

Blight Pathologies

BP6: The Schadum Elite

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The Blight: Pathologies

The Schadum Elite

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Introduction

Sorin relaxed in his chair, his face ever in shadows, his gaze a reflective mirror.

"I have revealed myself, just as you asked," Sorin said. "Am I a monster?"

"The term 'monster' is relative," replied Barnabus, not flinching underneath Sorin's intense gaze. "I want to know if this is real. Is what you are offering actually a chance to cheat death? Is this a true path to immortality?"

"If you survive the transition ... yes," Sorin said. "But you will be forever changed. You will be better, you will be stronger. There are drawbacks, but they are few, and you will find it is easy to adapt to your new form."

"What is the price?"

"Does it matter?"

Life eternal is a dream of many people, but so is power, power to do what you want and not suffer the consequences. Eternal life does not come without its consequences, and power must be taken and defended constantly. Not satisfied with the very real drawbacks of becoming a vampire, lich, or other undead being, one group sought another avenue in which to extend their lifespans and dominate their surroundings. Calling upon the power of shadows, the Schaduw Elite came into being. They rule their own corner in the City-State of Castorhage.

The Schaduw Elite are small, but do not think for a moment that they are weak. To cross them is to invite the powers of darkness to seek revenge. The shadows play tricks on us all, and the Schaduw Elite are the masters of the shadows.

A Brief History of the Schaduw Elite

Sorin Cristescu was a minor scion of the Wryes in Castorhage. He grew up around the wealthy, but he always was regarded as middle class due to his lineage. Always being on the fringes of the wealthy gave him a taste of the good life, and he became determined to elevate his station.

Sorin learned at an early age that information is more powerful than any kind of goods or commodities. Using his connections within House Wryes, Sorin became an accomplished rogue and a trusted member of the Wryes' larger organization. Although information gathering was his main trade, he kept his fingers in several different businesses for years. He was not above murdering a person or three along the way, either.

Luck showed him favor in the form of Jak Sweksin, a lifelong friend of like mind about how best to gain power, and together they began making plans to truly become powerful within the rigid caste system of Castorhage. They were joined by Sorin's wife, Krista, who always craved to have the wealth and prestige of the Royal Family, but also was denied such pleasures due to her suspect lineage.

While a man of good health, Sorin began feeling the weight of age as he neared 40. He saw the gray starting to blend into his hair, and he felt the aches and pains of middle age creeping into his joints. Sorin was not afraid to die, but he felt it was an injustice to grow old and die so quickly when there was so much to accomplish.

Determined to beat death, Sorin eschewed the path of becoming undead, not caring where it led or the drawbacks associated with it. He had learned not to trust the various magical means of extending life and youth, knowing even those were not permanent. As a man who had spent most of his life hiding in the shadows, he listened to their call.

After several weeks in BookTown, Sorin realized the shadows were where he felt most comfortable and learned of a creature called a shade. After further research, he became convinced that transitioning into a shade was the most ideal way of pursuing immortality. Shades take part of the Plane of Shadow into themselves, halting the aging process and granting other benefits that he believed far outweighed any drawbacks. The transition was risky, and possibly fatal, but any kind of bid for immortality has the chance for ultimate failure. Nothing comes for free; there is always a price.

Sorin, knowing it could take several years to find the proper rituals and materials to achieve his goals without resorting to reckless measures, formed a pact with his wife and Jak. Together, they took their first step toward becoming one with the shadows. They contacted a trusted alchemist through the Wryes network who provided them with the means to regain some of their lost youth and give them more time to research and prepare. Around this time, Sorin and Krista began laying the foundation for what would become the Schaduw Elite.

Eventually, the two met Malik, a magic-user who had toyed with the idea of becoming some kind of powerful undead for years. Like the Cristescus, he found the idea of a rotting body or vampirism too repugnant and beneath a man of his considerable intellect and stature. After a few discussions with Sorin and Krista, Malik signed on to become the fourth member of the group, and used his contacts to find an actual shade.

They found one in relatively short order, a shade named Reynard. Reynard had floated around Castorhage for the better part of a generation, but few people knew what he actually was. Malik was able to ascertain his true form and promised him great wealth if he agreed to share his secrets with the four of them.

Reynard was intrigued by the idea of a small group of individuals he could count on, as he had become fascinated with the city's political landscape. He became the fifth member of the group, along with Morgana, his long-time companion and fellow shade, who was accepted as the sixth and final member of what would be the original six shades.

Reynard and Morgana provided the final rituals and materials needed for turning the four into shades, and they made the transition 346 years ago on a cold, misty night. Not wanting to draw too much attention to themselves, they began using their contacts and money to create political and economic power for themselves while trying to keep a low profile.

Shortly after their transition, they learned of their ability to pass back-and-forth from Between quite by accident while disposing of a body. This fortunate chain of events led to a further increase in their prestige around Castorhage's halls of power, and they leveraged this ability when dealing with the various power players in town.

Sorin quickly used his newfound powers to consolidate his hold on several of Castorhage's low-level politicians and quietly made sure no one ever connected his public face with his private business. He joined the Illuminati, using his ability to pass back and forth from Between to curry favor with the Royal Family. For several years, Sorin maintained the façade of a wealthy businessman who got lucky with some age-defying magic before disappearing from public life to avoid questions and harassment.

Needing a public successor, Sorin and Krista raised an orphan boy named Seth who was absolutely loyal, setting him up as the new face of the business. Sorin publicly declared Seth as his successor before claiming that the magics he had used to maintain his youth finally were wearing off and that it was time to retire. As the years passed, Seth became a man, who in turn found Claude, another orphan boy, to raise and carry on the public face of the "family." Seth never made the transition to a shade, choosing instead to age gracefully.

Claude, however, was sneakier and more selfish than Seth.

The Elite Today

Claude always felt like an outsider, and neither Seth nor Sorin did much to remedy this perception. They both felt Claude needed to “grow up” and learn the hard way that life in Castorhage meant that nothing is ever free. Claude, quickly sensing that Sorin did not like or trust him, tried to recruit Krista to his cause, hoping her maternal instinct would allow her to see his side of things.

What Claude had not counted on was Krista’s complete lack of compassion for him. While Krista had found Seth and taken an active role in raising him, she played no role in finding or raising Claude and never really liked him. She agreed with the others about the “tough love” angle to his upbringing. Krista despised the soft, weak aristocrats she catered to, and enjoyed the measure of power they did not realize she had over them. Watching Claude take on the entitled attitude of the other aristocrats only hardened her feelings toward him.

