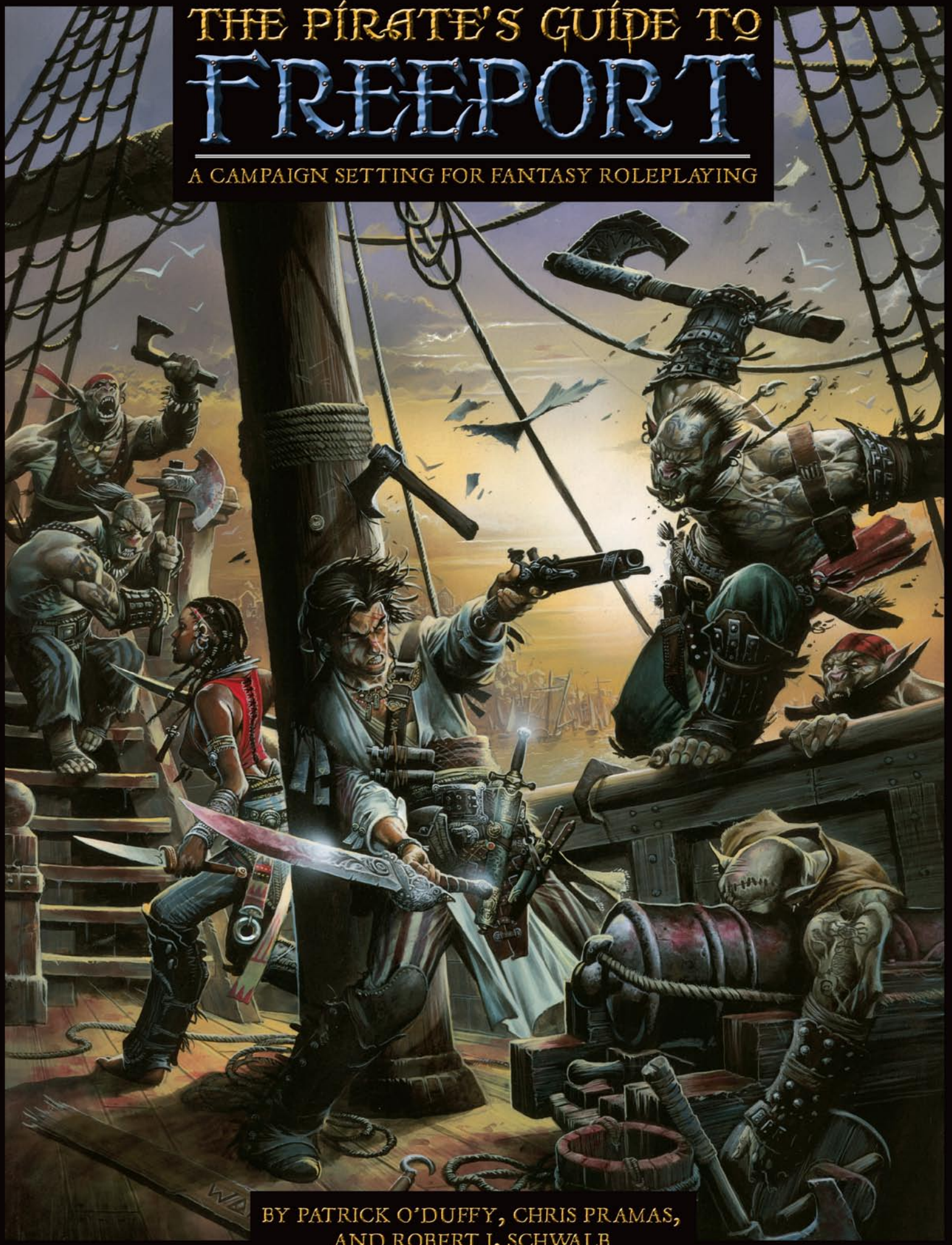
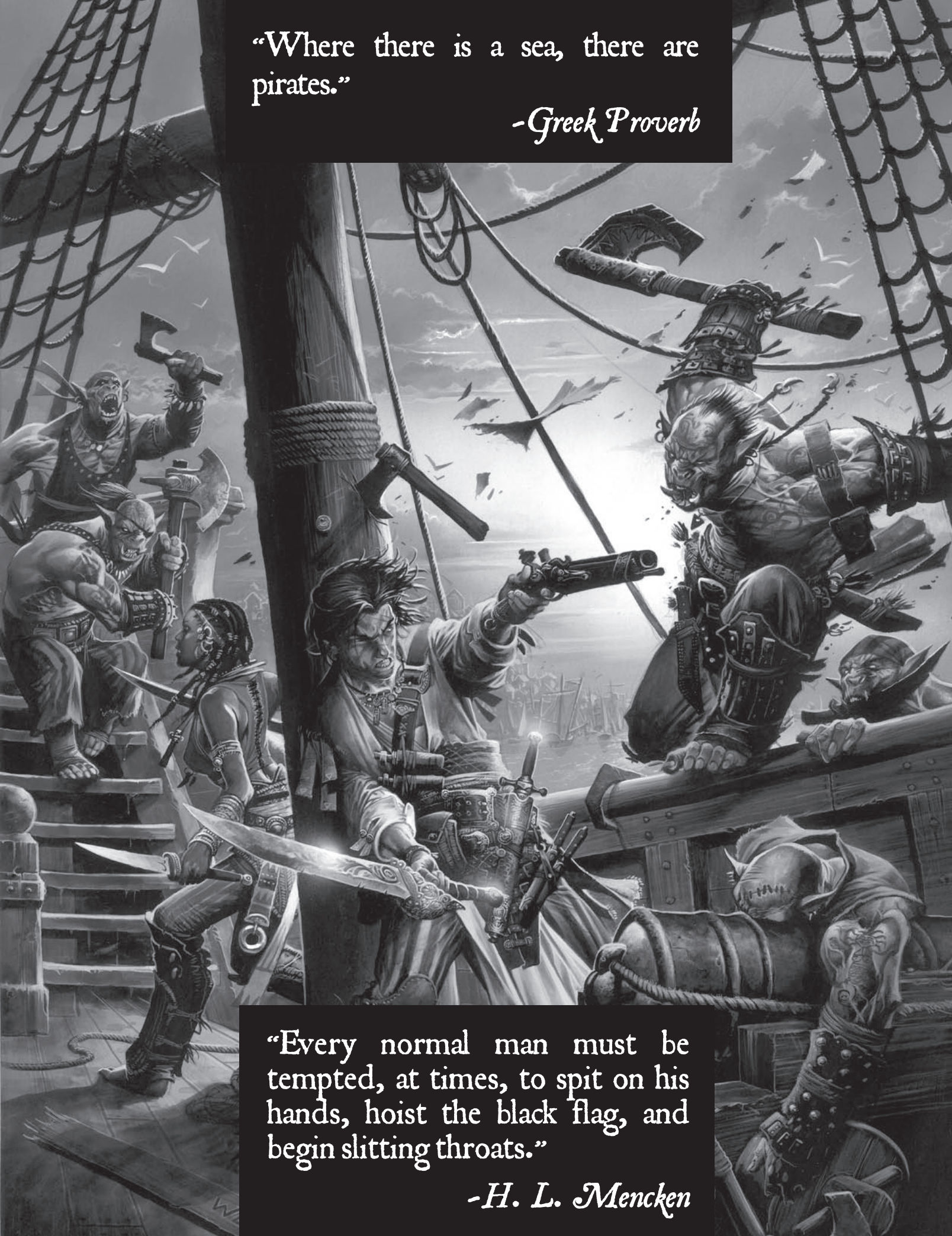
THE PIRATE'S GUIDE TO FREEPORT

A CAMPAIGN SETTING FOR FANTASY ROLEPLAYING



BY PATRICK O'DUFFY, CHRIS PRAMAS,
AND ROBERT J. SCHWALB


"Where there is a sea, there are pirates."
-Greek Proverb
"Every normal man must be tempted, at times, to spit on his hands, hoist the black flag, and begin slitting throats."
-H. L. Mencken

A Captain of Freeport

By Chris Pramas

It was the rancid stink of Freeport's harbor at low tide that woke him. Otherwise, Captain Vic Cutty would have slept through the morning, assuming some cutthroat didn't roll him off a pier. Vic cracked an eye open and immediately wished he hadn't. The sunlight made him wince, and even this small movement made him realize what a hangover he had. He sat up and forced his eyes all the way open. Pain lanced through his head as he took in his surroundings. He was behind some cargo crates on one of Freeport's many piers. At least he had had the good sense to pass out somewhere out of sight.

Vic stood up slowly, taking in a full view of the harbor. He'd heard poets prattle on about Freeport's beauty at sunrise. As he watched filthy children struggle through the mud flats nearby, searching for anything of value so they could eat that day, Vic mumbled, "Sod the poets," and began walking down the pier and back towards the city.

The hardworking denizens of the city were up early, and Vic cursed them for the racket that echoed inside his skull. He gained strength as he got his body moving, and by the time he made it to the Seaside Market, his headache had become manageable. He slipped through the crowded stalls of the market until he found Mari's place. Stepping up to the counter, he said, "One hangover special, my duck."

Mari, a slight girl with short hair, smiled at him. "Aye, aye, Captain."

"I'm not in the mood for your jokes this morning," said Vic wearily. "Just dish me up that porridge before I pass out again."

"Ooh, you had a rough night, did you, love?" Vic nodded as she served up a bowl of her fish porridge. It would make a lesser man vomit when in such a state, but Vic found the stuff fortifying after a hard night of drinking. He picked up a wooden spoon and began eating.

"So how's the crew search going then?" Mari asked.

"Lousy," Vic mumbled, swallowing. "You need a ship before you can sign on a crew."

Mari frowned, her disapproval clear. "I thought you borrowed money for that? Don't tell me you spent it all on drink and whores... again?"

"No, no, nothing like that. Give me a little credit."

"Sorry, love," Mari responded, "but you are the privateer captain without ship or crew. You can't pin it all on ill fortune."

Vic said nothing. What she said was true; he had lost it all. A freak storm sunk his ship, and he had lost most of his loot and crew along with it. The crew was replaceable, but his carefully hoarded loot was not. He hoped the damned sea devils at the bottom of the sea were enjoying it.

"Look here, Trask," said a rough voice, "our boy's lost in thought. I hope he's thinking about how to pay back all that money he borrowed."

Vic put down his bowl and turned around, though he already knew what he'd see. The man addressing him was Blucher, a burly tough with a large truncheon in his ham-sized fist. Another brute of similar stature stood to his left, and between them was Trask, the leader of the Syndicate's enforcers. Trask was a gnome who barely came up to Vic's belt, but he was a spellslinger, which made him dangerous—doubly so due to his status as one of Finn's chosen lieutenants. Anyone that crossed Trask would answer to Finn, and no one wanted to face the head of the Syndicate.

"Morning, Trask," said Vic coolly. "Come for the porridge?"

The gnome smiled. "That's why I like you, Vic. Even with a sword hanging over your head, there's always a joke on your lips."

"If I lose my sense of humor, I'll truly have lost it all."

"Speaking of things you've lost," Trask replied, "where's Finn's money?"

"It's like I told Blucher the other day," Vic said, "I was jumped outside the Broken Mug by some gangers. Didn't recognize 'em either, so they must be new. Any new gangs on the Syndicate payroll, Trask?"

Blucher punched Vic in the face, making him stagger back into the counter. "Perhaps you misunderstand the situation," said Trask. "I am here to ask you questions, not the other way round. Keep your manners, and Blucher won't have to hurt you again."

Vic straightened up and rubbed his jaw. His free hand lingered over the hilt of his dagger, but he didn't draw the weapon. Vic knew he could take out Blucher if need be, but that would only make his problem with the Syndicate worse.

"Now then," Trask said, "let's get to the heart of the matter. You borrowed money from the Syndicate, and you've not made a single payment. This situation makes Finn unhappy, and when Finn is unhappy, I'm unhappy."

"So I hear," muttered Vic.

"Oh, I'm sure you do," added Trask, a cruel smile on his face. "Now let me be clear. You have exactly one week to make good on this debt. If you don't, my enforcers will find you and turn you into shark bait. If you leave Freeport, make sure you always keep one eye open. Finn puts great stock in his friends, and he has them in every port. Do you understand what I'm saying?"

"I do."

"Good. I'll see you in one week. I hope you make Finn happy."

Vic was about to say something, but his reply died on his lips when he saw that Trask was motioning with his hands and whispering in a strange tongue. Vic recognized spellcasting when he saw it and tried to back up, but Mari's counter blocked his way. With a final flourish, Trask finished his spell. Flashing light flew from the gnome's fingers right into Vic's eyes. Countless colors burst in his skull as the power of the magic drove Vic to his knees. He could do nothing as Blucher stepped up to him and drove a truncheon into Vic's stomach. He doubled over and threw up his breakfast.

"That's for your insolence," Trask said quietly. "Next time it'll be much worse." The gnome motioned to his henchman, and the three disappeared back into the crowd.

Vic lay stunned until Mari threw a cup on water on his face. "Sodding runt," Vic mumbled as he slowly got his feet. He pulled his dagger out and feebly waved it in the air. "Someday I'll drive this into his black little heart."

"Not if you know what's good for you," Mari said sternly. "Now piss off and make room for paying customers."

***

Vic's day did not improve. He spent the rest of the morning at the Docks, working his contacts to no avail. He was up for any scheme that would net him some money quickly, but the only option he found was to sign on to another privateer as a crewman. Vic had done his years a lowly swab, and he would not go back to such abuse. He was a captain, damn it, and he was not about to let some other cutthroat order him around.

By afternoon, Vic was tired, and with the sun burning brightly overhead, he decided to return to his Scurvytown flophouse. He was paid up through the end of the week, and he needed to get some real sleep. He walked through the streets of Freeport in a daze, weaving through the crowds of hawkers, workers, thieves, and hookers. Garishly clothed hucksters tried to hustle him into gambling houses and partner him with rough-looking women, but Vic brushed them all off. He needed to sleep and clear his head, so he could figure a way out of this mess.

At last, Vic turned onto the flophouse's street. He was nearing the door when a hand grabbed his shoulder and spun him around.

"Are you Vic Cutty?" asked a melodious voice with a high-class accent.

Vic looked at the stranger. He was an elf clad in finely tooled black leather armor with a rapier and main gauche hanging from his gilded belt. His striking features—and his cleanliness—made him stand out in Scurvytown like a strumpet at a debutante ball. His wealth was apparent, however, and Vic knew better than to be rude to a potential patron.

"Yes, sir, I am Captain Cutty," Vic replied. "What can I do for you today, friend?"

The elf's features clouded over, and he drew both of his weapons, shouting, "You can die, Captain Cutty!"

Vic slowly unsheathed his battered cutlass. "Have we met before, sir? You don't look familiar to me, and most folks who want to kill me have at least crossed my path before."

Man and elf began to circle each other, weapons at the ready. "I am Dagonet, musketeer of His Royal Highness Merovech II, Moon King of Rolland. I have come to this wretched city in search of the captain of the pirate ship Forlorn Hope."

"That was my ship," said Vic, as he tested the musketeer's defenses with a quick thrust. The elf did not flinch at the attack and deftly swept the cutlass aside. Vic stepped back as the elf's main gauche stabbed for his gut. It appeared the elf was more than just pretty. "Perhaps you didn't hear over there in Rolland that the Forlorn Hope sank."

"Oh, I heard," said Dagonet, flicking his rapier at Vic's eyes. Vic ducked and stepped back, then used his left hand to pull out his dagger. Vic preferred fighting with just his cutlass, but facing two weapons, he decided to even the odds.

By now, a crowd began to gather. A fight in Scurvytown was not remarkable, but one involving a wealthy elf was most

unusual—nor was this some barroom brawl but a real duel between two skilled swordsmen. It didn't take long for the gamblers in the crowd to start taking bets.

"It seems we have some company," said Vic, grinning at the crowd. "Now that you have an audience, perhaps you'd like to tell me why you're trying to kill me."

The musketeer charged with his rapier high and main gauche low. Vic parried both with his own weapons, and the blades locked together. Now that they were up close, Vic could see the hatred in the elf's eyes.

"Six months ago your ship attacked and sank a ship from Rolland called the Silver Swan," said Dagonet through gritted teeth. "For this act of piracy, you will pay with your life."

The two combatants pushed and strained, each looking to free a blade a plunge it home. "Piracy nothing," spat Vic. "We were a privateer ship with a Letter of Marque in good order."

"We both know that "privateer" is just a polite word for a pirate, you scum," replied Dagonet. "The Kingdom of Rolland will not have it."

Vic pushed the elf off, and both fighters fell back into fencing stances. The crowd howled for blood now that the blades were free. "Rolland won't have it, or you won't?" asked Vic. "Your king knows the rules. Hell, he's hired Freeport's privateers more than once. I've killed orcs under your flag!"

The thought of Vic fighting for the Moon King was too much for Dagonet to bear. He came on fast, cutting and thrusting with his rapier while his main gauche probed for an opening. Vic gave ground and parried desperately. He stopped the worst of the attacks but lost track of the main gauche during the final flurry of blows. He realized his error too late and could not evade the small blade. "My brother was the captain of the Silver Swan," growled Dagonet as he drove the main gauche deep into Vic's shoulder, "and I will avenge him."

Vic kicked the elf in the shin, throwing the musketeer off balance enough for Vic to back away. His shoulder was on fire, and he knew he needed to finish this fight before the blood loss finished it for him. He let his dagger clatter to the pavement. With the blood running down his arm, the hilt was too slick to hold anyway.

"I remember your brother," Vic said casually as he slowly stepped backwards, left hand probing behind him. In a few paces, he backed into a building. He smiled as his fingers dug into the shoddy concrete typical of Scurvytown construction. He locked eyes with Dagonet. "Yes, that brother of yours was quite the captain. He watched us kill his men, and then he begged for mercy. He died a coward's death—on his knees."

"Liar!" the musketeer screamed and charged Vic anew. The elf's face was contorted with rage as he thrust his rapier at Vic's heart. Vic deflected the blow to the side and then used his left hand to fling concrete dust into Dagonet's eyes. The coarse flecks of stone blinded him. Vic Cutty sidestepped his opponent's wavering blade and drove his cutlass through the elf's armor and into his guts. As Vic pulled his blade free, Dagonet crumpled to the ground, and the crowd roared its approval.

"You should have stayed in Rolland," spat Vic. "Now your mother has lost two sons."

"That was a cur's trick," the elf gasped. "You have no honor, pirate filth."

Vic laughed. "You Continental blades are always prattling on about honor. Maybe that means something in Rolland, but this is Freeport. Here we fight to win."

"May the gods curse this wretched city!"

"What makes you think they haven't?" said Vic, but the elf never heard the retort. Dagonet, musketeer of the Moon King, was already dead.

***

The wound in his shoulder throbbed, but Vic Cutty was smiling. The money in the elf's purse was more than enough to pay back the Syndicate, as well as Mari for her trouble. Now all he had to do was sell the musketeer's rapier, and he'd be able to buy a new ship. He hated to part with the blade, as it was exquisitely crafted and possibly enchanted, but he had to have a new ship. Besides, wielding Dagonet's weapon would attract unwanted attention. As it was, he could expect trouble from other musketeers, and he was sure he hadn't seen the last of Trask. Those were problems for another day, though. Today, Vic Cutty would be a captain once again.

The Pirate's Guide to Freeport

A Campaign Setting for Fantasy Roleplaying

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~ Introduction ~

Ahoy, mates, and welcome to *The Pirate's Guide to Freeport*! This is your first port of call when looking for information on Freeport, known far and wide as "the City of Adventure." Freeport is a city of piracy and patriotism, of violence and intrigue, of ardent hopes and broken dreams. On its streets, a swab will find amazing wealth and grinding poverty, benevolent priests and black-hearted cultists, and honest merchants and two-timing thieves. Called the Crossroads of the World, Freeport is the destination of merchant fleets, the home base of squadrons of privateers and the not-so-secret refuge of renegade pirates. It's a chaotic melting pot of cultures and races—where gold is king, and life is cheap. And for thousands of souls, it's home.

What Is Freeport?

Freeport is a fictional city created for use with fantasy roleplaying games. *The Pirate's Guide to Freeport* has been designed as a general resource, so it is not tied to a specific RPG. GMs can use Freeport with the game of their choice. Similarly, the City of Adventure can be used in nearly any fantasy campaign setting. Since it consists of a small chain of islands, the Freeport setting can easily be dropped into existing worlds. References throughout the text are kept generic where possible to facilitate easy integration into the campaign setting of a GM's choice. For example, the gods are not named, merely referred to by portfolio (God of Knowledge, God of War, *etc.*). While characters do not have game statistics, each is noted as being an *apprentice*, *journeyman*, or *master*. This provides a rough guide to the skill level of the character.

> "Now I'm going where my spirit leads me
> I'm going where the sirens sing
> I'm going where the four winds take me
> Far across the raging sea"
>
> -The Skels

Game Support

Although *The Pirate's Guide to Freeport* provides all the background information a GM needs to get a campaign going, it does not have rules support for any particular game. For many GMs, that's not a problem. They are familiar enough with their game of choice to take care of character stats and the like on their own. However, not everyone has that level of familiarity with rules or the time to do such work. For those gamers, Green Ronin is publishing a series of *Freeport Companion* books. Each one complements *The Pirate's Guide to Freeport*, providing all the info you need to use this book with a specific game system, including the *True20 Freeport Companion* (for use with Green Ronin's *True20 Adventure Roleplaying*) and the *d20 Freeport Companion* (for use with the *d20 System*), with more to follow. Each *Freeport Companion* is available as a book, a PDF, or both. Additional game-specific info will be made available on Green Ronin's website.

The Freeport Line

As experienced gamers know, *The Pirate's Guide to Freeport* is not the first book about the City of Adventure. The world was introduced to Freeport in August of 2000 with the release of the ENnie- and Origins Award winning *Death in Freeport*. Over the course of six years and eleven books, Freeport grew and evolved. The rules set it was designed for, the d20 System, changed too. For both of these reasons, the original sourcebook, *Freeport: The City of Adventure*, could not be reprinted in its original form when it sold out. Therefore, we decided to advance the timeline five years from *Death in Freeport* and make the new city sourcebook system independent. The result is *The Pirate's Guide to Freeport*, which can be considered a second edition of *Freeport: The City of Adventure*.

This book updates and consolidates much information from previous Freeport books. It also presumes the events of many of the older adventures. GMs who would prefer to run through the old adventures first and who like the d20 System should pick up The *Freeport Trilogy: 5-Year Anniversary Edition* and *Crisis in Freeport*. Those four adventures tell the core story of the original line. *Creatures of Freeport* is also useful, and those looking for a truly epic challenge can try *Black Sails Over Freeport*. All of those books utilize the 3.5 revision of the d20 rules. Fans of *True20 Adventure Roleplaying* can find a True20 adaptation of *Death in Freeport* available for free on www.true20.com.

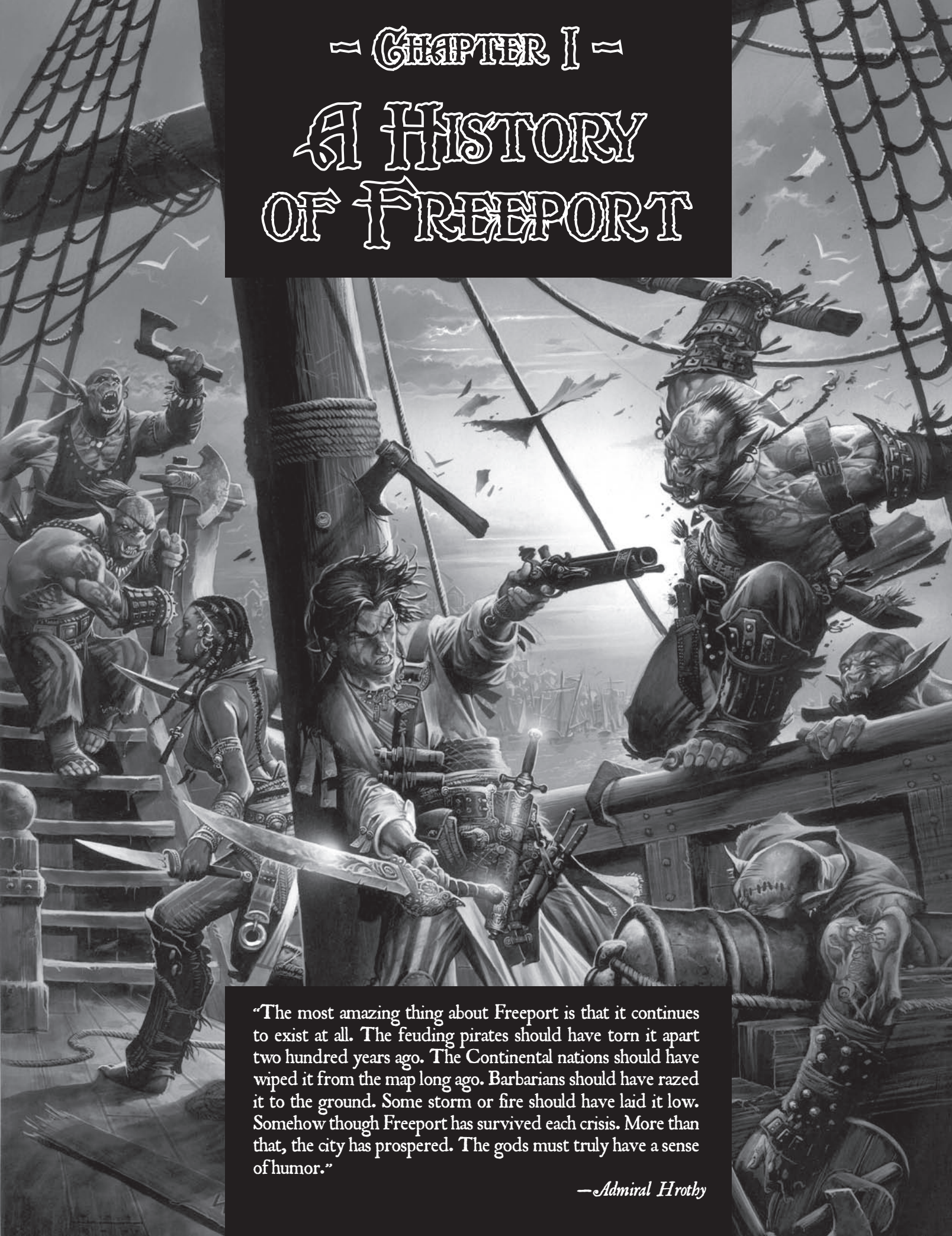
The Freeport line does not end with *The Pirate's Guide to Freeport*, of course. Far from it! In addition to the aforementioned companion books, there are other new sourcebooks to complement it. The first two are *Cults of Freeport* and *Buccaneers of Freeport*. *Cults of Freeport* describes a dozen despicable cults in lavish detail, presenting a detailed overview of each cult's goals, motivations, tactics, and their impact on the city. *Buccaneers of Freeport* presents a collection of eight new pirates, describing them in lavish detail and covering their histories, exploits, ships, crews, and current whereabouts. More Freeport products are in the works, so watch www.greenronin.com for the latest news about the City of Adventure.

Enough Talk!

Little did I realize when I put pen to paper in early 2000 that *Death in Freeport* would be the start of a setting of such popularity and longevity. I certainly did not think that I'd be writing a new Freeport book in 2006. Before we begin the book proper, I'd like to take a moment to thank all the fans that have supported Freeport over the years. I'd also like to thank all the writers and artists who have worked on the line. Each of you has added something to the City of Adventure, and the whole is now greater than the sum of its parts. To those of you new to Freeport, let me be the first to say, "Welcome aboard!" Freeport is damn sure not pretty, but it is hellishly fun.

Stay Free!

Chris Pramas, 12/31/06



Chapter I

A History of Freeport

"The most amazing thing about Freeport is that it continues to exist at all. The feuding pirates should have torn it apart two hundred years ago. The Continental nations should have wiped it from the map long ago. Barbarians should have razed it to the ground. Some storm or fire should have laid it low. Somehow though Freeport has survived each crisis. More than that, the city has prospered. The gods must truly have a sense of humor."

—*Admiral Hrothy*

Cities do not spring up overnight. Every place is defined and shaped by its history—and it cannot escape the legacy of past events. Before the *Pirate's Guide to Freeport* delves into the secrets of the City of Adventure, some light must be shed on its history. The roots of the city lie deeper in the past than most Freeporters suspect.

The Empire of the Serpents

While the current city of Freeport is only a few hundred years old, the site has been inhabited for much longer. Some two thousand years ago, the area was part of a larger island known as Valossa. Stretching a thousand miles south to north and eight hundred miles east to west, Valossa was the heart of the serpent people's empire. These sorcerous reptiles ruled vast swaths of territory when humanity was young, and they pioneered magic and science when the elves still hid in the woods.

Scholars today often refer to Valossa as an evil empire. While it is true their sorcerers used questionable methods to advance their art, Valossa was no ally of dark powers. The mindset of the serpent people is difficult for humans or elves to understand, so malfeasance is often used to explain misunderstood evidence. For instance, although highly civilized, the Valossans had no concept of individual rights. If a high sorcerer required one hundred living test subjects to use in magical experiments, his request was fulfilled as long as the experiments were judged to be of importance to the empire as a whole.



The Rotting Heart of the Empire

No matter the moral compass used to judge the serpent people, their achievements cannot be denied. Valossa flourished for over a millennium, and its influence spread, even into the planes. The empire resisted every outside threat, from barbarian incursions to infernal plagues to planar invaders. In the end, the true threat was internal.

The serpent people had long been worshippers of Yig, the great snake god. In the latter days of the empire, a cult dedicated to the worship of the Unspeakable One, a dread alien power, sprang up in the serpent people cities. Called the Brotherhood of the Yellow Sign, the cult spurned the worship of Yig and embraced the madness of the Unspeakable One. The leaders of the serpent people, too arrogant and vain to see past their high towers, allowed the cult to fester among the discontented. By the time the priests of Yig were roused to action, it was too late. The Brotherhood of the Yellow Sign enacted a ritual to summon their dark god, and the Valossan Empire was smashed for all time.

Wrath of the Mad God

No witnesses survived to tell of the Great Old One's appearance, but evidence of his destruction abounds. The mighty island of Valossa was rent asunder, and seawater rushed in to drown the serpent people by the millions. Those who survived were driven mad, losing their civilization and magic in one terrible moment. Nearly all of Valossa slipped beneath the waves, leaving only scattered islands as a testimony to the once-great empire.

The mad serpent people fled underground, where their degenerate descendants currently live. A small number of sorcerers and priests of Yig survived the Unspeakable One's wrath with their sanity intact. These few retreated into the shadows as the younger races created their own kingdoms and empires. As the centuries passed, few remembered the Valossan Empire or that serpent people had once been a civilized race.

The Rise of Freeport

The largest surviving bit of Valossa is an island chain known as the Serpent's Teeth. The name may be a distant echo of the Valossan Empire, though locals ascribe it to the shape of the islands. The main island of the Serpent's Teeth, A'Val, has a natural harbor that is easily defended. As the younger races took to the seas, roving captains quickly found A'Val. At first, it was just a place to rest, get fresh water, and refit. Before long, a village sprang up, which as the years passed, turned into a town. It was able to thrive by offering services to passing ships and providing refuge to those unwelcome elsewhere. The sailors took to calling it Freeport, and the name stuck.

A Corsair Haven

With its relatively isolated location and natural attributes, Freeport quickly became a magnet for pirates and ne'er-do-wells of all types. It didn't take long for buccaneers to take over the town, and Freeport became perhaps the most notorious pirate haven in the world.

What made Freeport work in the early days was a simple pirate code. Do whatever you want on the high seas, but don't go against your brothers and sisters in port. That meant no stealing, no killing, and no kidnapping while there. Duels did occur on occasion, but they were formal affairs done outside the walls. Most of the crew confined

their fighting to drunken brawls, of which there were plenty. By and large, though, the peace in Freeport was kept.

This era is often referred to as the Golden Age in Freeport. Pirates ruled the waves decade after decade. Although individual captains and crews suffered setbacks, piracy as a whole flourished. This was a time of legendary deeds, when brave buccaneers seemed larger than life.

Tales of captains like Bedwyr the Black, Sigurd Trolldottir, and Three-hands Chan have passed into maritime mythology. They may never have been more than local folklore if not for the efforts of one man, though. Captain Johannsen was a second-rate pirate but a first-class writer. After retiring from the high seas, he penned an outlandish history of Freeport's finest buccaneers. Titled *A True History of Freeporte Pyrates,* this volume established the romantic pirate in the public imagination more than anything else. The book went through six printings in less than two years and gained Captain Johannsen more fame than his years at sea ever had.

