□□ Session 28 – The Brain Stealer and the Shard of Hate (WIP)

□□ Music

Placeholder: Session 28 music thumbnail, Varrick Songweave audio and lyrics to be added *after recap approval*.

□□ Images

Upload the supplied images to BookStack, then replace the following four entries with their BookStack gallery image links (no unverified gallery URLs have been invented):

- **Illithid approach on black ice:** `vtt-screenshot-02-Illithid-encounter.jpg`
- **Brain Stealer Dragon:** `Brain Stealer Dragon.png`
- **Dragon confrontation / battle reference:** `vtt-screenshot-05-dragon-encounter.jpg` (or `vtt-screenshot-06-dragon-encounter.jpg`)
- **The Shard of Hate:** `The-hate-shard.png`

□□ Campaign Arc

- **Campaign:** Spelljammer
- **Session:** 28 – **The Brain Stealer and the Shard of Hate**
- **Date:** 14 November 2026
- **Dungeon Master:** James / Jamie / Sicareus
- **Setting:** Xerathor’s darkened serpent temple → the black-ice wastes of Agathys, Carceri’s sixth layer
- **Next Session:** 28 November 2026 (discussed at the table; subject to confirmation)

□□ Previously On...

Session 27 ended inside a light-starved serpent temple on **Agathys**. The party had defeated the Ice Devil and final Ice Mephit, crossed a one-way magical passage and met the jackal-faced Arcanaloth **Xerathor the Frozen Ledger**. His first agreement protected the adventurers from the layer's terrible cold, but exposed their souls to a claim should they die there and barred them from attacking him or using his portal to retreat.

Further contracts granted Rigg enhanced speed and Dexterity, Valen greater arcane intellect, and High Jinks increased Wisdom plus limited protection for Tiv v2. The payments included valuable possessions and, for Valen, memories relating to his Feywild tower. The transport altar was damaged, the Illithids had already gone ahead, and Primus's troubling mandate concerning the imprisoned **Tharizdun** remained in force.

□□ Overview

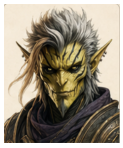
Xerathor had one more offer before the party left his temple: kill a creature somewhere out on the ice, and he would address their desperate need for rest. Rigg tried to negotiate another portable reward, but Xerathor would only entertain a further rest if they returned to him. The party accepted. The DM then granted a **long rest and advancement to level 10**, giving the adventurers a brief reprieve before sending them out under a faint red sky, along a route where a black temple marked the point of having gone too far.

In the darkness, Rigg approached three illuminated, squid-faced figures while the others remained farther back. He stole a small object, then struck one enemy from behind, setting off a running fight with Alhoons. The first fell to a stored Fireball, and Dino's psionic sword assault finished the second, but the third Illithid escaped. Before the company could settle, immense wings beat behind them and a **Brain Stealer Dragon** crashed onto the black ice. The creature's jaws, tail, psychic force and wing attacks overwhelmed the front line. Leydrick went down; the party improvised a rescue, regrouped through healing and, after a punishing exchange, High Jinks blew apart the dragon's exposed brain.

Only after the fighting did Rigg examine what he had taken from the enemy's pocket: a warm, faintly pulsing shard that the company associated with an old and deeply disturbing legend about the Abyss. The group elected to leave it with Rigg, who had repeatedly stood apart from the compulsion driving the others. Leydrick's *Prayer of Healing* gave them the benefits of a short rest, but no escape route had been secured. The fleeing Illithid, the shard's purpose, Xerathor's unfinished bargain and the route to the Resident were all still unresolved.

□□□□ Party Members

Shared development: The entire party reached **level 10** at the beginning of the session. The individual level-up choices actually discussed included Rigg's *Gunner* feat, Leydrick's *Divine Intervention*, and High Jinks' *Thought Shield*.