Sorin and the other original members of the Schadow Elite were very careful in developing their network, limiting the number of people who knew their true nature. Only a few more close associates became full shades over the first few decades. Claude, while part of their inner circle by default, had yet to earn their complete trust when it came to inheriting the family business. Claude’s only hope of joining the shades was if he could accumulate more wealth and power for the Elite without drawing the wrath of other houses down on them.

Sensing he still was not fully in his grandparents’ good graces, Claude became angry and disillusioned, and soon began looking for a way to get revenge on his family. He sought to take what he thought was his by right. While Seth was practical by nature, he had worked hard to raise Claude and felt some measure of responsibility for his outcome. He brought Claude and Sorin together one night to try to hash things out and put an end to the growing rift.

The night did not go well, and an argument ensued. Claude, calling out to a dark patron, murdered Seth. The unknown patron who answered Claude’s plea for power also empowered him with the ability to ignore many of the powers Sorin had as a shade. But Sorin was crafty and had prepared for such an eventuality.

A horrific battle followed in the Cristescu manor that night, and Claude was never seen again. The family quickly called a meeting of the entire organization, and several members were killed for their suspected roles in the attempted coup. Sorin suspected the Royal Family was behind Claude’s power play, but was never able to prove it.

Since that night, Sorin and Krista have been more careful about raising their “sons and daughters” — babies stolen from their cribs and raised as their own. They typically try to raise the children in secret until it becomes time to pass the torch. Loyalty is tested constantly, and any kind of failure means death. Several children are raised as brothers, sisters, and cousins to keep a close family atmosphere. Their education is thorough, and only the smartest and toughest are revealed publicly.

Those who aren’t chosen but deemed useful become key agents in gathering information and acquiring more wealth. Some eventually become shades themselves. Any child they consider a failure either is shunted into another part of the business in a disposable position, or as in a few cases, never seen again. It is rumored the swyne and the Schadow Elite have mutual agreements in place for disposing of bodies.

The current public face of the Cristescu clan is Ursula, a raven-haired woman of incredible intellect and athleticism. Krista raised her with two brothers and a sister, eventually choosing her as the most promising of the four children to lead the next generation in public. Ursula assumed public duties two years ago, and has not disappointed her parents.

Today, the Elite number several dozen people spread throughout Castorhage, although low-level operatives unaware of their true masters would bolster this number to more than 100. Only about a dozen are true shades, most of them the adopted sons and daughters of Sorin and Krista. Absolute loyalty must be demonstrated before the “gift” is given.

Sorin still is in absolute control of the Elite and recently emerged with Krista in public as Ursula’s “cousin.” The rest of the original six Elite currently maintain their anonymity, although Malik has become something of an urban legend due to his tendency to further his experiments in necromancy with members of the lower classes around Castorhage.

Krista runs the day-to-day operations of their gambling dens, while Sorin oversees the entire operation in and around Castorhage. Krista is not to be trifled with, and Sorin defers to her advice, having learned early on that she is a shrewd negotiator with the ability to see the larger picture.

Sorin has a very quiet demeanor, except when being social, where he aims to be the life of the party. His underlings have learned that the quieter he gets behind closed doors, the more their life may be in danger. Sorin keeps a calm composure, and on the rare occasions when he loses his temper, the offending party rarely lives to tell about it.

Jak is a regular at the gambling houses, but usually wears some kind of disguise and is careful to never overstay his welcome and draw undue attention. Jak does most of the dirty work when it comes to highly dangerous assignments, particularly from the Royal Family. Jak is the official liaison between the Elite and the Royal Family, and any attempt to circumvent this is quietly squashed and never spoken of again.

Reynard and Morgana currently operate a very lucrative cat burglar organization, using the information provided by The Elite to enrich themselves, or to do favors for other members of the organization. They spread the wealth around to the family.

The Schadow Elite Around the Lost Lands

Members of the Elite have spread to other cities in the Lost Lands. For campaigns that started in other cities (such as Bard’s Gate, Freegate, or even along the Razor Coast), the Schadow Elite have agents looking after their interests in some of the larger towns through which they fence their stolen goods. The Referee may use one of these operatives to bring the players into a Blight campaign.

The exact businesses these NPCs are engaged in are left up to the Referee to devise to fit her campaign, but all of them have their hands in some sort of criminal enterprise as well as legitimate businesses. Secrets are where the real money is made, but there’s nothing wrong with an honest day’s work.

A few sample agents of the Elite are presented below:

Bard’s Gate: Lucius, a shade, was the public face of the Castorhage operation until about 30 years ago. Lucius grew bored with being Sorin’s lackey, but realized the opportunity expansion outside Castorhage could bring. Being in Bard’s Gate has given him some measure of independence, and he is thinking about expanding the Elite into a larger organization in the city over the next decade.

LUCIUS

CR 8

XP 4,800

Male human shade bard 8 (*Tome of Horrors* 4 “Shade”) NE Medium outsider (augmented human)

Init +3; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., see in darkness;

Perception +12

AC 17, touch 13, flat-footed 14 (+4 armor, +3 Dex,)

hp 48 (8d8+8); fast healing 5

Fort +5; **Ref** +11; **Will** +9; +4 vs bardic performance, language-dependent, and sonic

Defensive Abilities ; **SR** 19

Weaknesses light blindness

Speed 50 ft.

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Melee +1 frost short sword +9/+4 (1d6+3/19–20 plus 1d6 cold)
Special Attacks bardic performance 23 rounds/day (counter-song, dirge of doom, distraction, fascinate [DC 19], inspire competence +3, inspire courage +2, suggestion [DC 19])
Spells Known (CL 8th):
 3rd (3/day)—*clairaudience/clairvoyance, dispel magic, scrying*
 2nd (5/day)—*blur, darkness, detect thoughts* (DC 17), *silence* (DC 17)
 1st (5/day)—*alarm, charm person* (DC 16), *comprehend languages, cure light wounds, disguise self*
 0 (at will)—*detect magic, ghost sound, mage hand, message, prestidigitation, read magic*

Str 14, **Dex** 16, **Con** 12, **Int** 16, **Wis** 13, **Cha** 21

Base Atk +6/+1; **CMB** +8; **CMD** 21

Feats Arcane Armor Mastery, Arcane Armor Training, Combat Casting^B, Skill Focus (perform [oratory]), Skill Focus (Knowledge [local])

Skills Appraise +11, Bluff +16, Diplomacy +16, Intimidate +12, Knowledge (local) +18, Perception +12, Perform (act) +16, Perform (oratory) +19, Profession (accountant) +8, Sense Motive +12, Sleight of Hand +10, Spellcraft +12, Stealth +14 (+22 in dim light [+26 in darkness]); **Racial Modifiers** +8 Stealth in dim light (+12 in darkness)

Languages Common, Draconic, Giant

SQ bardic knowledge +4, lore master 1/day, shadow images, shadow stride, shadow walk, versatile performance (act, oratory)

Other Gear +1 frost short sword, chain shirt, cloak of deep shadows, small doll sewn from tattered cloth, 20gp, 31sp

Shadowy Resolve (Ex) A shade gains a +2 bonus on all saving throws. It loses these bonuses in areas of bright light or normal light.