Golden No Longer

The Golden Age couldn't last forever. About two hundred years ago, the era of the rogue buccaneer came to an end. Lone ships faced increasing threats from organized navies. Where once a single ship could hunt merchantmen with impunity, now that same ship was a fox to the hounds of the naval squadrons. As crew after crew was hunted down and neutralized, the pirates of Freeport knew they had to change their ways.

The people of Freeport realized it would take a navy to fight a navy, so the pirate captains decided to form a force of their own and raid en masse. But who should lead this great raid? After much bickering, the pirates settled on two captains for the fleet. Captains Drac and Francisco were fierce rivals, and the assembled captains believed anything the two could agree on would be a good decision. It was not an ideal situation, but the pirates had surprise and numbers on their side. The combined fleet went on a three-month raid that netted more money, valuables, foodstuffs, and booze than Freeport had ever seen. The Great Raid, as it was called, was a spectacular success, still remembered in the yearly celebration of Swagfest, and neither Drac nor Francisco was slow in claiming credit. Before long, each had declared himself a Sea Lord of Freeport.

War in Freeport

The next ten years were tense ones in Freeport. The Great Raid set off a panic amongst the maritime nations. They spent vast amounts of money and resources building up larger navies, and the Sea Lords were forced to fight battle after battle against determined foes. Freeport was assaulted on three separate occasions, but its defenses proved too strong for the attacking ships.

This undeclared war had no clear victor. Freeport defended itself and inflicted several stinging defeats on its enemies, but attrition was high on both sides. In the end, the conflict petered out as the warring navies ran out of ships and men to hurl into battle. After ten long years of fighting, there was a lull, during which each side licked its wounds.

During the war, adversity had kept the pirates united, but when the pressure eased, trouble was not slow in coming. The Sea Lords had long hated each other, which ended in deadly consequences.

Sigurd's First Mate

Sigurd Trolldottir came to Freeporte from a far northern land. It was said that she was so ugly even wolves would not let her suckle at their teats. At the age of fourteen, she broke the neck of a boy who had been taunting her; alas, the lad was the son of the local jarl, and so Sigurd was driven from her birthplace. She traveled alone for many years, unwelcome even amongst the monsters of the wilds.

At last, she boarded a ship to Freeporte. As fate would have it, this ship was stopped by pyrates and looted thoroughly. Sigurd stood by while jewels were ripped from the throats of noblewomen and gold pried out of the hands of dead merchants. When the pyrate captain came to Sigurd, she said, "You can take everything onboard, but you cannot take my treasure." The captain and his swabbies laughed at her, thinking her mad. Sigurd smashed her head into his, and the captain slumped to the deck. He awoke in his own cabin, tied to his bed.

"Woman, what have ye done?" he cried.

"You may call me captain," says she. "Your ship and your life are now mine."

The captain turned white as snow. "What do ye plan for me?"

In response, Sigurd took off her clothes and smiled, exposing her pointy teeth. The captain shut his eyes. "I canna stand to look at ye," he shouted. "If ye have any mercy, make it quick."

The swabbies heard their captain howl all night long. None dared enter Trolldottir's cabin. Thus did Sigurd choose her first mate.

—Excerpted from The Life of Captain Sigurd Trolldottir: A True History of Freeporte Pyrates
Captain Johannsen, Author
Black Sails, Publisher

After a series of provocations, fighting broke out in Freeport for the first time in its history. The men of Drac and Francisco killed one another in the streets, shattering the pirate code that had bound Freeport together.

Neither Sea Lord gained an upper hand during the fighting. Before it could be resolved, word came of yet another fleet bound for the city. The pirates called a truce to defend the city, and the fleet sailed out, united once again. Or so it seemed.

The Big Sellout

Captain Drac had realized this was a war they could not win. The only chance for him and his men was to become a part of the system that was trying to destroy them. Drac entered secret negotiations with the nations set to destroy Freeport. He agreed to betray Francisco in exchange for a truce and recognition of Freeport as a sovereign city-state. The enemy leaders were only too happy to sign such an agreement, so they could end the ruinously expensive war.

With no knowledge of his comrade's duplicity, Captain Francisco led his fleet to the attack. Once he was engaged, the ships of Captain

Drac simply sailed away. Exposed and without support, Francisco's fleet was surrounded and destroyed. In the meantime, Drac sailed back to Freeport to announce the new city-state and his new regime.

Freeport Goes Legitimate

Captain Drac quickly consolidated his power over the city. He declared himself the only Sea Lord of Freeport and moved against his remaining enemies before they could organize against him. Some of the remaining pirate captains left Freeport rather than serve Drac. They blamed him for the ruination of the pirate code and for the betrayal of Francisco. The majority of the captains, however, seeing which way the salty wind was blowing, chose to remain in Freeport and ride out the storm.

As it turned out, Captain Drac's rule was considerably less bloody than anyone had believed possible. Drac was not joking about going legitimate. He set up trade routes with former enemies, cracked down on rogue pirates, and organized a Captains' Council for the governance of the city. Drac's word was still law, but the Captains' Council was in charge of the day-to-day affairs of the city and also advised Drac on matters of import.

Captain Drac ruled Freeport with a firm hand for the next thirty years. In that time, he succeeded in turning a pirate haven into a trading hub of substantial importance. Freeport had always enjoyed a fortuitous position, and Drac was not slow in making the most of it. Merchants used Freeport as a base for trade with the distant islands, and brave captains explored savage coasts. Gold, spices, and exotica flowed through Freeport, and Drac made sure the city got its cut.

A Question of Suggession

One question above all others haunted Drac throughout his reign. Could Freeport carry on after his death, or would civil war tear the city apart? Freeport meant money, and money made people crazy. Drac knew he had to take steps to safeguard the city's future. While Drac fancied himself a king, he resisted the urge to take the title. He knew the people of Freeport would not submit to a monarch. It was too contrary to what they were. Similarly, he knew he could not found a dynasty. The rough and ready men of the Captains' Council would not submit to Drac's son. The boy lacked the experience of the salty dogs of the council.

So Captain Drac chose another old hand, Captain Cromey, to be his successor. He even set into law that the Sea Lord's successor had to be approved by the Captains' Council. He did this to ensure the survival of Freeport as an independent city-state. At the end of his life, he chose the interests of the city over his own glory, and for this, he is remembered as a great man in Freeport.

Growth and Grises

The next hundred years were profitable ones for Freeport. The city continued to grow, which necessitated the building of a newer and larger city wall. Merchants opened trade routes to the east, making Freeport even more important in the maritime world. When wars broke out on the Continent, Freeport was largely able to stay out of them, though the city did cement alliances with several important powers. All in all, it was a period of stability and growth, with a succession of competent Sea Lords assuring the continued importance of the city. Only two incidents threatened Freeport's future.

Checks and Balances

The first crisis began thirty-two two years after Drac's death. The city—which had almost doubled in size—was in danger. A war raged on the Continent, disrupting trade and drawing away much of the city's navy. Freeport was in turmoil as food and other essential supplies became scarce, and angry riots were common. The Sea Lord Corliss, Cromey's successor, could barely keep order in the streets, even with the complete cooperation of the Captains' Council. An ambitious and popular councilor named Antonio Grossette used this opportunity to increase the power and influence of the council. He politically outmaneuvered Sea Lord Corliss and was able to expand the size of the Captains' Council to twelve members. Corliss realized he had no choice but to agree to Grossette's plan if he wanted the councilors' help in stabilizing the city, but he insisted on personally choosing the men who would be added to the Captains' Council. Since this incident, the size of the council has remained at twelve.

The Back Alley War

Once Freeport turned from pirate haven into city-state, changes in its population and makeup were quick in coming. The number of pirates decreased, while the number of merchants and tradesmen increased. Many of these new citizens brought their institutions with them. Primary among them were the guilds. These trade and craft groups were new to Freeport, and the Captains' Council was initially suspicious of them. The council was won over in time, though, once they saw the benefits the guilds brought to the city.

There was never a problem with a guild until the reign of the fourth Sea Lord, Marquetta. The first woman to become Sea Lord, Marquetta had made her name as a privateer. She was known as a tough but honorable combatant. Her honor was to be sorely tested during the first years of her reign by a new force in Freeport: the Thieves' Guild.

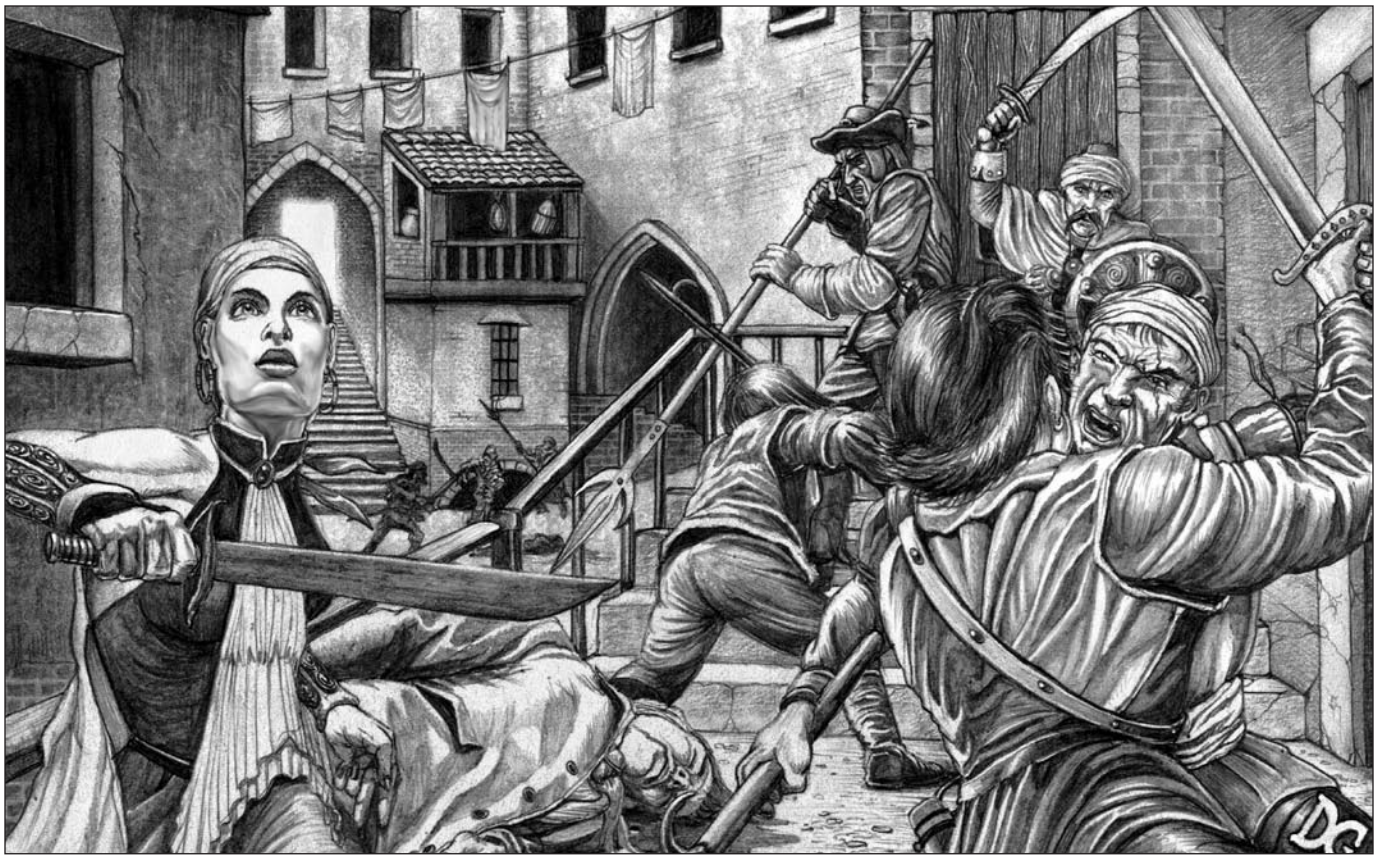
No Honor among Thieves

Thieves were certainly nothing new to Freeport, but in the early days, the pirate code had kept crime within the city to a minimum. Larceny was practiced largely at sea. When a gang of thieves from the Continent established a true guild in Freeport, it was a new experience. The city had known gangs before but not very organized ones. This group was experienced, professional, and ruthless. Inside ten years, they had gained complete control of Freeport's underworld.

At first, the Captains' Council was unconcerned. The Thieves' Guild was paying off most of the councilors, and the guildsmen kept their activities in the shadows. Soon after Marquetta's rise to power, she uncovered an operation run by the Thieves' Guild—in conjunction with a gang of orc pirates, the thieves had established a slave ring.

In the beginning, Sea Lord Marquetta attempted to deal with the problem diplomatically. She sent word through discreet channels that slavery was forbidden in Freeport and that the guild had best cease its activities. They supposedly assented to the request, but several months later, Marquetta learned the slave ring was still quite active. In fact, its scope seemed to have expanded even further than before. Again, Marquetta sent word to the guild. This time, the guild openly defied Marquetta, daring her to take action. With the Captains' Council in their pocket, the guild thought they were immune to the Sea Lord's meddling.

They were quite wrong.



A War on Grime

Marquetta quickly began an undeclared war. Her guard began arresting known guildsmen and rooting out safehouses, while she sent a squadron of ships to hunt down the orc pirates. The Thieves' Guild was caught by surprise and lost many of their number in the initial attacks, but they soon struck back. Three councilors on their payroll were assassinated for their failure to stop Marquetta. Several attempts also were made on the Sea Lord's life, all of which she survived with the aid of her bodyguards.

The conflict, soon known as the Back Alley War, raged for three years. Marquetta proved herself an implacable foe. She attacked again and again until she broke the back of the Thieves' Guild. All of its leaders were killed or imprisoned, and slavery was forever snuffed out in Freeport.

Since the end of the Back Alley War, no single criminal organization has dominated Freeport.

The Year of Three Sea Lords

The Sea Lords up through Marquetta were blessed with long reigns. Some on the Continent inferred they were improbably long considering pirates founded Freeport. It was all the more shocking, therefore, when Freeport saw three new Sea Lords in the year after Marquetta's death. The first, Rowland Furrock, decided to celebrate his elevation by participating in the Great Hunt a mere month after becoming Sea Lord; he was mauled to death by a giant boar. The second, Giles Wymer, was Sea Lord for six months until he fell victim to poison at a feast in his honor. The circumstances around his poisoning are still a mystery. The man destined to be Marquetta's true successor, Miles Caxton, took power after Giles' named heir fled the city rather than risking death as the Sea Lord.

The Freeport–Mazin War

During the reign of Miles Caxton, Freeport's merchants began exploring farther across the sea and trying to set up new trade routes. Several convoys disappeared in the south, and at first, it was thought they were simply lost at sea. Then a surviving ship made it back and reported that the convoys had been to the city of Mazin. This was a major port in the southlands and a center of the slave trade. The Freeport ships were set upon and seized there, and their crews sold into slavery.

Sea Lord Caxton would not abide by this treatment of his citizens, for nothing is more of an anathema to the people of Freeport than slavery. He first sent an armed expedition to deliver a message to the Mazini slavers: return the Freeporters or face the consequences. He was told if he wanted his people, he should come and buy them in the slave markets.

The now-infuriated Caxton built up the Admiralty and waged war on Mazin for nearly ten years. It was a difficult war to fight, with Mazin some distance from Freeport, but the Sea Lord would not be dissuaded. Finally, Freeport's fleet was able to lure out that of Mazin and defeat the slavers in a huge clash. This became known as Battle of the Burning Torches, named for the burning masts of the Mazini ships against the night sky. While the city was too distant to outright conquer, it was made to pay Freeport reparations and return those citizens that survived. Since the end of the Freeport-Mazin War, the two cities have had little contact. Mazini slavers have become mythical ogres to frighten the young children of Freeport.

A New Drac for a New Era

Fifty-five years ago, a descendent of Captain Drac succeeded the outgoing Sea Lord. Captain Marten Drac is rumored to have used blackmail and assassination in his rise to power, and he most certainly used them to maintain his position once he had it. Marten ruled for only fourteen years, but the damage he did to the city was substantial. A series of duties and taxes fattened his coffers but drove away many merchants. More ominously, he drove a new law through the Captains' Council that required the Sea Lord of Freeport to be a descendent of the original Captain Drac.

Marten's youngest brother, Anton, who became the next Sea Lord, saved the city from complete disaster. Captain Anton Drac proved to be cut from the same cloth as his illustrious ancestor, and he was able to undo the worst excesses of Marten's reign. The unfair duties were abolished, and Anton provided a series of incentives to win back the trade the city had lost. He also provided limited military aid to several important nations, earning their thanks and their business.

Anton's one failing was he did not abolish Marten's succession law. He was regularly urged to do so by the Captains' Council, but Anton could never bring himself to do it. When the councilors realized Anton would not budge on the succession issue, they changed tactics. Since the reign of the original Drac, the Sea Lord had had the power to nominate new members to the council. Although the council voted to confirm these nominees, they were never able to put up their own candidates. This was a power they desperately wanted, and they put the question to Anton.

The Sea Lord was initially against the idea. He knew this would further diminish the powers of his office. He also knew the sting of Marten's hideous regime was still in everyone's mind, so he proposed a compromise. The council would gain the ability to nominate councilors. In return for this power, the Sea Lord would be allowed to cast two votes for his nominee and break all ties. To elect their own nominee, at least seven councilors would thus have to vote against the Sea Lord.

The councilors were not pleased with Anton's suggestion and held out against it for many years. They kept hoping Anton would have a change of heart. Despite his enlightened rule, however, Anton considered Freeport his family's property. This notion would be his undoing.

Decade of Deceit

Sixteen years ago, a great war broke out on the Continent, involving nearly every nation. Sea Lord Anton Drac stayed out of it at first, but he knew he had to honor the treaties he had signed. He announced to the Captains' Council that the Freeport navy would go to the aid of its allies in the spring. This was to be the first time the full fleet had sailed to war since the days of Drac and Francisco. The Captains' Council was torn on the issue, approving the move by only a single vote.

Anton had made the announcement, so preparations could be made throughout the winter. The unfortunate side effect of this was it gave his enemies several months to plot a course of action. They used the time wisely, concocting an ambitious plan. In fact, it was so ambitious that rumors continue to circulate that they had outside help from the agents of governments who wanted Freeport to stay neutral.

The Captains' Council also decided to use the time granted them. They feared Anton might die in this war, and they would never gain the power to nominate new councilors. After years of impasse, the Captains' Council finally accepted Anton's offer and gained the power they craved. This has come to be known as "Anton's Gift." As matters transpired, the gift was given just in time.

Anton Pays the Ferryman

Towards the end of winter, Sea Lord Anton was inspecting the fleet on the docks. A single yellow-feathered arrow flew from the crow's nest of an anchored ship, piercing Anton's chest. The wound should not have been mortal, but the arrow was enchanted with vile, deadly magic. Anton was slain as soon as the arrow hit him, and Freeport was without a Sea Lord for the first time in two hundred years.

The assassin was cornered and killed before he could talk. The body was then stolen before priests could try to speak with the dead man. The assassin was dismissed as a lone renegade, and the magical nature of the attack was hushed up. The Captains' Council had more pressing business to attend to, after all—who would succeed Anton?

Milton Takes the Helm

At this juncture, Captain Milton Drac stepped onto the stage of history. A distant cousin of Anton, Milton appeared as if from nowhere. He was not a member of the Captains' Council, but somehow he enjoyed tremendous support there. Those most likely to oppose him were strangely silent, as if they feared the consequences of such action. In a matter of weeks, this unknown Drac had become the new Sea Lord of Freeport.

Milton's first act as Sea Lord was to cancel all military aid to allied nations. The fleet was to restrict its activities to guarding merchantmen, and that was all. As war raged on the Continent, Freeport stood neutral. The nations counting on Freeport's navy were gravely disappointed and branded Milton a traitor. He was accused of being the puppet of foreign agents or a religious cult. Captain Milton ignored the accusations and continued his rule of Freeport with little opposition.

The Sea Lord's goal was to make Freeport the preeminent maritime power of the world. After canceling the action of the fleet, he took the war chest and spent it on a monument to his ambition. The Lighthouse of Drac was meant to be one of the wonders of the age. It took ten years to complete and nearly bankrupted the city. Most citizens of Freeport took to calling the lighthouse "Milton's Folly."

The Madness of Milton Drac

What no one knew was that Milton Drac was secretly a member of the Brotherhood of the Yellow Sign. This malefic organization had somehow survived since the breaking of Valossa, biding its time until it could strike once again. They had found a dark prodigy in Milton Drac and aided him in his ruthless rise to power.

The lighthouse was the centerpiece of Drac's scheme. It had been specially constructed to channel the energy of the Unspeakable One, the terrible power worshipped by the Brotherhood of the Yellow Sign. As part of his plan, Milton had announced a gala celebration for the lighthouse's unveiling. He wanted ships from all the world's nations to choke the harbor. When the time was right, he and the Brotherhood planned to enact a magical ritual that would use the lighthouse to project the Yellow Sign into the night sky above Freeport. Charged with the power of the Unspeakable One, the Yellow Sign was to drive the assembled throngs mad, and from Freeport, the madness was to spread across the world.

Such was Drac's plan. Luckily for Freeport, a small group of heroes foiled it five years ago (these events are the subject of the original *Freeport Trilogy*), Milton Drac was slain, and the Brotherhood thwarted. Heroism, it seemed, was a match for the madness of the Unspeakable One.

The Succession Crisis

Freeport's succession law required a descendent of the original Sea Lord Drac to take over, and this bloodline seemingly ended with the death of Milton Drac. To make matters worse, Drac had murdered Councilor Verlaine, Councilors Melkior Maeorgan and Brock Wallace died defending the mad Sea Lord, and the Privateer Seat (the only council seat with a term limit) was soon to be up for grabs as well. This meant Freeport was lacking a Sea Lord and three of its twelve members of the Captains' Council. Marilise Maeorgan took over the seat of her slain brother Melkior (as permitted by the law), but the larger issues remained. The city had not seen such a power vacuum since its early days.

Candidates claiming to be members of Drac's bloodline were everywhere. Their claims ranged from the dubious to the ridiculous, but the council tried its best to vet all the candidates while debating internally about whether the succession law should simply be abolished. The candidate with the best claim was Drak Sockit, a half-orc bastard son of Milton Drac who led a militant group of orcs (the Sons of Krom) responsible for several riots.

A Very Bad Year

Freeporters who hoped Drac's death would lead to renewed peace and prosperity were sorely disappointed as multiple disasters rocked the city over the following year. First, another war erupted on the Continent, this time between the elves and the barbarians. When the war went against the barbarians, they tried to save face by sacking Freeport. The citizens rose up to defend their homes, and a vicious battle raged in the streets. Drak Sockit led the city's orcs against the barbarians, aiding Freeport in its hour of need, but he lost his life in the battle. After much bitter fighting, the barbarians were expelled and the city saved. These events are the subject of the adventure *Black Sails over Freeport*.

Months of rebuilding followed, and the political crisis continued. Finally, the Captains' Council made its decision: the succession law would be revoked. To the shock and horror of the councilors, the city erupted in violence. The gangs of Freeport used the announcement as an excuse to stir up the populace, which blossomed into full-fledged rioting. While the gangs had hoped for a certain amount of anarchy to enjoy a crime spree, the rioting spun out of control. The Sea Lord's Guard was unleashed to quash the rioters, and blood ran in the city gutters once again. The Commissioner of the Sea Lord's Guard was killed by an angry mob, and in return, the forces of law and order went on a rampage of their own. The two dominant gangs of the city, the Buccaneers and the Cutthroats, were utterly smashed, drastically changing the politics of Freeport's underworld.

During the riots, Councilor Arias Soderheim had his rival, Councilor Elise Grossette, kidnapped and whisked out of Freeport. He wanted her out of the way so he could make his move and become Sea Lord. In turn, this traitor was betrayed by a Continental agent who bribed the kidnapper into torturing and killing Grossette and pinning the blame on Soderheim. Grossette was rescued but only after suffering terribly at the hands of her kidnapper. The whole ugly mess went public, and Councilor Marilise Maeorgan called for Soderheim's blood, which she received in short order, ending the whole affair. Elise Grossette, disgusted with politics and traumatized by the torture she endured, resigned from the Captains' Council and quit politics forever.

And then, just to keep things interesting in the City of Adventure, a hurricane slammed into Freeport and caused yet more destruction. The preceding events are the subject of the adventure *Crisis in Freeport*.

A New Sea Lord

After the failure of Arias Soderheim's bid for power, the Captains' Council knew it must stabilize Freeport or face a full-fledged civil war. Councilor Marilise Maeorgan argued the empty seats must be filled before a new Sea Lord could be chosen. The other members saw this as an opportunity to get new blood on the Captains' Council without interference from a Sea Lord, so they agreed with Maeorgan's suggestion. At this point, the Captains' Council consisted of the following members: Captain Garth Varellion, Captain Hector Torian, Dirwin "Nimblefingers" Arnig, Sister Gwendolyn, Liam Blackhammer, Captain Marcus Roberts, and Marilise Maeorgan, with Captain Xavier Gordon in the Privateer's Seat.

Since Xavier Gordon's term in the Privateer Seat was almost up, he resigned and offered up his candidacy for a regular seat on the council. This was gladly accepted. Peg-Leg Peligro, the high priest of the Pirate God, took over the Privateer Seat at the councils' urging because they wanted someone they could trust. The council was filled out with three new members: Captain Jacob Lydon, Nathan Grymes, and Enoch Holliver. The roguish Lydon was a former pirate whose merchant



shipping company had seen better days. Nathan Grymes was a powerful merchant who was said to run an extensive smuggling ring on the Continent. Enoch Holliver was a retired mercenary captain with many influential friends and enough gold to keep his fingers in many pies.

With the council back to its required twelve members, debates on who should take over as Sea Lord began in earnest. With Lady Elise Grossette and Arias Soderheim out of contention, the field was wide open. Captain Garth Varellion put himself forward, as did Liam Blackhammer and several outside candidates. In a surprise move, Marilise Maeorgan advanced her own claim, despite her youth and the shortness of time served on the Captains' Council. Even more surprising, she quickly became the leading candidate. Despite her deceased brother's involvement with Milton Drac, she had three things going for her. First, her family had been prominent in Freeport's affairs for over a century. Second, her family fortune gave her a lot of money to spread around. Third, her vehemence in punishing the treachery of Arias Soderheim won her many public accolades.

So it was that Marilise Maeorgan became the second female Sea Lord. While this was not greeted with enthusiasm in all corners of Freeport, neither did it cause an uproar. While most folks understood that Marilise was almost certain to be corrupt, plain old corruption was preferable to the insanity of Milton Drac or a prolonged civil war.

The new Sea Lord was quick to make her mark on the city. With the Commissioner of the Sea Lord's Guard, Xander Williams, slain during the recent rioting, there was an important vacancy to fill. She split the Sea Lord's Guard in two. She made her father, Marshal Maeorgan, Commander of the Sea Lord's Guard. His men were given two primary duties: protecting the Sea Lord and defending the city from outside threats. The policing of the city was made the purview of the new Freeport Watch, whose appointed commissioner was none other than Enoch Holliver. By giving important positions to her father and a councilor who supported her bid for Sea Lord, Marilise Maeorgan made clear that nepotism was back and better than ever in Freeport.

With Marilise Maeorgan's ascension to the Sea Lordship, there was yet another vacancy on the Captains' Council. Liam Blackhammer nominated Tarmon, the High Wizard, in a move that caught the Sea Lord and the Council off guard. Tarmon had advised the council for many years but had never had a desire to serve on it. The Sea Lord did not want to make an enemy of the High Wizard, so she supported the nomination, and Tarmon joined the Captains' Council. This was the first time a powerful wizard served on the Captains' Council, and it made many in Freeport uneasy.

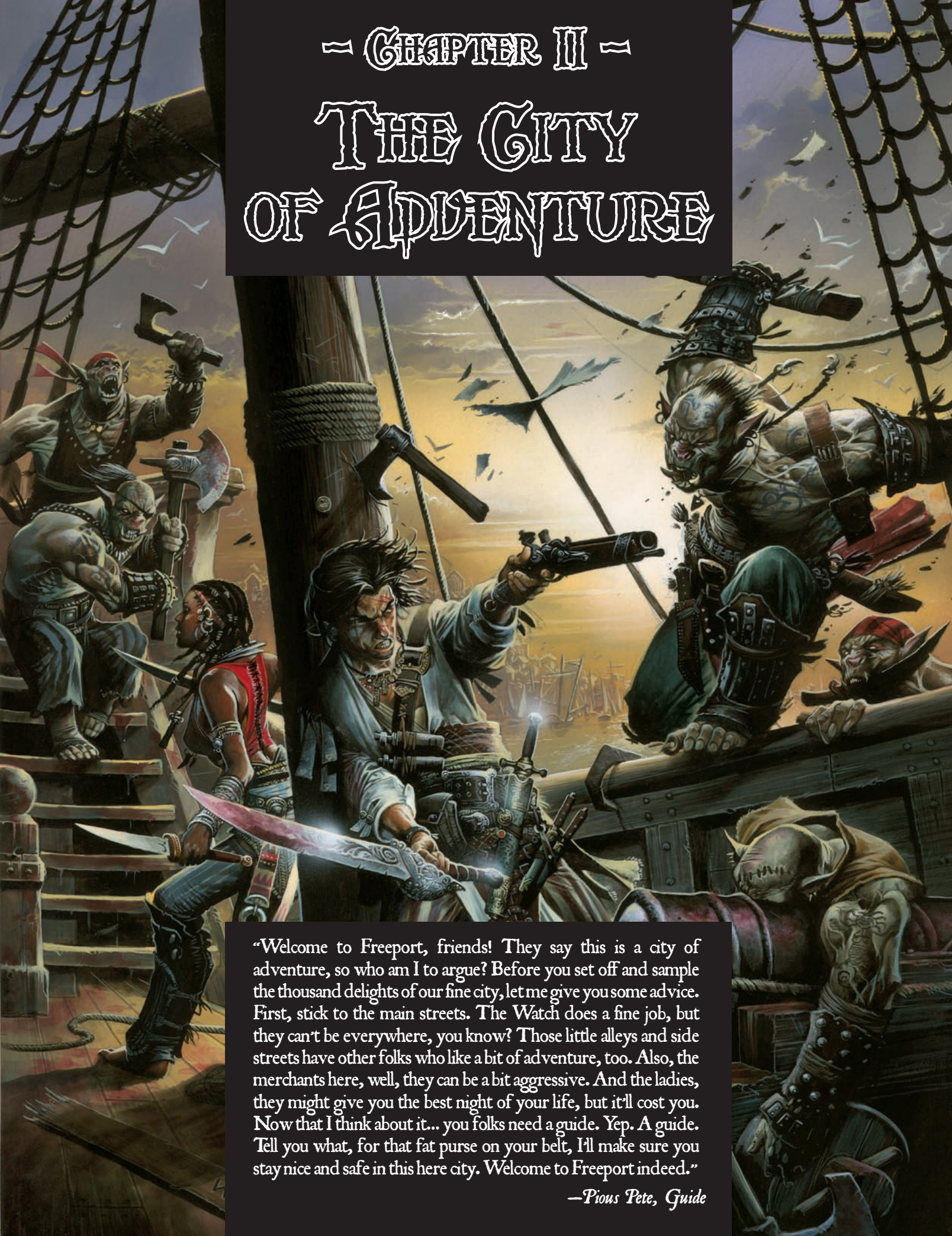
Freeport Today

The first year of Maeorgan's regime was trying. First, the Great Green Fire nearly destroyed everything. In a freakish supernatural event, the island of A'Val was set ablaze, and Freeport was nearly wiped off the map. The Wizards' Guild finally squelched the fire but not before half the island was turned to ash. Second, the town of Libertyville was re-founded and began competing commercially with Freeport. Both of these events are treated in more detail in **Chapter Fourteen: The Serpent's Teeth.**

The past two years have—at long last—been back to business as usual for Freeport. Marilise Maeorgan has been a stronger leader than expected, and her distinct lack of grandiose plans has made most citizens sigh in relief. Freeporters know how to deal with the business of corruption, and in that the Maeorgan regime excels. Marilise has power, and through that power, she and her friends make money. She sees her job as maintaining the status quo, and by and large, this has been achieved. Nothing, however, stops the bubbling cauldron of the City of Adventure, and current events in Freeport are the subject of the remainder of this book.

