

# Session 20 - Shepherd's Garrison

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## Summary

The party emerged from their harrowing first foray into the deep haze, battered and over-contaminated after encounters with hostile trees that had drained their resources. The crystalline dust in the thick, rolling haze had irritated their throats and forced them to make constitution saves against the dangerous contamination levels. Despite having a map to guide them, the unpredictable nature of the deep haze meant visibility could shift from normal to zero in moments, making navigation treacherous. They had successfully avoided most dangers, sneaking past ratlings in an ambush alley and dispatching a few while hypnotizing others, but the toll on their bodies was evident. As they approached Shepherd's Gate, hoping to find friendly passage, a warning bell suddenly rang out from the fortified position. Almost simultaneously, a green flare shot up near the gate, creating an ominous atmosphere that suggested they were arriving in the midst of some kind of attack or emergency. The party realized they were still too far away to be the cause of the alert, but Syndle characteristically assumed the alarm was for him, joking that they recognized "Little Dragon" approaching. The timing seemed fortuitous - perhaps they could help with whatever crisis was unfolding and earn safe passage through the gate in return. Upon closer approach, about a block from Shepherd's Gate, the party discovered an impressive garrison stronghold on the inner side of the fortification. The fortress featured imposing 50-foot tall towers with 20-foot diameters, connected by crenellated battlements and reinforced with circular bastions topped with ballistas. Green-cloaked urban rangers manned the walls and towers with crossbows, creating a formidable defensive position. A stone bridge connected the gate to the garrison at the 50-foot height level, allowing defenders to move between positions without descending to ground level. The source of the alarm became clear as three massive haze husks barreled toward the walls - grotesque, bird-like creatures with one significantly larger than the other two. These ugly, shambling monstrosities posed a serious threat to the fortified position, and the party found themselves in position to either help defend the gate or attempt to slip past during the chaos. Syndle, ever the pragmatist despite his low health, took a healing potion before the inevitable combat, restoring 10 hit points to prepare for the fight ahead. Combat erupted as the party engaged the haze husks while the garrison defenders provided supporting fire. Thanks to Syndle's magical mace, the entire party gained advantage on their initiative rolls, allowing them to act quickly in the developing battle. Syndle, despite having no rage abilities remaining and only 18 hit points, charged forward with characteristic recklessness to attack the largest haze husk. His twin