Character	Player	Class/Subclass	Race	Notable Actions
Garrick "Rigg" Dalhart 	Moose / Ben / Elemunk	Rogue (Swashbuckler)	Human	Selected the Gunner feat; stole an unidentified object before combat; opened with a surprise wrench strike, then mixed pistol Sneak Attacks with cover and drew the dragon's attention away from the fallen cleric. Became custodian of the shard.
Leydrick Gefinhal 	Jared / Galindis	Cleric (Life Domain)	Dwarf	Gained Divine Intervention at level 10. Protected Rigg with Shield of Faith, struck with the Dwarven Thrower, survived being knocked unconscious, then restored the group with Mass Cure Wounds, Mass Healing Word and Prayer of Healing.
High Jinks 	Kate / Keitachan	Warlock (Great Old One)	Tabaxi	Coordinated with Rigg's stealth approach; used Hex, Eldritch Blast and the stored Fireball from the Ring of Spell Storing; kept out of reach of the dragon and delivered the killing blast.
Dynoth "Dino Roar" Rokos 	Robb / Baconbuff	Artificer (Battle Smith) / Fighter (Psi Warrior)	Githyanki	Used Psi-Powered Leap, Moon-Touched and Dancing Longswords, Psionic Strike and Telekinetic Thrust; repeatedly blunted hits with Protective Field and moved unconscious Leydrick to a safer position.
Valen Pyre 	Justin / Slitzer	Wizard (Evoker)	Human	Cast a 5th-level Fireball against the Alhoons, then a 4th-level Fireball and Thunder Step against the dragon; used Sculpt Spells to protect allies and administered a Potion of Greater Healing to Leydrick.

□□ Key Locations

- **Xerathor’s darkened serpent temple:** The Agathys-side chamber where the final bargain was struck, the full rest and level-up were granted, and the party departed. The earlier damaged transportation altar was not repaired.
- **Black-ice expanse:** A barely lit frozen landscape beneath a faint red glow. Xerathor directed the group across it and warned that reaching the **black temple** would mean they had travelled too far. The temple was a landmark, *not a location visited in this session*.
- **Illithid encampment and adjacent rocky ice field:** An exposed area with a small amount of cover, initially occupied by three illuminated Illithid figures. It became the site of the Alhoon skirmish and, minutes later, the dragon encounter.

□□ Session Highlights

- **One more contract:** Xerathor described the creature he wanted dead as dangerous and not innocent. Rigg asked for a second rest or a portable means of obtaining one; Xerathor offered the possibility of rest *on returning to him*, not a portable boon. The party accepted, rested fully and advanced to level 10 before leaving.
- **New tools:** Rigg selected *Gunner* (firearm proficiency, +1 Dexterity, no loading restriction and no close-range disadvantage); Leydrick identified his new *Divine Intervention* feature for casting an eligible cleric spell of 5th level or lower without a slot or material components once per long rest. High Jinks reported *Thought Shield*. Other character choices were not itemised consistently at the table.
- **The unlit approach:** Rigg’s stealth checks included a **30** and repeated results in the twenties. He relayed observations to High Jinks, then used a **22 Sleight of Hand** to lift a fistful of something from an Illithid’s pocket without examining it. The immediately following surprise wrench attack was ruled critical and logged **63 total damage**.
- **The Alhoon fight:** The enemies answered with *Arcane Bolt* and *Chilling Grasp*; the latter restored health to the attacker. High Jinks maintained *Hex* and fired *Eldritch Blast*, while Valen landed a **5th-level Fireball (49 logged damage)**. High Jinks then triggered the stored **Fireball** in her Ring of Spell Storing and burned one of the wounded Alhoons to death.
- **Gun practice under fire:** Rigg’s first dramatic sliding pistol shot missed. His next close-range shot connected and was followed by Dino’s aerial/psionic sword combination, including *Telekinetic Thrust* and follow-up blows that finished the other Alhoon. A **third Illithid fled** after shouting about the shard and the Resident; no confirmed method or destination of escape was recorded.
- **The dragon arrives:** A distant mechanical rumble was followed by wingbeats from behind the party. A **Huge Brain Stealer Dragon** slammed into their midst. On a successful History check, Dino recognised it as the result of Illithid experimentation with a tadpole placed in a dragon. It fought with physical attacks and *Psychic Pulse*/*Wing Buffet* legendary actions.
- **Spellfire and desperate movement:** Valen followed with a **4th-level Fireball (36 logged damage)** and a **4th-level Thunder Step (30 logged thunder damage**

before the target's save) to escape the dragon's reach. Dino used *Protective Field* repeatedly and later forced the dragon prone with *Telekinetic Thrust*. Rigg alternated between rocky cover, pistol Sneak Attacks and heavy wrench strikes, including a **53-damage critical pistol strike** during Leydrick's crisis.