A Freeport Timeline

Time Before Present	Notable Events
2,005 years	The serpent people's Empire of Valossa destroyed in cataclysm; Serpent's Teeth is formed.
805 years	The future city of Freeport is founded on island of A'Val.
375 years	The Golden Age of Piracy begins.
205 years	Drac and Francisco lead the Great Raid.
195 years	Civil War breaks out in Freeport; Drac betrays Captain Francisco and becomes sole ruler of the city.
165 years	Drac dies and is succeeded by Captain Cromey.
133 years	Manipulated by Antonio Grossette, Sea Lord Corliss increases the Captains' Council to twelve members.
110 years	Marquetta becomes fourth Sea Lord and first woman to hold the post.
109 years	The Back Alley War begins.
106 years	Sea Lord Marquetta wins the Back Alley War, and the Thieves' Guild is destroyed.
99 years	The Year of Three Sea Lords
94 years	The Freeport-Mazin War begins.
86 years	Battle of the Burning Torches
85 years	The Freeport-Mazin War ends with Freeport victorious.
55 years	Marten Drac becomes Sea Lord, nearly bankrupting Freeport—institutes Drac Succession Law.
41 years	Anton Drac succeeds Marten and repairs much of the damage. Crucially, he does not repeal succession law.
16 years	Anton Drac assassinated by unknown forces; Milton Drac becomes Sea Lord of Freeport.
15 years	Construction begins on Lighthouse of Drac.
5 years	Lighthouse is completed; Milton Drac is killed; the succession crisis begins.
4 years	Barbarian invasion; Succession Law revoked; Soderheim's treachery; hurricane blasts Freeport; Marilise Maeorgan becomes the new Sea Lord.
3 years ago	Great Green Fire ravages A'Val; Libertyville is refounded.
2 years ago	The Reclamation Project begins; Bloodsalt District is founded.



— Chapter II —

The City of Adventure

"Welcome to Freeport, friends! They say this is a city of adventure, so who am I to argue? Before you set off and sample the thousand delights of our fine city, let me give you some advice. First, stick to the main streets. The Watch does a fine job, but they can't be everywhere, you know? Those little alleys and side streets have other folks who like a bit of adventure, too. Also, the merchants here, well, they can be a bit aggressive. And the ladies, they might give you the best night of your life, but it'll cost you. Now that I think about it... you folks need a guide. Yep. A guide. Tell you what, for that fat purse on your belt, I'll make sure you stay nice and safe in this here city. Welcome to Freeport indeed."

—Pious Pete, Guide

The best way to describe Freeport is by its moniker the City of Adventure. Now this isn't to say Freeport is a place where shining knights in full plate armor tilt at one another for the favor of inbred noblewomen. Nor is Freeport a city where you'll see great balloons drifting across the sky, magic carpets zipping hither and yon, or dragons belching flames. Freeport is the City of Adventure because danger lurks around every filthy corner. From the offices of the Sea Lord to the dank sewers worming their way beneath the city, there are hazards to be avoided, fortunes to be made, and lives to be lost.

Freeport is not often a pleasant city, but it is a place of opportunity. It is a city of delights, of vice and sin. Here, deals are made, intrigues planned, expeditions launched, conspiracies hatched, and dreams crushed. Merchants do a brisk business, employing ruthless tactics to rub out their competition, while thieves prowl the marketplaces, slipping sharp knives against the strings of dangling purses. High and mighty men and women come to the city to broker dirty deals with other lords (when they can tear themselves away from Freeport's renowned brothels, that is). The city hums with back-room bargains, the steady stream of black market goods slipping beneath the nose of the corrupt harbormaster. Here, assassins stalk the night, cults perform dreadful ceremonies to maddening gods, and pirates walk the Docks looking to spend the bloodstained coins they pried from the dead fingers of their victims. This, friends, is Freeport. It's no place for the meek, but for those with a good head, a sharp sword, and a keen wit, it offers some of the best opportunities for adventure in the entire world.

The Lay of the City

For all the people that live here, Freeport's not a huge, sprawling metropolis. It's a modest city huddling in all its ugliness at the southern end of the largest island of the Serpent's Teeth. That the city grew haphazardly is not lost on those who venture here. In many ways, it looks like it was cobbled together from whatever materials washed up on shore, and yet, there are still fine places in the city. The walls of the Old City loom over everything, and one can't ignore the beautiful estates of the Merchant District. That said, Freeport is not pristine with whitewashed buildings and perfectly symmetrical streets. The City of Adventure has grown without regard for planning—and it shows.

The Districts

Freeport has a character of its own, but it's one that reflects the nature of the people that live, work, and die here. It started as a small village but grew far faster than the founders ever expected. Therefore, much of the city has been added haphazardly, with new sections built to accommodate the influx of new settlers. As Freeport grew, neighborhoods formed, bound by common interests, wealth, and influence. In time, these clusters developed into the current districts.

The Docks

Locals call the Docks the "door to Freeport" because it's the easiest place to moor ships. From the pre-dawn light till after sundown, this is one of the busiest parts of the city. Half of the Docks are the wharves that stretch out into the harbor to accommodate the deeper water vessels. The wooden walks connect to a boardwalk that runs across the entire district, extending from the Warehouse District to Scurvytown. You can find just about anything you'll ever need here, as clever merchants like to get the jump on their customers before letting them move deeper into the city. The rest of the district caters to Freeport's particular breed of clientele: seamen. Pubs, taverns, flophouses, gambling houses, and bordellos offer countless diversions in which to sink a sailor's pay. Crime is a constant problem, as brawls spill into the narrow streets, pick pockets and cutpurses worm through the crowds, and bravos and toughs lurk in the shadowy alleys waiting for the perfect mark to stroll by. Murders happen, not as often as some claim, but a body appears in the harbor often enough people think little of it.

Scurvytown

Scurvytown squats to the east of the Docks. For years, this was easily the meanest part of town, being a large slum run by gangsters and crime lords, where even the Sea Lord's Guard only ventured en masse. While Bloodsalt has eclipsed this district in terms of violent crime and lawlessness, Scurvytown is still a place best avoided. The relatively cleaner and safer streets of the Docks give way to a place crammed with old homes, decaying shops, and watering holes no one in their right mind would frequent. The people of Scurvytown are a hardened lot, accustomed to the harsh nature of the streets and criminal rule. They put little stock into Freeport's elite, and they border on naked resentment when they encounter one of Freeport's merchants or so-called nobles.

Eastern District

Those who have the means and ambition to rise above the slums of Scurvytown find a slightly better life in the Eastern District. The middle class citizens of the Eastern District don't have it easy, though, since they are surrounded by five other districts—two of which are Bloodsalt and Scurvytown. The area borders as many districts as the Old City but does not have enormous walls to keep out unwanted elements. The Watch does have a presence in the Eastern District, but everyone knows the crime lord Finn really rules these streets.

Drac's End

People here try to scrape out an honest living far from the chaos of the waterfront districts, but doing so is not always easy in a city like Freeport. Drac's End is so named because the original Drac had once envisioned carving much deeper into the surrounding jungle, but it was here his ex-pirate workers were stopped dead in their tracks—sometimes literally—by the creatures then inhabiting the jungle. Since Drac's plans for expansion ended here, it acquired this somewhat ironic moniker.





Ships from all over the world can be found in Freeport's harbor. The City of Adventure is a key port of call on many important trade routes (both legitimate and otherwise).

The Temple District

Sailors have always been a superstitious lot, and since they founded this city, it's not surprising Freeport has a thriving religious community. No matter the year or season, the people of Freeport have plenty of reasons to pray. Having recently survived a killer hurricane, a barbarian invasion, a great fire, and a mad Sea Lord, it has never been clearer to Freeporters their fates are in the gods' hands. The city has no official religion, though the God of Pirates has far more worshippers here than in any other single place in the world. Other deities are well represented, too, corresponding with the great diversity of the city's population.

Merchant District

In stark contrast to the poverty of Drac's End stands the Merchant District. This is where the wealthiest people in Freeport live and sometimes even work. The shops here cater only to the highest class of customer, and the streets are lined with well-maintained stones and trimmed with handsome lights and well-kept greenery. Wave Avenue, the top address in town, runs right through the center of the district, like the spine that holds the city's economy together. It's said more deals are done on Wave Avenue than in the entirety of the Eastern District.

Warehouse District

As the center of trade for the entire region, Freeport needs to have a place for the easy storage of goods of all kinds. Unlike the wharves down in the Docks or Scurvytown, the piers of the Warehouse District are all heavily guarded and in good shape. The business done here involves serious money, and the docking fees are commensurately higher to cover the cost of the increased security. That this area borders directly on the Merchant District is no coincidence. The powerful and wealthy prefer not to have to walk far to watch over their goods.

The Old City

This is where it all began under the original Sea Lord Drac. The massive wall that surrounded the city in its earliest days still stands, though Freeport has long since sprawled far outside their confines. While the five gates that control traffic in and out of the Old City are still in working order—ready to be slammed shut and barricaded against riot or invasion—they've only been used once in recent memory, during the barbarian invasion. In places, the old brickwork in this district is falling down, but this is still the seat of rule in the city. The Courts are here, as well as the Sea Lord's Palace.

Bloodsalt

Bloodsalt was an accident. Formed in the aftermath of the Great Green Fire and the Wizards' Guild's recruitment policy for hiring only nonhumans, this place began as an encampment and rapidly became a permanent addition to Freeport. Bloodsalt is more of a ghetto for orcs, goblins, and hobgoblins than a proper district. There's little in the way of order, and violence rules the day. People are wise to avoid this place, for there's no justice here.



Many dangerous creatures that haunt the sea lanes have passed into nautical lore.
The mighty ocean wyrm is one such beast and few who have encountered it have lived to tell the tale.

Getting around Freeport

Freeport's evolution has never had much in the way of forethought, growing in an almost higgledy-piggledy fashion. A Sea Lord might make grandiose plans, spend enormous sums of gold expanding the city, and then give up on the project months after it got underway. Neighborhoods and districts grew out of the settlement patterns of those who came here—and without the guidance of the city leaders, who were more concerned with exploiting their own status than seeing to the needs of the people under their rule. As a result, there are few quick ways to get anywhere in Freeport, and going from even one district to the next can be an adventure.

The City Streets

The most telling example of Freeport's lack of foresight is in its streets. Visitors find the labyrinthine nature of Freeport's roadways incredibly frustrating since most of the roads lack names and, in some cases, are little more than alleys or gaps between buildings built too-close together. The main streets are named, but they're not always clearly labeled. Any native knows the names, as do most longtime residents, but for those out on a stroll and unfamiliar with the lay of the city, one street may look very much like any other—making it all too easy to get lost.

The roads that do have signs, typically a fingerpost planted on the corner of an intersection, are in the wealthier areas. Wave Avenue, for example, has signs up and down its entire length as it runs through the richest parts of the Merchant District. The elite in the city can afford to maintain such landmarks to remind the other folks of Freeport where they are not welcome. In Scurvytown, Bloodsalt, and parts of Drac's End, some streets have never had formal names, acquiring local names based on the types of places one might find there. For example, a street that has two bakeries might gain the name Baker Street. Or a street famed for collecting effluvia might be known as the Crack.

Other roads take the names of famous people who lived or died there or, more often, did something important or ridiculous. Of course, there is rarely any evidence to support the stories told by the locals, and on many occasions, two or three entirely different locations claim the same event and, thus, the same name. For example, there are two short streets, an alley, and a dirt path named Milton's Whistle. Each claims Milton Drac once stopped at a nearby watering hole to relieve his thirst.

As challenging as it is to find your way, it doesn't take long to get your bearings here. People tend to get the hang of moving through the city, and if not, they tend to get lost—permanently—in the worst parts of town. The best way to learn the city is to pay attention. There are landmarks aplenty in this city, and Freeporters refer to them when giving directions, such as *"Yar, it's three blocks past the Temple of the Pirate God and then to the right for two blocks, until you come to Sly's Sausage Stand. Look to yer left. Ya can't miss it."*

Alleys and Shortcuts

Since the main avenues are packed with people throughout the day, getting anywhere quickly is just not possible unless it's the dead of night, at which time travelers are likely to have a different set of problems. People that know the city learn to take advantage of the various shortcuts that bypass the most congested areas. Piss-soaked alleys running in the gaps between buildings can shave off ten minutes for those willing to brave the shadowy corridors. Most of these dark routes hide all sorts of unsavory things, including bloated carcasses, piles of refuse, mounds of excrement, and the misshapen beggars that make their homes in the cracks of the city. Only those of strong stomachs and unimpeachable courageousness find the time gained worth the gauntlet.

Guides

The easiest way to get around Freeport is to hire a guide. Enterprising urchins make good livings helping bewildered travelers find their way from place to place. These sharp-eyed youngsters watch for anyone that looks confused and then clamor for attention. Being swarmed by a horde of dirty children can be more than a little off-putting for those unacquainted with the city's youngest entrepreneurs. For the most part, these scamps are trustworthy, but a person should be advised to get a good look at the would-be guide to ensure he's not a halfling conman in disguise. Tales abound of visitors who mistakenly hire a halfling only to be led into Scurvytown, where they are robbed, beaten, abused, and sometimes murdered. Certainly, halflings take exception to the stories, declaring that most of their kind are honest folk just trying to make a living, but even they admit that some take advantage of their diminutive stature for criminal pursuits.

Urchins don't have a monopoly on the guide business. Plenty of the poor and destitute offer their services for a bite of lunch or swig of ale. Many of these folks are unreliable and may become lost if they receive their "payment" before they take their employers where they want to go.

Travelers with coin to spend seek out the professional guides. In the Docks and the Old City, bawds and valets make excellent livings teaching newcomers the ins and outs of Freeport. They are flawless in their guidance and know the best restaurants, shows, and bordellos for those who seek them. They can acquire tickets to sold out operas, finagle appointments with hard-to-reach merchants, and generally make the impossible possible. In exchange for their unmatched skill, they charge outrageous rates, but those who pony up the cash are never dissatisfied.

Rickshaws

For those in a hurry, they need not look much further than the rickshaws. They were introduced to Freeport nearly twenty years ago and have proven quite popular. With stations in the Seaside Market, Street of Dreams, Wave Avenue, and most other larger avenues, a person with the coin to spend can hire a strong lad or lass to pull them along while comfortably seated in a padded chair. One company used to dominate the rickshaw business, but it collapsed under mysterious circumstances. Now competition is fierce, and companies use whatever tricks they can to get the attention of their clients. Many use fanciful names to attract attention, offer cool beverages to their clients, or make impossible promises about their speed and efficiency.

Horses

Horses are rare in the city. They are not native to the Serpent's Teeth, so they must be shipped to the city from the Continent. This is costly, and the horses don't always survive the passage, leaving merchants to sell the meat, if not too green, to the rabble to recoup their losses. In truth, horses don't serve much purpose in the city. The streets are cramped and narrow, and a horse simply takes up too much room. Most taverns and restaurants aren't equipped with stabling, and few people would know what to do with a horse if they saw one.

Only the wealthiest citizens can afford to own the few horses present in Freeport. Some merchants and politicians keep steeds, and they pay excessive fees to keep them healthy. Feed, grooms, and property on which to ride them all come at a high price. Still, a horse drawn coach moving along Wave Avenue is a sign of power and influence, so many bluebloods scrimp and save to buy an old nag for the chance to look every bit as important as those of the upper crust.

Life in Freeport

Freeport has a savage reputation, but life here is much like any other city. Many people live by honest means, taking jobs wherever they can find them. Crime is a fact, but that's to be expected in a city founded by pirates and with so much trade running through it. It bears mentioning that in many districts, Freeport is rather safe, and ordinary people who are smart about their behavior can get along without fear of mugging or assault. This fact is not readily apparent to the scores of travelers who disembark from ships every day. Even they can see that Freeport, despite its myriad dangers, is a city of great opportunity.

Sights and Sounds

At heart, Freeport is a maritime city, so most of the sights, sounds, and smells—for good or ill—come from the sea. Much of Freeport's industry and service go toward catering to the needs of sailors, ships, and their passengers. Therefore, most things have a nautical theme, from street and business names to restaurant menus. This seaside atmosphere is most prominent in districts that have a shore, such as the Docks, Scurvytown, and the Warehouse District. The further inland one moves, the less pronounced these affectations become, giving way to the sorts of enterprises and structures one would expect to find in any large city.



It's easy to get lost in the back alleys of Freeport, especially in areas like Drac's End.

Along the coast, the air is full of scents and sounds of the sea, from the squawks of the seagulls to the smell of seaweed. Travelers may delight in the delicious smell of cooking fish seasoned with exotic spices, but the rank stench of the ocean, rotting fish, rubbish, and offal is far more common. Permeating it all is the ripe stink one can only find in large areas of human population—a mixture of sweat, excrement, and rot, mixed sickeningly with the noxious perfumes used to mask body odors.

Freeport is also loud. There's never quiet in the city. There's always a hum: the din of arguments, the clash of swords, the sound of rickshaws rolling over cobbled streets, the cries of animals at the butchery, and squawks of the colorful birds that roost on the roofs looking down at passers-by. Growls and screeches from dogs and cats blend with the creaks of taught rope, the rustling of hoisted sails, and the constant snap of the flags and signals that decorate the vessels in the harbor. And then, there's the wind and waves. There's always a breeze in the city, helping to reduce some of the smells wafting from the more unclean quarters, but it whistles incessantly as it navigates the streets and buildings. All of this noise, plus the crash of the surf, makes the city seem positively cacophonous to those accustomed to the quiet of the Continent.

People of Freeport

Freeport's virtues and vices draw people from all over the world. It is the destination of the hopeful and the hopeless—a city bursting at its seams. So full are its districts, not even the best accounting by the Captains' Council can adequately assess Freeport's population.

The city swallows visitors, their faces adding to the throng that pulses through the streets like blood through the veins of some sleeping giant. They find life here is many things. It's challenging, frustrating, and above all dangerous, but it's never boring. There's no such thing as a dull day in this city.

Races

Freeport is a tolerant city and accepts just about anyone, partly because the earliest settlers came here to be free from the stifling governments of the Continent. Most Freeporters recognize the same spirit in any who would leave behind their homelands to start all over again.

Humans

Humans founded Freeport, and they remain the dominant race in the city. So numerous are humans that if all the other races were combined, they would still not make up more than a quarter of the people living in the city. For this reason, Freeport is known as a human city, even though nearly every race and culture is represented amongst the population. Humanity in Freeport takes many shapes and sizes. Humans from all over the world come to this city, and every imaginable skin color, hair color, and language can be found here.

Halflings

Freeport is also home to a number of other peoples, some similar to humanity, others strange and even monstrous. The most common of these other races are halflings. They come from the Continent and are willing to work hard alongside other Freeporters to make a new life. While most people get along fine with halflings, the fact that Finn, the crime lord that rules the Eastern District, is a halfling is not lost on them. That and the natural roguish tendencies of many young halflings breed suspicion when dealing with these diminutive folk. Due to the influence of Finn, halflings are most common in the Eastern District.

Elves

Elves also have a presence in Freeport. Also drawn from the Continent, they often struggle to find a place in the city. They have some advantages over other newcomers because Freeporters tend to afford elves a bit more respect and tolerance. Despite the smattering of elves that live here, few elves can tolerate the city's excess. Freeport's noisome odors, dense population, filthiness, and violent atmosphere offend the delicate nature of these people.

Dwarves

Few dwarves have cause to leave their homelands for a port city of any sort, never mind one situated on a small island. Those that do wind up here are mad, exiled, or lost, yet once they set foot here, they find they don't want to leave. Some suspect dwarves stay because they can't bear the thought of another ocean voyage. Luckily, they often have unique talents that give them an edge in commerce in this dynamic city.

Gnomes

Of the racial groups that live in Freeport, gnomes are the least numerous. They are uncommon enough that they are often confused with halflings or dwarves. What they lack in numbers, they make up for in exuberance. Many find work as entertainers, performing in small productions in the playhouses of the Eastern District or thrilling the crowds of the Docks. A few make their living as jewelers, putting their talents at gem cutting to good use. The gnome community is lucky to have one of its own in the Captains' Council, ensuring the Sea Lord treats them well.

Orcs

Freeport also has a large orc population. Used as cheap labor during the construction of Milton's Folly (the city's lighthouse), the orcs never left once the work was finished. Brutish, crude, and violent, orcs largely live in Bloodsalt these days. Freeporters aren't exceptionally warm to these folk but tolerate them all the same. The orcs defended Freeport during the recent barbarian invasion, earning them some goodwill from the rest of the populace.

Goblinoids

Freeport experienced a great population boom a few years ago when the Wizards' Guild began recruiting nonhumans to use as labor. This led to an influx of savage humanoids that were largely unfamiliar with living in human communities. Since they caused a great deal of upheaval throughout the city, they were relegated to Bloodsalt, a newer district created just for them. Although largely contained to the edge of the city, goblins and hobgoblins, along with their larger kin, can be found mingling with other folks in the city, and goblin peddlers and hobgoblin mercenaries are fast becoming common sights.

10 Things Everyone Should Know

If you're thinking about visiting Freeport, there are a few things you should know if you value your coins, your life, and maybe even your soul. Leave it to ol' Pious Pete; I'll get you around safely.

Put your purse near your jewels. Freeport is notorious for thievery, and many people lose their fortunes within three steps of the boat that carried them here. Stick your valuables in places no thief would go.

Mind your manners. Don't like half-orcs? Keep it to yourself. Say the wrong thing, and you're bound to lose a few teeth. Say it twice, and you'll be lucky to escape with your life.

Use small coins. You might have a lot of money, but you won't for long if you're not careful. Pay for everything in the smallest coins possible, within reason. Don't pay for a sword in pennies: haul out a thousand copper bits, and you'll get kicked into the gutter.

Keep your eyes on your shoes. Gaping about is a sure way to get robbed, stabbed, raped, or all three.

If you're lost, look for the walls. Freeport doesn't have any conveniences like signs—most folks can't read anyway. The best landmark is the Old City Walls. You can't miss them. If they're in front of you, you're in the Docks; behind you, you're in Drac's End; to the east, you're in the Merchant District; to the west, you're either in the Eastern District or about to enter a world of pain (that's Scurvytown or Bloodsalt if yer not paying attention).

The Watch doesn't give a damn. The Freeport Watch is a sorry excuse for law enforcement. You feel you've been wronged? Get over it. The Watch doesn't care one whit for your troubles.

The Sea Lord's in charge. The current Sea Lord is a woman, but you don't want to mess with her. Her word is law, and that's all you need to know.

Stay out of Bloodsalt. Unless you're an orc or goblin, don't go here. You're going to ignore this advice, but consider yourself warned.

Avoid the Scurvytown Prostitutes. The Docks aren't much better, but odds are that except for the few coins you spent there, you'll come away with everything you brought with you.

Don't trust anyone. Not even me.

—Pious Pete



Some travelers are shocked to find out that orcs too have taken to the seas. Although they don't have the best ships, orc pirates make up for it with ferocity and a true love of hand-to-hand combat.

Adapting Freeport

At heart, Freeport is a fantasy city, and it assumes that the normal sorts of fantasy peoples populate it. In this city, you'll find humans alongside dwarves, elves, halflings, orcs, and others. While this is the default for this book, other settings and game systems may not have all or any of these races. If not, just substitute races found in your game for those described here or, if your game has no other races than human, you can substitute different ethnicities and cultures. For example, rather than using sea elves, you could easily substitute a seafaring people from an island nation. With just a few adjustments, you'll find Freeport can work for almost any game you play.

Other Races

There are many other people found in Freeport hailing from strange and distant lands. Hidden among the populace are disguised serpent people, followers of Yig working to reclaim their lost kin from beneath the city. There are also a growing number of azhar, a human-like race that claims the blood of the efreet runs through their veins (see **Chapter Fifteen: Beyond Freeport**). These races and many more call Freeport home.

Culture

Freeport is a varied and diverse society. Although certainly no metropolis, the city has a population that tops ten thousand in the busiest months, featuring people of all major humanoid races and cultures, as well as quite a few of the others.

In the City of Adventure, gold is king, and it is wealth that determines a citizen's address and respectability, rather than blood. Those with money—particularly old money—are at the top and chart the destiny of Freeport. Traditionally, these were wealthy ship's captains, but these days, well-heeled people of any calling can fall into this class. These are the people nominated to serve on the Captains' Council and who may even aspire to one day become the Sea Lord, especially now that the old adherence to the Drac bloodline is at an end.

Directly below the wealthy are the servants of the gods. The priests and acolytes who tend to the temples may not hold much political sway in the city, but they are highly respected. Some of these holy folk have taken vows of poverty, severely curtailing their individual means, but as a whole, the orders are wealthy and have plenty of influence over the city's happenings.

Next in line is the struggling middle class. This class comprises the people who have fought their way out of the gutter but haven't quite made it onto Wave Avenue. Many ship captains are included in this class, as are most of the minor merchants and shopkeepers in town. These ambitious people dream of more for their families and are willing to work hard to get it. Some may have fallen from greater heights, and they are often looking to return to their former status.

Below all of these classes are the working poor. This includes most of the sailors who live in Scurvytown or even just below deck on their ships. These people never seem to be able to get ahead no matter what they do. Many have actually given up hope of such a thing ever happening, short of being struck by sudden fortune.

The classic example is the sailor who works like a dog at sea for weeks or even months on end. Then when he finally makes shore and collects his earnings, he spends every last copper on ale and whores. By the time the ship is ready to pull out again, he's flat broke. This is a longstanding tradition among sailors, many of whom don't expect to survive their next voyage. The mortality rate among sailors is almost as high as it is among adventurers, and so the entire culture of Freeport has been infused with a "live for today" attitude that pervades all levels.

With the creation of the new district of Bloodsalt, a class even more reviled than the poor coalesced: the savage humanoid laborers. Primarily consisting of orcs, goblins, and hobgoblins, the denizens of Bloodsalt have become an underclass that everyone in Freeport can despise.

Languages

No matter what language a person speaks, he's bound to find someone that speaks it too. Freeport's cultural diversity means just about every tongue and dialect has a place. Luckily, most people also speak the common tongue, an ugly mishmash of several human languages with borrowed words and phrases from the dwarven language, elven expressions, and halfling curses, all drenched in the sailor's slang and jargon. It may be unsettling to first-time visitors, but most find they pick up the language quickly and can get along just fine.

Currency

In Freeport, gold is gold no matter where it's minted, so long as it has a reasonable weight and purity. Merchants accept coins regardless of their origin, but they always weigh the coins to ensure their value. Freeport does mint its own coins called "lords," but lacking any gold mines, they reclaim gold coins from taxes, melt it down, and re-mint the coins to bear the winged hourglass of the city and a likeness of the ruling Sea Lord. Since the tax collectors aren't choosy about the coins they collect, coins minted in the city are often worth less than foreign coins, since the smelters do little to sift out impurities.

Aside from the lords and other gold coins, Freeport also circulates silver, brass, and copper coins—also minted in the city and again using

Gunpowder: Scourge, Threat, or Menace?

~The Shipping News



Freeport's Symbols of Power: its flag and currency.

coins reclaimed during tax collections. Silver coins, called "skulls" bear a crude skull and crossed bones and are almost always tarnished black. One lord is worth about ten skulls.

The brass and copper coins are called pennies. Ten pennies make up a skull, or one hundred pennies make up a lord. Brass pennies are slightly more valuable than copper ones, since they are often black with frequent handling, and this makes some indistinguishable from older silver coins. Freeporters use the expression "scratch a penny" as a wish for good luck because some folks find, to their delight, that the black bit of metal is actually silver beneath all the muck. Copper pennies are weak and turn greenish white with corrosion, though they are accepted all the same.

Aside from metal coins, Freeporters often use barter for trade, exchanging trade goods or selling services in exchange for commodities. Letters of credit drafted by the Bank of Freeport are also as good as gold, and some locals have even begun to exchange wooden tokens as IOUs, which can be exchanged for one skull or rarely, one lord.

Industry

Freeport's attractiveness to merchants means the streets are flooded year round with foreigners peddling goods acquired from ports all over the world. Furthermore, the city's distinct lack of raw materials—iron, wood, and stone are hard to come by—means that many goods requiring these materials are actually cheaper to import than to fashion in the city. Therefore, the city lacks industry; most people work in service, tending shops, or working the docks. Those craftsmen and artisans who produce goods for a living have marginal success in the Seaside Market and along the Street of Dreams, and even then, they must compete with goods brought from other lands.

Education, Technology, and Magic

The city is home to the Freeport Institute, a large university that has somehow managed to gain recognition and even respect from Continental schools. The Institute owes much of its success to the Temple of the Knowledge God, which funds the school and provides additional training and materials for scholars and students alike. Ironically, the Institute stands in the heart of Drac's End, towering above impoverished and uneducated masses that could never afford the Institute's high tuition.

While Freeport may have wonders rumored to exist in far-flung lands, it has achieved many technological advances, including firearms, the printing press, clockwork pieces, and telescopes. Up until recently, black powder weapons were decidedly scarce—the secret of their manufacture known only to the gnome inventor Kolter. Eventually, however, others were able to reverse engineer the weapons, and now they're more common. Dwarf engineers on the Continent have pioneered cannons that can now be found on some ships.

The Shipping News, which perfected the process of movable type and can now print flyers and newspapers with incredible speed and in great quantities, popularized the innovation of the printing press. While other publishers make use of this device, they lack the movable type and must print in far smaller numbers.

Every year it seems some new device emerges from the city out of the ruins of countless failures. Freeport is coming to be known as a source of innovation and as a haven for tinkers and scientists. What new invention will arise in the city, none can say. There are whispers of all sorts of strange things from submersibles, flying machines, fireball projectors, and scores of other impossible devices.

Freeport is also home to a rich and influential magical society. Though Freeport's liberal views on magical practice encourages innovators to study here, there is by no means an abundance of magic users. The Wizards' Guild, sanctioned by the Sea Lord almost forty years ago, invites anyone with the talent and discipline to study magic. And each year, the guild receives a new batch of students not only from Freeport but also from the Continent.

Although the Wizards' Guild is the only approved institution of magic in the city, there are a number of wizards and sorcerers who take on apprentices to pass on what they have learned. Such methods of study are frowned upon by the Captains' Council and vigorously opposed by the guild, but the council realizes their own limitations about controlling and monitoring these arrangements and ignores these activities. Naturally, should a spellcaster violate the laws of the city, such as by working destructive magic within its walls, summoning demons and otherworldly creatures, or causing general mayhem and distress to the populace, the offender is brought down and viciously punished. Word has it that such individuals have their fingers and tongues cut off and out before being dumped in one of the Hulks.

Hedge wizards, witches, and minor soothsayers all do good business on the city streets. Many operate small shops dealing in magical materials such as strange ingredients, animals to serve as helpers, and other minor, enchanted trinkets. Seers and fortunetellers can be found all over the city and enjoy a great deal of business, though at least half are charlatans and fakirs. Overall, Freeporters tolerate spellcasters as they do anyone else. Residents may be a bit more guarded, warding off bad luck with a quick gesture or a touch of a turtle shell, but they have no objection to magic users presiding in the city.

Customs and Holidays

Freeporters recognize the holy days of any god they wish to court, so there's always a good turnout for the sacred days of the God of the Sea, God of Pirates, and others. There are many holy days; at least one day of every week holds some importance to one or more of the various religions. In fact, during contested days, fights between rival religions in the Temple District sometimes break out, and the priests who win the brawl get to claim the day for a year until the next time, when the fight begins anew.

Some religious activities are more widely celebrated than are others. On the evenings of summer and winter solstices, the adherents of the God of the Sea hold a procession down to the shores to the west of the Merchant District. When they arrive there, those who are willing take a ceremonial dip in the waters of the sea to show their respect to the deity. While the waters are a bit colder in the winter, this is still not much of a hardship. The celebratory parties held during and after the swimming are legendary in Freeport, and the city often plays host to the god's followers from many distant ports.

Freeport also recognizes a number of superstitious acts to ensure the continued good fortune of the city. Every decade, the Sea Lord makes a sacrifice on the docks to appease the sleeping beast on whose back the docks are claimed to rest. Native sailors pour a measure of wine into the sea to keep the beast happy and drunk, while fishwives dump tripe into the dark waters to sate the monster's hunger.

In truth, Freeporters are all very superstitious, and every day a portion of their time is spent warding off bad luck or doing something to appease the gods. A Freeporter is likely to rap three times on wood, spit on the ground, flick his tooth, pull on his ear, or blink his eyes twice, depending on the local methods to prevent ill fortune from making an unwelcome visit. Certain gestures convey insults—a person's gender, nationality, or even height can all indicate the insult's potency. Many of these movements are variations of invocations for good luck and originate from the belief that when a person requests fortune's favor, they do so at the expense of another person's luck, so it's often bad form to make a gesture while being watched.

