability check with a given skill, whether they succeed or fail that ability check, they can't use that skill again during the remainder of the job.

A character earns one renown after successfully completing a job. There are typically no monetary or item rewards for completing a job, other

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than perhaps covering daily food and lodging, if successful.

## Job Difficulty Class

Tier	Character Level	DC
1	1-4	15
2	5-10	17
3	11-16	19
4	17-20	21

The following quests are available as Assignments for those with the Black Network as a Group Patron, or as downtime Faction Jobs for those who are members of the faction themselves. Quests beyond this list can be easily available as well.

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# Random Quests from the Zhentarim

## d10 Quest

- 1 **Debt Collection.** Collect on a past-due debt. I hear this one's a runner.
- 2 **Thievery.** Steal a priceless item during a public event.
- 3 **Burglary.** Breaking and entering at its nest. Keep an eye out for dogs—or worse.
- 4 **Assassination.** There's no other option. You've got the time, the place, and the target. Make it look like an accident.
- 5 **Caravan Escort.** Make sure the goods get from point A to point B in one piece.
- 6 **Espionage.** Keep a low profile. Don't come back unless you've got some juicy intel.
- 7 **Smuggling.** There are buyers on the inside. The only thing standing between the Zhentarim and payday is local law enforcement.

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- 8 **Bodyguard Duty.** A cautious individual hired you to watch their back for the day. It should be easy money. Should.
- 9 **Vandalism.** Don't forget your crowbar. If this doesn't send a message, there's always arson.
- 10 **Blackmail.** Someone's got skeletons in their closet. Find the dirt and put on the pressure.

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# Magic Items

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## ASSASSIN'S GLASSES

*Wondrous item, uncommon*

These ornate wine glasses can take a variety of forms, such as a flask, goblet, or stein, and always come in pairs. While holding an assassin's glass, you can use a bonus action to swap the contents of your glass with another assassin's glass you can see within 60 feet of you.

## BANESWORD

*Wondrous item, uncommon*

The blade and hilt of this weapon are made from black iron and engraved with the symbol of Bane: an upright right hand with thumb and fingers

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together. You gain a +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with this magic weapon.

While wielding this sword, you can use an action to cast the *bane* spell from it. Once used, this property can't be used again until the next dawn.

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## ZHENTARIM TATTOO

*Wondrous item, varies*

Produced by a special needle and placed in a location of your choice, this tattoo of a flying snake is applied to all agents of the Zhentarim. It provides you the following benefits:

- ✱ ***Intimidating.*** When you display this tattoo while performing an Intimidation check against another humanoid, add 1d4 to your attempt.
- ✱ ***Criminal Contacts.*** You have a reliable and trustworthy contact who acts as your liaison to a network of other criminals. You know how to get messages to and from your contact, even over great distances; specifically, you know the local

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messengers, corrupt caravan masters, and seedy sailors who can deliver messages for you. At DM discretion, the agent may call upon a favor from the contact for services such as forgery, smuggling, etc.

✱ ***Safe House.*** You gain access to a safe house where you can store contraband or lay low, hiding behind innocent, reputable business owners when the law comes knocking.

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# Spells

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## MANSHOON'S MAGE HAND

*Conjuration cantrip*

**Casting Time:** 1 action

**Range:** 30 feet

**Components:** V, S

**Duration:** 1 round

You conjure a spectral, floating hand to choke a creature you can see within range. Make a ranged spell attack against the target. On a hit, the target takes 1d4 psychic damage and, if the target is Large or smaller, it must make a Strength (Athletics) or Dexterity (Acrobats) check (target's choice) against your spell save DC. On a failure, the target is grappled until the start of your next turn.

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The spell's damage increased by 1d4 when you reach 5th level (2d4), 11th level (3d4), and 15th level (4d4).

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# Faction Agent Background

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All faction agents are required to change their background feature to Safe Haven, regardless of their background.

## Feature: Safe Haven

As a faction agent, you have access to a secret network of supporters and operatives who can provide assistance on your adventures. You know a set of secret signs and passwords you can use to identify such operatives, who can provide you with access to a hidden safe house, free room and board, or assistance in finding information. These agents never risk their lives for you or risk revealing their true identities.

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