strikes with reckless attacks connected, dealing 3 and 6 points of damage to the creature's ankles in what he jokingly called a "dishonorable" attack from behind. The urban rangers opened fire with crossbows and ballistas, though their accuracy proved disappointing in the early stages of the battle. Most of their shots went wide, with one ballista bolt tearing harmlessly through abandoned sheds and piled debris rather than finding its target. Meanwhile, the two smaller haze husks ignored the combat below and began climbing the fortress walls to directly assault the defenders above. Tark positioned himself strategically behind cover and began picking off enemies with his longbow, while Oira prepared to provide magical support from a protected position. Oira's divine magic proved crucial as she cast healing word on the wounded Syndle, restoring 7 hit points and granting him an additional weapon attack as part of the spell's effect. She followed this with toll the dead targeting the large haze husk, but the creature's surprising wisdom allowed it to resist the necrotic magic entirely. Xakarium positioned himself carefully to avoid catching Syndle in his area effect spells, then spent 3 sorcery points to recover a second-level spell slot for Aganazzar's Scorchers. The spell proved devastatingly effective, striking multiple haze husks for 9 fire damage each and setting them ablaze with ongoing flames. The battle intensified as the largest haze husk retaliated against the party's assault with a devastating trample attack. All four party members were forced to make DC 16 strength saving throws to avoid being knocked prone, and each took 4 points of bludgeoning damage as the massive creature stomped through their ranks. The situation grew worse when a second large haze husk arrived, this one even more grotesquely mutated than the first, oozing with sickness and corruption. This new threat demonstrated a horrifying ability, ripping chunks of its own mutated flesh and hurling them at Oiroa, Syndle, and Xakarium, forcing constitution saves against the fetid attack. The flesh-hurling attack proved nearly fatal for Syndle, who collapsed unconscious and began making death saving throws while his companions fought desperately around him. Oiroa responded by using her Pearl of Power to regain a third-level spell slot, then cast mass healing word to restore 5 hit points to all party members within range, bringing Syndle back to consciousness. She followed this by using channel divinity to regain a second-level spell slot and summoned her spiritual weapon - a magical gavel that materialized and immediately scored a critical hit against the bloodied large haze husk, dealing enough damage to crush its skull and kill it outright. Xakarium continued his magical assault with guiding bolt and firebolt spells, while Ned provided ranged support from an elevated position with crossbow bolts and fire magic. The urban rangers finally found their mark with ballista fire, landing multiple 3d10 damage hits that proved devastating to the remaining haze husks. Tark's precise longbow work and the combined magical assault from the party quickly eliminated the remaining threats, with Xakarium's final firebolt dealing 13 points of damage to finish off the last large haze husk. As the immediate threat ended, additional complications emerged as gnolls appeared from hiding positions to the south, attempting to use the haze husk attack as a distraction to approach the gate. However, the urban rangers had prepared for such tactics, and the humanoid canines ran directly into a gauntlet of spike traps and crossfire from concealed sniper positions in converted buildings. The gnolls were quickly repelled, their opportunistic assault failing against the well-prepared defenses. With the battle concluded, the party was welcomed into Shepherd's Gate by Ansom, Petra's brother and a ranking member of the urban rangers. He recognized the party immediately and expressed profound gratitude for their previous rescue of his sister, thanking them profusely for their heroic actions. Ansom granted them entry without the usual gate taxes, acknowledging their assistance in defending the fortress during the attack. However, when he enthusiastically clapped Syndle on the back in greeting, the exhausted barbarian immediately

collapsed, highlighting just how depleted the party's resources had become. During their recovery, disturbing signs of contamination became apparent among the party members. Tark's hair had begun falling out in patches, creating a concerning case of alopecia that suggested ongoing contamination effects. Even more alarming, Yazzy had developed functional gills, a clear sign that the deep haze exposure had caused significant biological changes. These persistent symptoms indicated that their contamination levels had reached dangerous thresholds requiring immediate magical intervention. The party learned about available contamination treatment options from local religious organizations. The Silver Order's High Flame Keeper Ophelia Reed could provide purge contamination spell services for 400 gold, while the Falling Fire followers at Hendrick Farm offered similar services. Syndle, as a member of the Falling Fire, could receive free treatment and was close to qualifying for their sacrament ceremony, which would allegedly grant immunity to future contamination. Oiroa and Xakarium decided to seek treatment from the Silver Order, while Tark borrowed 150 gold from Oiroa to afford the purification process. The party planned an extended downtime period of several weeks to address their various needs and complete pending projects. Their meteorite weapons were nearing completion, with each weapon providing one extra damage as a base property along with unique magical abilities. Yazzy ordered a +1 enchantment for his rapier at a cost of 1,200 gold, with the weapon gaining finesse properties that would allow him to use dexterity instead of strength for attacks. Syndle's battle axe would receive similar treatment, unusually becoming a finesse weapon despite being an axe. Additional magical equipment discussions included Oiroa's interest in an Amulet of the Devout for extra channel divinity uses and the astronomical 6,000 gold cost of a Pearl of Power for spell slot recovery. The party arranged payment plans for expensive items and confirmed that their extended rest would allow completion of all weapon enchantments and magical modifications. They also planned to address persistent contamination effects with lesser restoration or cure disease spells, hoping to eliminate symptoms like Yazzy's gills and Tark's hair loss that remained even after magical purification. The session concluded with the party safely through Shepherd's Gate and on to Emberwood Village, planning their recovery and equipment upgrades while preparing for Syndle's upcoming sacrament ceremony with the Falling Fire. Their successful defense of the fortress had earned them goodwill with the urban rangers and access to the services they needed to address their contamination and equipment needs. The extended downtime would allow them to emerge stronger and better equipped for future ventures into the dangerous deep haze, though the persistent effects of contamination served as a sobering reminder of the risks they faced in their ongoing adventures.