In addition to all the other activities and excuses to shirk work, Freeporters recognize four major holidays: Swagfest, Captain's Day, Raidfest, and Drac's Fall.

Swagfest

Swagfest is by far the most exciting day of the year. Over two centuries ago, the first Sea Lords of Freeport—Captains Drac and Francisco—took their fleets on a three-month plunder spree that came to be known as the Great Raid. The anniversary of the day the fleet returned to Freeport Harbor to share the booty is the biggest celebration the city has. Although Swagfest lasts only one day, just about everyone in town also takes the next day off to recover from the revelry of the day before. It takes place in mid-spring, just before the start of hurricane season, and it marks the end of the easy days of the dry season as the storm clouds gather on the horizon.

Freeport's Colors

Freeport is a city-state and, therefore, flies its own colors. The Freeport flag consists of a winged black hourglass on a crimson field. There's a lot of speculation about the meaning of the flag, but locals claim it derives from an old pirate device that when flown, it warned other ships their time was nearly up.

Captain's Day

Captain's Day celebrates the day the original Captain Drac was born. While Drac was alive, his birthday celebrations were grand events the entire city shared in. That tradition continues to this day, though Drac is long gone. His birthday is in the middle of the winter, right around the solstice.

Raidfest

Raidfest is pretty much the opposite of Swagfest. It was started as a means of bidding the pirate fleet farewell as it sailed off to start another



The Shipping News keeps Freeporters up to date on goings on in the city and beyond.



Another night, another brawl. Many Freeporters grumble that the Watch is never around when it's needed. Many others just sigh and start laying odds on the fight.

reign of terror across the seas. This happens right around the end of the hurricane season, when it's clearly safe for the ships to sail off into the deep blue ocean without fear of a savage storm. Although much of Freeport's open support of piracy is in the past, the maritime traditions hold a great deal of weight here, and the popularity of this holiday continues on.

Drac's Fall

A recent holiday, Drac's Fall commemorates the toppling of Milton Drac's regime. Celebrations start two days before the anniversary of his death, and Freeporters turn out in large numbers. In the weeks leading up to the festival, the people make effigies of Drac and his cronies (with the marked exception of Melkior Maeorgan for obvious reasons) and place them in lewd and compromising positions outside of their homes.

Drac's Fall lasts exactly three days. On the first day, the locals dress up a few animals in yellow cloaks and set them loose in the city streets. The Freeporters kill these animals and feast on them that night. During the second day, the local temples and acting troupes put on performances and parades, filling the streets with enthusiastic revelry, and at night, the Wizards' Guild pulls out all the stops and fills the night sky with pyrotechnic displays. Finally, on the third day, people begin drinking in earnest, music fills the streets, and people set aside their reservations and act in the most scandalous ways—a fair number of the newest generation can point to this day as the moment of their conception. That night, all of the effigies are rounded up and burned on pyres—a nerve-wracking experience for most, since open and uncontrolled fires in the city have a record of being disastrous. The first year, a fire broke out in Scurvytown, causing the Captains' Council to order the effigies burned on rafts in the harbor, instead.

Entertainment

No matter the time of day or night, there's always something going on in the city. Taverns stay open as long as there are paying customers. Gambling dens thrive on the edges of the Eastern District and Scurvytown, while prostitutes offer their comforts in discreet or not-so-discreet places throughout the city. For those looking for oblivion, drug-dens rent out beds and ply their clients with near-endless supplies of opium to keep them comfortable and unconscious. For those with the coin, there's always something interesting for sale.

Arenas

Freeporters respect a good brawl, so people of all classes and stations will turn out to watch two popular combatants fight. Bets are placed with a flurry of activity as the fighters circle each other. Most duels involve just fists and last until one contestant falls. Fights may be bloody and result in a smashed nose or broken ribs and fingers, but these contests are rarely lethal. The One Ring (see **Chapter Three: The Docks**) is the best known official arena, and on certain nights of the week, people from all over the city crowd around to see the latest match and place bets.

For those looking for more excitement, a few discreet questions and a couple of skulls will point them toward hidden fighting pits where stakes are much higher. Such arenas are well concealed—the Watch frowns on such duels—so they take place in the cellars beneath disreputable taverns or in abandoned warehouses in the Docks, Scurvytown, or sometimes even in the Warehouse District. These matches can be more interesting—the fights last until first blood or sometimes to the death. Those who participate are well paid since spectators spend a lot of gold to watch two men or man and beast rip each other apart.

Drinking

Freeport's drink of choice is rum. Made from sugar cane that grows all over the islands, rum is plentiful and found in the cups of nearly every tavern. Wines and fermented fruit drinks are also popular. Ale and beer are less common, since the islands lack the necessary ingredients to produce these drinks in quantities. Instead, most taverns substitute mead made from locally harvested honey. Those who prefer beer frequent Strebeck's Beer Hall, one of the few true breweries in the city. Most other beer and ale is imported from the Continent at prices higher than rum.

Even normally nonalcoholic beverages have some alcohol in them here. Freeporters distrust the water, so they cut their drinks with a bit of rum or wine. Hot beverages are the exception, and those who can afford the steep prices favor both coffee (sometimes known as kahve) and tea.

Taverns outnumber all other businesses in the city. Some locals claim there's at least one pub for every family in the city, and while this is an exaggeration, it's not far from the truth. Many taverns can be found in the Docks, catering to sailors fresh off the ships, but there are plenty elsewhere.

Nargotics

A less popular but still thriving industry is the drug trade. Freeport sees all sorts of strange substances pass through its docks, from the numbing smoking herbs grown on the islands to hallucinogenic mushrooms to opium smoked in the gloomy dens in Scurvytown. Naturally, some drugs are worse than others, so the harbormaster controls the amount allowed into the city, and those allowed receive steep tariffs. With such controls in place, smugglers do good business selling contraband in drug dens in the Underside.

Two drugs are unique to Freeport: snakeweed and abyss dust. Strangely, they both derive from a single plant—the sunburst flower. Snakeweed is the dried form of the plant, and when smoked, it has a fairly harmless, euphoric effect. Abyss dust is smoked or inhaled and has far more narcotic and addictive properties.

For years, snakeweed was legal and common in town. Abyss dust appeared fifty years ago, when an enterprising alchemist discovered how to treat snakeweed with certain chemicals to alter and enhance its effects. An epidemic of this tainted snakeweed swept the city, and the Captains' Council launched a massive investigation into the new scourge that was turning the freebooters of Freeport into drug-addicted zombies. The alchemist was located without much trouble, and his head was stuck on a pike outside the Dock Gate.

When it was discovered in the alchemist' notes that abyss dust was made from snake weed, the Captains' Council felt it had no choice. It outlawed the growing, selling, owning, or using of both plants and even funded a slash and burn campaign that eliminated the sunburst flower from the whole of southern A'Val. Of course, this campaign merely drove the trade in snakeweed underground, right into the welcoming arms of Freeport's criminal element. Plus, the alchemist's formula survived his untimely demise and is now well known among the wrong elements in Freeport.

These days, snakeweed is still extremely easy to come by, and the possession of it is largely left unprosecuted. Abyss dust is a different story. Enforcement of the law concerning the stuff is much stronger, and penalties for the possession of it are harsh. The sentences range from a

public whipping for possession to death by drowning for its manufacture. Compared to snakeweed, abyss dust is harder to find today, though determined addicts usually have little difficulty finding a steady supplier.

Snakeweed

Sunburst flower is a plant that was originally used thousands of years ago by the Valossans as part of their religious ceremonies. The trances produced by smoking the dried leaves and flowers of the plant were thought to bring the serpent people closer to their god. Today, the same plant is used for a far more pedestrian purpose: the casual intoxication of Freeport's residents.

When dried, the stuff is simply called snakeweed by most, and while it can be psychologically addictive, it is in itself relatively harmless. When smoked, snakeweed produces a feeling of serene calm, a deadening of pain, and slight euphoria. Heavy doses produce an incapacitating euphoric stupor and sometimes inspire dreams of shadowy serpentine forms and vast cities beneath the waves. Many of the poorer citizens and sailors of the port city use the drug as an escape from the drudgery of everyday life.

Abyss Dust

If snakeweed was the only substance distillable from the sunburst flower, it's unlikely the plant would ever have been banned. In fact, few associate the innocuous effects of snakeweed with the powerful narcotic known as abyss dust.



The decadent pleasures of Freeport are not without their consequences.

The drug looks like ashes, possessing a rich black and gray color. It is administered through inhalation or smoking. Some hard-core users like to mix their abyss dust with snakeweed, claiming it takes the edge off some of the more extreme hallucinations.

Eating

As one would expect from a maritime city, Freeport's diet largely consists of things harvested from the sea—fish and crustaceans being the most common. Freeport's waters are rich with marine life, and fishermen do well here. A rarity, lobster is considered a delicacy seldom found outside the fine dining of the Merchant District. But eating crab, which is plentiful, is considered gauche by most, fit for the dregs in Scurvytown, though there is a growing trend among the newer aristocrats to dine on these "sea bugs." Shellfish is another common meal, and many sailors dine on succulent scallops, oysters, or fried clams.

For those looking for something landside, goat and swine are good alternatives to seafood. While not as plentiful as fish, farms outside of the city supply Freeporters with meat. Beef is expensive as there's not enough grazing land for cattle, and it's not profitable to bring cows by ship. Many Freeporters also dine on pheasant, chicken, and the stringy wild turkey that lives on A'Val.

Freeport has a rather feeble agricultural system, so fresh vegetables and grains are a bit pricier here. The city is one of the biggest buyers of grains and flours from the Continent, ensuring good business between the Continent and the islands. What little grain Freeport does grow is maize, introduced to the city a century ago by explorers. The corn is ground down to a powder and fried to make fritters or baked for bread.

Common vegetables are onions, yams, and beans. Greens sometimes do well, depending on the season—when available, they're plentiful. Freeport also has fruit in abundance thanks to its mild winters and warm climate. Most fruit is harvested from the jungles, and pineapples, melons, and bananas are a staple of every Freeporter's diet. The one thing that grows in abundance is coconuts, so it is worked into just about every meal.

Freeport cuisine is spicy, laden with chilies and ground pepper. This taste originates in the city's founding. Given the scarcity of meat and foodstuffs, they used heavy seasonings to mask the rancid taste of spoiled meat or turned vegetables. Local dishes are also salty for the same reason. Freeporters rely on sea salt to preserve their foods, giving every meal an almost briny taste.

The Arts

Many Freeporters have an appreciation for the arts. Actors and performers can make a good living entertaining the masses, and nearly every district is home to one or more theatres or troupes of street performers. Burlesque and bawdy comedies do extremely well in the Docks and Scurvytown, while higher-brow performances thrive in the Merchant District. In Drac's End, near the Cluster, there are "kafes" (kahve houses) where students sing, play instruments, or recite poetry for extra money. In some corners of the city, entertainment leans towards debate, and philosophers argue politics, metaphysics, and theology to crowds of interested onlookers, though they rarely enjoy success outside of the Old City, Temple District, or the Cluster of Drac's End. Elsewhere, they would be beaten, robbed, and left hemorrhaging in an alley.

Opera is extremely popular in the Merchant District thanks to the spectacles put on by the Freeport Opera House. Many of the city's

elite are patrons of the arts and donate considerable funds to the Opera House and other, smaller theatres. Usually, the wealthy attend the same production a dozen or more times—it wouldn't do not to be seen, after all. The audience does their best to pay attention the first few times they attend, but after six or more viewings, they spend most of their time chatting, showing off their new jewelry and fine apparel, or gossiping about their peers.

Communication

Freeporters get their news from the city paper or one of its smaller competitors. Even though many people in the city can't read more than a few words, they find it's worth a penny to hear someone else read the paper. Such readers gather in taverns and accept coins in their cups to read the latest news. On particularly slow news days, a reader may embellish or completely fabricate what he reads to ensure his audience comes back the next day.

Letter writing is also a bustling trade. Again, few people can read their names let alone an entire letter, but for the average citizen, it's an event to receive something as special as a letter. And when they get an extra penny or two, they take the letter to a reader who will read the contents with a dramatic flair. And for a penny more, the reader will do his best to forget what he just read. Many students pay for their drinking habits by reading letters, the Shipping News, and whatever else anyone brings them.

Games

Gaming is a common pastime in Freeport. Dice games are preferred because knucklebones are cheap and easily replaced. Cards have gained ground, though they are expensive and require their owners to keep up with all of them. The first decks derived from fortune-telling cards, but as they have gained popularity, the arcane images began to disappear in favor of simpler and cheaper markings that can be created by hand with a bit of charcoal or dung. Specialty cards can also be found, and they may have images of nude women of all races—very fashionable with sailors—or common nautical themes such as monkeys, captains' wheels, parrots, and so on. Dominos and tiles are often good substitutes for cards or dice, and there are a slew of complicated games for those with the patience to learn them. Finally, chess and draughts are great time-killers, and between voyages, sailors, marines, and others may play a few games while waiting for the next ship to sail.

Whoring

Prudes may bristle at the thought of prostitution, but Freeport's courtesans compose an entire industry. Most people survive by attending to the needs of those who come to visit or stay or trade. Freeport does produce a few things, but largely the citizens make their living in service—or plunder if they sail the seas. A warm night in the arms of a woman (or a man) is something every sailor craves, and those without a lover are willing to spend a few coins for the company of another.

The quality of Freeport's prostitutes varies a great deal. The better courtesans are found in places like the House of Serenity in the Old City and higher priced mistresses in the Merchant District. The worst and most decrepit walk the streets and alleys of Scurvytown or work in the back rooms of the Docks' taverns. Cleanliness is not certain, and venereal disease, in all its shapes and colors and smells, is a constant and annoying problem in the poorer quarters.

Government

To call Freeport's government corrupt would be to say that orcs are savage, water is wet, and the sun rises in the east. The fact that most of the politicians are on the take merely reflects what has been the status quo for the city since its founding. There have been exceptions, but they are few and far between. Corruption is simply a part of the culture.

The Sea Lord

At the top of Freeport's government is the Sea Lord. This is a position for life; once attained, the only way a person can lose this post is death or abdication. The post of Sea Lord is unimpeachable, and no matter the crime, the Sea Lord can never be removed. For obvious reasons, Freeporters are very concerned about who holds the title, and contention over this position has been the source of many of Freeport's troubles.

In theory, the Sea Lord's rule is law, though his or her edicts are subject to the approval and support of the Captains' Council (see **Captains' Council** in the next section). A Sea Lord can make laws and enjoys nearly all the powers held by traditional monarchs, but there are limits. The Sea Lord must acquire the council's approval in four vital areas: declaring war, entering into treaties with foreign powers, allocating city funds, and levying taxes. These last two come up most often and create the greatest amount of tension within the council and between the council and the Sea Lord. Since the members of the Captains' Council are usually citizens who end up paying the most in taxes, they often feel strongly about incurring new ones and about what's done with the money raised. This control is one reason why the streets in the Merchant District—where most councilors live—are well cared for while those in Scurvytown are falling to pieces, and why Bloodsalt is a festering mire of violence and upheaval.

Before death or abdication, the Sea Lord is supposed to name a successor. In years past, only a person of the Drac bloodline could actually become the Sea Lord, but with the Law of Succession removed (see **Chapter One: A History of Freeport**), anyone of the Sea Lord's choosing can follow.

The current Sea Lord is Marilise Maeorgan. For details on this powerful woman, see **Chapter Thirteen: Denizens of Freeport.**

Captains' Council

In a clever act of keeping one's enemies close, the first Sea Lord, Captain Drac, elevated his fellow captains to advisors to support his claim to his titles. This council was conceived to keep Drac's rivals happy, but it also unexpectedly placed checks on the Sea Lord's powers. While they are present to advise the Sea Lord on matters of governance, they actually have a great deal of influence on city politics. The Sea Lord sits on the council as well and has two votes. Additionally, it is the Sea Lord who breaks all ties. Essentially, the Sea Lord only needs five votes to push a measure through.

The Captains' Council must consist of twelve members. The Sea Lord and the Captains' Council can both nominate new members, and the councilors must approve the nomination with a vote. The Sea Lord casts two votes and breaks all ties.

Positions on the Captains' Council are theoretically for life. The only exception to this is the Privateer Seat. This special position was created



The Captains' Council has an important role in Freeport. It is meant to keep the Sea Lord's power in check, but this has not always been possible.

The Current Council

Currently, every seat on the Captains' Council is filled. Each of these characters is more fully described in **Chapter Thirteen: Denizens of Freeport**.

- **Dirwin "Nimblefingers" Arnig:** Dirwin is a gnome and the head of the Jewelers' and Gemcutters' Guild.
- **Liam Blackhammer:** A self-proclaimed champion of the people, he's held his seat for almost twenty years.
- **Xavier Gordon:** Xavier once sat on the Privateer's Seat but gained a permanent post on the Council after the Succession Riots.
- **Nathan Grymes:** Nathan is one of the newer members on the Council; he's made it clear he places the Merchant District above all other concerns.
- **Sister Gwendolyn:** Gwendolyn represents the interests of the Sea God.
- **Enoch Holliver:** Enoch is a well-connected mercenary the Sea Lord chose to head up the militarized Freeport Watch.
- **Jacob Lydon:** Drunkard, pirate, and rogue, Captain Lydon is one of the most well-known members of the Council.
- **Marcus Roberts:** Marcus is a long-standing member of the council who runs his own spy network on the Continent.
- **Hector Torian:** Raised by Milton Drac, Torian continues to search for a Drac heir.
- **Tarmon:** Tarmon's role as High Wizard of the Wizards' Guild gave him a place as the advisor to the Captains' Council. He gained his seat to fill a vacancy, giving him and his guild incredible power.
- **Garth Varellion:** An ambitious, shallow, self-absorbed fool, he has few supporters.
- **Tench Prescott:** The current holder of the Privateer's Seat, Tench is a disinterested politician and spends little time governing.

to ensure there would always be an actual ship's captain on the Council to give a voice to the privateers of Freeport, who spend much of the year at sea. Only working captains—those who regularly sail their own ships—are permitted to hold this position, which lasts for three years, and after the captain cannot serve in that position again for at least another three years. During this term, the captain is required to remain in Freeport to sit on the Council, effectively removing him from his ship. Traditionally, those in the Privateer Seat turn over the day-to-day operations of their ship to their first mate until they can return to their duties.

Freeport is not a democracy, but the Captains' Council has traditionally recognized the value of having the people feel like they have a voice of some sort. For this reason, many of the past nominees to the council have been people who hold sway over some faction of Freeporters or who are widely popular among the citizenry.

Getting the Boot

There are only a few ways for a councilor to leave other than death. They can resign if they like, though this is rare. It's usually done for reasons of poor health, but most councilors enjoy the power and hang on until the bitter end—unless they can arrange for a protégé to be nominated to take their spot.

The Captains' Council may impeach and remove other councilors, but they only do so for the most heinous of offenses. Bribery, nepotism, and extortion are all considered part life in Freeport. Impeachable offenses include murder and outright treason. Any member of the Captains' Council can call for impeachment, and a two-thirds majority must approve it. So far, the council has only ever impeached two members, and even then, they kicked only one out.

If a councilor is murdered, a direct family member can claim his position. This action can be done without the approval of the Sea Lord or the Council, but the family must agree on its nominee.

In contrast with the other seats, the position of the Sea Lord is unassailable by any legal means. The only way a Sea Lord has ever left his position is on his way to his grave. Many Sea Lords have died in their beds, clearly naming a successor. It is when a Sea Lord dies unexpectedly that trouble brews.

Influential Families

It's sometimes easy to forget Freeport is home to more than prostitutes, thieves, and privateers. In spite of the squalor of Scurvytown and the destitution of Drac's End, Freeport has a large wealthy class with at least as much influence on the happenings of the city as the Captains' Council. Safe behind tall fences encircling their grand houses, protected by veritable armies of private guards, these isolated elites do their best to ignore the plight of fellow Freeporters and embrace the decadence of their wealth and station.

House Brack

Matthias Brack (*male human master*) and his daughter Gwendolyn were comfortable and avoided drawing too much attention. That changed when Gwendolyn found herself swept up with the Daughters of the Guild, a group of bored and disaffected young women who donned masks, caroused in bars, picked fights, and made trouble as acts of rebellion. Her nocturnal pursuits eventually landed her in a sticky mess, requiring the intervention of a few local heroes to save her from being sacrificed by mad serpent people. With his daughter returned, Brack threw himself into his work to earn enough money to move to a larger, fortified manor so he could be sure his daughter would never be in danger again. He worked for four years, during which time his prominence grew until he rivaled even the Tarjay family. He has purchased a new home, hired a small army of guards, and now obsessively monitors his daughter's doings. Gwendolyn, on the other hand, chafes at her captivity and desperately hunts for a husband to extricate her from her father's protectiveness.

House Maeorgan

House Maeorgan has had a shady history: one son was a member of the Brotherhood of the Yellow Sign, and the other was murdered. In spite of this, the family has survived in terms of respect and prominence. Marshal Maeorgan (*male human master*) has always had a finger in politics but never had the desire to claim a place on the Captains' Council. Instead, he was content to let his children represent his interests, freeing him to tend his family's shipyards in distant ports. Unfortunately, this decision led to the deaths of his two sons, leaving his family fortunes to fall upon the shoulders of his daughter, the current Sea Lord.

Both sons met their ends on the Captains' Council. His eldest son, Armin, was poisoned, and his second son was proven to be a member of the Brotherhood of the Yellow Sign and justly died with his snake of a master. Still, these deaths haunt the elder man and make him worry over his daughter, not out of any sense of fatherly concern but for the welfare of his businesses and his legacy.

Marilise did surprise her father in her cunning move to attain the position of Sea Lord. Her coup pleased him deeply and dispelled any doubts about her wildness and his previous conceptions that she would prove to be the least of his heirs. When Marilise offered him command of the Sea Lord's Guard, he readily agreed, though he had no military experience. He understood his daughter was honoring him and that she wanted family to undertake her protection.

House Mirren

The Mirren Family is not contained to the Merchant District. Thanks to the fertile loins of their matriarch, Mirrens can be found everywhere—from the Docks to the Eastern District and even the Old City. Lenora Mirren heads the family, overseeing her network of her thirty-some-odd grandchildren that make up the largest clan in the city. She may not be overly wealthy, but she has contacts and influence, which keep her in good standing with the other elites in her home neighborhood. Some claim Mirren is of royal blood, but in truth, she was just a handmaiden lucky enough to be the sole survivor when her mistress's ship sank some three leagues from Freeport.

House Roberts

Unlike many of the families of the Merchant District, the Roberts clan came into wealth through piracy (legal and otherwise) rather than trade. Marcus Roberts enjoyed incredible success in his younger days, giving him ample money to buy a home and start a legitimate trade in Freeport. He was swept into politics, taking him away from his daughter

A Dangerous Job

A seat on the Captains' Council may be a seat coveted by many Freeporters, but any local who's been in the city for the last decade knows life as a councilor is no easy thing. The heights of power are as fraught with peril as anywhere in Freeport, and a hidden assassin, poisoned cup, or an errant crossbow bolt can end a politician's career abruptly. Here are just a few of the esteemed councilors who met a terrible end.

- **Lady Elise Grossette:** Lady Grossette was the most likely to gain the post of Sea Lord upon repealing the Law of Succession. But before she could make her move, Arias Soderheim hired a vile elven pirate to kidnap her and keep her out of Freeport while the new Sea Lord was selected. What Soderheim didn't know was that a Continental agent paid the kidnapper to torture and kill Grossette and then pin the blame on Soderheim to thrust Freeport into turmoil. Elise was rescued, but she never returned to politics. Few have seen her since, as she spends nearly all of her time cloistered away in her sumptuous manor in the Merchants' District.
- **Melkior Maeorgan:** Being on the Captains' Council is little protection when you back the wrong man. A noted lackey and lapdog of Milton Drac, Melkior intended to ride the Sea Lord's coattails to greater power. He gained his seat on the council after murdering his brother at Drac's suggestion. Melkior was a secret member of the Brotherhood of the Yellow Sign and met a nasty end along with his master in the climactic battle at Milton's Folly.
- **Arias Soderheim:** Every councilor has ambition; they wouldn't be on the Captains' Council if they didn't. But a wise politician knows to wait for an opportunity to rise rather than try to seize it. Such is the story of Arias Soderheim. Arias was certainly one of the most well-known of the councilors, having weathered the storm of Drac's fall and the upheaval that followed. It was also common knowledge that he intended to take the post of Sea Lord. To this end, he hired a ruthless pirate named Captain Sharpe to kidnap his rival Elise Grossette and keep her out of the city until the new Sea Lord was selected. His plan failed when a Continental agent bribed Captain Sharpe, who then tortured (and planned to kill) Lady Elise to fuel discord in the city. When Soderheim's hand in this nasty mess was revealed, he was hunted down and killed at Marilise Maeorgan's orders.
- **Brock Wallace:** This patriarch of the Wallace merchant family in Freeport made his fortunes by securing exclusive trade deals on the Continent. Given his wealth and influence, Brock Wallace rose quickly and gained a seat on the council in return for his support of Milton Drac. Brock's loyalty to Drac wouldn't last, for he was concerned about how much gold was going into the Lighthouse Project and openly voiced his criticism. He threatened to withdraw his support for the project and with it the supplies and workers needed to complete it. For his conscience, Drac had Gorn, a serpent person, kill and steal Wallace's identity. Gorn met his end along with Drac and Maeorgan in the Lighthouse.
- **Verlaine:** Verlaine was another casualty of the Yellow Sign. A minor businessman, Milton Drac offered to raise him to the council in exchange for his loyalty and unquestioning service. While Verlaine had reservations about being a minion, the wealth Drac offered was too much to pass up. Verlaine made his name through ruthless manipulation and cunning on the council, and through his efforts, he cultivated the needed allies to ensure the Lighthouse Project would get underway, while removing and silencing the opposition through blackmail and threats. Verlaine used his position to expand his fortunes and his enterprise to become one of the most influential citizens in the city. What Verlaine didn't know was that Drac was using him as a dupe to pin his own corruption on. Verlaine was eventually murdered, but the circumstances of his death, as well as his assassins, were destroyed in the conflagration that claimed his house.

Nifur, his only family after his wife died in childbirth. Roberts was influential and successful, but his fortunes didn't grow to their current stature until Nifur Roberts (*female human apprentice*) set aside her youthful exploits and turned her sharp mind toward business. Having little interest in following in her father's steps into politics, she took her father's struggling trade business, diversified into arms dealing, and is now a premier importer of swords, armor, and firearms. Her successes have vaulted her to a position of power in the Merchant District, and she is the closest thing Freeport has to a celebrity.

House Roth

The Roth family dominates the Merchant District and has a controlling stake in the Merchants' Guild. Despite their ties to the Drac regime, the family continues to exert incredible influence in the city. For more information on the Roth family, see **Chapter Ten: Merchant District**.

House Tarjay

David and Willemena Tarjay (*male and female human journeymen*) made their fortunes dealing in textiles and dry goods, importing these items at incredibly low prices and turning the goods over at a delicious profit. They've been extremely successful in these ventures, becoming among the most influential families in the city.

The family owes their success to David's ruthless tactics and willingness to exploit the poor. Through Continental factors, he bought up large swathes of land. He rented parcels to peasants in exchange for nearly all they produced, allowing the peasants to keep only what they needed to survive. The plan worked exceedingly well, and David managed to bring the crops to Freeport at only the cost of shipping. He made back the money he spent in his land ventures in just a few years and built an empire on the backs of his sweating laborers.

The Siege Cannons

Freeport's ultimate defense is its five massive siege cannons. Buried in the storerooms beneath each tower, they can be winched to the top, set in their cradles, and fired in under thirty minutes. Wrought from brass and iron, they resemble dragons—the barrel serves as the neck, and the business end is the dragon's head. Indeed, these weapons are unlike any in the world and with good reason too. No one knows who forged them; they were salvaged some two centuries ago from a mysterious hulk beached on the Windward side of A'Val. Impossibly large, even by Freeport standards, the vessel seemed designed for some otherworldly purpose. There was much debate about this ship, much of which was fueled by superstition and fear. But leveler heads saw value in the wreckage, and the city set about recovering what it could from the ship. It took a while, but the Sea Lord Francisco paid an exorbitant sum of gold to acquire what was at first regarded as an expensive curiosity. The Freeporters stripped the vessel clean, even using the wood to build many buildings in the Old City and elsewhere. To this day, the keel of the hulk juts out of the sand on that beach like the horn of a narwhal. Rumors persist of gold and mysterious artifacts at the site of the wreck, and the place is a popular destination for adventures and treasure hunters.

While the ship offered a great deal of assistance to Freeport's early years, the real find was the cannons. Francisco set the best minds to work at determining how the weapons could be used. For months, wizards, priests, and scholars puzzled over the devices, but they made little progress. Their true power would remain hidden until a marauding fleet cruised into Freeport Harbor, intent on stemming the tide of piracy. They received a surprising reception. The Sea Lord ordered an attempt to fire the cannons, and once the fleet's flagship was reduced to a floating bonfire by one shot from the top of the Freeport battlements, the rest of the invaders quickly moved on. It was a good thing the captains of the invading fleet were so impressed because the shot that destroyed their ship was a fluke. It took another year before the Sea Lord's Guard learned how to fire the fire cannons reliably—as well as determining the high price for using them.

The cannons are twelve-foot-long, two-foot-thick tubes of iron with brass fittings, each weighing roughly a half-ton. There is no firing mechanism per se, only a set of handprints on each side of the cannon and a third set placed at the butt of the massive gun. Each cannon is mounted on a wheeled, wooden cart.

Firing the cannon is dangerously simple but costly, too. It requires three people to place their hands in the handprints on both the sides of the cannon and the rear. The person at the rear fires the cannon; the other two simply provide power—soul power! The firer verbally designates a visible target and concentrates for a brief moment. Within seconds, a massive ball of fire erupts from the muzzle, speeding unerringly to the target.

It's not easy getting people to step up to the task of sacrificing themselves on the altar of Freeport's defense. The cost of firing the canons is a highly protected secret, since Freeport's enemies would be less reluctant to assault the city if they new the true toll of firing the cannons.

Originally, there were five, but the years have been unkind. Now only four are in working order. The Guard keeps it as a decoy and still protects it, though not quite as securely as the other four. The Guard hopes that someone wanting to steal such a heavy item might accidentally take the easy—and wrong—one.

The Sea Lord's Guard

"The Sea Lord dipped the Guard's balls and gave them to her pap. What he intends to do with them, who can say?"

—Anonymous

The Sea Lord's Guard has been around for nearly two centuries. Originally, this colorful group was little more than a band of brutes that enforced the Sea Lord's will, but they gradually evolved into something of a police force. Based at the Fortress of Justice, patrols would walk the city (or most of it), ensuring some modicum of law and order prevailed. The days of the Guard as enforcer have ended with the current Sea Lord. Militarized and placed under the command of her father, Marshal Maeorgan, they have given over the duties of keeping the peace to the newly created Freeport Watch.

With the last commissioner's death, the question about what to do with the Sea Lord's Guard was a pressing concern of the Captains' Council. Some members favored the almost fanatical approach of the later Commissioner Williams (see **The Freeport Watch**), while others had no interest in returning to the vigilance of the recent Sea Lord's Guard. It all came down to the Sea Lord—who was nominally in charge of the organization—and given her many unsavory connections in the city, it was abundantly clear that the Williams' approach would not survive. The problem, however, was in finding a home for those Guards still loyal to Xander's memory.

Her answer was to divide the force into two groups. Those men who were loyal to the late commissioner came under the command of Marshal Maeorgan. As a military outfit, they were constrained to the Old City and the training grounds and no longer had any contact with the underworld, and therefore couldn't threaten Marilise's illicit interests. The Sea Lord closed all current investigations and strongly encouraged the new soldiers to use their enthusiasm to protect Freeport from its enemies abroad.

Marshal Maeorgan does not have much in the way of military experience, but he's intelligent and knows how to exploit the expertise of others. He brought in trainers from the Continent to transform the Sea Lord's Guard from a police organization into a true military

force. The best of them are detailed to protect the Sea Lord, and that is the one aspect of the Guard's operation Marshal oversees personally. He would not trust his daughter's life to anyone else.

Organization

The Sea Lord's Guard has a rigid ranking system. At the head is Commander Marshal Maeorgan. With the hard work of training the men complete, he focuses more on his civic duties, leaving day-to-day operations to his capable second, Captain Emery Shent (see **Chapter Seven: Old City**). Five lieutenants answer to Captain Shent, and each in turn commands three sergeants. Each sergeant oversees a company of ten men, for a total of 150 guardsmen in all.

