

# PLAYER'S HANDOUT 1: ECOLOGY OF THE SHADOW MITE

Shadow mites (*Umbra volatilis*) are small, furry creatures that consume shadow energy. They are agile fliers and can be found near areas of deep darkness. Shadow mites are drawn to darkness. Historically found throughout Faerûn, populations have dwindled dramatically in recent years due to unknown causes. Some believe the shadow mite to be extinct, reports from reliable sources indicate that the creatures can still be found in certain areas of the Shadowfell.

## OVERVIEW

**Height:** 7 - 10.5 cm; **Length:** 11 - 18 cm; **Weight:** 450 - 830 grams; **Lifespan:** 5 months - 2 years

## ORIGIN

Experts disagree on the origin of the shadow mite. Many Netherese scholars believe that shadow mites are remnants of the Shadow Weave itself, shards of shadow energy scattered when the Shadow Weave collapsed. Divine historians argue that shadow mites were created by the sun god Amaunator to consume darkness. Others fear that they are creatures of Shar, consuming shadow in order to concentrate its power. Nexkile Danith, renowned professor of ecology at the Lady's College of Silverymoon, has done extensive research on the history and ecological importance of shadow mites. Danith wrote "The current body of evidence is inadequate to accurately determine the origin of *Umbra volatilis*. However, examination of ancient texts and artwork indicate that this species existed in pre-Spellplague times, as far back as 1368 DR."

## HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

Historical evidence suggests that shadow mites were used for a variety of purposes when they were more prevalent. In cities they were often used to illuminate the streets at night. Groups of shadow mites would be released into the city streets at dusk and their consumption of darkness would make travel safer. Wealthy individuals sometimes kept shadow mites stored inside lamps for illumination. The creatures were also immensely popular as pets. Many casters believed shadow mites to have magical properties and would use the creatures in rituals.

## HABITAT/RANGE

Shadow mites live in areas of dense darkness, preferring temperate climates with low annual rainfall. Areas of intense gloom serve as shadow mite feeding grounds. Large shadow mite populations thrive in the Ordulin Maelstrom. Small groups of shadow mites likely remain in the Shadowfell in isolated pockets. Shadow mites can travel easily between Faerûn and the Shadowfell, able to blink to the other plane when they are in immediate danger.

## DIET

Shadow mites feed almost exclusively on raw shadow energy. They dart in and out of areas of intense darkness with their mouths open. Their bodies are specially adapted to convert shadow energy into metabolic energy. Bright streaks of light typically accompany their feeding, but in most feeding grounds the shadows are so intense that darkness quickly quenches this trail of light. Several people have reported seeing them feed on the bodies of dead shadow creatures or parasitically attached to Shades. These sightings have not yet been confirmed.

## APPEARANCE

Shadow mites are small, furry flying creatures. They have soft, downy fur that is typically brown or black and sometimes has beige to light brown streaks. Shadow mites are agile fliers and typically move using sudden diving or sweeping motions. Their small, tufted ears lay flat prior to each dive in order to increase their aerodynamics. They make soft cooing sounds as they fly.

## LIFESPAN AND REPRODUCTION

The lifespan of a shadow mite is typically between 5 months and 2 years. Shadow mites bred in captivity generally live longer than their wild counterparts. They have no known natural predators. It is suspected that the leading cause of death is over-consumption of shadow energy. Shadow mites reproduce rapidly, but their reproductive process is poorly understood.

## PLAYER'S HANDOUT 2: TERRAIN FEATURES FOR ENCOUNTER 3B

**Traveling Between the Planes:** At the beginning of combat, half of the PCs are transported to a Shadowfell reflection of the world. There is no line of sight or line of effect between the planes. However, you can see a hazy reflection of the other world. As a minor action, a PC can use an Arcana check to switch places with a PC on the other plane. This is not considered teleportation due to how thin the barrier between planes is in this location. Allies such as mounts and animal companions cannot be transported to the Shadowfell. The result of your check determines how successful you were:

Hard DC: The PC switches places with a PC of their choosing on the other plane.

Moderate DC: The PC switches places with a random PC on the other plane.

Easy DC: The PC loses a healing surge and switches places with a random PC on the other plane.

Fail: The PC loses a healing surge and cannot move to the other plane.