## Scenes

### Approaching Shepherd's Gate

The party approaches Shepherd's Gate after escaping the deep haze and encounters a warning bell and green flare

signaling danger.

- Party traveled through deep haze with crystalline dust and contamination
- Encountered and dealt with ratlings in an ambush alley
- Heard warning bell and saw green flare near Shepherd's Gate
- Discovered a large garrison stronghold inside Shepherd's Gate with 50-foot towers
- Spotted three haze husks approaching the walls, one much larger than the others
- Syndle took a healing potion before combat for 10 hit points

## Battle with Haze Husks at Shepherd's Gate

Combat erupts as the party engages three haze husks attacking the fortified gate while garrison defenders provide support.

- Initiative rolled with party having advantage due to Syndle's magical mace
- Syndle attacked the large haze husk with reckless attacks, hitting twice for 3 and 6 points of damage
- Garrison crossbow archers and ballista fired at the haze husks, mostly missing
- Tark used longbow attacks from cover, hitting for significant damage
- Two smaller haze husks climbed the walls to attack defenders
- Oiroa cast healing word on Syndle for 7 hit points and toll the dead on the large husk
- Xakarium positioned for Aganazzar's Scorcher spell using 3 sorcery points
- Xakarium cast Scorching Ray hitting multiple husks for 9 fire damage each, setting them ablaze
- Ned fired crossbow bolts and firebolts from elevated position
- Large Haze Husk trampled the party with DC 16 strength saves, dealing 4 bludgeoning damage and knocking prone
- Second large Haze Husk hurled fetid flesh requiring constitution saves
- Syndle went unconscious and began making death saving throws
- Oiroa used Pearl of Power to regain third-level spell slot and cast Mass Healing Word for 5 hit points to all
- Oiroa cast spiritual weapon as a gavel that critically hit and killed the first large haze husk
- Xakarium killed second large haze husk with firebolt for 13 damage
- Tark finished off remaining enemies with longbow attacks
- Urban Rangers eventually hit with ballistas dealing 3d10 damage
- Gnolls emerged from hiding using the distraction to approach the gate but were repelled by ranger defenses

# Welcome at Shepherd's Gate

After the battle, the party is welcomed into Shepherd's Gate by Ansom, who thanks them for previously saving his sister Petra.

- Ansom recognizes the party and thanks them profusely for saving Petra
- Party is granted entry without paying normal gate taxes
- Ansom welcomes them warmly, though Syndle collapses from exhaustion when clapped on the back
- Party notices Tark's hair falling out and Yazzy has grown gills from contamination
- Discussion about contamination treatment options available from religious groups
- Party learns about the fortress layout with stone bridge connecting gate to garrison at 50 feet height

## Contamination Effects and Treatment Planning

The party discovers ongoing contamination effects and discusses options for purification and extended downtime.

- Tark's hair is falling out due to contamination effects
- Yazzy has grown gills from contamination
- Party learns about purge contamination spell available from Hooded Lanterns for 400 gold
- Oiroa and Xakarium decide to get contamination purged by Silver Order's Ophelia Reed
- Syndle plans to get purged by Falling Fire followers for free as a member
- Tark borrows 150 gold from Oiroa to afford contamination purging
- Discussion of weapon enchantments and completion of meteorite weapons
- Yazzy orders rapier enchantment for 1,200 gold
- Party plans extended downtime of several weeks to complete all projects
- Syndle prepares for sacrament ceremony with Falling Fire to become immune to contamination
- Party learns contamination prevents long rest benefits at 3+ levels
- Discussion of using lesser restoration or cure disease for persistent effects

