

## ZARAK, REVISED



LET'S GIVE THIS UNICORN-HUNTING HALF-ORC SOME TUSKS

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BACKYARD ADVENTURE GAMES

## BUFFING ZARAK

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By the time your players' characters have arrived at the Wayward Pool in Thither, the second fey realm of the now-divided Prismeer, their suspicions that something is rotten in the state of Zybilna are proving true. They have encountered (and maybe defeated) Bavlorna Blightstraw in the realm of Hither. They may have met Nib, a tragic character doomed by Skabatha Nightshade to make amends for his ill-gotten wealth. They've either met Will of the Feywild and his Getaway Gang, or learned that Skabatha is hunting the young boy. By the time they meet Lamorna, the unicorn who haunts the Wayward Pool, they are primed to seek justice against Granny Nightshade. When they learn that Lamorna's mate, Elidon, has possibly been imprisoned by the Hourglass Coven, their resolve will likely stiffen.

Fitting, then, that the designers have provided an outlet for that revenge. At this point in the adventure, your players may be interested in rediscovering their lost items, if you used the Lost Things adventure hook. Prismeer is such a wild and wonderful place, however, that they may have gotten distracted, or wondered just what their motivation should be. Just then a good, simple villain appears: the assassin Zarak, who has been sent by The League of Malevolence to take Lamorna's horn from her.

Unfortunately, as written, Zarak is less than a speed bump. The characters are level four at this point in the adventure, and at 37 hit points and a 14 AC, your rogue will probably dispense of Zarak near the end of the first round of combat. If you proceed with the assassin as written, your players will be confused from a narrative perspective: "What was that? Was that supposed to be difficult? Whoever was trying to kill that unicorn isn't really a problem—that must have been a random encounter instead of a major plot point." Zarak should present a real danger for your PCs, or at least a real danger to Lamorna. The adventure provides Zarak a means to escape in his *potion of invisibility*, so there is nothing wrong with making this encounter hit hard and then fade away. If you run Zarak as a true assassin, you can really put pressure on the players by having him target Lamorna straight away.

But we're getting ahead of ourselves. Eventyr Games, who craft the excellent *Wild Beyond the Witchlight DMs Bundle and Map Pack*, suggest bumping Zarak to 67 hp and 16 AC. Doing so pushes Zarak's CR to 6, which is probably close for a party of five fourth level characters. Eventyr's Zarak is better, certainly, but even with Uncanny Dodge and Relentless Endurance he is unlikely to survive far into the battle. In order to make your characters feel anxious, Zarak should be able to accomplish his objective: wounding Lamorna so that she cannot escape. In order for that to be possible, we suggest further refining Zarak as outlined below. For this stat block we built upon Eventyr's Zarak, and included statistics from EN World's *Level Up 5E*

*Monstrous Menagerie*. Feel free to grab our stat block below for inclusion in your own game.

# ZARAK

Medium humanoid (half-orc)

Armor Class 15 (leather)

Hit Points 97(13d8+39)

Speed 30ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	18 (+4)	16 (+3)	11 (+0)	15 (+2)	6 (-2)

**Saving Throws** Dex +7, Int +2

**Skills** Acrobatics +7, Deception +4, Insight +6, Perception +6, Stealth +7

**Senses** blindsight 10 ft., darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 16

**Languages** Orc, Common

**Challenge** 9 (5000 XP)

**Special Equipment.** Zarak carries a potion of invisibility.

**Relentless Endurance** When reduced to 0 hit points, Zarak drops to 1 hit point instead.

**Assassinate.** During the first turn of combat, Zarak has advantage on attack rolls against any creature that hasn't acted. Any hit the assassin scores against a surprised creature is a critical hit.

**Deadly Poison.** As part of making an attack, the assassin can apply a dangerous poison to their weapon (included below). The assassin carries 3 doses of this poison. A single dose can coat one melee weapon or up to 5 pieces of ammunition.

**Evasion.** When the assassin makes a Dexterity saving throw against an effect that deals half damage on a success, they take no damage on a success and half damage on a failure.

**Sneak Attack** The assassin deals an extra 21 (6d6) damage when they hit with a weapon attack while they have advantage on the attack, or when the assassin's target is within 5 feet of an ally of the assassin while the assassin doesn't have disadvantage on the attack.

## ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** Zarak makes two Dagger attacks

**Dagger. Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:** +5 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. **Hit:** 6 (1d4+4) slashing damage plus 10 (3d6) poison damage.

**Garotte. Melee Weapon Attack:** +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. **Hit:** 8 (2d4+3) slashing damage and the target is grappled (escape DC 14). Until this grapple ends, the target takes 8 (2d4 + 3) slashing damage at the start of each of its turns, and Zarak can't grapple another creature or use Assassin's Whim.

**Swarm of Blades (1/day).** Zarak magically fills the air in a 10-foot cube within 30 feet with spinning daggers for 1 minute. A creature takes 20 (8d4) slashing damage when it enters the area for the first time on a turn or starts its turn there.

**Hand Crossbow. Ranged Weapon Attack:** +6 to hit, range 30/120 ft., one target. **Hit:** 6 (1d6 + 3) piercing damage plus 10 (3d6) poison damage.

## BONUS ACTIONS

**Assassin's Whim.** Zarak takes the Dash, Disengage, or Hide action.

**Meat Shield.** Zarak uses a creature he is grappling to gain three-quarters cover. If the +5 bonus to AC granted by this cover causes an attack to miss, the attack instead hits the creature Zarak is grappling.

**Rapid Attack.** Zarak attacks with his dagger.

## REACTIONS

**Uncanny Dodge.** Zarak halves the damage he takes from an attack made against him, provided he can see the attacker.

## LEGENDARY ACTIONS

Zarak can take 2 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. Zarak regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

**Cunning Step.** Zarak disengages and can move up to his full movement

**Low Blow.** Zarak makes an attack with his dagger, if he hits the target must make a DC 14 Constitution saving throw or have its speed halved until it regains at least 1 hit point.

**Swarm of Blades (two actions).** Zarak uses his Cloud of Daggers feature (still only 1/day).