**Maelstrom:** The Maelstrom has an insidious influence, poisoning minds and causing horrifying hallucinations. What is your PC's biggest nightmare? Whatever it is, it is inside you clawing to get out or crawling under your skin or... At the beginning of each of your turns, you use a free action to try to get whatever it is out (as described in the hazard in the DM's statistics blocks for this encounter).

**Radiant Pillar:** Creatures that end their turn inside the pillar or are pushed into it are blinded to the end of their next turn and take radiant damage equal to the AL or equal to twice the AL if they are shadow creatures.

**Faerûn Illumination:** Faerûn is brightly lit.

**Shadowfell Illumination:** Creatures with normal vision can only see 2 squares. Creatures with low-light vision can only see 5 squares. Creatures with darkvision are unaffected. Additional light sources such as sunrods do not function here.

**Shadowfell Dampening:** Radiant powers used in the Shadowfell deal half damage.

## PLAYER'S HANDOUT 3: ENCOUNTER 3B SKILL CHALLENGE

**Important Notes:** This is not a traditional skill challenge since there are no skill checks and all successes are automatic. Prior to the combat, your group was given several ritual components which need to be used at a specific spot on the map. You can distribute the ritual components amongst yourselves however you wish. While adjacent to the location that corresponds to your particular item, you need to spend a minor action to gain a success. (The success is automatic, no skill check required.) The corresponding items and locations are listed below. You need to start on the dais so that your item becomes attuned to the ritual.

**1. Location: Ritual Circle; Item: Pendulum; minor action while adjacent (automatic success) (1 success)**

You spin the pendulum counterclockwise in one complete circle.

**2. Location: Altar; Item: Book; minor action while adjacent (automatic success) (1 success)**

You read a short passage from the book.

**3. Location: Brazier; Item: Candelabra; minor action while adjacent (automatic success) (1 success)**

Flames spring to life as you touch the candelabra to the brazier.

**4. Location: Fountain; Item: Vial of Unicorn Tears; minor action while adjacent (automatic success) (1 success)**

You add a few drops of the liquid to the fountain.

**5. Location: Compass Rose; Item: Sextant; minor action while adjacent (automatic success) (1 success)**

You attune the sextant to the compass rose.

**6. Location: Whole Statue; Item: Sapphire; minor action while adjacent (automatic success) (1 success)**

You touch the sapphire to each eye of the statue.

## PLAYER'S HANDOUT 4: SKILL CHALLENGE FOR ENCOUNTER 4

**Important Notes:** With Athletics and Thievery, the PC must be adjacent to the ritual stone. With Arcana, Nature or Religion, the PC must be within 5 squares of the stone. Attack powers may also be used against the ritual stones. The Purple Sphere of Shar seems to bubble with malevolent energy that grows uncontrollably if unchecked. Each PC may attempt only one check or attack per round.

**Goal:** Destroy all the ritual stones to stop the corruption of the Aspect

**Primary Skills:** Arcana, Athletics, Nature, Religion, and Thievery

**Alternate Options:** Any melee or ranged attack power can be used to destroy a stone.

**Arcana, Minor action (Hard DC) or Standard action (Moderate DC) (1 success)**

Using your knowledge of the arcane arts, you temporarily dampen the magic protecting the ritual stone, using the Purple Wall of Shar to destroy it.

**Athletics, Minor action (Hard DC) or Standard action (Moderate DC) (1 success) (must be adjacent to ritual stone)**

Using your brute Strength, you crush the stone shielding one ritual caster.

**Nature, Minor action (Hard DC) or Standard action (Moderate DC) (1 success)**

You call upon the forces of Nature to block the Maelstrom's energy from feeding the ritual stone. The Purple Sphere instantly destroys it.

**Religion, Minor action (Hard DC) or Standard action (Moderate DC) (1 success)**

Using the power of your faith, you momentarily disrupt the malefic purity of the Purple Sphere of Shar near the Ritual Stone and the Stone explodes into fragments.

**Thievery, Minor action (Hard DC) or Standard action (Moderate DC) (1 success)**

Cleverly, you remove the stone from the Purple Sphere of Shar entirely, breaking its protection.

**At-Will Ranged or Melee Attack Power, Standard action (Defenses = AL+10, AL+12 for AC) (1 success)**

You swing or shoot at the ritual stone, breaking it into pieces if you hit. The Sphere seems to react to power used nearby it. This may have a negative effect.