- **Near-fatal moment:** Leydrick fell unconscious and rolled a death save. Rigg initially considered helping him up but instead tried to draw the dragon's attention. Dino used *Telekinetic Movement* to slide Leydrick about **30 feet** across the ice. Valen administered a **Potion of Greater Healing** for **13 HP**; once standing, Leydrick cast *Mass Cure Wounds* (**26** healing) and a 4th-level *Mass Healing Word* (**18** healing). An earlier *Mass Healing Word* had provided **15** healing. His *Shield of Faith* concentration ended when he went down.
- **The finishing blast:** The dragon badly wounded Rigg in melee, but **High Jinks' Eldritch Blast** delivered the final damage. The DM described the creature's brain bursting apart and splattering Dino. The battlefield was clear of living enemies immediately around the party.
- **Aftermath:** Rigg inspected the stolen object for the first time. Dino recalled a legend about an enormous shard associated with the creation of the Abyss, but the smaller object's abilities were not identified. Rigg kept it. Dino removed a tentacle from the dragon; the dragon carried no ordinary treasure. Leydrick cast *Prayer of Healing* (**17** logged healing), granting short-rest benefits. The session ended after recovery and a characteristic, optimistic pep talk from Valen.

⚔ Encounter Resolution

Creature / Group	Final Status	What the record establishes
Alhoon at Rigg's opening ambush	Defeated	Took Rigg's surprise critical strike and further party damage; one of the two Alhoons was burned down by the Fireball stored in High Jinks' ring.
Second Alhoon	Defeated	Dino's sword-and-psionics combination brought down the other foe after earlier party attacks.
Third Illithid figure	Escaped	Moved away during the Alhoon fight after invoking the shard and the Resident. The transcript does not establish whether it ran, teleported or used another route.
Brain Stealer Dragon	Killed	Its defeat is explicit: High Jinks delivered the final Eldritch Blast and the DM described its brain rupturing.
Leydrick	Alive	Was unconscious during the dragon battle; restored by Valen's potion and later provided substantial group healing.
Tiv v2 / other companions	Not established in this battle	Tiv v2's existence and earlier protection remain part of continuity, but no confirmed battlefield participation in Session 28 should be invented.

□□ Key Scenes

1. The Fistful in the Darkness — Rigg and an Alhoon

A few faint lights stood out against the black ice. Rigg approached from the unlit side, close enough to lift a handful of something from an Alhoon’s pocket while the creature remained distracted. He tucked his prize away rather than investigate it and immediately drove his enormous wrench down into the unsuspecting enemy. The blow turned reconnaissance into a battle; only much later would he discover what he had stolen.

2. A Cleric Sliding Across the Ice — Dino and Leydrick

With Leydrick unconscious and the dragon still moving among the party, Dino reached out with psionic force. Rather than risk dragging the cleric through the melee, he shifted him roughly thirty feet across the slick ground toward a safer position. It was not the final rescue, but it created an opening for the healing that finally brought the cleric back into the fight.

3. The Last Thought of the Dragon — High Jinks and the Brain Stealer

High Jinks had made distance her best defence, repeatedly edging into blasting range and withdrawing before the dragon could close. As the creature turned its attention back toward the bloodied front line, another *Eldritch Blast* struck true. The DM described the upper mass of exposed brain exploding, ending the creature’s rampage on the ice.

4. The Heartbeat in a Pocket — Rigg and the Shard

After the dragon fell, Rigg finally opened his hand to inspect his stolen prize. The object was disturbingly warm and seemed to beat or swirl as he held it, unlike the ordinary magical items he knew. Once returned to his pocket, the sensation subsided. The others chose to let him keep

it—not because it had been proven safe, but because he was the one adventurer who had so often resisted the pull affecting the rest.

