

APPENDIX C: TOURNAMENT

The characters might join Xanathar's tournament to gain more information about the lair before staging their heist, or even as a means of entry to the lair for the actual heist.

SETTING THE STAGE

When the tournament's full, Noska Ur'gray and his four thugs lead the characters to the Xanathar Guild Hideout and teleports them to area X22 in Xanathar's Lair. From here, the characters are taken to the holding cells in area X7, jeered by Xanathar Guild members as they move through the lair.

The characters are locked in a cell next to the tournaments other contestants (see 'The Teams' below), under the watchful eyes of three **bugbears**, while everyone waits for Xanathar to arrive. The characters can use this time to assess their potential opponents or perhaps even speak with them to learn more about Xanathar's Lair.

After about 30 minutes, Noska and his thugs come to fetch the teams. All combatants are walked into the middle of the arena (the chained Stomp & Stooge is dragged by the bugbears). Ahmaergo, who's standing in the southeast alcove, walks forward and declares that "The Great Xanathar has arrived. Bow yer heads, scum!" On cue, the invisible Xanathar creates its usual psychedelic light display (see area X18) and rumbles something in deep speech, which is followed by frantic cheering from the guild members in the stands, although noone seems to understand what's being said.

Noska Ur'gray then presents the teams to the roaring crowd, before having two of the teams escorted back to their cells. The two remaining teams are walked to opposite ends of the arena, ready for Xanathar's call to start the first round!

THE TEAMS

Three teams of NPC combatants are ready to enter the tournament. Most of these combatants are drafted from the prisoners (or willing combatants, if you choose) in area X7:

The Bonegnashers. A male **half-ogre** named Groz, a **minotaur** named Umpok, and a female **orog** named Charworl. These three monstrous creatures fight brutally and ruthlessly, not caring if they leave their opponents dead in the sand.

Ahghairon's Few. Xia Shung (NG female Shou human **bard**), Claudio Benzreck (LN male Tethyrian human **noble**), and Arthright Grayfalcon (CN male Illuskan **swashbuckler**). The three Waterdavians make an effort to not kill their opponents, finishing off with non-lethal blows if possible.

Team Arena Fodder. A female **drow** named Raelyn Auvryndar, a female lightfoot halfling named **Samara Strongbones** and an **ettin** named 'Stomp & Stooge'. The wild ettin attacks the creature nearest to it (regardless of alliance), so Raelyn and Samara stay a good distance behind the giant, allowing it to soak up damage while they make ranged attacks from cover.

BATTLE IN THE ARENA

You decide which teams fight in each round – while teams that aren't fighting have time for a short rest. If some (but not all) of the player characters are fighting in the arena, and the remaining characters have nothing to do, you can give sidelined players control of enemy combatants during the arena battle, so they don't become bored. If two teams of NPCs are fighting, you can either give your players control of some (or all) of the combatants if they're up for it, or simply describe how the battle wages for a few minutes before a team returns victorious – and the losers are thrown unconscious into a cell or left as bloody smears in the arena.

SNOOPING AROUND THE LAIR

Noska won't allow characters to snoop around freely, before, during, or after rounds in the arena. Characters can, however, try to overpower Noska and his retinue of thugs while traveling to or from the arena. Characters might also be able to overpower (or persuade with a DC 15 Persuasion check and a 10 gp bribe) the bugbears watching over the holding cells, to gain free access to the rest of the lair. If the characters are caught trying to skulk away, Xanathar Guild members attack them in an attempt to incapacitate and haul them off to face Xanathar in the audience chamber (area X18).

CHARACTERS IN THE STANDS

If a character has been allowed to follow the other characters without joining the tournament (such as convincing Noska to let them go as the team's manager or sponsor), Noska assigns a single gazer to watch over the character and allows them to remain in the stands with the Xanathar Guild members. Here, a character can make wagers with the various bandits and goblins on who's going to win, and perhaps even learn more about Xanathar's Lair with good Charisma (Deception or Persuasion) checks.

A character in the stands can attempt to help its friends with subtle magic or stealthy ranged attacks (a sling, hand crossbow, or blowdart) to influence the combat in the arena. If this requires any movement or sound, however, the character must make a DC 15 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) or Charisma (Deception) check, depending on what's appropriate. On a failure, the gazer spots the attempt and quickly hovers growling in front of the character, indicating they should stop. Likewise, if character attempts to leave the stands, the gazer uses its mimicry to shout: 'Stop! Stop! Forbidden! Stop!', drawing the attention of everyone nearby.

A character that tries to leave regardless, or who interferes in the battle in the arena, is attacked by the gazer and any Xanathar Guild members who've noticed. The bandits knock the character unconscious before carting them off to area X7.

VICTORY

Each player character on the winning team receive a stuffed Xanathar doll with a pocket in its mouth that holds a 100 gp gemstone, and an onyx trophy carved to look like a smiling beholder being caressed by hands (worth 25 gp).

After receiving this prize, the characters are hauled off by Noska Ur'gray, Ahmaergo and the invisibly floating Xanathar towards the audience chamber (area X18), where they are joined by Nar'l Xibrindas and his grell bodyguard. Here, Xanathar, still invisible, speaks in rumbling undercommon to Nar'l, who translates for the party in a sibilant voice: "The Mighty Xanathar is pleased by your performance and requires your services." What Xanathar demands of the party is up to you and the state of your campaign. Perhaps Xanathar wants them to find the Stone of Golorr, to find one of the keys, if Xanathar possesses the stone already, or to eliminate a powerful Zhentarim, like Davil Starsong, Skeemo Weirdbottle or Urstul Floxin. If the party acquiesces (truthfully or with a DC 15 Charisma (Deception) check), Xanathar has Noska escort them back to the portal and teleported back into the sewers proper, with instructions to seek out the dwarf enforcer when the task is completed.

DEFEAT

If all characters are rendered unconscious and defeated, the Xanathar Guild members unceremoniously dumps them in the sewers underneath the Castle Ward (relieved of obvious valuables), where they must make their own way back to the streets of Waterdeep, reeking of sewage and bitter defeat.