## Equipment Upgrades and Magical Items

# The party finalizes weapon enchantments and discusses new magical equipment during their planned downtime.

- Party learns their meteorite weapons do one extra damage as base property
- Yazzie's rapier gets finesse property and special magical abilities
- Syndle's battle axe becomes a finesse weapon with +1 enchantment
- Discussion of flame tongue longsword dealing 2d6 fire damage
- Oiroa considers purchasing Amulet of the Devout for extra channel divinity
- Pearl of Power costs 6,000 gold but provides third-level spell slot recovery
- Party discusses payment plans for expensive magical items
- Weapons will be completed during extended downtime period
- Special properties revealed for completed meteorite weapons

## Npcs

### Urban Rangers

Green-cloaked defenders of Shepherd's Gate who man the walls, towers, and ballistas. They struggle with accuracy in combat initially but eventually help defeat the attacking creatures. They recognize some party members from previous encounters and rotate duties at the gate.

### Ansom

Petra's brother and a member of the Urban Rangers/Hooded Lanterns at Shepherd's Gate. He recognizes the party and is profusely grateful to them for previously saving his sister Petra. Has authority to waive gate taxes and grant entry to the fortified compound. Shows protective concern when Syndle comments about his sister being pretty.

### Haze Husks

Large, ugly creatures attacking the walls of Shepherd's Gate. The larger ones are particularly grotesque and dangerous, with one being disgustingly ugly, oozing, and capable of hurling chunks of its own mutated flesh as weapons. They can trample enemies and climb walls to attack defenders.

### Gnolls

Humanoid canines that emerge from hiding during the Haze Husk attack, using the distraction to approach the gate from the south. They are repelled by the Urban Rangers' defensive preparations including spike traps and crossfire from sniper positions.

### High Flame Keeper Ophelia Reed

A member of the Silver Order who can provide spell casting services including purge contamination spells for 400 gold. She can help remove contamination for non-members who are on good terms with the organization.

## River

A tiefling mage of the Amethyst Academy who the party plans to speak with about their newly acquired third-level spells and magical equipment needs. She handles weapon enchantments and magical item creation.

## Hendrick Farm Followers

Members of the Falling Fire religious group located at Hendrick Farm who can provide contamination purging services. They offer free services to members and sympathizers of their faith.

# Locations

## Shepherd's Gate

A heavily fortified gate with a small fortress featuring 50-foot tall towers, 20-foot diameter circular bastions topped with ballistas, thick iron portcullises, and crenellated battlements. Green-cloaked urban rangers man the walls and towers. A stone bridge connects the gate to the garrison at 50 feet height, with a drawbridge system and defensive spike traps in a moat area. The surrounding buildings have been converted into sniper positions.

## Deep Haze

A dangerous area with thick, rolling haze containing crystalline dust and delirium that causes throat irritation and requires constitution saves. Visibility can change rapidly from normal to zero, and the contaminated environment can cause party members to become lost and accumulate contamination levels.

## Emberwood Village

The village where the party plans to return for extended downtime, rest, and various services including weapon enchantments and contamination healing. Home base for the party's operations and recovery.

## Hendrick Farm

A farm location where the Falling Fire followers gather, offering contamination purging services for their members and sympathizers. One of the locations where party members can receive religious

healing services.

## Tawson's Creek

Alternative name mentioned for the farm location where Falling Fire followers provide contamination healing services. May be the same location as Hendrick Farm or a nearby area.

# Spells

## Healing Word

A bonus action healing spell cast by Oiroa that restored 7 hit points to Syndle and allowed him to make one weapon attack as part of the spell's effect. Used to bring Syndle back from unconsciousness during the battle.