**Encounter Ranged or Melee Attack Power, (Defenses = AL+10, AL+12 for AC) (1 success)**

You swing or shoot at the ritual stone, instantly crushing into dust before the Purple Sphere can even respond if you hit.

## PLAYER'S HANDOUT 5: TERRAIN FEATURES FOR ENCOUNTER 5

**Deadly Maelstrom:** It is extremely dangerous to be inside the Maelstrom. At the start of each of their turns, creatures not native to the Maelstrom (including mounts, animal companions, etc.) must make a death saving throw.

If the result of your death saving throw is:

**20+:** You can spend a healing surge.

**10-19:** Nothing happens.

**1-9:** The Maelstrom drains some of your life force. You must choose one of the following negative effects:

- ~ You fail a death saving throw. In this combat, you die when you fail 3 death saving throws even if you are currently at positive hit points.
- ~ You lose an Action Point. You do not gain any benefit for using an Action Point in this way.
- ~ You lose 2 healing surges.

If you are dying, you still make death saving throws at the end of your turn as normal.

**Leaving the Maelstrom:** There are two ways you can flee from the Maelstrom and leave the combat. (1) Voluntarily move off any edge of the map. (2) Spend a standard action activating the bauble given to you by the Harpers to teleport safely back to the Vault of the Sages. You are removed from the combat and cannot reenter combat (the chaos of the Maelstrom makes it impossible to find your way back). The entire party does not need to leave the Maelstrom at the same time. When to flee the Maelstrom is an individual choice; injured PCs may choose to flee while other PCs stay and fight.

**Dangerous Skies:** The intense winds make it impossible to fly more than 15 feet above the ground.

**Illumination:** The area is dimly illuminated with a dull, sickly blue-green light.

**White Mist:** Creatures that end their turn in the White Mist can choose to spend a healing surge as a free action at the end of their turn but also become slowed until the end of their next turn.

**Bloody Mist:** Creatures that end their turn in the Bloody Mist are affected by Bloodlust until the end of their next turn. Bloodlust creatures can score a critical hit on an 18-20 but also take a -4 penalty to all defenses.

**Wailing Ghosts:** Creatures that end their turn in a square with Wailing Ghosts take psychic and necrotic damage equal to the AL. After taking this damage, the creature becomes insubstantial until the start of their next turn.

**Column of Darkness:** The columns of darkness are areas where necrotic energy seeps through from the Shadowfell. They are columns of pure darkness and block line of sight. Non-shadow creatures that enter or start their turn inside the columns of darkness take necrotic damage equal to the AL. A creature can only take this damage once per round from a given column of darkness. Shadow mites live in these areas and can be captured from adjacent squares (see Skill Challenge).

## PLAYER'S HANDOUT 6: ENCOUNTER 5 SKILL CHALLENGE

**Important Notes:** This combat is an endurance encounter. The goal of this encounter is to collect as many shadow mites as possible before fleeing the Maelstrom. It is not necessary to kill any of the monsters (although killing monsters can be helpful). All of the skill checks are minor action (Hard DC) or standard action (Moderate DC). Each PC may only collect one shadow mite per round (although you can make multiple attempts per round). Success is on a sliding scale - the more shadow mites you collect the better. If you die in the Maelstrom, any shadow mites you had collected are lost. Knowing when to flee is a useful skill!

**Goal:** Capture as many shadow mites as possible before fleeing the Maelstrom.

**Primary Skills:** Acrobatics, Athletics, Bluff, Insight, and Stealth

You do not need to have a free hand to capture a shadow mite, although you do need to be adjacent to it.

**Acrobatics, Minor action (Hard DC) or Standard action (Moderate DC) (1 success)**

Skillfully maneuvering your *shadow catcher*, you deftly trap a shadow mite as it flits through the air.

**Athletics, Minor action (Hard DC) or Standard action (Moderate DC) (1 success)**

You snatch a shadow mite and manage to hold onto the squirming little thing long enough to stuff it in your *shadow catcher*.

**Bluff, Minor action (Hard DC) or Standard action (Moderate DC) (1 success)**

With soothing noises, you coax a shadow mite into your *shadow catcher*.

**Insight, Minor action (Hard DC) or Standard action (Moderate DC) (1 success)**

You can predict the little critter's movements and position your *shadow catcher* such that the shadow mite flies right in.

**Stealth, Minor action (Hard DC) or Standard action (Moderate DC) (1 success)**

You sneak up on the shadow mite and capture it before it even knows you were there.