Headquarters

The Sea Lord's cunning move contained the Sea Lord's Guard to the Old City and got their noses out of Scurvytown, Drac's End, and the Docks. The soldiers drill, train, and live in the Fortress of Justice, though they occasionally make appearances whenever there's need for a bit of pomp and ceremony. Rarely, they may also be used as marines in Freeport's fleet.

Recruiting

Those seeking a place in the Sea Lord's Guard need to be able to take orders, be physically fit, and have a good head on their shoulders. Green recruits undergo a tough training course that lasts four weeks, in which they learn the fundamentals of large-scale combat, weapon use, and group fighting. Afterwards, they are assigned to a company and squad and spend the rest of their time with their mates, honing their skills for the inevitable day when Freeport needs them.



Information is power, as Freeport's many agents and spies well know.

Advancement

There are five ranks in the Sea Lord's Guard—guardsman, sergeant, lieutenant, captain, and commander. Captain Shent is strict about promotions, for he knows that unwarranted advancement breeds resentment and reduces morale. The guardsmen don't get much pay for their service, but they receive free food, lodging, and uniforms. More money and more time off come with the higher ranks, so guardsmen work hard to climb to the top.

Membership

All members of the Sea Lord's Guard are men and almost all humans. Occasionally, a dwarf or half-orc can be found in the service but never an elf, halfling, or gnome. These races are not recruited or welcome to join. The Sea Lord's Guard is the last conspicuously human and the most male organization in Freeport.

The Admiralty

Freeport has not been in a formal war for years, but as a major port, it must maintain a fleet. Sea Lord Cromey established the Admiralty to oversee all aspects of Freeport's naval defenses. In the ensuing years, the Admiralty has pursued a three-part strategy to safeguard Freeport.

First, it maintains the fleet proper. The official Freeport navy is small, consisting of a dozen ships of various sizes. Its main job is to patrol the waters around A'Val and keep the sea lanes safe. This duty is ironic in view of the city's past, but it's in Freeport's best interest to keep trade flowing through the city. Considering the advantages Freeport offers pirates, it isn't too much to ask that they do their hunting elsewhere. Still, the buccaneers are a hotheaded bunch, and sometimes they just can't resist a juicy target. Such rogue activity is the fleet's greatest concern, followed by monster attacks and the like.

Second, the Admiralty maintains Freeport's unofficial fleet, the privateers. Early Sea Lords realized no law could take the pirate spirit out of Freeport's sailors. With typical pragmatism, that spirit was turned into a moneymaking scheme. For nearly two hundred years, Freeport has hired out its freebooters to other nations as "privateers" (a fancy name for legalized pirates). The Admiralty sells Letters of Marque to ship captains, allowing them to fly Freeport's flag while attacking the ships of designated nations, thus making them "legal" combatants and protecting them from charges of piracy.

The city makes money in two different ways under this scheme: selling Letters of Marque and selling the privateers' services to foreign nations. This plan creates huge business for Freeport, so much so that privateers have their own representative on the Captains' Council (currently Captain Tench Prescott). When wars get hot, the privateers may switch sides repeatedly, as the various combatants offer increasingly huge amounts of gold for their aid. Due to limits of communication, the Admiralty has formalized the bidding process. One week every three months, the Admiralty opens its doors to foreign dignitaries, and each tries to outbid the

Three Guardsmen Caught in Bribery Scandal!

– The Shipping News

others and secure the Freeport ships for his own government. Active privateers make a point of being in port at this time, so they can get up-to-date information on the next season's enemies. Once a deal has been struck and money changes hands, new Letters of Marque are purchased and the privateers put to sea.

Office of Dredging

The Admiralty's secret weapon is the Office of Dredging. This small and unassuming branch of the Admiralty purports to busy itself with the improvement of Freeport's harbor and the clearing of underwater hazards, but its real function is spying. The Office of Dredging maintains a spy ring in the navy of every major Continental power. These men and women pass on all sorts of information, although technically they are supposed to concentrate on threats to Freeport's security. The members of the Office of Dredging are fierce rivals of Captain Roberts's spy network. They consider Roberts and his ilk rank amateurs, while Roberts maintains that the "Dredgers" are slow-witted and afraid to take risks.

Law and Order

On the Continent, Freeport is seen as a lawless place, filled with murderers, thieves, and worse. The truth is that though Freeport may be a bit wilder—and corruption and crime are common if not frustrating occurrences—it is a city with laws and rules that strives to maintain some semblance of order. At heart, Freeport is a city that values freedom and personal liberty above all other considerations, and those who don't interfere with their fellows can find a good life in this city.

Keepers of the Peace

For many years, it fell to the Sea Lord's Guard to maintain law and order in Freeport. The quality of these law enforcers varied a great deal, ranging from criminals to zealous, brutal policemen that rounded up crooks and disposed of them in the Hulks or the Tombs. Now, this task falls to the Watch, an organization created by the Sea Lord to police this tempestuous city.

The Watch

"Now ya see Mickey, we's gots ourselfs a thief. Wot say we take 'is catch and... give it back to them rights owner... yeah? Now runalong Mickey an' be a good boy."

—Red Mackey, Watchman

Certainly, the legitimacy of the Sea Lord's Guard has waxed and waned over the years. While there were dark times, none compared to the Guard under the command of Commissioner "Boss" Dutch Tillinghast. During his tenure, the Guard fell into a state of total corruption, barely enforcing the law and making a fortune from an assortment of nefarious, illegal activities. Merchants who wanted protection from the Guard were extorted for large sums of money, and those who refused to cooperate were beaten and had their businesses destroyed. Criminals ran rampant. Citizens were robbed in broad daylight. Many reported crimes went unsolved. Crooks who were arrested would often disappear before their trial, only to turn up later back on the streets. In Scurvytown and Drac's End, gangs fought epic street battles for days on end, looting, maiming, and killing everyone in sight.

Those the Sea Lord's Guard deemed to be without rights—such as foreign laborers and the poor—were handled brutally. There were allegations that the Sea Lord's Guard was involved in the slave trade, selling prisoners to the salt mines of other nations. To make matters worse, Sea Lord Milton Drac plundered the gold allocated for the Guard to build his lighthouse.

The law-abiding citizens of Freeport complained, but nothing was done. Private protection became more and more common, and the size of the Sea Lord's Guard shrank over the years—not that Boss Tillinghast ever complained. He was firmly in Milton's pocket and earned plenty of gold from his many crooked schemes.

Everything changed with Drac's death. The Captains' Council moved quickly to sack Boss Tillinghast, and he left Freeport under a cloud of scandal. Lady Elise Grossette led the effort to find a new replacement, finally luring an old friend of hers to take the job. She chose Xander Williams, a former Watch Commander from the Continent. A zealous crusader against crime, Williams's methods were extreme but effective. When Lady Elise Grossette offered him the job in Freeport, he couldn't resist the chance to test his mettle against the most notorious seaport in the world.

His tenure brought rapid change to the Guard: he dismissed, arrested, or exiled anyone connected to Boss Tillinghast. Williams brought with him a cadre of toughs to help him clean house. He also worked on the council, dredging up several thousand gold coins to hire and equip new recruits, build Precinct Houses, and recruit a new Guard. Freeport's streets were remarkably safer, and law ruled the day.

Naturally, not everyone was pleased with Commissioner William's successes, so when the riots broke out after repealing the Law of Succession, several criminal elements used the ensuing chaos as a cover to get revenge on this do-gooder. Williams was murdered and mauled, a signal that his style of law enforcement would not be tolerated in the city, and the results of Williams' tough approach became a distant memory.

Marilise, who had many criminal connections in the city, had no interest in replacing Williams with one of his loyal toughs. She also realized the Sea Lord's Guard had long outlived its usefulness as a



Few Freeporters know that they live in the graveyard of the ancient serpent people—and fewer still are aware that survivors still lurk beneath the city.

Private Security

It's said you can measure a person by the quality of her enemies. In Freeport, the same comparison can be made by the quality of her guards. The wealthy of Freeport long ago decided that good security was worth paying for. During the era of Boss Tillinghast, private guard units multiplied because the Sea Lord's Guard could not be counted on despite all the bribes they received.

Nowadays, private guards are a pervasive presence in the Merchant and Warehouse Districts. Besides the guards needed for the household, guards are also needed to watch over the various shops, inns, and warehouses, as well as to escort their employers about the city.

In a town as dangerous as Freeport, clashes between guards and criminals are common, as the thieves and killers seem to constantly test the strength and skill of the various guard units. On a rare occasion, two or more guard units have been known to clash with each other, most often due to flaring tempers and not any kind of overt, planned skirmishes. Aggressive use of a private guard unit attracts the immediate attention of the Watch and possibly the militarized Guard.

police force, so she divided the body in two. Enoch Holliver took the more crooked elements and created the Freeport Watch. The rest of the loyal and disciplined men she left as the Sea Lord's Guard but as soldiers and defenders of the city and a sort of Praetorian Guard for herself. While a few honest men remain in the Freeport Watch from Xander's stint, it is clear dishonesty and corruption are fast becoming the norm again.

Organization

The new Watch has about two hundred and fifty members spread across seven districts, the greatest number working in the Merchant District and the fewest in Scurvytown (the Old City is still the domain of the Sea Lord's Guard). No watchmen patrol the streets of Bloodsalt; they leave that dangerous place to the locals. Holliver delegates control over the districts to loyal captains he installed shortly after gaining his post. The captains tend the day-to-day activities of the Watch, assign rosters, manage expenditures, and maintain the local jails from which criminals are taken to the Fortress of Justice. There is also a special detachment known as the Sewer Guard. For more information on this punishment detail, see **Chapter Twelve: The Underside**.

Watchmen patrol the streets in groups of two or more. They're supposed to be on the lookout for suspicious characters but are often found in the local pub, instead. When a watchman finds trouble, he responds first with his cudgel. If he needs extra watchmen to keep the peace, he blows a signal whistle worn around his neck. What follows is often a grand beating.

Headquarters

Each district has a Watch Precinct—the same ones Commissioner Williams ordered built. These sturdy buildings are equipped with a barrack, mess, offices, and cells enough for twenty prisoners at a time. Commissioner Holliver uses the the Old City precinct as his headquarters (since ther Sea Lord's Guard patrols this district) and here captains must travel to give their weekly reports. The captains visit Holliver on an assigned day that rotates, so there's only one district at a time that's short a captain.

Recruiting

The Watch is always on the lookout for new recruits, and they've enjoyed a steady supply of watchmen because the organization offers decent pay and doesn't look too closely into their candidates' pasts. The only requirements to join are to be reasonably intelligent and be in good shape. Assuming the recruit passes muster, he undergoes a day of training, is shown around his beat, and is equipped with a uniform and stout cudgel. Though it has gone unnoticed, an increasing number of new recruits are ex-mercenaries from the Continent due to Holliver's influence as commissioner.

Rank and Advancement

Those who patrol the city streets are called watchmen. They report to their sergeants, who do double duty as detectives. There's a captain for each precinct, and there's a precinct for every district except the Old City and Bloodsalt. The seven captains report to Commissioner Enoch Holliver, whose headquarters is just southwest of the Fortress of Justice in what was to be the Old City's precinct house.

Captains give out promotions based on the watchman's merit. Since there are only so many sergeant slots available, awards take the form of higher pay or better beats. A post in the Merchant District, for example, is considered a gravy job compared to walking the streets of Scurvytown. While the rules are clear, there are ways to circumvent the normal means for promotion—being on time, apprehending criminals, and doing your job well. Many captains, especially in the worse parts of the city, are open to bribes to help offset their meager pay. Those watchmen who grease the right palms find there's no limit to how high they can rise.

Membership

Unlike the Sea Lord's Guard, the Freeport Watch is far more relaxed about who can join. The Watch accepts men and women of any race to serve and protect. There's still some hesitation to accept halflings and gnomes, but there are a few in the Eastern District. Hobgoblins are typically not welcome; they tend to join the Redblade Militia in Bloodsalt.

Crime and Punishment

The core of Freeport's legal system is the pirate's code, which boils down to "do whatever you want on the high seas but don't go against your fellows while in port." This notion defines the psychology of Freeporters who might be bloodthirsty blackguards at sea but rein in their murderous impulses when rubbing elbows with fellow pirates while swilling pint after pint of ale at the Rusty Hook. Despite this



Many say that the days of true law and order died with Commissioner Williams.

unspoken agreement, some do violate the code and therefore violate the laws, and it's for these scum that Freeport has its laws.

Reporting a Crime

If a citizen wants to report a crime, he or she must speak to a sergeant at the local precinct (or the leader of a patrol, if one is on the scene). The details of the incident are then passed along to the men under his command, often with instructions like *"Look out for a man selling gold candlesticks,"* or *"If you spot a woman with green trousers, arrest her at once!"*

Captains investigate major crimes in their districts. An example of a major crime might be the murder of a prominent merchant or the burglary of citizen's home. Some captains are brilliant detectives, others just suspicious brutes. During the investigation, evidence is gathered, questions are asked, and the usual suspects are rounded up and leaned on. In the end, not all crimes are solved, and frame-ups are common if justice must be served.

Punishment

Those who have committed minor offenses, such as drunk-and-disorderly conduct, are sent home after sobering up. Major offenders are taken daily by wagon to the Courts to stand trail. Locals call the wagon the "The Dead Man's Barge," suggesting the fate of many passengers on board. Citizens are encouraged to jeer and throw small objects at these rogues as the wagon makes its way. Particularly notorious offenders must make the trip while wearing a black bag over their head, lest someone recognize them and attempt to rescue or kill them. Freeport's main prison, known as the Tombs, is located just inside the Fortress of Justice. It is thus only a short walk from sentencing to prison. That is, unless the criminals are repeat offenders or particularly vile specimens. Their fate is far worse; they are sentenced to the Hulks.

For the accused, trials are quick and dirty. There are no juries. The prosecution presents their case first, then the defense. The prosecutor and defendant may call witnesses to testify at the judge's discretion. Each side is then allowed a brief final statement before the judge issues his verdict. Upon reaching a verdict, the judge's word is final—there are no appeals. Occasionally, a wealthy member of society who has been found guilty of a crime may beat his sentence by talking to the right people. Although the system is not entirely corrupt, strings can be pulled if the price is right.

The accused may hire a lawyer, but if unable, the city provides one. These public defenders are a lazy, incompetent, apathetic lot, collecting their fees and not sticking their necks. A handful of public defenders still care and doggedly provide their clients with the best defense they are able to muster.

Independent lawyers are a slick and dangerous bunch, well-versed in the many loopholes of Freeport's legal system. They'll represent anybody who can cough up the gold, no matter how reprehensible. Their fees are exorbitantly high, and whether their client is acquitted or thrown in jail, they always collect (sometimes with the help of armed men).

Death

Freeport rarely executes its criminals, seeing such acts as tyrannical and smacking of the sorts of punishments meted by nations on the Continent. Still, there are some instances where there is no other recourse. Burning down a government building, treason, and mass murder cannot go unpunished. A typical methods for administering a death sentence is beheading, but some justices get creative and decree death by sharks, drawing and quartering, and so on—a merciful judge may assign death by poison. For particularly powerful criminals, the capital punishment can be delayed indefinitely with the sentence being death by natural causes. Such prisoners are consigned to the Tombs for life or, more rarely, placed under house arrest.

The rare instance of a public beheading is held at ten o'clock in the morning in a small courtyard in front of the Tombs. All ticket holders (purchased or won at the gates to the Fortress of Justice compound) must watch from a safe distance. Before the prisoner is killed, he's allowed to make one final statement. Those lucky enough to win the chance to witness the execution always applaud eloquently at this tragic speech. The jailer then beheads the prisoner on a stone chopping block. Rescuing someone from being executed here would be a legendary achievement. Some have tried, but so far, no one has succeeded.

Carrying out some court ordered executions involves transporting the convict to another location. For the public, these are raucous occasions, as almost anyone can watch the Sea Lord's Guard perform the execution without buying a ticket. For example, notorious pirates are often keelhauled at the Docks.

Any remains are sent to the Crematorium. Jailers have been known to sell a piece or two to interested parties (for the right price) before they take their final journey.

Drac's End Murders Blamed on Mysterious Cult!

~The Shipping News

Exile

It takes a lot to be kicked out of Freeport. A person has to commit the same crime repeatedly, making it more expensive to keep catching him than it is to just put the fool on a boat and send him out to sea for the pirates to take care of. Those who survive exile and return to Freeport find the city unwelcoming, and if caught, they find far more severe punishment.

Fines

The amount of the fine varies with the judge's whim and the nature of the crime. At a minimum, a fine should be equal to the damages caused, though in some cases the fine can be twice or even three times the amount. Should the accused be unable to pay the fine, he may be imprisoned in the Tombs until his family can pay the debt. Sometimes he must perform hard labor to pay off his debt or even forfeit his mortal possessions to the victim of the crime.

Flogging

The practice of flogging traces its origins back to Freeport's roots. When at sea, every man counts, and even the nastiest crimes are overlooked as the ship and the crew was more important than one wronged sailor. Instead of tossing the culprit to the sharks, the captain could order a flogging, where the man is tied to the mast and the wronged party given a scourge to deliver a number of lashes appropriate for the crime. Flogging is still a suitable punishment, and when it's given as a sentence, the criminal is bound to a pole and given a number of lashes usually between one and six, but a dozen or more is not unheard of. Variations of this punishment include smacking the criminal with driftwood clubs, socks filled with smooth stones, or even just using one's fists.

Common Crimes and Punishments

	Punishment by Offense			
Crime	First	Second	Third	Fourth
Arson	Fine	Flogging	Imprisonment	—
Arson, Government	Flogging	Death	—	—
Assault	Fine	Flogging	Hard Labor	Imprisonment
Blackmail	Fine	Fine	Flogging	Hard Labor
Bribery	—	Fine	Fine	Flogging
Burglary	Fine	Fine	Flogging	Flogging
Counterfeiting	Fine	Flogging	Hard Labor	Imprisonment
Cult Membership	Imprisonment	Death	—	—
Demon Worship	Exile/Death	—	—	—
Embezzling	Fine	Fine	Flogging	Hard Labor
Espionage	Imprisonment	Death/Exile	—	—
Fraud	Fine	Fine	Exile	Hulks
Murder	Hard Labor	Imprisonment	—	—
Murder, Mass	Death	—	—	—
Perjury	Fine	Fine	Flogging	Exile
Rape	Fine	Flogging	Imprisonment	—
Rioting	Fine	Flogging	Exile	Imprisonment
Robbery	Fine	Flogging	Exile	Imprisonment
Sedition	Flogging	Flogging	Exile	Death
Slavery	Flogging	Exile/Death	—	—
Tax Evasion	Fine	Hard Labor	Flogging	Imprisonment
Treason	Imprisonment	Death	—	—
Vandalism	Fine	Flogging	Hard Labor	Imprisonment

Watch Rousts Drug Den! Dozens of Fiends Corked Up!

~The Shipping News

Hard Labor

There's always work to be done in Freeport, and those criminals sentenced to hard labor are responsible for a great deal of it. Most folks that gain this punishment are sent to work on farms or cut timber from the jungles. Sometimes a judge may assign the criminal to work for the wronged as he sees fit. Convicted criminals landing this sentence can look forward to months or even years of backbreaking labor.

Imprisonment

The worst of all sentences is imprisonment, as Freeport has just two destinations for those to be incarcerated: the Tombs and the Hulks. The Tombs are dank, and disease is widespread, to say nothing of the subterranean predators that come up from the cyclopean depths to snatch a screaming meal. The Hulks are even worse. These decommissioned ships float beyond the harbor, and their holds are crowded with some of Freeport's most dangerous criminals. A convicted criminal must row the boat to the Hulk under the eyes of the watchman and once there, climb aboard. There, the guards drop the prisoner into a sea of filthy faces, leaving him to find his fate in the cruel hands of rapists, murders, and crime lords. Few escape the Hulks.

Religion

Just about every legitimate (and illegitimate) religion in the world has a place in Freeport. The Temple District is choked with shrines, temples, and other holy houses, all catering to the various interests and religious inclinations of Freeport's dynamic population. Most religions have their place in the aforementioned district, but walking around the city, one is sure to see symbols and icons of a host of gods. While Freeporters are generally tolerant of other religions, everyone in the city recognizes a few of the more important faiths. The following four are among the most popular in Freeport. More details on these gods and can be found in **Chapter Nine: The Temple District**.

The God of Pirates

As a city founded by pirates, it should be unsurprising that the God of Pirates is one of the most popular. The temple works hard to improve its image, but no matter how they shade it, they serve a bloodthirsty god that represents the interests of the most unsavory bastards to sail the seas.

The God of Knowledge

In stark contrast to the more savage religions in Freeport, the God of Knowledge is positively refined. His temple serves as a holy place but also a great repository of lore. Understandably, the Temple of the Knowledge God has strong ties to the Freeport Institute.

The God of the Sea

The God of the Sea is a vital figure in the lives of Freeporters as it is his hand that shelters the city from the most devastating storms and tidal surges and protects vessels as they embark on ocean voyages. Freeporters who work on or around the sea (which is just about everyone in the city) keep an icon of this moody, fickle god.

The God of War

Freeporters respect strength and skill at arms, so the God of War has a modest following in the city. Before any engagement, a pious Freeporter will send a quick prayer to this violent god to bless his weapon and his wit that he might survive to fight again.

Other Gods

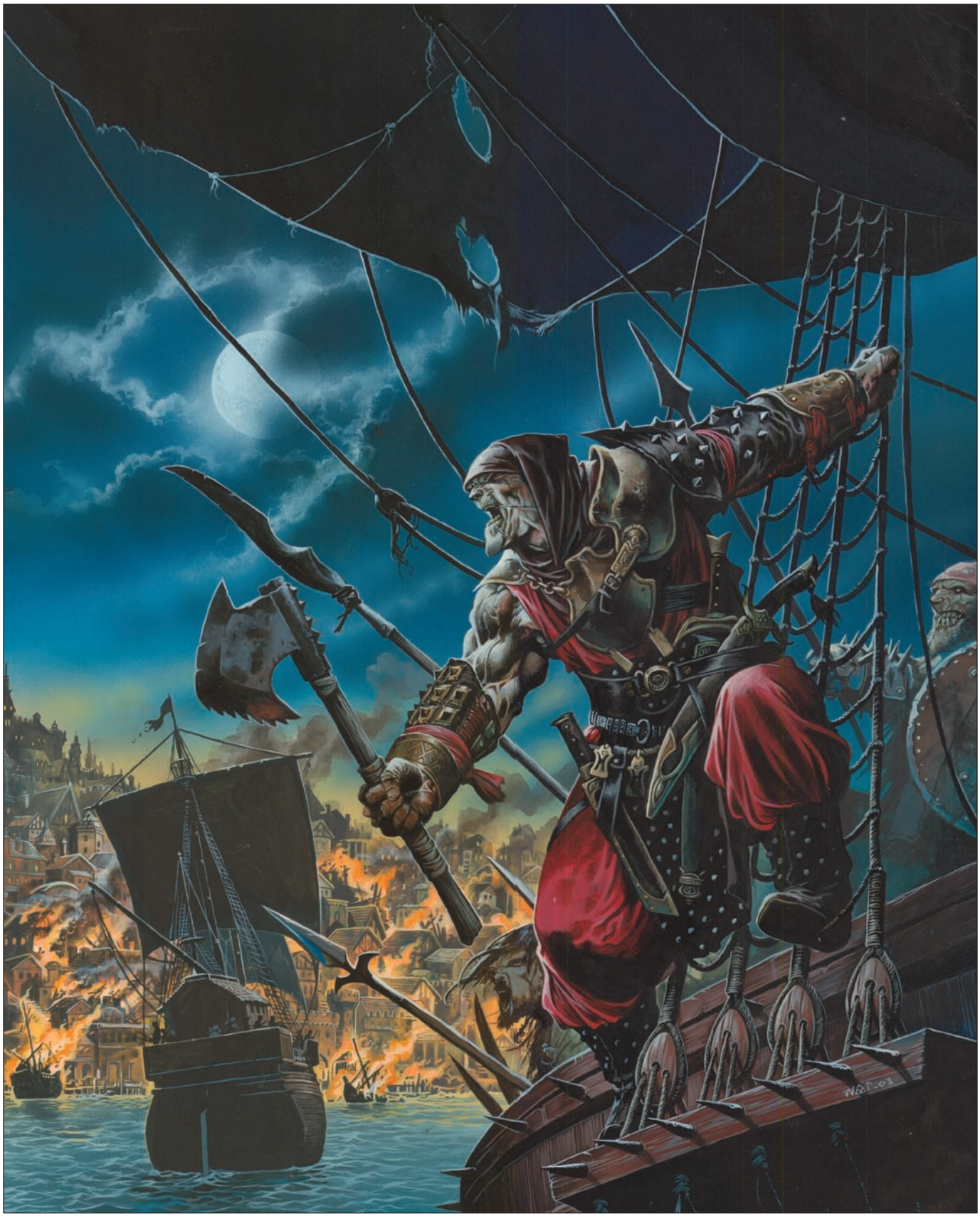
While four gods dominate Freeport's theological landscape, it's also home to scores more. Religions from the Continent survive in the shadow of the dominant faiths and include the God of Justice, the God of Death, God of Wisdom, and even the God of Thieves. Many of these priests operate small temples or shrines in the Temple District, while the smallest must make do with a tiny stall in the Fool's Market.

Cults and Subversives

There are limits to Freeport's tolerance for religion. Freeporters respect the gods and their followers, accepting most worshippers no matter how strange their behavior or beliefs. They draw the line, though, at any religion that demands its followers actively harm or maim themselves or others. Some sanctioned sects, such as that of the God of War, skirt this line, but people turn a blind eye toward their violent behavior given the religion's long place in Freeport's history.

There's no telling how many vile cults are at work in Freeport at any given time. A group of friendly nobles might gather under the darkness of the new moon and make living sacrifices to a fiend of the deepest hell, while a group of sailors could gather in the back room of a tavern to perform unspeakable rituals to some evil, slumbering god that rests in a sealed vault beneath the sea.

Perhaps the most famous of Freeport's cults is the Brotherhood of the Yellow Sign. This organization traces its roots to the Valossan Empire and was founded by mad serpent people to honor a dreadful being known only as the Unspeakable One—to say his name is to invite his attention, and sane people do not want that. The Brotherhood has risen and fallen throughout the years but never came as close to realizing their mad plans as when Milton Drac ruled the city as Freeport's Sea Lord. Since his fall, the Brotherhood has scattered, nearly broken, it's members dead, missing, or in hiding. Still, there are whispers of their activities in the gloomiest depths of the city, concerning some new grandiose plot to plunge Freeport into madness.



A barbarian invasion was but the latest threat to the City of Adventure. Freeport emerged victorious, though many lives were lost and much property destroyed.

The Underworld

Five years of rule under the new Sea Lord and Freeport Watch has allowed Freeport's criminal underworld to reassert itself in this city of pirates. It should come as no surprise; Freeport has a strong criminal tradition that goes all the way back to Drac and Francisco. The streets are alive with freelance thieves, murderers, enforcers, and thugs, and for this reason, everyone in the city goes armed to the teeth. Even those folks rich enough to afford a few bodyguards and private militias aren't cavalier enough to dispense with a sword or pistol. Only fools depend on the corrupt Watch now that Williams' Guard is a memory all but erased from this tumultuous city.

Organized crime is contained to just a few groups scattered through the city. For the most part, they are small, concerned with running a protection racket covering a few blocks or smuggling drugs and contraband into the city. None of these groups compare to the larger expansive organizations—Finn's Syndicate and the Canting Crew, the latter being controlled by Mister Wednesday. These gentlemen have a stranglehold on Freeport's crime, and woe to any who contest their control. Both Finn and Mister Wednesday have a lot of influence in the city and in their respective territories. There, their word is as much law as anything that comes from the Captains' Council.

Drugs

Abyss dust and snakeweed may be the most prevalent of banned drugs, but they are not the only ones. Countless other diversions slip into the city through the ragged docks of Scurvytown or hidden among cargo from Continental ships, only to slip unseen into the hands of the crime lords that rule Freeport's underworld. Including ground herbs, dust, mushrooms, and noxious liquids, many of these substances are deadly addictive, forcing the council's hand in banning them from the city. Of course, once you tell a Freeporter he can't do something, he's just about guaranteed to give it a try. Illegal drugs can be found in places where there are customers, so they are a problem in Scurvytown, parts of the Eastern District, Drac's End, and the Merchant District.

Smuggling

Freeport places duties on almost everything coming into the city, from textiles to food, to livestock to weaponry. In most cases, there's a flat fee assessed by the relative value of the good, set by the harbormaster and the Captains' Council. In theory, no good should receive too much of a tariff, or it risks interfering with the city's burgeoning economy, but circumstances and powerful people can dictate adjustments, increasing the tariffs on goods, based on the interests of the politicians. Smugglers, therefore, do good business. In fact, for many merchants, it's often cheaper to smuggle goods in than to pay a tax passed by some greedy councilor, and even if caught, the risk of losing the goods is worth it. Smuggling operations move contraband through Scurvytown mostly, though some daring smugglers may hide high-tax items amid low-tax items through the Docks. The harbormaster is famous for being amenable to bribes and can thus be encouraged to look the other way.

Gangs

Gangs are the norm for Freeport. Made up of disaffected youths drawn from poverty stricken districts and given a sense of empowerment, they rove the streets wearing their colors and generally cause trouble. Gangs offer their members a sense of belonging, a bit of power, and respect from the locals who fear them. And since for many Freeporters advancement is an illusion, gangs provide another means to enjoy the finer things the city can offer. There are dozens of gangs in Freeport, though they are most active in Bloodsalt, Scurvytown, the Docks, and Drac's End. Many have ties to organizations like Finn's Syndicate.

Protection Rackets

With crime as it is in the city, many criminals—especially those in service to Finn or Mister Wednesday—supplement their activities by extorting money from honest businessmen in exchange for protection. These are hired guards, but they guard against their fellow thugs, thieves, and other criminals, as well as themselves. Typically, a representative of a criminal organization will approach a business owner and explain how the neighborhood, street, or district is dangerous and ensure nothing will happen to the place if the shopkeeper ponies up a percentage of his profits. In exchange, he gets a mark on his door to ward off thieves. Those who don't pay are beaten, robbed, or have their property destroyed. This sort of crime occurs all over the city, extortionists sometimes overlapping and forcing shop owners to pay out to several different criminals at the same time. Finn's "protection" is most widespread in the Eastern District, but Scurvytown and Drac's End have no shortage of their own extortionists.

Slavery

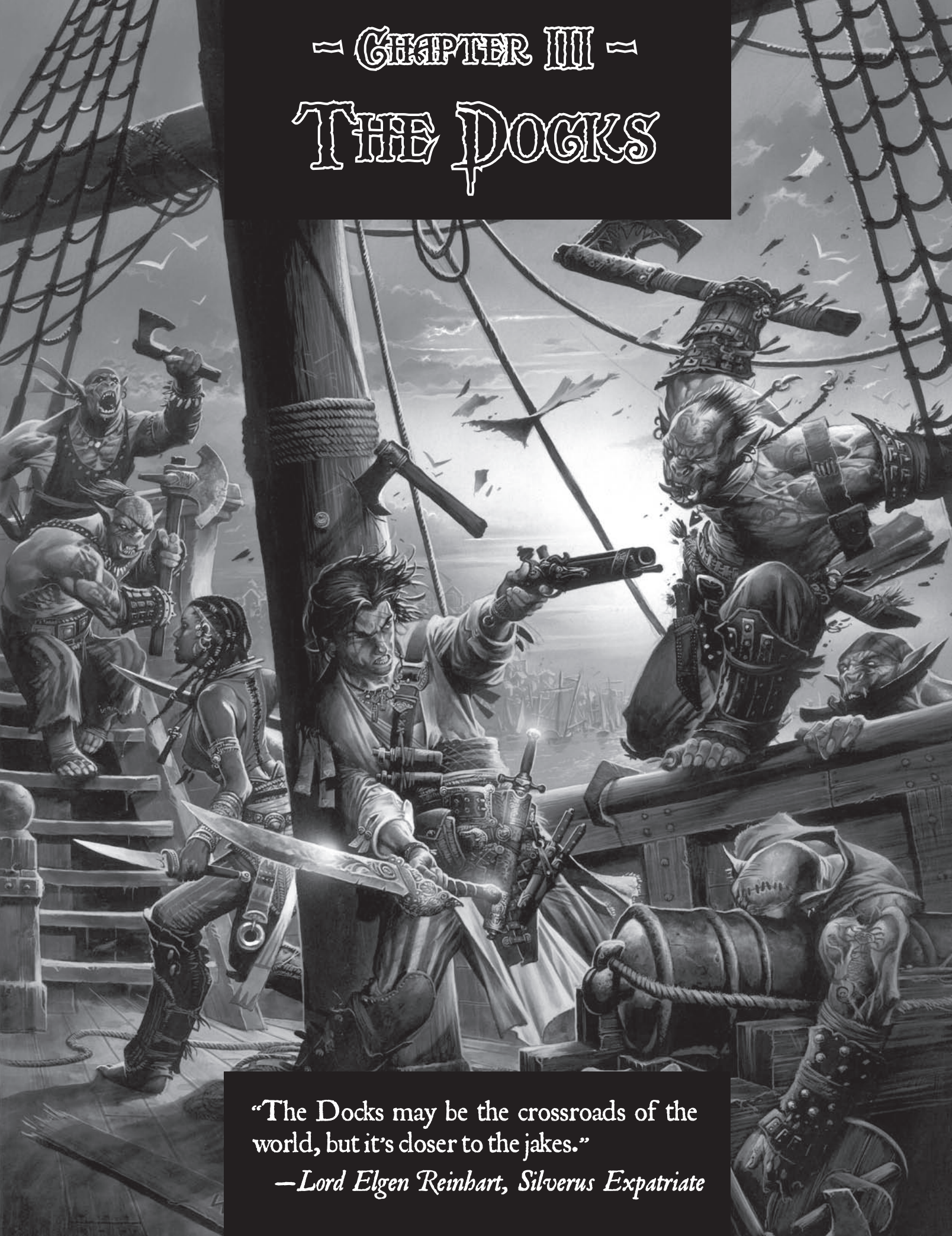
If there's one law that's inviolate, it's the ban on slavery. Even Finn and Mister Wednesday wouldn't touch this nasty trade. Despite the widespread and near universal hatred of slavery, it does happen in Freeport, though never in the open. Slavers from distant ports, including the hated city of Mazin, come to the city to harvest slaves from places where no one will be missed. This includes orphanages, rundown taverns, and the poorest corners of Scurvytown. The slavers spirit their captives out of the city, using the smuggling channels to move their illegal cargo, but sometimes they exchange slaves in the Flesh Market, hidden somewhere in the Underside. Slavers are not tolerated in Freeport, and even if here on other business, they have a tendency to go missing.