Shadow Stride Once per day, a shade of 9 Hit Dice or more can use *teleport without error* to reach any shadow area on the same plane. Alternately, it can use *plane shift* once per day to reach the plane of shadow.

Shadow Walk Once per day, a shade of 9 Hit Dice or more can create an effect identical to a *shadow walk* spell (CL equals the shade's Hit Dice). This ability transports only the shade and non-living objects it is carrying.

CULTS OF THE SUNDERED KINGDOM: Emily, a shadow-bonded thief, wanted to strike out on her own, and felt that leaving Castorhage was the best decision she ever made. She is fiercely loyal to Krista, who found her in the streets and saw her potential. She intends to make the transition to a shade within the next few years, provided her businesses in the Sundered Kingdom are successful.

EMILY (SCHADUW ELITE OPERATIVE)

CR 8

XP 4,800

Female shadow-bonded human rogue 9
 NE Medium humanoid (augmented human)
Init +4; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; **Perception** +15

AC 19, touch 15, flat-footed 14 (+4 armor, +4 Dex, +1 dodge)
hp 62 (9d8+9 plus 9)

Fort +4; **Ref** +10; **Will** +6

Defensive Abilities evasion, improved uncanny dodge, trap sense +3, uncanny dodge

Speed 35 ft.

Melee masterwork dagger +10/+5 (1d4/19–20)

Ranged masterwork shortbow +10/+5 (1d6/x3)

Special Attacks sneak attack +5d6

Str 11, **Dex** 18, **Con** 13, **Int** 16, **Wis** 16, **Cha** 17

Base Atk +6/+1; **CMB** +6; **CMD** 21

Feats Dodge, Fleet, Mobility, Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot^B, Shot on The Run, Weapon Finesse^B

Skills Acrobatics +16, Appraise +15, Bluff +14, Climb +12, Diplomacy +13, Disable Device +12, Disguise +11, Escape Artist +11, Intimidate +13, Knowledge (Local) +13, Perception +15, Profession (Accountant) +10, Sense Motive +13, Sleight of Hand +15, Stealth +24

Languages Common

SQ rogue talent (Fast Stealth, Finesse Rogue, Ledge Walker, Surprise Attack), trapfinding

Combat Gear *dust of disappearance, potion of cure light wounds*, 5 doses of large scorpion venom; **Other Gear** masterwork shortbow, 20 arrows, 4 masterwork daggers, +2 leather armor, cloak of light shadows, thieves' tools

BORDERLAND PROVINCES: Barnabus, a shadow-bonded cleric, works best by himself. After an argument with Sorin he almost didn't survive a few years ago, he decided he could best serve the Elite, and himself, by being elsewhere. Sorin agreed. While loyal, he prefers his current position away from the daily contact with the rest of the organization. Barnabus is very opinionated, and is firmly convinced he is rarely ever wrong. If he wants your opinion, he will tell you what it is.

BARNABUS (SCHADUW ELITE OPERATIVE)

CR 9

XP 6,400

Male shadow-bonded human cleric of Mirkeer 10
 NE Medium humanoid (augmented human)

Init +2; **Perception** +4

Aura evil

AC 16, touch 12, flat-footed 14 (+4 armor, +2 Dex)

hp 89 (10d8+30 plus 10)

Fort +10; **Ref** +3; **Will** +11

Speed 30 ft.

Melee +1 dagger +11/+6 (1d4+3/19–20)

Special Attacks channel negative energy 5/day (DC 19, 5d6)

Spell-like Abilities (CL 10th; touch +9):

7/day—*hand of the acolyte, touch of darkness*

1/day—*dispelling touch*

5 rounds/day—*eyes of darkness*

Spells Prepared (CL 10th; touch +9):

5th—*raise dead, slay living* (DC 19), *summon monster V*^D (summons 1d3 shadows)

4th—*inflict critical wounds* (DC 18, x2), *sending, shadow conjuration*^D, *unholy blight* (DC 18)

3rd—*deeper darkness*^D, *dispel magic, remove curse, remove disease, speak with dead*

2nd—*blindness*^D (DC 16), *darkness, eagle's splendor, hold person* (DC 16), *silence* (DC 16), *spiritual weapon*

1st—*cause fear* (DC 15), *comprehend languages, detect good, inflict light wounds* (x2), *obscuring mist*^D

0 (at will)—*bleed* (DC 14), *detect magic, detect poison, read magic*

D domain spell; **Domains** Darkness, Magic

Str 14, **Dex** 14, **Con** 16, **Int** 12, **Wis** 19, **Cha** 15

Base Atk +7/+2; **CMB** +9; **CMD** 21

Feats Blind-Fight^B, Combat Casting, Greater Spell Penetration, Improved Channel, Spell Penetration, Toughness, Weapon Focus (dagger)^B

Skills Intimidate +12, Knowledge (arcana) +14, Knowledge (planes) +14, Knowledge (religion) +12, Spellcraft +14, Stealth +12

Languages Common, Infernal

Other Gear +1 dagger, mithral chainshirt, cloak of light shadows, obsidian holy symbol of Mirkeer

The Schadum Elite's Goals

Sorin is quite happy to stay in the shadows to which he has sworn himself. While he briefly flirted with becoming a larger power player in Castorhage, the effort needed to unseat the powers-that-be was not something he wanted to spend a good chunk of his newfound immortality doing. Plus, his suspicions that the Royal Family used Claude against him due to some early jobs he had undertaken for them has made him very reluctant to get involved in the town's larger political games. He tells everyone he is but a small fish in a large ocean and is content with his place in it.

The Elite instead concentrate on acquiring money and information. Sorin is very fond of pitting the larger criminal and political organizations against each other to keep the attention off his own enterprises, and he has largely been successful in that regard.

Fencing stolen goods through his network and two gambling dens are the main source of the Cristescu fortune, although they have their hands in several smaller businesses.

Sorin prefers to seed rumors through trusted friends to manipulate public opinion and to draw attention away from where he will be operating. If any of their low-level operatives are caught, they rarely know enough to harm his organization, and if they do, they quickly are taken care of.

Introduction to the Schadum Elite

Introducing low-level players to the Schadum Elite should come in the form of a note left by a stranger offering good money for "easy" work. If the players are at least 5th level, then an actual agent of the organization approaches them. For players above 8th level, that operative is a shadow-bonded agent.