## Toll the Dead

A necromancy cantrip cast by Oiroa targeting the large haze husk, requiring a DC 15 wisdom saving throw. The haze husk succeeded on the save and took no damage from the necrotic spell.

## Scorching Ray

Cast by Xakarium as a second-level spell using 3 sorcery points. Successfully hit the large Haze Husk and smaller ones, dealing 9 fire damage each and setting them ablaze with ongoing fire effects.

## Shocking Grasp

Attempted by Xakarium as a cantrip against the large Haze Husk but missed the attack roll despite the creature not wearing metal armor. Would have provided advantage if the target had metal armor.

## Mass Healing Word

A third-level healing spell cast by Oiroa using a recovered spell slot from her Pearl of Power. The spell healed multiple party members for 5 hit points each and granted Tark an additional weapon attack.

## Spiritual Weapon

A spell cast by Oiroa after using channel divinity to regain a spell slot, manifesting as a magical gavel. The spiritual weapon scored a critical hit against the large Haze Husk, dealing significant damage and ultimately killing the creature.

## Guiding Bolt

A first-level spell cast by Xakarium that creates a flash of light and deals radiant damage. He used this spell while repositioning during the battle against the Haze Husks.

## Firebolt

A cantrip cast by Ned from an elevated position, dealing 13 points of fire damage to a Haze Husk and contributing to finishing off the creatures. Also used by Xakarium to kill the second large Haze Husk.

## Prayer of Healing

A healing spell that Oiroa can cast to restore hit points to multiple party members after their combat encounter. Provides group healing during their recovery period and requires 10 minutes to cast.

## Purge Contamination

A newly developed third-level spell that can remove all levels of contamination from a target, though it causes three levels of exhaustion. Available as a spell casting service for 400 gold from religious orders like the Silver Order and Falling Fire followers.

## Lesser Restoration

A spell mentioned as a potential cure for Tark's hair loss condition caused by contamination effects. The party considers using it to address ongoing contamination symptoms that persist after purge contamination.

## Cure Disease

A spell considered as an alternative treatment for ongoing contamination effects that persist even after magical purification, such as Yazzy's gills and Tark's hair loss.

# Items

## Magical Mace

A weapon carried by Syndle that grants advantage on initiative rolls to the entire party. One of its special properties that provides tactical benefits in combat situations.

## Potion of Healing

Healing potions used by party members during and after combat. When taken as a bonus action, they heal 2d4+2 hit points, but when taken as an action they provide full effect. Syndle used one before combat for 10 hit points and another during battle.

## Pearl of Power

A magical item owned by Oiroa that costs 6,000 gold and allows the user to regain a third-level spell slot once per day. Extremely valuable for spellcasters as it effectively provides 400+ gold worth of spell services daily.

## Meteorite Weapons

Special weapons being crafted from meteorite metal that deal one extra damage as a base property and have unique magical abilities. The party is having various weapons made and enchanted, including Yazzy's rapier and Syndle's battle axe.

## Yazzy's Rapier

A meteorite rapier being enchanted with +1 enhancement for 1,200 gold. The weapon gains finesse property allowing use of dexterity instead of strength, and has special magical abilities that activate under specific conditions.

## Syndle's Battle Axe

A meteorite battle axe being enchanted with +1 enhancement. The weapon becomes a finesse weapon despite being an axe, allowing Syndle to use dexterity for attacks, and provides additional magical properties.

## Flame Tongue Longsword

A magical longsword that deals an additional 2d6 fire damage. One of the party members receives this weapon as part of their equipment upgrades during the downtime period.

## Amulet of the Devout

A magical item from Tasha's guide that provides a +1 spell bonus and grants one additional channel divinity use. Oira considers purchasing the lowest tier version for the extra channel divinity rather than the spell bonus.

## Mithril Shield

A shield made from mithril metal that provides +1 to AC bonus. The party discusses its properties and benefits during their equipment planning sessions.

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