Theft and Burglary

Freeport has thieves like dung has flies. Thieves infest the city, mingling with the crowds of the Seaside Market, slicing purses on the wharves and breaking into homes in the Merchant District. Some work for one of the two crime syndicates, but most are freelancers, disorganized and looking out for themselves first and foremost.

Other Crimes

As with any city of Freeport's size, crime is just a way of life. Rape happens in dark alleys just as it does in the side passages of the great estates in the Merchant District. A person can be beaten to death for an askance look or a misspoken phrase, and bodies floating in the sewers or harbor are so commonplace that no one even notices anymore. For as adventurous and tolerant as Freeport is, there's a strong undercurrent of cruel selfishness, a sense that the individual is somehow greater than the whole, and their needs must always come first. Sure, there's unity when the chips fall, but on a day-to-day basis, folks are unaccustomed to lending a hand without asking what they get in exchange.



Chapter III

The Docks

"The Docks may be the crossroads of the world, but it's closer to the jakes."

—Lord Elgen Reinhart, Silverus Expatriate



The Warehouse District and Scurvytown offer places of port, but most ships dock here. Along the crowded wharves, one can find ships hailing from all over the world, bringing unusual peoples, customs, goods, and animals to this city of adventure. It is here that orc pirates rub shoulders with elven corsairs. Human sailors brawl with those of rival nations, while exotic peoples from as far away as Hamunaptra stare in wonder at travelers from legendary Narajan.

A number of shops, pubs, and brothels that cater to travelers face the wharves. From the moment a visitor disembarks from the ship, locals assail him with ways to spend his money. Many people are flat broke within minutes of arriving. Behind these initial establishments are more taverns, brothels, apothecaries, and other businesses that cater to sailors. Flophouses are common, offering low-rent accommodations for those who aren't too choosy about where they sleep.

Although most buildings in the Docks are for entertainment or retail, there are some residences. Homes cluster together and form small communities bound by ethnicity. Most folks, though, reside in apartments above their shops, retreating there at the end of a trying business day.

Structures in the Docks are wooden atop stone foundations. S0me incorporate stone—mostly near the shore, but even these are few and far between since the material is expensive and rare on the islands. Nearly all the buildings in the Docks have some form of damage or another, incurred by the frequent storms that lash the island.

The buildings fronting the wharves form a row all across the district. There are a few wide avenues heading off to adjacent districts, including one crowded road that travels through the Seaside Market. Most streets, though, are narrow alleys that wind into the darkest depths of the district or to nowhere at all. These labyrinthine paths may lead to ambushes, dangerous pubs, or bizarre shops that sell suspect or illicit goods.

As one would expect, the Docks are active. The district is empty in the morning after crews depart for their next destination, only to fill again with another round of vessels in the afternoon. While few ships come to port after the sun has set, the night is filled with raucous laughter, screams, and carousing.

Entering the Docks

Travelers disembark by gangplanks to the crowded wharf below. Upon stepping off the ship, the visitor is assailed by sights and sounds, by hawkers peddling junk, by thieves looking for a mark, and by anyone else who would profit from those unfamiliar with Freeport's pitfalls. Maneuvering up the wharf is tricky; stevedores unload cargo, while unskilled laborers scrape barnacles and slime from the hulls of ships. Coils of rope, falling crates, and large angry orcs are just a few things one can encounter here.

Once free from the wharves, the Docks district awaits. Businesses ranging from brothels, restaurants, pubs, and specialty shops front the wharves. Urchins sell copies of the *Shipping News* and call out the major events of the day. Peddlers and merchants hawk their wares to passers-by, while bawds offer their services to guide newcomers to the safer parts of town. Sailors haul their catch to the fishwives, who with deft hands strip the fish of scales, bones, and guts, sending them splashing onto the streets or the swirling waters below.

Inside the Docks

Life on the sea is dangerous, and those who make their living on the waves are often hard-bitten people with large appetites. Sailors who

get their pay at the end of a trip often blow the entire amount during their shore leave. After all, there's nothing to spend it on while aboard the ship, and they never know whether their next trip out might be their last. Better to spend it now than to let it weigh you down if you're tossed into the sea.

Since the streets of the Docks are busy day and night, many here happily relieve sailors and travelers of their coin. Grifters, con men, thugs, thieves, streetwalkers, and peddlers prowl the narrow streets, searching for their next target. By day, the Docks are bad enough, but at night, it's suicidal to go about alone.

All sorts of mayhem happens here after sundown, and it's not uncommon for the Watch to find a body or two—or more—floating in the harbor. Unless the victim is somebody of note, though, it's unlikely that authorities will administer any repercussions. It's usually up to the poor soul's friends to avenge him, assuming he had any.

There's little refuge indoors either. The taverns are not choosy about clientele, and all sorts of unsavory types haunt the crowded pubs. Few establishments have bouncers, and those that do are there to protect the staff. Guests are on their own.

Crossroads of the World

The people of the Docks have seen it all. Since this district is the doorway through which travelers come to Freeport, people see visitors of just about every nationality, race, and culture. There's a certain air of tolerance here, an acceptance of others regardless of how unsettling they are. People judge others on their merits, not stereotypes. This attitude is what makes Freeport so endearing to seafarers. The pirate city has always served as a haven, a hideaway for people of all backgrounds, and as Freeport becomes more cosmopolitan, the locals are more and more willing to accept anyone who comes to visit.

This good-natured charity lasts only as long as the visitors behave. Should someone from off-island do something nasty, it's just a matter of time before the locals band together and smack the upstart down. Even the toughest creatures think twice before taking on an entire mob of disapproving Freeporters.

The Docks Summary

Often considered the gateway to Freeport, most visitors must brave the narrow streets of the Docks to access the rest of the city.

Buildings

Most buildings sport some damage from the last bout of summer storms. Most are wooden, but a few are made of stone.

People

The Docks folk are a diverse lot, hailing from all manner of countries around the world.

Roads

The Warehouse District's boardwalk stops at the edge of the Docks, leaving foot traffic to make their way through the haphazardly cobbled street. Paths formed from old boards allow pedestrians to stay out of the mud, though these routes are often rerouted to the more sinister alleys, where criminals await their prey.

Descriptive Elements

The Docks are loud and packed with people. The air is pregnant with the stench of seawater mixed with waste, the stink of blood and fish guts, and the myriad of odors wafting up from the people perfumed to cover up body door. The Docks are vibrant and exciting, alive with the clash of cultures that call this place home.

Locations of Interest

All of the following locations can be found in the Docks.

1. The Longshoremen's Union

"Freeport, as we all know, is a wild town. Serpent men, buried temples, gates to Hell—you can't walk into somebody's basement without uncovering a Truth That Nobody Is Meant to Know. But, for all that eldritch excitement, our city is still a port—which means somebody's got to do the loading and unloading and make sure the city's main industry keeps chugging along. These days nothing happens on the wharves without the Longshoremen."

—Sweet Gregor, Brute

The Longshoremen's Union is a fixture on the wharves. Operating out of an unassuming storefront facing the wharves, a visitor wouldn't know this group employs every sweating stevedore unloading the ships on the wharves. The truth is, anyone who wants work on the wharves must join the union. Those who don't and think they can get away with not paying their dues face a cordial but firm welcoming committee who clarifies the need for joining the brotherhood. Woe to those who refuse. A person has one chance to join. If they don't, they're beaten—and if they still refuse, they disappear. Those fools who try to break the union with scabs, or try to cut union wages, are in for a full-scale strike—one that effectively shuts down the city. Thus, no one crosses the Longshoremen's Union.

Usually, these bruisers are locals with a reason to stay on dry land—strong family ties, a surreptitious weak stomach, or just a desire to live a normal life. They're big and burly, but while they blow off some steam now and again, they don't raise the same kind of ruckus visiting sailors do. Freeport is their home, after all, not just a way station.

History

Among the movers and shakers of Freeport, there's a lot of scorn directed at the Longshoremen. The Captains' Council and no few local merchants decry the union, claiming it is little more than a gang of thieves and extortionists, worse than the cutpurses haunting the rest

of the Docks. Despite the mutterings of the elite, the Longshoremen are in fact one of the few honest organizations in town.

This wasn't always the case. For years, the Longshoremen's Union was a joke. The bosses lined their pockets with sweetheart deals that left the workers out in the cold. While these corrupt officials got rich, and ship captains paid starving wages to the workers to off-load their ships, the people of the Docks suffered. So long as the Captains' Council got their cut, they ignored the plight of the stevedores and longshoremen, allowing the exploitation and terrible conditions to persist.

Everything changed about a decade ago. Poppy Bragg, a member of the union, emerged as a force of nature. Dissatisfied with his pay and disgusted by the corruption riddling the upper levels of the organization, he championed the cause of the worker and fought his way to the top. He built a union to be feared and respected. He met with merchants and ship owners and laid down the law, tearing up the old contracts and hammering out tough new ones. At the same time, he insisted his members pull their weight—he'd make sure everyone could eat, he was fond of saying, but he'd be damned if he'd let anybody get fat.

Description

The Longshoremen's Union has a small office that fronts the wharves. Plain and serviceable, the offices are merely functional. Bragg refuses to let union funds go toward beautifying the place, and so long as the organization sustains itself, he's content.

The building is two stories, with a meeting hall on the main floor, along with an office and a records room where the union keeps its contracts and funds in a thick iron vault. A staircase leads upstairs to more storage rooms and offices. The only thing that separates this building from those around it is a white flag hanging out front bearing a red silhouette of a muscular man pulling on a rope.



Key Figures

The Longshoremen's Union keeps a small staff on hand to manage the day-to-day affairs of the organization. Two accountants, a couple of clerks, and some burly toughs can be found here at any time. Poppy Bragg also has an office, but he's rarely here and prefers, instead, to work alongside the other workers on the wharves.

Poppy Bragg

For thirty years, Poppy Brag (*male human journeyman*) worked on the wharves, unloading cargo and living the life—and reaping the benefits of its generally corrupt, complacent union. The leaders signed deals that looked good on the surface but short-changed their workers in the long haul, leaving them without pensions or other provisions for old age. Bragg, like everybody else, knew deep down things couldn't last, but who wanted to go up against entrenched leaders? Life's too short to make waves.

Then Bragg met Emaya Passos, a sailor's daughter and a bit of a militant. She was just as tough and plain spoken as any of the dockworkers Bragg had known, and she had seen a lot in her time. Freeport was an embarrassment, she believed; the upper classes were decadent, and that base behavior had wormed its way down to the wharves. She was the moral compass Bragg had been waiting for his whole life. They married, and within five years, he'd fought his way to the top of the union. Through sheer force of will, and the occasional judicious use of force, he built a network of allies and gave the dead wood their walking papers.

Poppy may be in his mid-fifties, but he doesn't look it. He's short, stocky, and made of solid muscle. His hands are calloused and skin weathered. His dark eyes are quick and alert, and when angry, he has the look of a fanatic. He wears a thick sweater, breeches, and woolen cap. He always has a cudgel on hand to make sure people understand him properly.

Mother Passos

The daughter of a hardened sailor, Emaya Passos (*female human journeyman*) is a tough, no-nonsense woman who wastes no time on frivolities. She's as invested in the union as her husband, and she makes just as many speeches and is more than capable of knocking a few heads around if necessary. She can't stand corruption and has little use for the pampered nobility in the Old City and Merchant District, seeing them as Freeport's problem, not its solution. The Longshoremen have taken to calling her Mother, since she's always watching out for them.

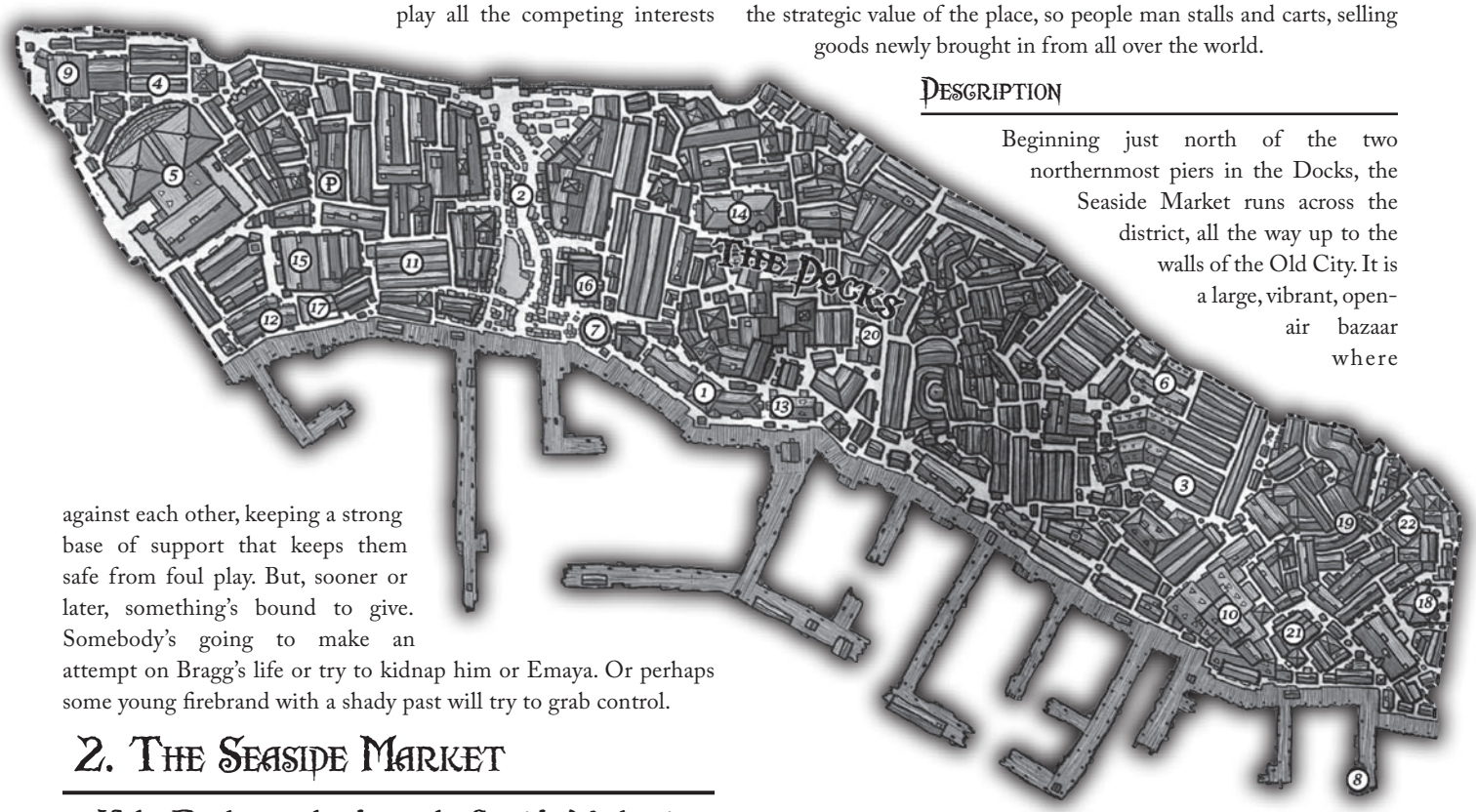
Emaya looks a great deal like her husband. She's short and stocky with broad, ruddy features. She has long brown hair, but she keeps it pulled back, tight on her scalp. She favors the breeches and sweaters of the workers, which the delicate ladies find scandalous.

Adventure Seeds

Poppy Bragg and Emaya Passos are the heart and soul of the union. Through their dedicated efforts, the livelihoods of the Longshoremen have improved dramatically. Their children are no longer starving, and they earn a fair wage for the hard and necessary work they do. Although these members are loyal, there's a bit of unrest among the

workers. New men have begun to speak against the union, complaining how it has the wharves in a stranglehold and that their wages are being garnished unfairly. Appealing to the old days, when there were more opportunities to grow wealthy, these divisive elements are getting some traction. None of the workers admit to going to these meetings, but Passos grows concerned that there's some other power behind this unrest. She'd pay a good price to find out who it is.

While generally beloved in the Docks, Bragg's popularity drops off outside this district. Members of the Captains' Council and powerful crime lords would be happy if he and his wife were out of the picture. The union leaders know how to play all the competing interests against each other, keeping a strong base of support that keeps them safe from foul play. But, sooner or later, something's bound to give. Somebody's going to make an attempt on Bragg's life or try to kidnap him or Emaya. Or perhaps some young firebrand with a shady past will try to grab control.



2. The Seaside Market

"If the Docks are the door, the Seaside Market is the hall."

—Aulvant Brine, Peddler

The Docks are home to countless small shops and pubs, all catering to the varied tastes and interests of those who brave the seas to reach Freeport. Although, only the Seaside Market comes close to reflecting the cosmopolitan nature of the Docks. This thriving corridor is the true crucible of the Docks, for here is where most merchants sell their wares and most travelers make purchases. Goods from all over the world change hands beneath the tents and out of the backs of carts. Exotic fruits, grains, livestock, and other perishables can be found here, but this place also holds great treasures for those with the coin to spend. One vendor may deal in priceless relics brought forth from the ancient tombs of Hamunaptra, while another may peddle silks brought from far-flung Narajan. Weapons, armor, curiosities, and treasures are all for sale. Of course, there's no shortage of cutpurses and thieves who'll get their coin through less honest means, but this is a busy and important part of Freeport, forming the very spine of the city's economy.

History

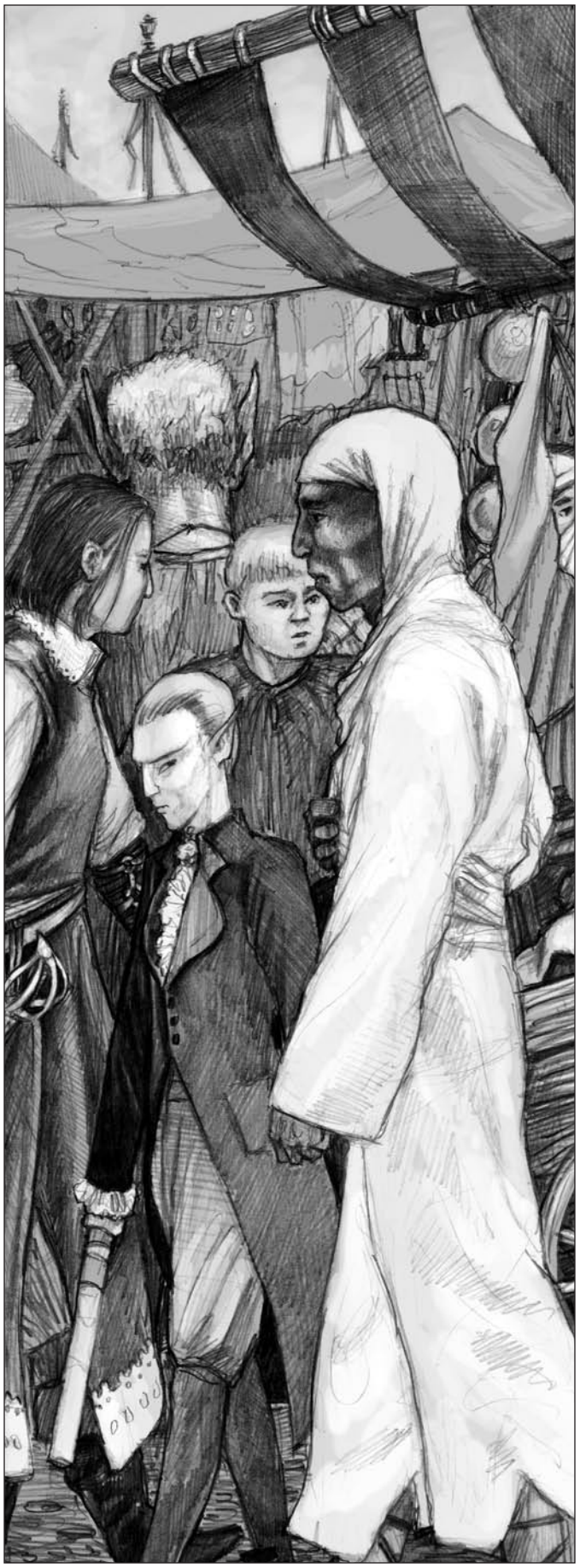
Freeporters never planned for the Seaside Market; it just appeared. It's been in the city for as long as anyone can remember and for good reason. The Seaside Market stands on the main thoroughfare from the Docks to the Old City. It didn't take Freeport's merchants and peddlers long to figure out that they would move more of their goods if they went to their customers rather than the other way around. Thus, what started as a few ambitious vendors quickly exploded into the incredible, dynamic market that stands here today. But the Seaside Market is not just for native merchants. Visiting dealers grew wise to the strategic value of the place, so people man stalls and carts, selling goods newly brought in from all over the world.

Description

Beginning just north of the two northernmost piers in the Docks, the Seaside Market runs across the district, all the way up to the walls of the Old City. It is a large, vibrant, open-air bazaar where

A Haven for Killers

The tumultuous and often violent character of the Docks enables those with a murderous spirit to stalk the narrow streets without fear. Since bodies turn up frequently, those with a taste for killing can slake their thirst here, often without attracting attention; months can pass before anyone realizes something is wrong. Years ago, the Firebrand Killer would leave his immolated victims in plain view. The Welcoming Committee, an infamous killer who preyed on unwary travelers, racked up a score of victims until some blond-haired brute from the north took off his head. Since the Docks breed these deranged types, the locals have come to accept their presence as yet another hazard. In fact, many of the side streets where these villains were captured or killed are named for the murderers. The most famous is Firebrand Way, Gemini Circle, and Charley's Crossing.



shoppers can find almost anything they might want—for a price. The entire area is crammed full of tents, tables, and stalls, all filled to overflowing with all sorts of merchandise ranging from fresh fish and imported vegetables to live cattle to books to weaponry of all kinds. Goods of a magical nature can be found here as well, and spellcasters come from all over the city to acquire weird ingredients for their sorcerous pursuits.

Wherever there's such a large amount of unbridled commerce, there are also thieves and con men of all stripes. The Seaside Market is not the safest place in the city, even in broad daylight, and the Watch is notorious for ignoring anything short of an outright brawl in the narrow aisles between the merchants.

Even with the risk of theft, people come here in droves. The prices are generally much cheaper than elsewhere in the city, so many people make regular pilgrimages down to the Seaside Market for necessities.

Key Figures

The Seaside Market is packed with people from sunrise to sunset. No matter their station, occupation, or purpose, folks from all walks can be found strolling through the maze of tents and stalls.

Brunnor Wallingston

Brunnor Wallingston (*male dwarf apprentice*) runs a small business selling a broad selection of potions, elixirs, unguents, incenses, and more. Everything from virility concoctions to love potions to more magical substances can be had for the right price. Brunnor claims to brew all his own wares, but in truth, he has two wizards working off their debt of passage in the basement of his home a few blocks over. He's probably the biggest mage smuggler in the region, bringing renegades and exiles from the Continent to Freeport in exchange for a year of service, brewing alchemical substances and magical potions. On the side, Brunnor also dabbles in poisons, but he keeps his side business secret, dealing only with referrals.

A stout dwarf, Brunnor stands just under five feet tall and weighs approximately two hundred and fifty pounds. He has black hair that he wears in long braids, his beard is full and black, and he has an onyx stone inserted in the socket of his missing left eye.

Halkos Tremiir

The Halfling Benevolent Association has many eyes and ears scattered throughout the city. One such spy is a barber and physician named Halkos Tremiir (*male elf journeyman*). Nearly penniless and on the brink of destitution, Orm Redleaf (see **Eastern District**) offered to pull him back to his feet, so to speak, in exchange for keeping an ear out for any rumors or gossip that might be of interest. Halkos had had enough tragedy in his life, so he agreed. The Halfling Benevolent Association set him up with a stall in the Seaside Market and a tenement nearby. In exchange, they want information.

Halkos puts on a friendly face to his customers, and he enjoys his work, eavesdropping and gossiping about other people's business. He keeps his head shaved to the scalp, has long, pierced ears, and has a pale complexion. While working, he wears a long, white coat overtop of a mail shirt to ensure he's protected from any disgruntled clients.

Jaminy Swift

A notorious thief and scamp, Jaminy Swift (*male human apprentice*) is an adolescent that roves the Seaside Market. He's in charge of a gang

Law and Order

As with most other districts in the city, the Docks have a branch of the Freeport Watch to maintain order. Watch Captain Cadawar Creed (*male human journeyman*) recruits his watchmen from locals, drawing heavily from sailors and pirates, bouncers, and bravos. The result is an eclectic mix of morally ambiguous toughs who are more than willing to turn a blind eye toward crime if properly plied with gold.

Those who sign up with the Watch receive a blue armband and a stout cudgel. Armor, swords, and other necessary accoutrements are left to the watchmen to provide. As a result, the most suspicious sorts are the ones who wear a shirt of mail and have a sword hanging from their belts, since such luxuries are costly and are usually funded by bribes and pay-offs.

Patrols rarely follow a regular pattern. Groups of two to five watchmen congregate in pubs or in front of brothels to flirt with the ladies. The most dedicated may walk the wharves, keeping an eye out for suspicious activity. These teams usually include a sergeant who has the authority and the grit to keep the wayward watchmen in line. The Watch never patrols at night, though a handful of men can be called upon at the Watch Station in case of an emergency.

of urchins who share his talents for larceny. A former stowaway who happened to land in Freeport, Jaminy has survived by his wits, speed, and cherubic looks. A few fishwives have tried to reform the boy, but all attempts have ended in disaster. Despite their failures, Jaminy is well liked in the market, and most folks pay him a few coins each week to keep him and his thieves away from their merchandise.

Jaminy controls a gang of two dozen orphans ranging in age from six to thirteen. He's the undisputed leader, and none of the children would dare cross him. The group lives with a pack of aggressive dogs in an abandoned warehouse, buried beneath a jumble of buildings in the Docks.

Jaminy has red hair and freckles, stands five feet tall, and weighs eighty pounds. He wears a fine white shirt, snug breeches, and a pair of soft leather shoes he stole from a disagreeable gnome last year.

Nevtalathien

Owner of Nev's Leather, Nevtalathien (*female half-elf journeyman*) is a veteran mercenary who settled in Freeport after spending a life as a sell sword. Remembering the city fondly from her infrequent visits in the past, she decided to try her luck at an honest life. She opened a leatherworker's business in the Seaside Market and found Freeport was as good a home as any and retired here. Still, Nev sometimes goes away for a few weeks, only to return with a fresh new batch of scars.

Nev resents her elven ancestry and is cool, bordering on rude to elven customers. She has bright green eyes and refined features hinting at her fey heritage. She's pretty, but her experience in battle and her age has left her sour and cynical.

Pious Pete

Another famous character of the Seaside Market is Pious Pete (*male human journeyman*). This scruffy old salt claims to have once been a priest who had to flee the Continent after a misunderstanding. Rather than draw undue attention by establishing a new order to his mysterious god, Pete gave up the cloth in favor of a life of drinking. He had a great time, but he ran out of money quickly. He set out to find something easy to do, having no love for honest labor. Since walking was about the extent of his effort, he learned a lot about the city. In the space of a year, he had learned the names of most streets and alleys, figuring out short cuts and routes to avoid. Then it struck him. People got lost in Freeport all the time, and he knew the city. Why not get paid for leading folks around? And so, Pious Pete became a guide.

Pious Pete doesn't look like much. He's grizzled with a white beard stained yellow around the mouth, a red face, and a bald head. He smells a bit like sour milk and old vomit. He's rarely far from a bottle. He's a bit obsessed with bottles. When he finishes a drink, he ties a string around the neck and hangs it from his shirt, the bottles clinking together as he walks. When deep in his cups, he sometimes speaks in a strange language and makes odd gestures as if performing some religious ritual.

Adventure Seeds

Most of the merchants working in the Seaside Market are honest folk—they have a reputation to uphold, after all. There are a few places, usually behind an innocent front, that cater to those seeking illicit goods. There's a thriving black market here, and those looking for suspect equipment or dangerous information will find it.

A few days ago, a strange ship bearing odd markings docked at the wharves. The ship was white with white sails. It flew a few banners, but they were all the same: black with a white eye in the center. The ship had no cargo except for four masked men in white robes. They spoke to no one, paid their docking fee in mithral coins, and disappeared into the crowds. No one has seen them since. A few daring thieves boarded the ship, but they found nothing—no food, no water, nothing. Then, as abruptly as the ship appeared, it vanished. Since the arrival, Pious Pete has been a bit nervous, though he doesn't explain why. He refuses to be alone, and he hasn't slept in the same place for weeks, moving from flophouse to flophouse.

Tainted Oysters Cause Chaos in Seaside Market

~The Shipping News

Legends of Freeport

Local legend holds that the wharves are built on the back of a giant sea turtle that has slept in the Harbor since ancient times. Although it's buried under tons of rock, mud, sand, and water, most folks believe if the beast isn't appeased, it will wake up, move off, and take the wharves with it. To appease the monster, the Sea Lord makes a sacrifice every decade, but most folks on the wharves make offerings to the sea by spilling a few drops of ale or wine to make sure the monster stays in its deep sleep.

The market is a common place to buy and sell illicit goods. The heroes might be able to find items or information they need here, but sometimes the sellers have agendas of their own. This would also be an excellent place for a gang war to break out, as it's one of the most valuable pieces of territory for shakedowns and the like.

3. The Black Gull

"...and here is the Black Gull. If you don't like your teeth and would rather not spend your coin on kohl to darken your eyes, feel free to enter."

—Pious Pete, Guide

The Docks are full of taverns and pubs, but given their rough clientele, most honest folk look a bit further into the city for a drink and a meal. The Docks are no place for the mild, and nowhere is this truer than the Black Gull. Squeezed between two warehouses in the eastern part of the Docks near the border to Scurvytown, The Black Gull is a dangerous place that caters to the nastier sorts that visit the city.



History

The Black Gull is a fixture in Freeport. It takes its name from a huge raven that flew in the door when the bar first opened and refused to leave. The owner, Dill Mackey, started feeding the bird. One night, a sailor who was three sheets to the wind looked up and said, *"That's the blackest gull I've ever seen."*

Within days, Mackey renamed the bar and replaced the sign out front with a painting of his favorite pet. Of course, that was years ago, and the sign now shows some wear, but the bird is still there. When it's not perched on Mackey's broad shoulder, the raven rests in a wrought-iron cage up behind the bar, relatively safe from the raucous crowd.