The Elite also are not beyond setting the characters up and then "saving" them so they owe the organization a debt — a debt that never quite gets paid off. New faces in town mean opportunities for infiltrating other guilds and businesses where familiar faces may not be able to gain access.

No one meets an actual shade until a measure of trust is earned, and they use the shadows to make their entrance and exit to impress upon the characters their power. All of the Elite's missions involve secrets, either exposing them or acquiring them for future blackmail.

If the characters are successful in their first mission, they are invited to a home of one of the operatives where a larger, and more dangerous, mission will be offered. If that mission is successful, then the characters may be offered actual positions within the organization.

Characters who run afoul of the group's intentions may find themselves cast out, although this usually means the characters vanishes and is never heard from again. Sorin cannot allow his secrets to be known.

To prove themselves, operative must usually perform a task requested by the Elite. These initial tasks usually include gathering information on rival organizations or the ruling elite in Castorhage. Characters might also present secrets or hidden knowledge to the group to prove their worth.

Using the Schadum Elite

Being a low-level member of the Schadum Elite is not that difficult, other than the character must answer when called upon. A character might go months without ever seeing or hearing from his contact within the organization, but that does not mean they are not watching.

A full member of the organization spends his or her time adding to the Elite's coffers and protecting them from outside threats. A member of the inner circle may begin to participate in the politics of the organization, and may finally be invited into the shadows for the final gift.

Shadowy Operatives

While not a requirement to work for the Elite, any character who wants to move up in the organization eventually has to formally swear themselves to the shades that run it. This is done through a ritual that binds the character to the shadows. It begins the process by which the character eventually may become a shade, but the character is free to stop the progression any time he wishes. That being said, once a person joins the Elite, it is forever. No one retires or quits this organization.

The process for becoming a shade will not happen until the character earns the Elite's complete trust over several years of loyal service. This would be a long-term goal of a campaign. They have a system for earning their trust, and there is no deviation from this system. The Referee, of course, is free to adjust this system so it best fits her campaign, but this is not something given lightly. In the more than 300 years since the Elite came into being, they have allowed only around a half dozen other people to become shades, and four of them were their adopted children.

After prospective members show they can be useful and, more importantly, loyal, to the Elite, Sorin offers the prospect (or prospects) a permanent position within the organization. Malik has devised a magical mark only the shades and their shadow-bonded followers can identify. Everyone at this level is referred to as an operative, having sworn service to the Schadum Elite, putting the group's interests above their own.

The magical mark is visible only to other shades, shadows, agents, and operatives of the Schadum Elite, or creatures with the ability to perceive the invisible (via *detect invisibility*, for example) and does not fade. You can make this mark visible to other creatures for 1 round. *Dispel magic* cast against a 12th-level caster can remove a mark.

Falling into Shadow

Once a character successfully completes three missions, kills someone in defense of the Elite, or performs a special service, he may earn the right to further access the powers and privileges the Schadum Elite may offer. As they progress in the organization, completing tasks and earning money without bringing the wrath of another house or the authorities on them allows the character to become more powerful and more influential in the Schadum Elite.

Operatives who reach this level are referred to as shadow-bonded and undergo a ritual in which they gain the Shadow-Bonded template. This minor template changes their sub-type to augmented human, and grants the ability to blend into the shadows (+8 inherent bonus to Stealth; this bonus is replaced by the racial Stealth bonus if the character ever becomes a shade.).

Embracing the Shadows

The final reward is an invitation into the inner circle and becoming a shade, a gift that has been given only a handful of times since the original

six shades made their pact. But there may come a time when Sorin, along with the rest of the original six shades, decides it is time to increase their ranks and offers a character the chance to become a ruling member of the Elite. This would be toward the end of the campaign as a grand finale if the Referee decides to take the game in that direction.

This is not something a character should undertake lightly. Despite the promise of immortality, the character will be confined to the shadows and forever be uncomfortable in full sunlight. Their appearance will change and they will always need to be aware that the forces of good may no longer dismiss them as a minor threat.

This ritual must be performed in an enclosed room in the light of candles that provide a lot of shadows. If successful, the subject becomes a shade (*Tome of Horrors 4* "Shade"). The ritual begins with the subject willingly offering herself to the Plane of Shadow. The primary caster decorates the subject with the remains of a mummy and baptizes him with unholy water. A diamond focuses the candlelight on a mirror, which is held above the subject's face, whose soul then is drawn out of the body, through the diamond, and into the mirror where the transformation occurs. The diamond is consumed in the process, which is irreversible. The character must make a DC 20 Will save; if the save fails, he gains one permanent negative level and the ritual must be restarted from the beginning. If the save is successful, the creature's form bleeds shadow until he is engulfed in darkness. He rises as a newly created shade.

Betraying the Schaduw Elite

Betrayal is not advisable, as the Cristescu clan does not tolerate any wavering loyalty. If a character decides to serve his own self-interest at the expense of the Elite and is caught doing so, he can expect to be attacked by a group of shadows at the very least, and he will never be able to do business with the Elite again.

Sorin has a long memory and becomes a lifelong adversary of any group of adventurers that crosses his organization. He has adapted to his immortality well over the last few hundred years and has learned patience. Betraying the Schaduw Elite creates long-living enemies with long memories of the characters' offenses.

Should the Referee build an adversarial campaign with the Elite, Sorin tries to use others to deter or kill the characters first. He does not get involved until absolutely necessary, but once he does, the characters have awakened a sleeping dragon. The six original members use every power at their disposal to take out what they perceive to be a threat to their continued immortality and lifestyle. Their one weakness is that they have become very comfortable in the current situation and are very loathe to leave and start over elsewhere.

The Schaduw Elite and The Illuminati

Sorin has been a member of the Illuminati since just before he became a shade. He has used his connections to take over several businesses, and he has a controlling interest in one bank, although to be fair, the other interested partners in that bank have no say in how it's run. They are simply public faces.

The Schaduw Elite and Between

Being a shade does have its benefits beyond immortality. True shades have the ability to use their shadow magic to enter and leave Between and have used this ability to strand foes there on more than one occasion. The Schaduw Elite are unable to use this ability in full sunlight.

"The shadows reveal as much as they hide, all you have to do is look."
— *The Looming Shadow, Act II, Scene IV*

Schaduw Elite Headquarters

The Schaduw Elite's headquarters currently are incorporated into a three-story, Gothic house. The grounds are well kept and surrounded by a 6ft-high brick wall with an ornate wrought-iron gate. The top of the wall is decorated by spikes to discourage jumpers.

The interior of the home is left for the Referee to design as fits her campaign. The upstairs rooms contain no significant treasures or secrets outside of the expensive furnishing and decorations, which are tasteful. The actual headquarters are described below.