□□ Ongoing Threads & Plot Hooks

- **Primus, the Resident and the Red Prison:** The existing command to pursue the Illithids and reach **Tharizdun** is still in force; its ultimate consequences remain morally and cosmically unresolved. The session did not show a new command from Primus.
- **The Shard of Hate:** Rigg holds the object taken from an Illithid before combat. Dino's remembered legend suggests a connection to the larger shard associated with the Abyss, *not proof of its full nature or powers*. The conversation also recalled a separate shard-related task and a recipient transcribed as **Thresden**; the precise relationship to the current mandate needs confirmation.
- **The Illithid who escaped:** One of the three figures departed the scene. Its destination, means of travel, knowledge of Rigg's theft and potential ability to warn others all remain unknown.
- **Xerathor's promised hunt:** The Arcanaloth asked the party to kill an unnamed creature on the ice. The party killed a Brain Stealer Dragon, but the DM did *not* explicitly confirm it was Xerathor's intended quarry or that the second-rest offer had been fulfilled.
- **No established way home:** Xerathor's portal remains contractually barred, and the temple transport altar was already damaged in Session 27. Rigg had hoped his theft might yield the Illithids' exit mechanism; the object turned out to be a shard instead.
- **Souls and earlier bargains:** Xerathor's cold-protection/soul agreement and the three personal exchanges continue to matter. The earlier surrendered possessions and Valen's tower memories were not restored by the new bargain.
- **The route ahead:** The **black temple** is an unvisited landmark given by Xerathor. The greater pursuit and possible rival Illithid expedition remain unresolved; there is no verified new forest location or next-layer transition this session.

□□ Loot & Discoveries

Item / Discovery	Finder / Holder	Description / Status
Shard of Hate	**Rigg** — retained	*A small wrongness with a heartbeat.* Pickpocketed before the opening attack, identified as significant only after the dragon fell. It felt warm and pulsed or swirled when held, but settled when pocketed. No attunement, curse effect, psychic damage, identified ability or power was confirmed. Its name follows the working session draft / supplied item artwork.

Item / Discovery	Finder / Holder	Description / Status
Dragon tentacle	**Dino** — claimed	*A trophy from a brain-twisted wyrm.* Dino explicitly said he removed a tentacle from the slain dragon. Its use, properties and later inventory placement were not established.
Ring of Spell Storing	**High Jinks** — retained	The ring was *not* traded to Xerathor in Session 27. High Jinks used its stored **3rd-level Fireball** during this fight. The other previously discussed healing spells were not independently re-inventoried at session end; remaining capacity/loadout should be checked before the next session.
Potion of Greater Healing	**Valen → Leydrick** — consumed	*One small bottle against a very large dragon.* Valen gave the potion to the unconscious cleric; the Roll20 log records **13 HP** restored. Count one potion expended.
Illithid remains	**Party** — searched/requested	Valen asked to search the two fallen Illithids after the battle, but no contents or further acquisitions were recorded. Do not add crystals, coins or escape devices on speculation.
Dragon's carried treasure	**None confirmed**	The DM explicitly noted that the dragon had no pockets and was carrying nothing. No treasure hoard or additional artifact was found on its body.
Short-rest recovery	**Leydrick / party**	After the battle, *Prayer of Healing* provided 17 logged healing and the benefits of a short rest. This was **not** another long rest; hit dice and expended spell slots should be tracked accordingly.

Cliffhanger

- The party survived the Alhoons and **killed the Brain Stealer Dragon**; Leydrick is conscious again, and a post-battle short rest has been taken.
- **Rigg still carries the single recovered shard**, taken by pickpocket before the battle. Its true nature and role in the competing quests remain unknown.
- **One Illithid escaped.** Its route and what it may report are unresolved.
- **Agathys remains a trap:** Xerathor's soul contract is still active, the return portal is forbidden, and the damaged altar offers no confirmed escape.
- The party must press toward the **Illithids and the Red Prison**, while determining whether Xerathor's unnamed target has actually been slain.

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