Description

The Black Gull is a narrow building with only two walls of its own. The sides are formed by the brick warehouses that rise to either side. Mackey built the back and the front when he claimed the place. The interior is dirty and the floor covered in suspicious stains. A bar runs along one side with wooden stools in front for patrons, and some benches and tables line the opposite side. A few other tables fill up the empty spaces, placed just far enough apart to squeeze between them. The décor is decidedly spartan—a mariner's wheel hangs from the ceiling along with a few nets and other junk.

Fights happen like clockwork in the Black Gull. Mackey tolerates them mostly, but whenever anyone comes over the bar or threatens him or any of his staff (which includes three waitresses and a busboy) he lets loose his bouncer, Buster, on them.

The Black Gull has prices that range from reasonable to downright cheap—about half normal. The quality of the booze is rather low but priced right for the thirsty. Mackey doesn't serve any food in the place—*"Gets in the way of the ale,"* he complains—but people are welcome to bring it in from elsewhere. They'd better have enough to share, though. A lack of such manners has sparked more than one fight in the place.

Key Figures

As mentioned, the Black Gull is not for the meek, being better suited for tough pirates. There are a few regulars, but they're mostly retired pirates who come to the tavern to drink away their sorrows and swap lies about their exploits.

Dill Mackey

Dill Mackey (*male human journeyman*), the proprietor, wasn't always a bartender. He was once the First Mate on the notorious *Black Doxy,* a pirate ship that earned the enmity of most maritime

The Harbormaster

"You compare yourself to Sea Lord Drac. I knew Drac. Believe me, you're no Drac."

—Kad Serlin, Harbormaster

Freeport Harbor is the greatest source of taxes in the entire city. The Sea Lord's tax collectors do their best to collect fees from the various property owners in the city, but in a town as corrupt as Freeport, it's often difficult to do in a fair and timely manner.

The people who would pay the most property taxes are, of course, the most powerful souls in town, so collecting anything from them is difficult. The ships sailing in and out of town are another matter entirely.

The city doesn't collect taxes directly from the captains of the ships in the harbor. Instead, they get their cut from the fees the owners of the various piers charge the ships that make use of their services. If the taxes aren't paid, the piers are closed down and the owners don't make a dime.

This is clearly extortion, but it's also a long-established tradition, so the pier owners of Freeport generally hand over their taxes with more-often-than-not forced cheer. It's not so bad for them, after all. They just pass the costs on to their customers—and then use the taxes as an excuse to jack up the prices further. The person in charge of collecting all of this money is Kaddaceous "Kad" Serlin (*male sea elf master*), an elf who has had the job since the founding of the city.

Serlin is a well-known fop about town, rumored to have been cheating on his wife Darlanian (*female sea elf journeyman*) for over a hundred years. Even though his office overlooks Port Square, he makes his home in a fine house in the Merchant District. It's commonly believed Serlin is skimming a hefty bit off the top of the taxes he brings in, but he's so good at getting the city the money it needs that no Sea Lord has ever formally complained.

Serlin can be seen striding along the wharves at just about any time of day, usually accompanied by his personal unit of the Watch. He has the power to collect city taxes from the pier-owners. Since it's in his best interest to make sure the docking fees are properly collected, he and his guardsmen can be "unofficially" called upon when stubborn ship captains won't pay the proper fees.

Adventure Seeds

Serlin has been cheating on his wife with an aquatic elf named Marlienne. The affair has been going on for a century already, and Darlanian is finally fed up with it. She's prepared to pay for proof of her husband's infidelity. When she gets that, she's ready to take matters into her own hands, so incautious players may quickly end up unwilling accessories to a murder of one of the most prominent people in town.

Of course, an elf doesn't get to be as powerful as Serlin without making some enemies. There are plenty of other viable suspects to go around, including certain members of the Captains' Council. An investigation from the outside is sure to turn over all kinds of rocks that the wealthy and powerful of the city would rather leave unturned.

nations. The ship captain, Angus McGee, had a cruel streak and took no prisoners, feeding screaming victims to the sharks while he and his boys relieved themselves on the bloodbath below. Eventually, assassins cornered the pirates and stabbed all but a few of them to death, pinning to their corpses lists of victims whose deaths lay on the heads of the crew. Dill escaped this fate, changed his name, and disappeared into the city. He opened up the bar, and he's been here ever since.

Mackey has spent the last ten years looking over his shoulder, waiting for the moment his enemies finally find him and end his life like the sorry bastards before him. He hides his fear behind a gruff demeanor, but deep down, he's scared witless.

Mackey is in his mid-fifties. He has gray hair and a drooping moustache. The left side of his face is a mass of scar tissue—a self-inflicted injury to put off his hunters. He wears simple clothes infested with lice.

Buster

If Dill Mackey has a true friend in the world, it's Buster (*male half-orc apprentice*). A hulking brute, he hovers at the edges of the bar, hefting a thick club with nails driven through the business end. Buster doesn't believe in warnings—that's Mackey's department. Buster is just here to bust heads. If trouble breaks out, Buster is the first in and the last out, leaving behind a heap of broken men.

Buster is tall and muscled. He has an olive complexion, and his flesh is covered in thick wiry black hair, making him look a lot like a green gorilla. He wears a vest and breeches. He doesn't believe in shoes—his human mother beat him with a boot when he was a child.

M.F.

The Black Gull attracts the very worst the Docks has to offer, and a few dangerous men choose this watering hole over most others, including the Rusty Hook. One tough bastard in particular bears mention. He goes by MF (*male human master*), but no one knows what the initials stand for. MF spends three nights a week here, sitting alone and sipping the cheapest swill available. He carved his initials into his chest a couple of years ago and dares anyone to comment on them. MF is the only regular patron Buster won't challenge.

Adventure Seeds

It's just a matter of time before Mackey's hunters find him. As the first mate, most folks crossed by the Black Doxy blame him as much as they did the old captain. Thus, he has a considerable reward on his head. Should the assassins discover Mackey's real identity, the tavern owner might be in the market for a bit more muscle.

4. The Rusty Hook

"Ah, the Rusty Hook. Stay away from the maids... er... yeah, the maids... or else your hook won't be the only thing that's rusty."

—Quirious Crey, Elven Visitor

The Rusty Hook is a freestanding warehouse converted into a tavern and inn by well-known ex-pirate named Karl Wine. Situated near the Merchant District, many well-to-do Freeporters would gladly tear down this eyesore.

History

The Rusty Hook was once a warehouse, and it shows. Karl Wine, a one-handed ex-pirate, won the crumbling building in a game of cards from some fool years ago. Wine took one look at the place and realized he had no idea what to do with it. Since the only things he knew were drinking, fighting, and wenching, and since the place wasn't a boat, he decided to set up a tavern instead, naming the dive after his much-neglected prosthesis.



Running a tavern out of a warehouse wasn't altogether clever; the place was far too big, being one huge room. Wine spent a couple of months thinking and drinking, slowly working out how he could make it work. One morning, after a particularly lewd evening of debauchery, he woke up on his back. He shoved the prostitute off his belly and realized the ceiling was easily forty feet overhead. He had an idea. He'd split the place horizontally with a new, lower ceiling for the main room, with plenty of space above for the bunkrooms.

Construction began, and a year later, the Rusty Hook opened for business.

Description

Although Wine had a good idea, he was never one to consider his plans—the main floor is still quite large. A shoddy wall runs across the middle, separating the common room from the kitchens in the back. Surprisingly, the food isn't bad. The seafood is always fresh, if not a bit overcooked. Wine actually has a flair for cooking, but any attempts to bring the quality above its meager standard would be wasted on his rough-and-tumble clientele.

A ladder leads up to the second floor, which is cordoned off into a dozen or so rooms with leaning walls held up by hastily erected supports. Wine claims one of the rooms as his own, and it has a door that leads to another room occupied by his barmaids—all of whom were women of ill repute before getting honest work at the Hook. He rents the other dozen rooms by the month, week, day, or even hour. These are deplorable places, equipped with a foul cot and little else. Wine keeps one large room upstairs for the unconscious drunks, the bouncers depositing them to sleep off their benders—once their purses have been lightened to cover the cost of floor space.

Key Figures

Most of the people who patronize the Rusty Hook are sailors, people used to living on the substandard gruel commonly prepared by the underpaid cooks that live on the ships.

Karl Wine

Karl Wine (*male human journeyman*) is a gambler. He has a hard time saying no to any game of chance. But having uncommonly good luck, few people engage him in cards anymore. He has a foul mouth, wandering eye, and a friendly manner. He knows a lot of the folks in the Docks, as well as his way around the city. People who need to get out of town discreetly go to Wine for help.

Karl's about forty years old, but he's not certain of his exact age. He takes his name from his flushed appearance and excitable manner. His once-fit body has gone to fat, which he does his best to hide beneath baggy clothing. Despite his growing girth, he's never without a lady on his knee—he pays enough for her to endure his sweaty advances.

Adventure Seeds

Karl Wine rues the loss of his left hand. He rarely speaks of how it happened, but when properly quenched he waxes on about the injustice of it all. The truth is, Wine wronged a woman in his youth, and for his crime, he lost his hand. The woman has kept the preserved appendage in a barrel of salt all these years. Karl would pay a handsome price to get it, a fact not lost on some of Freeport's unscrupulous sorts who pawn anything and everything.

Legends of Freeport: Fargas Ironfoot

The *Widowmaker* was a feared ship on the seas. Captained by Fargas Ironfoot (*male halfling master*), he specialized in capturing ships intact and selling them in distant ports. He forced the crews he abducted to fight each other to the death. Those who refused were fed to the sharks. Those who survived were offered a place on his ship. Fargas hasn't been sighted in or around the Serpent's Teeth for a few years now, but old salts still shudder about the horror wrought by this bloodthirsty halfling.

The Rusty Hook also serves as a place to smuggle people in and out of Freeport. Criminals who manage to escape the Tombs can go to Karl, and in exchange for a steep fee, he'll set up passage on a ship out of town. Karl makes no exceptions—a person must pay. If they don't, he turns them in. Giles Franklin was one such man Wine turned over to the Sea Lord's Guard. An innocent man who happened to cross the old Sea Lord Drac, he escaped the Tombs and promised to pay Wine his fee when he reached Silverus. The innkeeper refused, wanting all the money up front. Franklin couldn't pay it, and Wine turned him in. Franklin endured months of torture upon his return, and for his escape, the Guard took his feet. Franklin is now a free man and he wants revenge.

5. Society of Lobstermen

"No, they're not man-lobsters fool, they're lobstermen! Don't you know anything?"

—Wendel Rolmes, Local Bastard

Seafood, obviously, is a staple in Freeport's diet, and lobster is the priciest delicacy on the market. Very few average folks in town can afford it, but the dinner tables and restaurants of the Merchant District have it in good rotation (along with oddities such as imported beef and chicken). The dish comes dear for a simple reason: there aren't many lobsters in Freeport's waters, and those present are tough to catch. Like the people of Freeport, the lobsters have become adept at surviving by any means necessary, clinging to rocks, hiding in caves, and even snipping open traps. It takes a special kind of fisherman to bring them to the surface—it's more of an art than a job.

So why do the Lobstermen have a fleet of three well-appointed ships? Why do they have a fancy "guild headquarters" on the border of the Merchant District? Why do they never seem to want for money or goods? Why do they get all those fancy, peculiar visitors from out of town? And why do they go so damned far off the coast to do their fishing? The truth is: The Lobstermen do catch the creatures, and they're regular pros at the job. But that's not all they go scrounging for down in the depths.

History

Balboa Cockle, a tinker of no small intelligence, founded the Lobstermen's society decades ago. He hit upon the idea that if so many ships had been sunk in the waters around Freeport, then the sea floor must be overflowing with gold. He knew if he got wizards involved, they'd either steal his idea or take the lion's share of the profits in exchange for magic. Locking himself in his laboratory for weeks, he devised a suit of brass and glass and canvas designed to let the wearer explore the floor of the ocean. The only problem was that Cockle's contraption required somebody on the surface of the water to work an air pump, and he was at a loss for friends. So he formed an alliance with the only group of people in Freeport who were bigger loners than he was—the handful of misanthropic fishermen who hunted lobsters.

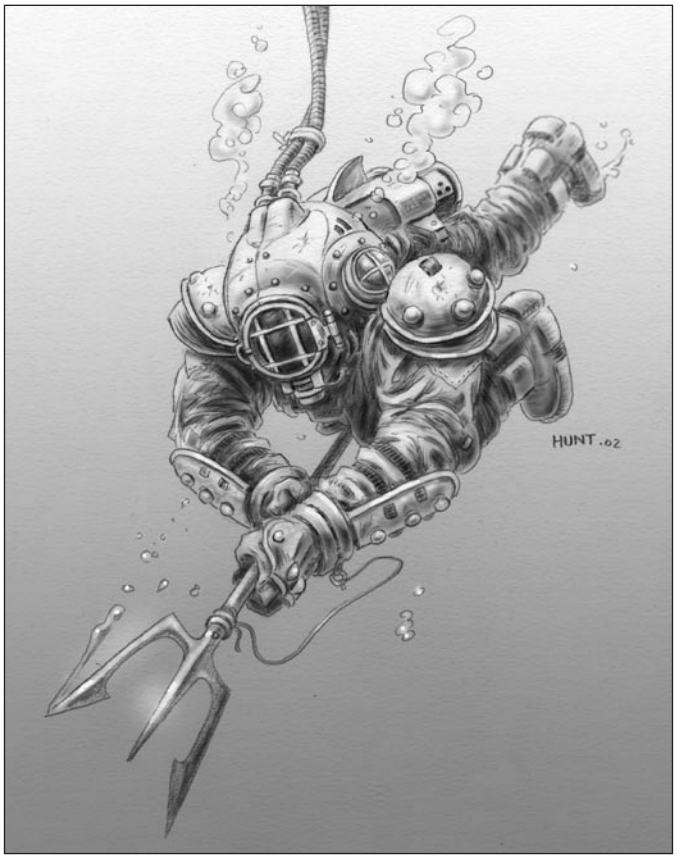
They succeeded beyond their wildest dreams. They found wreck after wreck beneath the waves, each loaded with more booty than the last. Cockle and his allies were smart; rather than make a great show of their wealth, they invested in prudent improvements to their boats and equipment. Over the decades, they grew into a full-fledged society—codes of secrecy were established, initiation rites created, and a headquarters acquired. They undertook moves to expand, streamline, and protect their business. The society's emissaries have traveled the shipping lanes, letting it be known that anyone wanting something retrieved from the depths can have it for the right price—hence the visitors at all hours, most of whom seek some heirloom or other priceless gewgaw that's now gathering coral. The Lobstermen will fetch anything, no questions asked. They are a tight-lipped, adamantly neutral crew.

They vigorously monitor the shipping lanes and patrol their undersea haunts in Cockle Shells (as they call their diving suits). Anyone who ventures below the waves and snoops around for lost treasure may likely contend with one or more mysterious figures wielding tridents and weighted nets. Rumor has it that the Lobstermen have also acquired some arcane means to render water-breathing magic useless, which is devastatingly effective underwater. The sea has closed over more than one party of reckless adventurers who thought that magic was all they needed for protection down below.

Description

The Society of Lobstermen operates out of an enormous four-story building that faces the warehouse district. An impressive building by any standards in the city, it looms over the rest of the Docks, rising above the squalor as if to remind Freeporters of its influence and power. The north side of the structure consists of two square towers capped with pyramidal roofs bearing lightning rods that carry the current somewhere inside the building—for what purpose, none can say. These towers have several windows at each level, and gaudy statues and bas-reliefs reveal the extent of the society's wealth. The rest of the place is taken up with a heavily guarded warehouse that holds the items they dredge up from the seas until they can be appraised and sold in the city.

In addition to the building, the society owns a dozen ships of various sizes. The ships are equipped with cranes, diving bells, and a slew of other diving equipment. When in port, the ships are under heavy guard to protect the organization's secrets.



Key Figures

Given its power and prestige, the Society of Lobstermen has a large membership. Most members are sailors and expert divers, though they employ several mages to aid them in their more dangerous operations. In addition, the society has a small force of veteran marines to protects the ships from pirates and the occasional sea devil attack.

Poul Reiner

After Balboa Cockle died a few years ago in a diving accident involving a randy sea lion and a faulty new diving suit, his heir apparent was Poul Reiner (*male half-elf journeyman*). A skilled swimmer and a veteran diver of nearly a hundred descents, there was little doubt about his skill and worthiness to fill the founder's shoes. Reiner is a secretive man who doesn't like attention. He can be found alone in his offices when he's not accompanying a crew at sea, and he commands a network of informers and spies to bring him news about sunken vessels or odd sightings at sea.

Since taking over, Reiner has stepped up the dives. He's not looking for more treasures, though most missions recover treasures as always. Rather, the extra operations are to explore the sunken ruins of ancient civilizations in places far from the common sea lanes. Reiner is obsessed with the artifacts and carvings recovered, and when he examines a new piece brought back, his eyes take on a feverish cast, something that disturbs those closest to him.

Although Reiner can pass for human, evidence of elven blood is clear. He has vaguely pointed ears and angular features. He has a slight frame that conceals a wiry strength and uncanny endurance. Reiner's mother was a sea elf, giving him an advantage over his human peers when it comes to descending into the murky depths.

Adventure Seeds

While the Society of Lobstermen does its best to conceal the extra income they make from recovering old treasures from wrecked ships, their secret is one of the worst kept in the city. The society realizes this, but they make the same denials and tell the same lies out of habit. Newcomers to the area, though, are often surprised when investigating a mysterious wreck or searching for sunken treasure to find they are not alone.

As well, the waters around Freeport hold many secrets. Since the Valossan Empire sank in the cataclysmic earthquake, many of its ruins still stand beneath the waves. On occasion, divers come up with bizarre statues and odd artifacts hailing from this ancient time.

Reiner's obsession with the relics of lost civilizations stems from one of his dives a decade ago. While dredging up a few chests of gold coins out of the wreck of a Continental ship, he spied something strange flitting through the shadowy depths of the sea. He tied off the chest and gave the rope a tug before going off to investigate what he thought might be a hallucination. He headed away from the skeletal remains of the old ship for an area of particularly dense kelp. There, he discovered a soft violet luminescence shining up from the ocean's floor. He used his digging tool to clear away the sand and plants and discovered a few inches below a solid stone surface covered with alien symbols and glyphs. He cleared away more of the debris and found the stone tiles extended for yards all the way around. He kept looking until he came upon an unsettling carving that defied description. It burned its image into his head and sent him fleeing back the way he came.

Ever since, visions of underwater empires, strange cities, and bizarre shapeless creatures haunt Reiner's dreams. Each night, the dreams grow worse, and he fears he will go mad. He is desperate to find the ruins once more, but he's turned up nothing so far, and he's been to the same place a dozen times only to find nothing. He would pay a fortune to find the site, and his growing obsession is beginning to threaten other efforts to sustain the society.

6. The Shipping News

"Read all about it! Two coppers'll get you the whole story! Lizard Man Spotted in Sewers! Sea Lord in League With Gibbering Cosmic Horror! Gate to Hell in Center of Town! All this plus arrivals and departures, sunrise and sunset, high tide and low, and the continuing adventures of Commander Cody in serial form! Plus our award-winning political column—'One Freeporter's Opinion'—the column that brought down Sea Lord Drac! For the ladies we have 'Freeport After Dark'—all the society gossip you can swallow! All of it for the same two pennies! Thank you, sir! Bless you, ma'am!"

—Quick Willie, Paper Boy and Scamp

The Shipping News is Freeport's newspaper. Each morning before dawn, scores of young boys and girls take to the streets, laden with

bundles of papers. They drop their loads on a street corner and go about the business of selling their rag, calling out headlines to passers-by, cajoling and heckling, and generally being obnoxious until people buy up all the issues.

History

The Shipping News got its start almost fifty years ago, when a young man named T.K. Calame set out to make his way in the world. Lacking any kind of appreciable skills, he searched for something he could do to keep food in his belly and a maiden in his bed. One advantage he had over his peers was his education. He could read and write, and quite well. He began with a series of pamphlets calling out corruption in the government, uncovering society scandals, and reporting on a variety of current events. At first, he pasted his writings on the sides of buildings and on fingerposts, and it wasn't long before people would collect in front of his weekly news. It seemed Freeporters liked to be in the know and preferred Calame's reliable tales over the fabricated tales spun by the rumormongers and criers.

Calame realized he could turn his experiment into a fortune. He convinced a few merchants and ship captains to invest in his growing business, and before he new it, he had a full-fledged printing operation in the Docks. He sold just a few copies at first, but as word spread, Freeporters clamored for the latest issue, forcing Calame to step up production, hire reporters, editors, and invest in more expensive printing equipment. By the time he was old and gray, the Shipping News had become Freeport's sole source of information, and the era of rumormongers had gone the way of the Vallossans.

The Shipping News evolved from a single sheet of paper with muddy print into a full-fledged newspaper broken up into sections including classified, society, current events, weather, and much more. C.Q. Calame, T.K.'s grandson, pushed the paper forward, tripling the readership. The Shipping News' reporters hit the streets all over the city, dredging sensational stories, reporting on rumors, and including inflammatory editorials about key figures in the city. The Shipping News is still concerned with getting its facts straight, but if they can shade the truth to sell more issues, all the better. And if they get a few details wrong, they can always print a retraction in the next issue.

Description

The Shipping News operates out of a large building on the northeastern edge of the Docks, just south of the Eastern District and west of Scurvytown. T.K. Calame chose this site as it afforded easy access to the more interesting parts of the city. The front of the building contains the Shipping News offices, where reporters write their sensational stories, and editors fix the errors and add a few extra details. C.Q. Calame works here as well, writing his regular column, "This Week in Freeport."

Behind the offices are the printing presses. The Shipping News employs a large staff to run the machines. The Shipping News credits itself with inventing movable type; although in truth, Calame's father discovered the technology on one of his visits to a city on the Continent.

A few years ago, the Shipping News suffered a terrible fire when an angry mob descended on the place during the upheaval that surrounded the ascension of the current Sea Lord. The damage was terrible, and several staff members asphyxiated in the smoke. When the presses stopped, an outpouring of coin came from all over the city to help Calame rebuild his paper. Now, the offices and presses are better than ever, and in thanks for the local support, Calame runs a special column called the Tales of the Phoenix, where one of his reporters writes about an ordinary person and their life. This column has become wildly popular in the Merchant District, since noblewomen devour the heartrending stories of hardship and suffering of the lower classes.

Key Figures

With nearly fifty employees, the Shipping News is one of Freeport's larger industries. Between editors, writers, copy fitters, and printers, they have a diverse assortment of staff, possessing motives and talents that run the gamut.

C.Q. Calame

The owner and publisher of the Shipping News, C.Q. Calame (*male human journeyman*), inherited all of his grandfather's spunk, talent for writing, and business savvy. He knows a story when he hears it, and his editorials are the most popular. Calame realizes the Shipping News is as much a part of Freeport as the Sea Lord, so he takes his responsibility seriously.

C.Q. is approaching his middle years. He has pleasant features and bright eyes. He's good with people, and a few words is usually all it takes to get them talking. He wears a simple white shirt, breeches, and floppy hat. He's never without a blank, bound book, quill, and inkpot, so he can take notes about what he sees and encounters. His fingertips are permanently black with ink.

Some people say C.Q.'s the most powerful man on the island—he can move public opinion, spread the word on just about anything, and there's nobody in town he doesn't know. Sure, he's made lots of enemies with all the juicy stories he's run, but there's nobody in town that would dare lift a finger against him. And nobody can buy him off, either.

Angelo Stampfel

Like many reporters that work for the Shipping News, Angelo got his start as a child. Calame pays well for any bit of dirt, any rumor, and so many of Freeport's urchins put food in their bellies by spying and reporting what they find. Angelo Stampfel (*male human journeyman*) was just another kid, or so most thought, but his ear for language and his nose for trouble landed him a reporting assignment. As he continued to impress Calame, his position increased—until at

Grisly Murders, Gnawed Bones: A Cannibal in Our Midst?

~The Shipping News



the young age of twenty, he became the paper's ace reporter. With contacts spread throughout the city, and knowing just what buttons to push to get his subjects to talk, he's by far one of the best-connected people in the city.

Adventure Seeds

Since the reporters of the Shipping News make everyone else's business their own, they regularly get into trouble. A reporter digging into a juicy story might disappear, or a crime lord might send brutal threats, making an example of a few people in Calame's employ. Even though C.Q. has plenty of friends, he's no fool, and he's quick to pay for protection when needed.

Thus far, the Shipping News has been Freeport's only paper. This is not to say there haven't been other attempts, but each fledgling outfit goes under soon after it opens its doors. Calame claims to have had nothing to do with his rivals' failures, but his friends ensure he has little competition.

Finally, the Shipping News is famed for smearing people. Wealthy merchants who cross the paper have found their livelihoods suddenly dwindling after just one story suggesting a scandal. The player characters might find their reputation destroyed in the paper after an unscrupulous reporter feeds C.Q. a fake story about how the group is a bunch of crooks and thieves out to harm the city. Until they clear their names, they face scorn at every turn, and even if they manage to get Calame to retract the story, the damage is already done.

7. The One Ring

"You just can't beat a good beating."

—Dahn Rey, Promoter

The One Ring is a stone-lined fighting ring situated just off the southeast end of Port Square. Every Friday night, just as the merchants in the Seaside Market are securing their goods and packing up their tents for the night, the One Ring plays host to some of the most brutal conflicts ever seen outside of a dungeon or battlefield. The crowds come from all over the city to watch the fights and place bets on the contestants.

History

There are fighting pits all over the city, in darkened alleys in Drac's End to abandoned basements in Scurvytown, as well as the bloody fighting arenas in Bloodsalt, but none hold a candle to the success and appalling violence found in the One Ring. Sure, other venues have their share of death and maiming, but the One Ring makes a spectacle out of these contests, drawing people of every class and station.

Dahn Rey opened for business during the days of the last Sea Lord, Marquetta. A veteran gladiator, he brought a sense of style to pit fighting, recruiting some of the best warriors the city had to offer and promoting the fights. Rey has enjoyed incredible success in this venture, and the blood of countless champions over the decades stains the stones that form the ring.

Up until a few years ago, the fights in the One Ring were often fixed, with each side negotiating which fighter would take the fall. There were plenty of tricks that could make a fighter take a dive, including poison, disease, blackmail, or simple threats. Unfortunately, this trend attracted the attention of some of Freeport's gangs, and it wasn't long before the One Ring became a battlefield for rival groups. After one night of violence killed a dozen spectators, Rey reined in the corruption and now tries to run an honest business, though he's been known to fix the outcomes from time to time—the promise of gold is often too much for Rey to resist.

Description

The ring is a circular platform made of stones stacked and mortared about three feet high. It has been repaired several times over the years, but it is essentially unchanged for over a century. Spectators stand

packed tightly around the ring, looking up at the battlers. Those sitting too close are spattered with blood, and there are plenty of tales of people being crushed by contestants flung from the ring. Rey had a set of boxed seats affixed to the walls of nearby buildings to give those with enough pull or gold an opportunity to see the fights from an unobstructed and generally safe vantage point.

Most fights are bare-knuckled boxing matches, though the Ring does offer at least one sword or knife fight each week. Nothing brings in the crowds like the sight of blood, and it flows freely in the ring during such matches. It's not uncommon to see a loser or two at death's door in the course of an evening.

While there are few rules for the fights, the ones that are in place are strictly enforced. These are honest fights, so there's to be no magic of any kind. The One Ring has been permanently enchanted with a spell that causes any magic items brought into the ring to glow brightly, as will any contestants who are under the effect of a spell or cast a spell during the fight. If anyone or anything in the ring glows at any time, the fight is suspended and the perpetrator grabbed and summarily tossed into the harbor.

Rey makes his money by charging for the good seats and by booking bets before every fight. Besides the regular Friday night fights, he also hosts special events on many holidays, including Swagfest, Raidfest, and even Captain's Day. The Sea Lords have generally been fans of the fights, attending often. Even those who have not cared much for the fights have acknowledged their usefulness in keeping Freeport's populace from attacking one another in the alleys instead.

Key Figures

During a contest, people pack in around the One Ring for a glimpse of the violence, but between fights, it's empty. Dahn Rey employs a handful of recruiters to find viable fighters to entertain audiences. The One Ring has a staff of regular fighters who earn their living by fighting whomever Rey can scrounge up. These warriors are something of celebrities, and many Freeporters have a favorite fighter.

Dahn Rey

A crusty dwarf with a famously long beard, Dahn Rey (*male dwarf master*) fled to Freeport almost a century ago. As a veteran gladiator, fighting was all he knew. Freeport certainly had smaller arenas for such contests, but none of them had the prestige of the fighting pits from his homeland. Dahn erected a platform in the Docks to cater to pirates and sailors, and he was surprised when after a few years of business, people came from other districts to watch his spectacle. Rey may be gruff and unpleasant, but he knows what to say to generate excitement and to pull in spectators and contestants.

Jonas Virden

Dahn Rey is no fool. While he knows the blood brings in the audience, his house fighters are too valuable to end up in pieces scattered over the arena. As a result, he has a standing deal with the Temple of the War God to give them a cut of his earnings to have a priest, Jonas Virden (*male human journeyman*), tend to the casualties. Something of an amateur fighter, Jonas would probably come to the One Ring even if not paid. His job is to tend to the grievously injured, and if possible, bring them back from the brink of death. He tends other injuries but charges for them. Those who pay regular tribute at his temple get the same treatment for half the normal price. Those who can't or won't pay are reduced to their previously injured state; Jonas doesn't suffer crooks lightly.

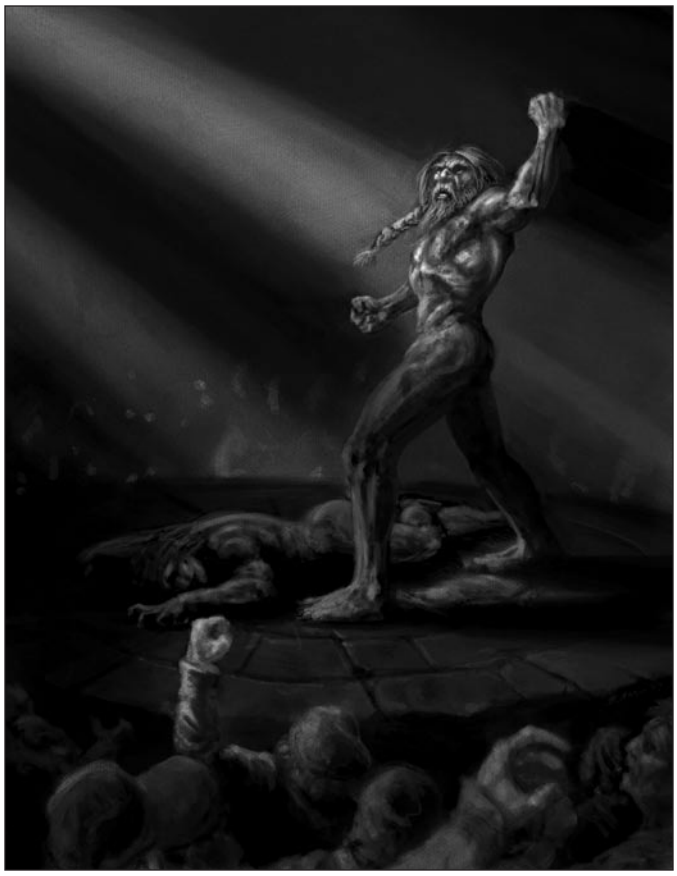
Ragnar

The current champion of the ring is Ragnar (*male human journeyman*), a berserker from a distant land who came to Freeport in search of his beloved Alfhild. The warrior-maiden Alfhild captains a longship that occasionally haunts the waters around Freeport but heads out to sea for months at a time. It was inevitable that Ragnar would eventually wind up in Freeport. When he did, he learned his wife-to-be had come to the city several times over the last few years but rarely stayed for long. Ragnar sent his crew home to the frozen wastes, and he decided to wait for his beloved. While he waits, Ragnar tests his skill in the One Ring. To his surprise and pleasure, he's found few who can match his ferocity and is thus far undefeated after a dozen contests.

Ragnar is big, standing nearly seven feet tall and just under three hundred pounds of muscle. He has long, braided, blonde hair and a thick beard. When he fights, he strips naked, much to the delight of the gathered noblewomen. His muscled body is crisscrossed with scars of old injuries, giving him a wild and dangerous look. He's killed at least three men so far, and few warriors are willing to fight him.

Adventure Seeds

About three hours before the fight, Ragnar disappears. Rey is frantic, for tonight the berserker is to fight an ogre in hand-to-hand combat, and the dwarf has sold out the show. If Ragnar doesn't show, Rey will be in deep trouble. He hires the PCs to locate the warrior before the





show starts. It turns out that Ragnar discovered Alfhild was in town and left to find her. The PCs must locate the warrior and convince him to fight, or the dwarf will make a PC take his place.