The entrance to the hideout is through a secret door in the library disguised as part of a bookcase that takes up the entire wall. The door can be opened only by a shade or a person bearing the Schaduw Elite's mark (as *arcane lock*). Behind the bookcase, stairs wind their way down to the entry room.

1. Entryway

This room is sparsely furnished with two couches and four chairs. An oak bookshelf stands against the far wall, loaded with thick, leather tomes. A few lamps cast dim light and long shadows around the room. A large, patterned carpet covers the center of the stone floor.

Sorin holds meetings with his associates in this room. The bookcase conceals a secret door with a passage to Sorin's private office. It isn't particularly hard to find (DC 15 Perception), but Sorin loved the idea of hiding the door behind a bookcase. If the players are meeting Sorin for the first time, this is the room in which the meeting happens. Sorin uses the shadows to make a dramatic entrance to impress them.

2. Passageway

This nondescript hallway has several ornate doors and is carpeted in a soft red tone. Each door is decorated with a lit candleholder that casts flickering light throughout the hallway. The archways are elaborately worked wood, varnished to a fine sheen.

While this hallway has no tricks or traps, there is no reason not to make the players paranoid that there might be multiple things to worry about in this hallway should they enter it as intruders. If the Schaduw Elite is aware of an incursion, **3 shadows** are in the hallway.

THE SCHADUW ELITE

SHADOWS (3)

XP 800

hp 19 (Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Bestiary "Shadow")

CR 3 armor, cloak of deep shadows, bag of holding (type I)

3. Training Room

This large room contains several types of gym equipment. It appears most of the equipment is well taken care of and the room looks as if it recently has been cleaned.

This room contains a weight bench plus fixtures related to honing skills for rogues. Sorin is a believer in continuous training and expects his employees and agents keep their edge. Other than the training equipment, there is little else in the room.

4. Sorin's Private Office

Lushly furnished, this wood-paneled room is dominated by a large desk, plush chairs, and a large map of the city along the wall behind the desk. There are several marks on the map, but no tags. A smaller desk to the side holds several bottles. The carpet in this room is a deep crimson and appears thicker than the hallway carpet.

Sorin holds meetings here for members of the Elite and the Illuminati. This also is where much of the serious planning happens for his business dealings. The bottles contain various vintages of wine and whiskey from around the region. A secret door on the south wall (DC 20 Perception) leads to an escape tunnel. Sorin's stats are provided here for the Referee, but he can be found wandering throughout the headquarters.

SORIN CRISTECU

XP 19,200

Male human shade rogue 12(Tome of Horrors 4 "Shade")
NE Medium outsider (augmented human)

Init +8; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., see in darkness;

Perception +17

CR 12

AC 17, touch 15, flat-footed 12 (+2 armor, +4 Dex, +1 dodge)
hp 82 (12d8+12 plus 12); fast healing 5

Fort +7; **Ref** +14; **Will** +8

Defensive Abilities evasion, improved uncanny dodge, trap sense +4, uncanny dodge; **SR** 23

Weaknesses light blindness

Speed 55 ft.

Melee +2 human bane dagger +17/+12 (1d4+7/19–20)

Special Attacks sneak attack +6d6

Str 16, **Dex** 19, **Con** 13, **Int** 18, **Wis** 15, **Cha** 16

Base Atk +9/+4; **CMB** +12; **CMD** 26

Feats Dodge, Fleet, Improved Initiative^B, Mobility, Skill Focus (Knowledge [local]), Spring Attack, Weapon Finesse^B, Wind Stance

Skills Acrobatics +15, Appraise +19, Bluff +16, Climb +14, Diplomacy +18, Disable Device +15, Disguise +18, Escape Artist +15, Intimidate +18, Knowledge (local) +25, Perception +17, Profession (gambler) +13, Sense Motive +17, Sleight of Hand +15, Stealth +19 (+27 in dim light [+31 in darkness]); **Racial Modifiers** +8 Stealth in dim light (+12 in darkness)

Languages Abyssal, Common, Infernal, Draconic

SQ rogue talent (Crippling Strike, Fast Stealth, Finesse Rogue, Improved Evasion, Surprise Attack, Trap Spotter), shadow images, shadow stride, shadow walk

Other Gear +2 human bane dagger, masterwork leather

Shadowy Resolve (Ex) A shade gains a +2 bonus on all saving throws. It loses these bonuses in areas of bright light or normal light.

Shadow Stride Once per day, a shade of 9 Hit Dice or more can use *teleport without error* to reach any shadow area on the same plane. Alternately, it can use *plane shift* once per day to reach the plane of shadow.

Shadow Walk Once per day, a shade of 9 Hit Dice or more can create an effect identical to a *shadow walk* spell (CL equals the shade's Hit Dice). This ability transports only the shade and non-living objects it is carrying.

5. Krista's Private Office

A study in luxury, this room is very opulent, with a crystal chandelier hanging from the ceiling and expensive lamps, figurines, and furniture, including two very comfortable-looking chairs in the center of the room. The carpet in this room is plush and colored a very light red.

Krista often brings her children here during the day if she's busy doing the books. She also conducts her day-to-day business here. Very few people outside the Schadow Elite ever see this office, and if they do, chances are it will be one of the last places they see as Krista doesn't like bringing the people who handle her daily business affairs in here. Failure is not tolerated.

KRISTA CRISTECU

XP 4,800

Female human shade rogue 8(Tome of Horrors 4 "Shade")
NE Medium outsider (augmented human)

Init +3; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., see in darkness;

Perception +14

CR 8

AC 17, touch 17, flat-footed 13 (+3 deflection, +3 Dex, +1 dodge)

hp 56 (8d8+8 plus 8); fast healing 5

Fort +5; **Ref** +11; **Will** +7

Defensive Abilities evasion, improved uncanny dodge, trap sense +2, uncanny dodge; **SR** 19

Weaknesses light blindness

Speed 50 ft.

Melee +1 merciful dagger +12/+7 (1d4+3 plus 1d6/19–20 nonlethal)

Special Attacks sneak attack +4d6

Str 10, **Dex** 17, **Con** 12, **Int** 16, **Wis** 16, **Cha** 20

Base Atk +6/+1; **CMB** +6; **CMD** 22

Feats Dodge^B, Mobility, Skill Focus (Knowledge [local]), Skill Focus (Profession [accountant]), Skill Focus (Sense Motive), Weapon Finesse^B

Skills Acrobatics +10, Appraise +14, Diplomacy +16, Disguise +16, Escape Artist +10, Intimidate +16, Knowledge (local) +17, Perception +14, Profession (accountant) +17, Profession (gambler) +14, Sense Motive +17, Sleight of Hand +14, Stealth +14 (+22 in dim light [+26 in darkness]); **Racial Modifiers** +8 Stealth in dim light (+12 in darkness)

Languages Common, Draconic, Dwarvish, Elven

SQ rogue talent (Fast Stealth, Finesse Rogue, Surprise Attack, Trap Spotter), shadow images, shadow stride, shadow walk

Other Gear +1 merciful dagger, ring of protection +3, cloak of deep shadows, ledger book, blank parchment rolled and tied with a red ribbon, pouch containing 42gp

Shadowy Resolve (Ex) A shade gains a +2 bonus on all sav-

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ing throws. It loses these bonuses in areas of bright light or normal light.

