The adventurers set out to rescue a drow noble captured by a party of kuo-toa raiders. The rescue might be the result of negotiations with the noble’s house, or of information discovered in the course of the characters’ previous activities. In any event, rescuing the prisoner provides a sure way to find favor with the drow—or to gain a bargaining chip for later use against the dark elves.

The kuo-toa raiders inhabit a warren of half-submerged caverns deep in the Underdark. Assume that the adventurers know the location of the site, or improvise a short skill challenge to allow them to find it. The delve opens with the adventurers on the edge of kuo-toa territory.

**Tiles:** This delve uses one set of tiles from DU3: Caves of Carnage™.

**Levels:** This dungeon delve works best for a party of five player characters from 16th to 20th level.

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**Expanding the Delve**

Any or all of the following elements can be added to this delve to turn it into a longer adventure:

✦ The adventurers must make their way through dangerous territory before reaching the kuo-toa warrens. Encounters with a purple worm (Monster Manual, page 214), a tribe of grimlocks (Monster Manual, page 148), or a fomorian war party from the Feydark (Monster Manual, page 110) are appropriate challenges.

✦ Another faction hopes to find the same drow noble before the adventurers can. A group of incunabula from the Shadowdark (page 146) might seek secret knowledge the noble holds, or a group led by a raksasha assassin (Monster Manual, page 217) might want her dead for the same reason.

✦ The aftermath of the rescue (whether successful or not) could include a skill challenge to negotiate the return of the noble (or the noble’s remains) and a substantial reward.

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**Encounter Level 17 (9,750 XP)**

### Setup

5 kuo-toa guards (G)
1 shadow hulk (H)

The adventurers begin the encounter on a flight of mildew-coated, roughly hewn stairs. At the start of the encounter, place only the visible kuo-toa guards. Place the shadow hulk and the other guards only after they are spotted or when they attack.

The true power behind the kuo-toa raiders, and the instigator of this kidnapping plot, waits deeper within the complex. To reach that location, however, the adventurers must deal with the guardians occupying this chamber.

**As the adventurers descend the stairs, read:**

Slime coats the rough walls of this huge cavern. Small chunks of shattered crystal can be seen scattered across the floor. Water flows into the cavern through a series of cracks in the far wall, creating a stream that disappears into a dark pit at the chamber’s center. Hunched and fishlike kuo-toa stand near the pit. Startled by your appearance, they raise their spears and shields.

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**Perception Check**

**DC 20** A kuo-toa glances briefly to both sides of the cavern as it lurches forward to attack.

**DC 25** In addition to the distant sound of flowing water echoing up from the open pit, you hear the faint sound of shouts in the Deep Speech common throughout the Underdark.

**Tactics**

The shadow hulk uses its burrow speed and phasing to slip through the walls and floor of the cavern. It makes **grabbing double attacks** against lightly armored adventurers as it constantly blasts foes with its **maddening gaze**. Unless it grabs a foe, it slips back into the walls and floor of the cavern whenever it can to avoid retaliatory attacks.

The kuo-toa guards keep to the sides of the cavern, giving the shadow hulk room to phase or burrow into combat. If the shadow hulk is slain, surviving kuo-toas flee down the pit to **Encounter DW2** (page 90).

If an adventurer tries to use the crystals for cover, the shadow hulk smashes them. See “Features of the Area” for details.
**5 Kuo-Toa Guards (G) Level 16 Minion**
Medium natural humanoid (aquatic) XP 350 each

- Initiative +11
- Senses Perception +12; darkvision
- HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.
- AC 29; Fortitude 24, Reflex 25, Will 23
- Speed 6, swim 6
- ✦ Spear (standard; at-will) ✦ Weapon
  +21 vs. AC; 7 damage.
- Slick Maneuver (move; at-will)
  A kuo-toa adjacent to an enemy shifts to any other square adjacent to that enemy.
- Alignment Evil
- Languages Deep Speech
- Str 15 (+10)  
- Dex 16 (+11)  
- Wis 9 (+7)  
- Con 15 (+10)  
- Int 11 (+8)  
- Cha 13 (+9)  
- Equipment leather armor, light shield, spear

**Shadow Hulk (H) Level 17 Solo Soldier**
Huge shadow magical beast XP 8,000

- Initiative +14
- Senses Perception +16; darkvision, tremorsense 10
- HP 860; Bloodied 430; see also claw frenzy
- AC 35; Fortitude 38, Reflex 31, Will 30
- Saving Throws +5
- Speed 6, burrow 4 (tunneling); phasing
- Action Points 2
- ✦ Claw (standard; at-will)
  Reach 3; +23 vs. AC; 3d6 + 11 damage.
- ✦ Grabbing Double Attack (standard; at-will)
  The shadow hulk makes two claw attacks. If both claw attacks hit the same target, the target is grabbed. A grabbed target takes ongoing 15 damage from the shadow hulk’s mandibles until the grab ends. The shadow hulk cannot make any other attacks while grabbing a creature.
- ✐ Claw Frenzy (standard, usable only while bloodied; recharge [1])
  Close burst 3; +23 vs. AC; 3d6 + 11 damage.
- ✐ Maddening Gaze (minor 1-round; at-will) ✐ Gaze, Psychic
  Close blast 5; targets enemies; +21 vs. Will; the target does nothing on its turn except attack its nearest ally, moving if necessary (save ends). The target makes only basic attacks while under this effect.
- Alignment Unaligned
- Languages —
  - Str 32 (+19)
  - Dex 18 (+12)
  - Wis 16 (+11)
  - Con 28 (+17)
  - Int 11 (+8)
  - Cha 13 (+9)

**Features of the Area**

- **Illumination:** Darkness.
- **Ceiling:** 30 feet high.
- **Crystals:** These 5-foot-high crystalline growths provide cover and are blocking terrain. If a crystal growth is smashed (a DC 25 Athletics check made as a minor action), it shatters in a close burst 1. Creatures in the burst are subject to an attack: +20 vs. Reflex; 1d10 + 7 damage, and the target is slowed (save ends).

**Water:** The stream and the pool to the northeast are filled with cool, murky water to a depth of 1 foot. These areas are difficult terrain for Small or Tiny creatures. A number of gemstones are scattered about the bottom of the pool—offerings made by the kuo-toas to their dark gods. The adventurers can collect gems with a total value of 360 pp.

**Pit:** This 20-foot-deep pit is half filled with water. A creature falling into the pit takes no damage but must succeed on a DC 10 Athletics check to stay afloat and a DC 25 Athletics check to climb out of the pit. A character who fails to stay afloat sinks and begins to drown (see *Dungeon Master’s Guide*, page 159, for details).

At the waterline, a partially submerged tunnel leads to *Encounter DW2* on page 90.