Shadow Stride Once per day, a shade of 9 Hit Dice or more can use *teleport without error* to reach any shadow area on the same plane. Alternately, it can use *plane shift* once per day to reach the plane of shadow.

Shadow Walk Once per day, a shade of 9 Hit Dice or more can create an effect identical to a *shadow walk* spell (CL equals the shade's Hit Dice). This ability transports only the shade and non-living objects it is carrying.

6. Malik's Private Office

Bookshelves line the walls of this room, crammed full of books, papers and scrolls. There is a desk along the far wall, although it is hard to see underneath all the books and papers on it. In one corner is a globe in an ornate wooden tripod holder. The stone floor is stained in several places. A door on the south wall looks as if it has been touched by flame around its edges.

Malik spends very little time here unless he is researching something, although there is no real order to how the shelves are filled. Malik keeps only a handful of low-level scrolls and spellbooks here. The rest of his collection is in his private library at another location. The Referee is free to sprinkle some magic scrolls, potions, or books in here as fits her campaign.

The room is guarded by **3 lesser shadows** that attack anyone who enters the room not accompanied by Malik.

MALIK
XP 12,800

CR 11

Male shade sorcerer 11 (*Tome of Horrors* 4 "Shade")
CE Medium outsider (augmented human)

Init +2; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., see in darkness; **Perception** +5

AC 15, touch 15, flat-footed 12 (+2 deflection, +2 Dex, +1 dodge)

hp 74 (11d6+22 plus 11); fast healing 5

Fort +7; **Ref** +9; **Will** +11; +4 on saves vs. poison

Resist electricity 10; **SR** 22

Weaknesses light blindness

Speed 50 ft.

Melee +1 dagger +7 (1d4+4/19–20)

Special Attacks abyssal claws (2 claws +8, 1d6+2 plus 1d6 fire, usable 6 rounds per day), shadow images

Spells Known (CL 11th; melee touch +8, ranged touch +9):
5th (4/day)—*cone of cold* (DC 19), *dismissal* (DC 19), *dominate person* (DC 19)

4th (6/day)—*bestow curse* (DC 18), *crushing despair* (DC 18), *ice storm*, *stoneskin*

3rd (7/day)—*deep slumber* (DC 17), *dispel magic*, *lightning bolt* (DC 17), *protection from energy* (DC 17), *rage*

2nd (7/day)—*blur* (DC 16), *bull's strength*, *darkness*, *detect thoughts* (DC 16), *shatter* (DC 16), *web* (DC 16)

1st (7/day)—*burning hands* (DC 15), *cause fear* (DC 15), *charm person* (DC 15), *chill touch*, (DC 15), *feather fall* (DC 15), *hypnotism* (DC 15)

0 (at will)—*arcane mark*, *bleed* (DC 14), *daze* (DC 14), *detect magic*, *flare* (DC 14), *mage hand*, *open/close* (DC 14), *read magic*, *resistance* (DC 14)

Bloodline Abyssal

Str 12, **Dex** 14, **Con** 14, **Int** 13, **Wis** 11, **Cha** 19

Base Atk +5; **CMB** +6; **CMD** 19

Feats Arcane Strike, Combat Casting, Dodge, Empower Spell, Eschew Materials⁸, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Maxi-

mize Spell, Toughness

Skills Bluff +18, Intimidate +13, Knowledge (arcana) +15, Knowledge (planes) +10, Perception +5, Spellcraft +15, Stealth +2 (+10 in dim light, +14 in darkness), Use Magical Device +12; **Racial Modifiers** +8 Stealth in dim light (+12 in darkness)

Languages Common, Abyssal

SQ shadow images, shadow stride, shadow walk

Other Gear +1 dagger, cloak of deep shadows, a small onyx figurine (100 gp), pouch containing 65gp and 4 rubies worth 50gp each

Shadowy Resolve (Ex) A shade gains a +2 bonus on all saving throws. It loses these bonuses in areas of bright light or normal light.

Shadow Stride Once per day, a shade of 9 Hit Dice or more can use *teleport without error* to reach any shadow area on the same plane. Alternately, it can use *plane shift* once per day to reach the plane of shadow.

Shadow Walk Once per day, a shade of 9 Hit Dice or more can create an effect identical to a *shadow walk* spell (CL equals the shade's Hit Dice). This ability transports only the shade and non-living objects it is carrying.

SHADOW, LESSER (3)

CR 1/2

XP 200

CE Medium undead (incorporeal) (*Tome of Horrors* Complete "Shadow, Lesser")

Init +2; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; **Perception** +8

AC 14, touch 14, flat-footed 11 (+1 deflection, +1 dodge, +2 Dex)

hp 6 (1d8+2)

Fort +2; **Ref** +2; **Will** +2

Defensive Abilities channel resistance +1, incorporeal, shadow blend; **Immune** undead traits

Speed fly 40 ft. (good)

Melee incorporeal touch +2 (1 Strength damage)

Str —, **Dex** 15, **Con** —, **Int** 5, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 14

Base Atk +0; **CMB** +2; **CMD** 15 (can't be tripped)

Feats Dodge

Skills Fly +6, Perception +8, Stealth +6; **Racial Modifiers** Perception +4

Strength Damage (Sp) The touch of a lesser shadow deals 1 point of Strength damage to a living foe. A creature drained to Strength 0 by a lesser shadow dies. This is a negative energy effect.

Shadow Blend (Ex) In any light condition less than bright light, the lesser shadow's form blends into the surrounding shadows, granting it concealment.

7. Malik's Laboratory

This room is full of laboratory equipment. Beakers, bottles, vials, and other assorted glassware. A bloodstained table occupies the middle of the room, although the bloodstains on its surface suggest it has been used recently. Two large cabinets sit along the far wall, and cobwebs hang from the ceiling

This laboratory is where Malik practices his experiments on his unwilling subjects. The lucky ones die and are disposed of. What happens to the unlucky ones is best not spoken of. The urban legends around the Night Butcher did not originate from children's tales, as Malik keeps insisting.

This room may contain whatever the Referee sees fit for his campaign. Malik keeps an extensive supply of materials related to necromancy in this

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room and has a few potions and scrolls. All of his major magic items are kept at a different location.

A secret door in the northeast corner (DC 20 Perception) leads to **Area 8**.

8. Ritual Chamber

This room is steeped in shadow from candles strategically placed in the many corners of this octagon-shaped room. The center of the room is dominated by a raised stone platform with a symbol carved into the floor that doesn't quite seem to ever stay in focus. A large wardrobe sits in the far corner, almost disappearing in the shadows.

This room is where the Schaduw Elite perform the rituals that bind the shadows to their most trusted agents, and transform the privileged few into shades. The border between the Prime Material Plane and the Plane of Shadow is very thin in this room and it is guarded at all times by a **shadow demon**. It attacks anyone who does not have a shadow mark, or who is not accompanied by a member of the Schaduw Elite.

Inside the wardrobe are 4 *cloaks of light shadows*. At the Referee's discretion, there could be 1 *cloak of deep shadows* waiting for its future owner.

DEMON, SHADOW XP 3,200

CR 7

CE Medium outsider (chaotic, demon, evil, extraplanar, incorporeal) (*Tome of Horrors Complete* "Demon, Shadow")
Init +8; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; **Perception** +20

AC 18, touch 18, flat-footed 14 (+4 deflection, +4 Dex)

hp 59 (7d10+21)

Fort +5; **Ref** +11; **Will** +7

Defensive Abilities incorporeal; **DR** 10/cold iron or good;

Immune cold, electricity, poison; **Resist** acid 10, fire 10;

SR 18

Weaknesses sunlight powerlessness

Speed fly 40 ft. (perfect)

Melee 2 claws +11 touch (1d6 plus 1d6 cold), bite +11 touch (1d8 plus 1d6 cold)

Special Attacks pounce, sprint, shadow blend

Spell-like Abilities (CL 10th):

At will—*deeper darkness*, *fear* (DC 18), *greater teleport* (self only), *telekinesis* (DC 19)

3/day—*shadow conjuration* (DC 18), *shadow evocation* (DC 19)

1/day—*magic jar* (DC 19), *summon* (level 3, 1 shadow demon 50%)

Str —, **Dex** 18, **Con** 17, **Int** 14, **Wis** 14, **Cha** 19

Base Atk +7; **CMB** +11; **CMD** 29

Feats Blind-Fight, Combat Reflexes, Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes

Skills Acrobatics +14, Bluff +14, Fly +22, Knowledge (local) +12, Knowledge (planes) +12, Perception +20, Sense Motive +12, Stealth +14; **Racial Modifiers** +8 Perception

Languages Abyssal, Common, plus any two; telepathy 100 ft.

Sprint (Ex) Once per minute, a shadow demon increases its fly speed to 240 feet for 1 round.

Shadow Blend (Su) During any conditions other than bright light, a shadow demon can disappear into the shadows as

a move-equivalent action, effectively becoming invisible. Artificial illumination or light spells of 2nd level or lower do not negate this ability.

Sunlight Powerlessness (Ex) A shadow demon is utterly powerless in bright light or natural sunlight and flees from it. A shadow demon caught in such light cannot attack and can take only a single move or standard action. A shadow demon that is possessing a creature using *magic jar* is not harmed by sunlight, but if it is struck by a *sunbeam* or *sunray* spell while possessing a creature, the shadow demon is driven out of its host automatically.

Miscellaneous Magic Items

Cloak of Light Shadows

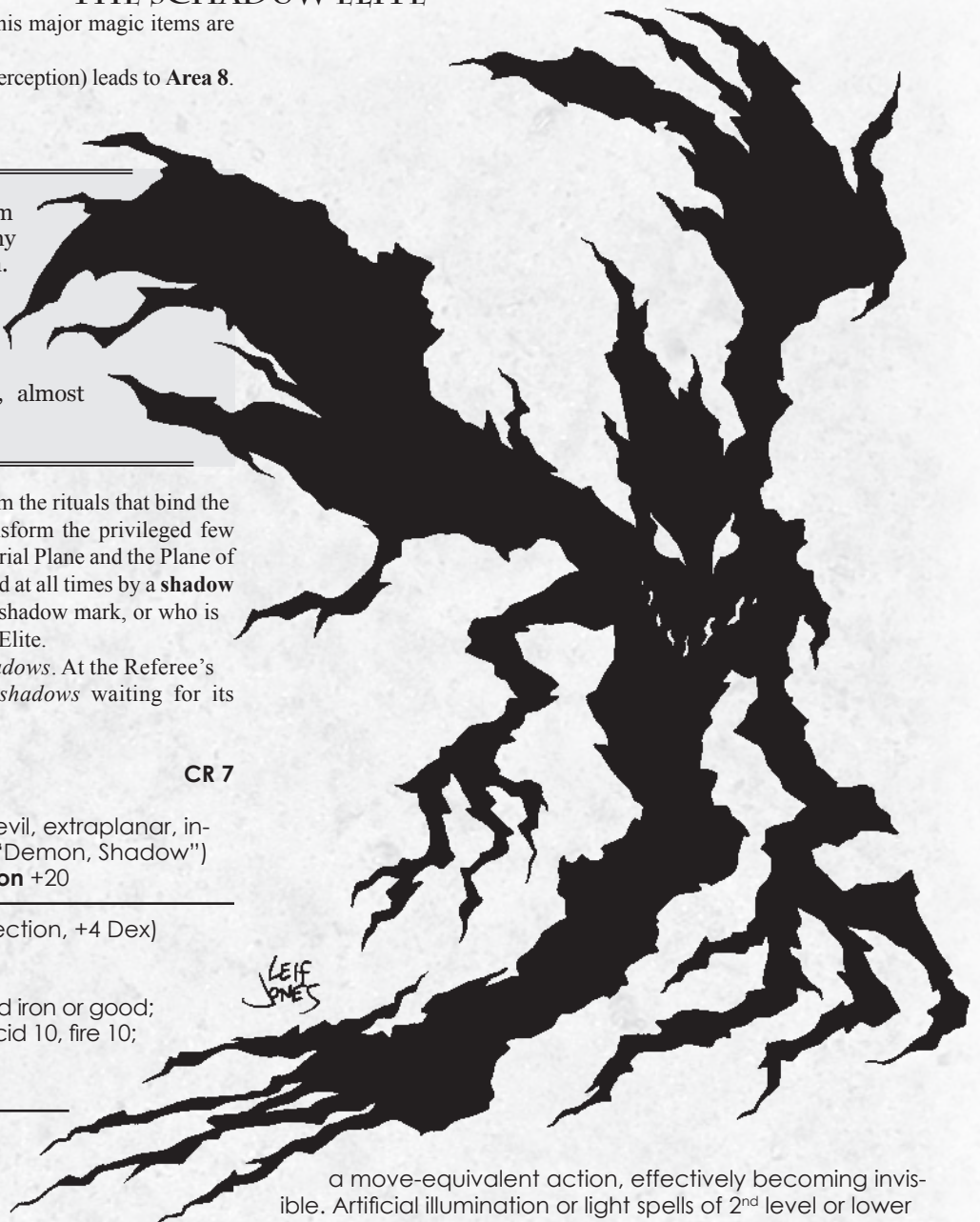
CLOAK OF LIGHT SHADOWS

Aura moderate conjuration; **CL** 7th

Slot shoulders; **Price** 10,800 gp; **Weight** 1 lb.

DESCRIPTION

Malik created these cloaks for use by the organization. It is given to elite members who have become Schaduw Elite brothers. It is gray in color, but deepens to black in dim light. It allows the wearer to use *dimension door* once a day to travel



between shadows (areas of dim light or darker). If it is left in full sunlight for three straight days, it disintegrates into dust.

CONSTRUCTION

Requirements Craft Wondrous Item, *darkness*, *dimension door*; **Cost** 5,400 gp

Cloak of Deep Shadows

CLOAK OF DEEP SHADOWS

Aura moderate conjuration; **CL** 7th
Slot shoulders; **Price** 50,400 gp; **Weight** 1 lb.

DESCRIPTION

Malik created these cloaks for the inner circle and everyone who becomes a shade. There currently are 12 in existence. The process for making these is much harder and more time consuming. Getting Malik the materials is part of the price of becoming a full shade in the organization. It is possible he would make one of these for a non-shade under the right circumstances, but those circumstances have never come to pass. This cloak is dull black in color and seems to absorb any light around it, putting the wearer in constant shadow (as a constant *darkness* spell). It allows the wearer to use *dimension door* three times a day to travel between shadows (areas of dim light or darker). If it is left in full sunlight for three straight days, it disintegrates into dust.

CONSTRUCTION

Requirements Craft Wondrous Item, *darkness*, *dimension door*; **Cost** 25,200 gp

Blight Storylines

Below are some adventure plots Referees can expand upon using the Schadu Elite.

What Happened to Claude?

Claude was not completely destroyed in the confrontation with Sorin. Claude was instead banished to the Plane of Shadow as punishment for his failure and is now bound to a powerful outsider. Should Sorin offend the wrong person, it is possible the offended may call upon the same powers Claude did and that he could return as a powerful adversary. Conversely, Sorin himself may call upon Claude to atone for his misdeeds and unleash his tortured soul on the characters.

Ursula's Final Path to Shade-dom

Ursula decides she wants to make the transition to become a shade. She directs the characters to find the item for her ritual. This could be for characters hoping to also eventually make the transition.

Ursula's Siblings: What are They Up To?

All the siblings have a role within the organization, but all have their own plots to further their ambitions. Many vile things are afoot around Castorhage, and the family tries to take as much money as they can from the filth.

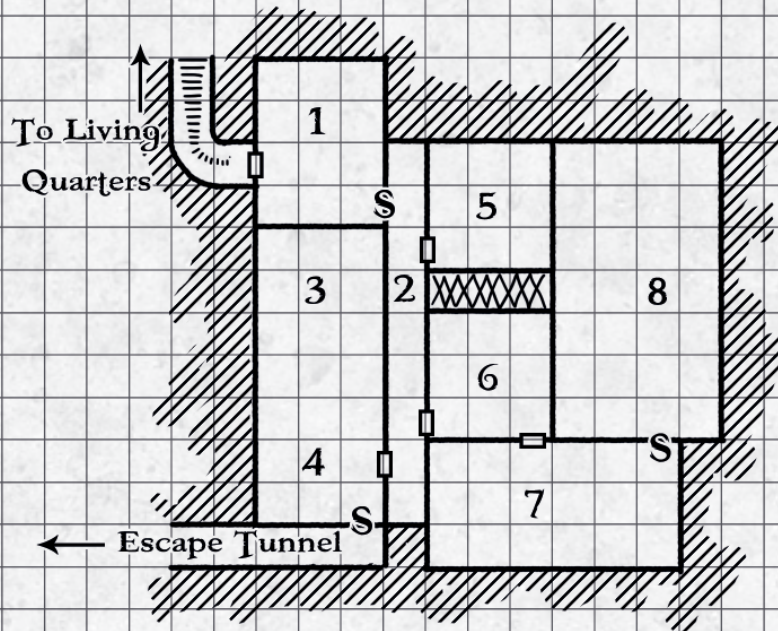
The Elite and Between

With the shades' ability to pass back and forth to the Between without risk of being stuck, they are very useful to the Royal Family, and are employed occasionally to "take care of" certain enemies or people who know too much. Malik is the prime go-between for the characters in this instance, and they will find he is a very uncomfortable person to be around. He has a fondness for rude "compliments" and an uncanny ability to discern people's phobias.

Malik does not share everything with Sorin, and it is possible for the characters to be told their mission is none of his business. Sorin does not usually challenge Malik on his side projects as long as they don't interfere with the main business, or their ability to stay out of the crosshairs of political intrigue.

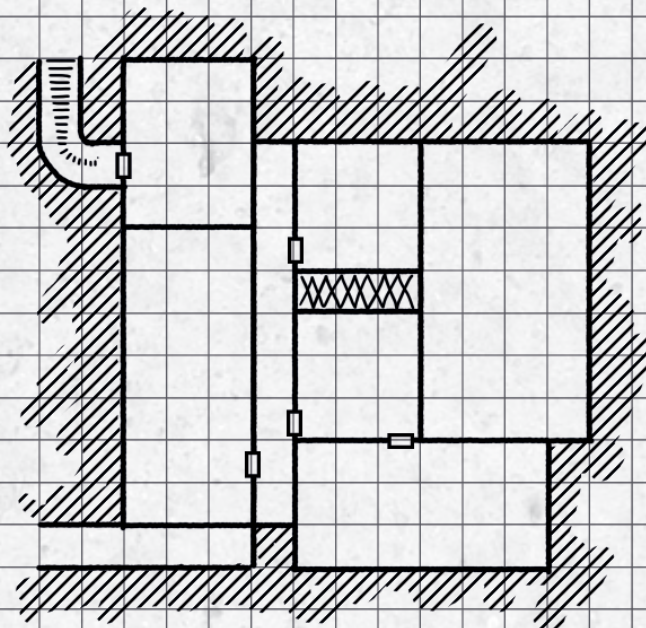
The Schadow Elite

1 Square - 5 Feet



The Schadow Elite

1 Square - 5 Feet



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