8. The Broken Mug

"Mind the floor in there, hey?"

—Wendel Iratch, Watchman

The Broken Mug Inn is an eyesore—a festering wound sagging at the end of a rickety pier at the outer edge of Scurvytown. Taking its name from the most common sort of weapon found in the place—a broken mug—it has a nasty reputation as a dive and watering hole for the poor and destitute. Few people brave the approach to the run-down inn, and fewer stay there for long, preferring the finer establishments further inside the Docks.

History

Dakarta Gringsson, a dwarf expatriate from the Continent, came to Freeport with a few coppers in her pocket, an axe over her shoulder, and a sour attitude. She tried her hand as a mercenary but found she no longer had the stomach for it. Searching for a way out of the business, she spent most of her evenings swilling thin ale at the Broken Mug inn. The owner, a lecherous fellow with a taste for dwarf maidens, offered to make Dakarta his partner in exchange for warming his sheets. Sensing an opportunity, Dakarta agreed, and on the first night of their "romance," she strangled the man and dumped his body in the harbor through a trap door in the main room. The Broken Mug has been hers ever since.

Description

The Broken Mug Inn looks like it was vomited out of Scurvytown into the sea only to catch on the end of a rotting pier to which no captain in his right mind would tie his ship. It leans treacherously over the edge of the water, and in certain places, swirling dark waters can be seen through holes in the floor. The interior is particularly noisome. Three-legged tables, unstable stools, and an old bar across the back are all the seating available, and most nights, patrons just stand around, leaning against the walls while they mutter and grumble about their misfortunes.

There are rooms to let on the second floor of the Broken Mug. These rooms are cheap and simple, but most have a wonderful view of the harbor. However, once the workday begins in the predawn hours, the noise can be awful. Food is served here as well. It's actually good, and it's not unusual to see the upper crust occasionally dining here, during the day of course.

Dakarta is tough enough to bounce unruly patrons herself. If anyone really annoys Gringsson, whether by hurting her or any of her staff, she has a rather unique punishment for them: dunking. The offender is bound hand and foot with the help of all those present and then placed upon a hinged platform to the south side of the main room. A rope secures the offender to a large ring set in the floor, and when the stays are kicked out, the trapdoor drops open, and the offender plunges into the murky depths. Most folks are hauled out spluttering within seconds.

Key Figures

During lunch, the Broken Mug attracts an eclectic mix of successful captains, politicians from the Old City, and merchants from all over the Docks and elsewhere. The rest of the time, the clientele consists of

poor and broken sailors, sad wrecks of men who have little left in life. Dakarta employs three barmaids, a skilled cook, and a human brute named Roy who lost his hand fighting in the One Ring.

Dakarta Gringsson

Although the Broken Mug is nothing to look at, Dakarta (*female dwarf journeyman*) is proud of her business and cherishes the friendships she's gained from the locals who frequent her place. She's pleasant for a dwarf and doesn't judge the people who sit at her bar. She's not a good listener, though, and tends to leave people in mid-conversation to see to something else.

Dakarta stands four feet tall and weighs one hundred fifty pounds. She has flat, brown hair, and her cheeks are covered in a fine down of brown hair, forming a light beard. She has bright blue eyes and a pleasant smile, though she's missing most of her teeth. She wears a mail apron when tending the bar having taken a knife in the gut from an enraged drunk a few years back.

Captain Morgan Baumann

Morgan Baumann (*female human master*) is one of the many pirates that breathe a sigh of relief now Freeport has returned to a more comfortable mix of corruption and villainy. Sure, there's a veneer of respectability, but more and more, the pirate city of old has begun to reassert itself, which is just fine for Captain Baumann.

The reason is simple: Morgan has a history of bucking tradition. She never abided by the rules, and did her best to circumvent them whenever possible. She was the only daughter of the captain of the *Headsman's Axe,* a mean ship with a meaner crew. Her father detested what he saw as a weak girl, useful only for breeding, so he dismissed her out of hand. Refusing to be passed over, she infiltrated the crew of her father's ship, ingratiated herself with them. When she returned to Freeport, she murdered her father and claimed the ship, renaming it *Kraken's Claw.*

For the next few years, she was a constant and annoying problem for a city trying to improve its image. Morgan had no use for the laws and rules of the city, following the pirate's code of old. Any ship that sailed out of the Serpent's Teeth was fair game, and she gained a ruthless reputation for killing everyone on board the ships she attacked.

Captain Baumann doesn't live in the city; she has far too many enemies, but they are frequent visitors. When not at sea, Morgan, her first mate and lover Shanta Froese (*male elf journeyman*), and her crew can be found swilling ale in this dive.

Adventure Seeds

The dunking is more damaging to one's reputation than it is to one's health, but most people realize they deserved it and let the ignoble bath pass with a laugh and smile. Not all, though, are willing to let such an act go unaddressed. A few months ago, a band of pirates stumbled into the Broken Mug and caused all sorts of trouble. One even went so far as to slap Dakarta in the face. Rather than killing him on the spot, she opted to sober the men up, and she and her loyal patrons gave the pirates a good dunking—twice to get their point across. The crew left, swearing revenge. They've been gone for a few months, but their ship was reportedly spotted in the area two days ago. Dakarta's not worried, but some of her patrons are pooling their money to hire a few thugs for protection.

Of late, a few drunks have seen a ghostly figure moving in the waters below the inn at night. Most locals laugh off the reports, considering them hallucinations brought on by too much of Dakarta's finest. The dwarf, however, becomes nervous whenever the ghost is brought up, and she quickly changes the conversation. Fearing the ghost, if it exists, is the previous owner, she's keen to see it put to rest. She's beginning to make a few discreet inquiries to those with experience in ghost hunting in the hopes of recruiting someone to send the spirit to where it belongs.

9. The Diving Fin

"Oh, the Docks ain't all just hookers and booze and dives. There're some real gems here too."

—Pious Pete, Guide

The Diving Fin is something of a curiosity for the Docks. There are plenty of places in this district to get a meal, but few of them offer anything that could come close to fine. However, there is one exception: the Diving Fin. This restaurant owes its success to the culinary expertise of Dreiden Simmerswell, a former adventurer who abandoned his trade in favor of experimenting with wondrous dishes in the kitchens of his burgeoning restaurant.

History

Years ago, Dreiden Simmerswell settled in Freeport to seek a life of adventure. While not exceptionally talented in this pursuit, Freeport's promise of easy riches drew him like a moth to a flame. He was quickly disappointed when he arrived. The open chests brimming with gold were nowhere to be found, the locals were smelly and crude, and there wasn't a decent place to get a meal anywhere within walking distance of the Docks.

While looking for work, he noticed an abandoned warehouse lying in an area that should have been prime real estate. He set aside his ambitions for adventure and used the last of his dwindling fortune to open the best restaurant in Freeport. Unfortunately, he had no idea what he was doing. He had no practical cooking skills and knew next to nothing about running a restaurant. But he focused his creativity and halfling pluck and persevered. He spent most of his energy on perfecting seafood, and through practice and experimentation, his talents increased, allowing the Diving Fin to gain an excellent reputation.

When it first opened, it did poor business, but as Dreiden's mastery of cooking emerged, so too did the Fin's reputation. Most folks preferred to keep the place a secret, rather than filling it with those who couldn't appreciate the delicate fare and complex flavorings Dreiden uses. Word of mouth inevitably spread, and now the Diving Fin is one of Freeport's most popular restaurants. In fact, they are so busy on most nights you must have a reservation.

Description

The Diving Fin stands on the corner of the Docks, adjacent to both the Warehouse and Merchant districts. The layout of the Diving Fin is rather sparse, as the focus is more on the food than the atmosphere. A single door opens into the main room, which seats about a hundred. The bar is in the rear of the room, directly adjacent to the kitchen entrance. Most times, Gringa, the bartender and bouncer, can be found here, ponderously mixing drinks in glasses that are almost

completely engulfed by her hands. Patrons who aren't half-orcs find her concoctions a bit strong.

Lighting is provided by candelabras dangling from the ceiling and torches hung at varying intervals along the walls. There are a few stabs at a nautical theme, namely some paintings and the occasional stuffed sea creature, but for the most part, the place simply settles for clean and neat.

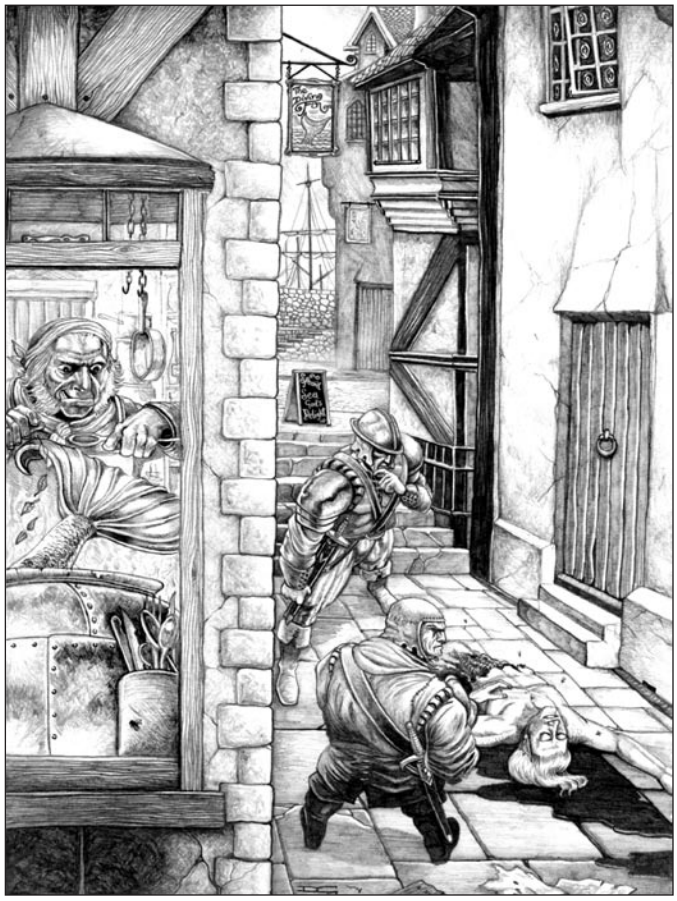
Aside from the general excellence of the food, the sheer variety of available dishes makes the place that much more intriguing. A typical evening will have such delights as soft-shelled crab kebabs, shark sandwiches, kraken steaks, and the occasional appearance of the fabled "Sea God's Delight," which is the rather large tail of some sea creature smothered in a tangy whisky sauce. Specials change nightly.

One item that is never on the menu, however, is fighting. Gringa strictly enforces this policy. Patrons are requested to deposit their weapons at the door, and at the first hint of unrest, Gringa calmly makes her way to the boisterous party and slowly raises them up to the ceiling. This is usually all that is required to keep the peace, but Gringa is not above retrieving her axe from above the bar.

Since Dreiden still has a lot of room in the cavernous building, he dabbles with running an inn. Upstairs, there are a dozen modest rooms for rent, though each is rather plain and bare. Dreiden and Gringa, as well as a few members of the staff, have rooms here, but their abodes are equally drab.

Key Figures

Many Freeporters sing the Diving Fin's praises and visit the restaurant at least once a week. The restaurant has become successful enough to employ a full staff of cooks, dishwashers, waiters, busboys, hosts, and a few toughs to keep the peace and encourage the crime lords to look elsewhere for protection fees.



Dreiden Simmerswell

Dreiden (*male halfling journeyman*) has come a long way from his days as a fresh-faced adventurer. He can't imagine living any other life than tending his kitchen and producing dishes to please and astound his guests. Over the last few years, Dreiden has put on weight, but his obesity doesn't slow him down. He still zips around the kitchen, barking orders to his assistants and whipping up a new batch of delights each evening.

Short and fat, Dreiden is a typical halfling. He has a pudgy face and easy smile. He has bright, inquisitive, green eyes, and he always perks up when food is the topic of discussion. He wears a smart white suit and apron and a silly hat on his head.

Those hoping to catch a glimpse of Dreiden will probably leave disappointed. Simmerswell spends most of his time preparing the night's delicacies in the kitchen. Only toward the end of the evening does he come out to mingle with his customers. It is up to the waiters to inform diners to pass chef compliments to Gringa, who acknowledges them with a single curt nod.

Gringa

Gringa (*female half-orc apprentice*) actually knows Simmerswell from his days of adventure seeking, and she enjoyed the halfling's carefree personality so much she decided to join him in his restaurant venture. Gossip in the Docks suggests Gringa's relationship with Simmerswell goes beyond simple business dealings, though no one but a suicidal fool would ever say as much in the half-orc's presence. In spite of the rumors, neither of them has even remotely considered moving beyond the easy friendship they enjoy. Why mess with success?

Gringa is large, and she wears her orc ancestry with pride and uses her fierce looks to ensure people don't cause trouble in the place. She has deep green skin and black hair. Her yellow eyes have a jaundiced look, but she's hale and healthy. She wears a black suit when working but keeps her old adventuring gear handy in case of trouble.

Adventure Seeds

Dreiden depends on Gringa to run the front of the house. After a few years of dedicated service, Gringa decides to take a break. Desperate to find a replacement, he offers a temporary position with good pay to any tough who can mix a halfway decent "Freeport Sunset." Assuming the PCs sign up for the work, they overhear a few well-dressed types discussing business at a nearby table. Those who eavesdrop learn there is a new merchant in town who's buying up mining equipment for a new venture on Leeward. The businessmen laugh about it, claiming it's a fool's errand, since the island has been rumored to have gold for years, but all people have ever found there was bankruptcy.

Owning a restaurant can be a competitive business, and now that the Diving Fin has begun to overshadow its competitors, a desperate owner decides its time to close down the Fin once and for all. So when people begin complaining of food poisoning, and several small, mysterious fires are lit after closing time, it's clear someone is up to no good. Simmerswell is a cook, not a detective, and Gringa's method of questioning leans toward the crippling. This situation requires subtlety, intelligence, and patience.

10. The Star of the Sea

"Sorry son, this is just the way it has to be. Yer pap drowned and yer mam died from the scratches. There's no place fer yeh. The Star o' the Sea is yer home now."

—Corporal Clegg, Watchman

One of the unfortunate truths of seaport life is that sailors go off and sometimes don't return. Often, they leave a family behind: a wife working in one of Freeport's shops or inns and a handful of children dozing through school until they can follow their father onto the water. Fortunately, the Star of the Sea is there to help.

History

Like many widows in Freeport, when Meredian Clozet's husband vanished at sea, she faced the grim reality of trying to raise her three children while working to put food on the table. She had few skills and little luck, so she turned to the Captains' Council for help. She pestered them with regular petitions and candlelight vigils until the council finally assented. She then secured contributions from noted merchants, ship owners, and even the occasional softhearted pirate. With the funds gained, she opened her home to widows and orphans, rescuing the destitute from Scurvytown and offering them a new life as part of her new organization. Within a few years, the Star of the Sea had outgrown her home, forcing Clozet to move its headquarters to an impressive building in the Docks.

Description

This great building stands facing the sea and is one of the first sights greeting travelers as they disembark from their ships. A massive mansion, Meredian had the place constructed when it was clear her own home would no longer serve. Sporting twenty bedrooms, two kitchens, a great dining hall, and innumerable passages and smaller rooms, it is a sprawling place Clozet has expanded to accommodate the swelling membership. As a result, the building has a haphazard appearance, as if built by a madman.

The members of the Star of the Sea are fanatics. They eagerly adopt the mourning uniform of all black. Whenever Clozet makes a speech about social welfare and self-sufficiency, her followers listen in rapt attention. They are practically an army, and an endorsement by the Star of the Sea amounts to a universally acknowledged seal of approval in Freeport, from the highest noble down to the blackest rogue.

The group has grown into a powerful activist organization in Freeport. Its members can be found at every council meeting where important policy is debated, dressed in traditional black dresses and veils; the women serve on the boards of many charities and volunteer in many of the city's shelters and hospitals. Some of them even volunteer for rounds in the Hulks.

Key Figures

Clozet's organization has two tiers of members. The majority of the women and children are the mourners, and they are ardent supporters of Clozet, lending whatever assistance they can for the betterment of the group. Above them is Clozet's inner circle—a cabal of fanatical women who have sworn their lives to serving their mistress. Clozet shares duties with her deputies, but she's responsible for coordinating most of the big decisions. Not to mention keeping the group's biggest secret: she's on a mission from god.

Common Shops of the Docks

All of these locations are great, but they may not be appropriate for all situations—such as when the player characters just want to buy a sword, find a place to bed down for the night, or simply spend some coins to re-supply in between adventures. The following shops are your standard fare for this district and can be used for just this purpose.

Taverns and Inns

In addition to the taverns and inns described in this chapter, one can find any of the following in the Docks.

12. The Lost Lass: This small tavern caters to sailors and pirates.

13. Cracked Pot: This bustling water hole serves only cheap wine.

14. Kergen's Kradle: This inn is a more of a flophouse that rents rooms at hourly, daily, or monthly rates. For a few pennies, you can even borrow a room for a few minutes.

15. The Doxies Lap: An inn and restaurant, this establishment offers decent accommodations at a fair price.

16. Bilge Rat: This seedy tavern is noted for its excellent ale.

Businesses

Most weaponry and armor that moves through the district does so at the Seaside Market, though there are a handful of specialty shops in this district. The best place to find general gear is at the Seaside Market.

17. Urian's Forge: This smith works exclusively in metals and offers a wide assortment of weapons and armor.

18. The Hidden Hide: Huddled on the edge of the Docks, this tanner is noted for the urine filled pits he uses to cure hides. He molds the material into decent leather armor.

Diversions

For the randy and impatient, the Docks offers plenty of places for travelers to gain companionship.

19. Rose Alley: This filthy side street is a common place to pick up "companions" of the illicit variety.

20. Bliss: A small but successful brothel, Bliss specializes in exotic companionship.

21. Eddies: Another brothel, many suspect this place as the source of a recent bout of syphilis that's wreaking havoc in the Docks.

22. The Honey Pot: This drug den offers a cornucopia of narcotics.

Meredian Clozet

Clozet (*female human journeyman*) is mad. The night her husband vanished, she had a vision of a woman walking through storm-crested waves, calming them as she went. When Clozet heard the news about her husband, she knew he had been judged unworthy of salvation—as, indeed, Freeport must be. The water-woman has appeared to Clozet numerous other times over the years, haunting her dreams and mutely guiding her actions. But she's never told a soul about her divine companion—she's waiting until the time is right.

Meredian Closet is now in her late fifties, and years of care and concern for her followers have taken their toll. She is tired—and it shows—but the fires of her passion burn hot in her eyes and in her impassioned speeches. She wears the somber garb that defines those under her protection, and she cuts a distinctive figure, draped in black with a pile of shocking white hair on her head.

Adventure Hooks

The Star of the Sea enjoys the love and affection of Freeport, and Clozet is a saint in the eyes of the people. No one is aware of the bubbling insanity building inside of her. Sure, she has her eccentricities, but so does everyone. At any moment, she could broaden the scope of her crusade to address other matters of moral corruption. She might march against the drug-pushers, the brothels, thieves, gangs, or even foreigners.

Alternatively, Clozet has never forgotten her husband. She pines for him, and sounds of her weeping fill the house, reinforcing her followers' commitment to helping their heroine. Should word of her husband's survival reach her, there's no doubt that she would abandon everything to find him. Should she look toward tackling Freeport's bigger problems, her husband would likely resurface to draw this potential troublemaker away from the city.



11. The Dented Helm

"I'm not normally one for dwarven stouts, but all it took was one swig of Garek's girl and I was hooked."

—Oddick the Thirsty

The one thing the Docks aren't short of is watering holes. To a casual drinker, one might pass by the Dented Helm without thinking twice, but for those with a taste for good brew, there's no finer pub in the whole city. It's not for the ambience—there's none of that mind you—but rather for the beer.

History

The Dented Helm doesn't have a fantastic tale or strange legend about it. Instead, it just opened for business one day. Garek, a fighter and master brewer, came to Freeport for no reason he'll speak of, walked around a bit in the Docks, and picked an old warehouse to set up shop. Some even say he closed his eyes, spun in a circle, and chose the building he saw when he opened his eyes again. In any event, he strolled up to the building, kicked open the door, and started setting the place aright for his new pub. Naturally, the owner was not impressed and threatened to call the Guard. With a grunt, Garek tossed him a fat nugget of gold and told him to sod off.

Description

Since the building is a warehouse, the Dented Helm isn't much to look at. The only way a person could tell it's a tavern and brewery is by the yeasty smell coming from inside and by the dented helm nailed to the front door. The interior is just as bland as the exterior, featuring a few tables, a bar, and rows of hardwood casks.

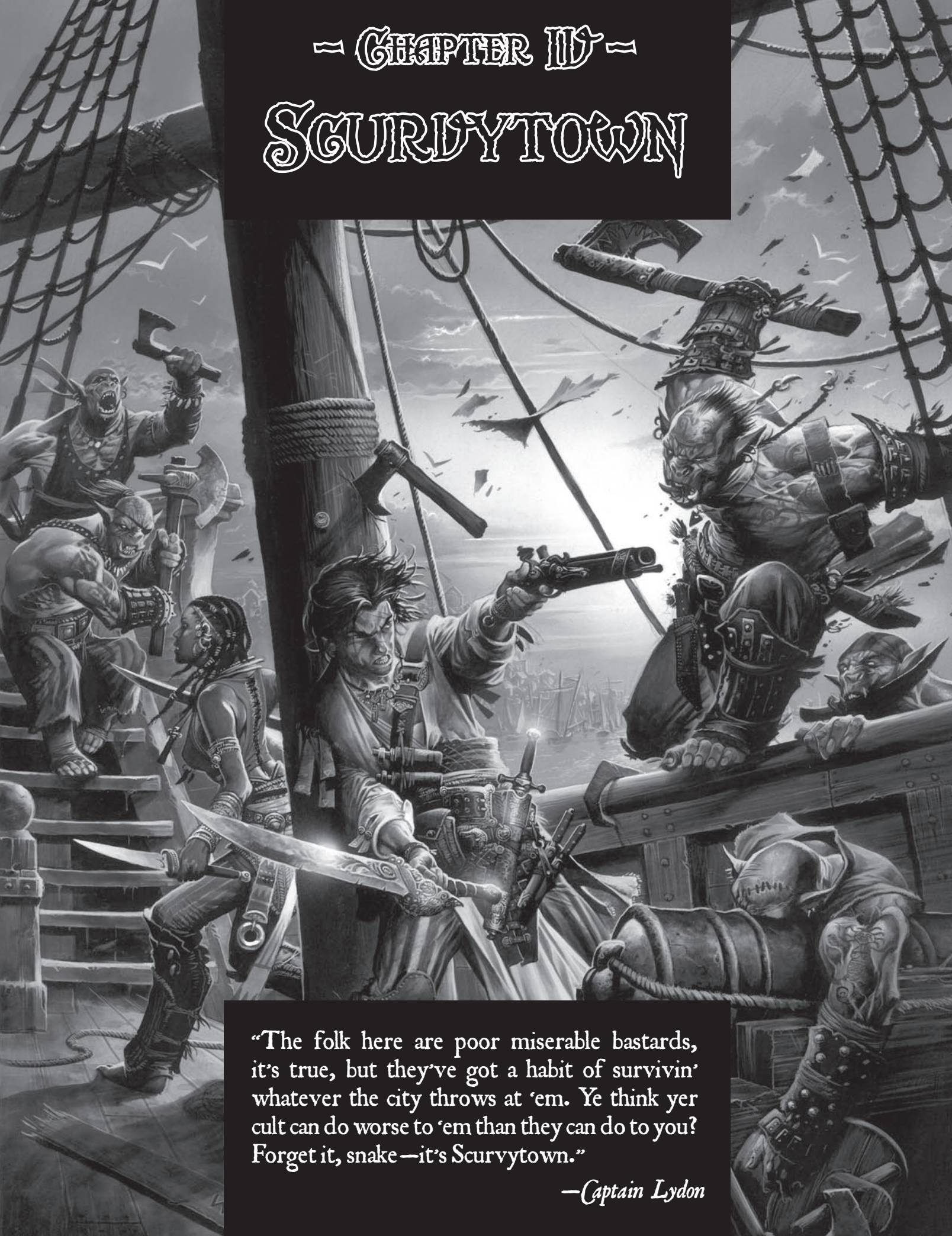
Key Figures

When Garek first opened up for business, he ran the place alone. In the years since, he's hired a few dwarves to help out with the brewing, give him time to barter for hardwood to make new casks, and attend to running the place.

Garek

Garek (*male dwarf journeyman*) is the most distinctive person here because he always wears an old battered helmet with a dent over his right temple. He's short and stocky and has a huge barrel chest and stubby legs. He wears his long, gray beard in braids that hang past his prodigious belly. He's a friendly sort, always with a tale to tell, and he loves fabricating some new fantastic story about how he got the dent in his helm.

Brewing ale, beer, and lager is everything to Garek, and he talks about little else. In fact, he calls each cask his "girl," and when he makes his rounds, he sometimes leans over to give them a whisper or kiss to ensure the fermentation process goes properly. Garek has never had much use for laws or regulations, and he does pretty much what he wants. When he opened up for business, he threw a party that lasted three days straight and made drunkards of everyone within six blocks.



— Chapter IV —

Scurvytown

"The folk here are poor miserable bastards, it's true, but they've got a habit of survivin' whatever the city throws at 'em. Ye think yer cult can do worse to 'em than they can do to you? Forget it, snake—it's Scurvytown."

—Captain Lydon

If the stories told in far-flung ports about Freeport were true, visitors would be gutted like fish the moment they strode down the gangplank of an arriving ship. While newcomers quickly learn Freeport is far more than a collection of bloodthirsty pirates, one place fits the city's image like a glove: Scurvytown. This district is officially named the Freebooter's Quarter in documents, but no one off the boat less than a week uses that name. The decrepit condition, lawless population, and grinding poverty of the place earned it the nickname Scurvytown decades ago, and the name stuck.

Drac's End is a poor district, but at least the people there try to better themselves. Scurvytown is for those who've given up or have no other place to go. It's a squalid hellhole with appalling living conditions, and those marooned here suffer the worst Freeport has to offer. In the rainy season, water runs down the hill from the Old City and the Eastern District, turning Scurvytown's unpaved streets into muddy swamps where mosquitoes breed. In the dry season, the heat dries and cracks the muddy streets, and dust rises in choking clouds when carts and wagons go by. The stench from the fishery and the other aromatic industries in Scurvytown rises to unholy levels.

Only those with a taste for crime, violence, or perversion (or with little regard for their own personal safety) voluntarily make their home in Scurvytown. Crime is higher here than anywhere else in Freeport, especially violent crime. Most days begin with a couple of corpses found face down in the gutter or bobbing in the waters of the harbor. Unless the victim is rich or influential, little effort is made to find the perpetrator. Other forms of crime—theft, mugging, smuggling, drug dealing, and cult activity—are just as common. In the warren called the Beggar's Market, lowlifes from around Freeport come to buy less-than-legal items and substances. Criminals on the run use the flophouses and decaying buildings of the district as hideouts, and the neighborhood called The Pit hosts a variety of the least savory thugs in the city (not to mention occasional supernatural menaces).

For decades, Scurvytown was home to the few orcs, hobgoblins, and other savage races that dwelt in Freeport. This changed in the wake of the Great Green Fire, when the council established the new district now known as Bloodsalt (see **Chapter Five: Bloodsalt**) to house the hobgoblin and orc workers of the Reclamation Project. Many orcs vacated Scurvytown for Bloodsalt, lured by the prospect of work and the company of their own kind. This exodus drained much of Scurvytown's labor force and economy, leaving the remaining inhabitants resentful. Some of that resentment turned into active persecution of nonhumans, and the few orcs remaining in Scurvytown were driven off by racist violence. The modern incarnation of Scurvytown is dominated by humans who have a weird kind of pride in their district; it's not much, but they need to believe it's better than Bloodsalt and need to believe they are better than the nonhuman newcomers to the city.



Locations of Interest

The following locations can be found in Scurvytown.

1. Dreaming Street

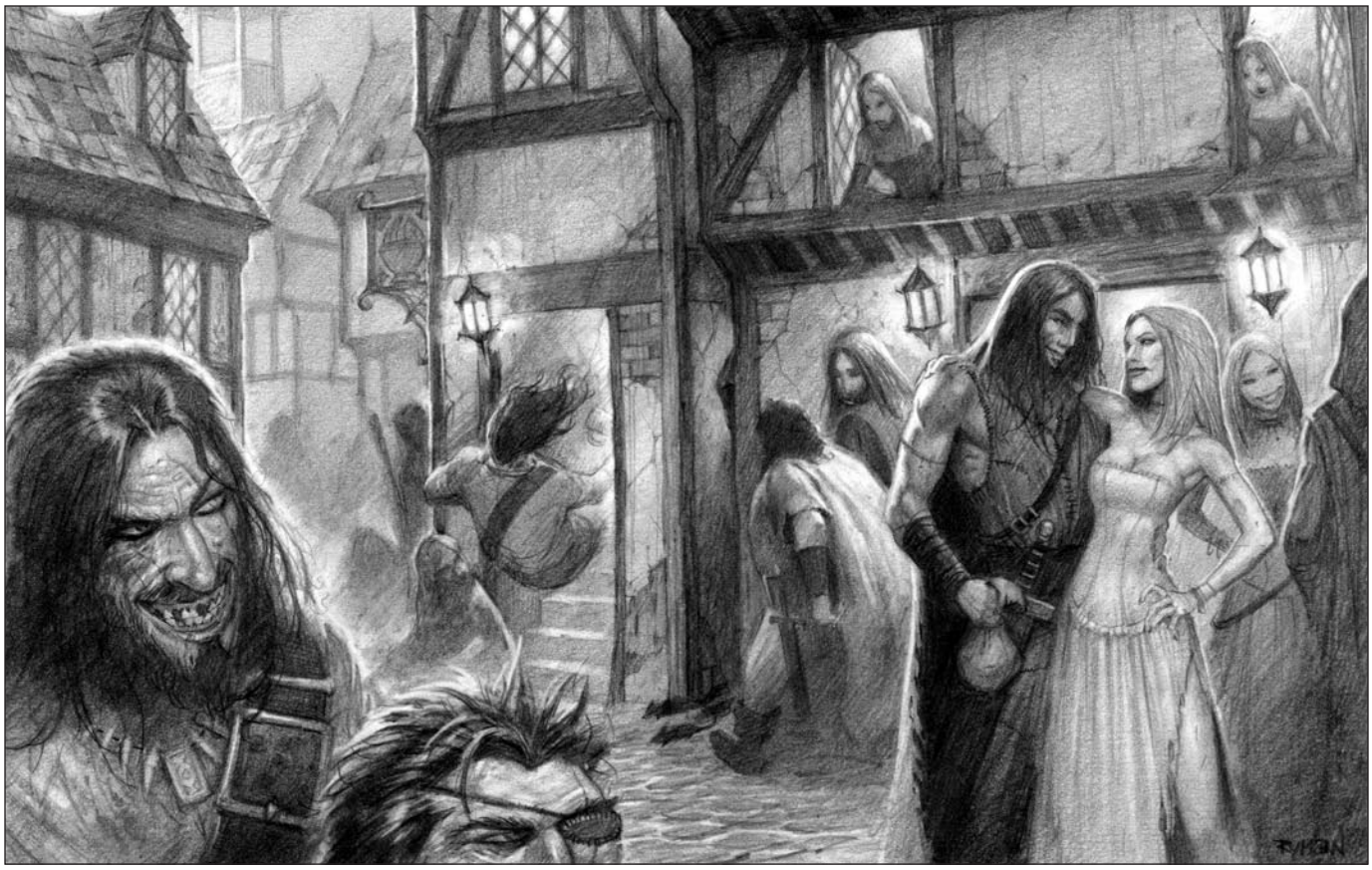
"My students are not just here to entertain you, gentlemen. They're here to learn. And for the right price, they'll take any lessons you care to teach them."

—Lady Jane

While there are a wide variety of bars and taverns in the rest of the city, as well as a number of brothels, drug dens, and gambling establishments discreetly scattered across the various districts, Dreaming Street takes things to a whole different level. Name the activity, and you can probably engage in it on Dreaming Street—if you can meet the price.

History

Freeport has always had a Dreaming Street; the pirates who founded the city were not about to deny their vices in their own home. It wasn't until Captain Drac made Freeport "respectable" that Dreaming Street



was considered disreputable—and even that had little effect on its popularity. There's always been a Dreaming Street and there always will be. True, outcry from the more upstanding citizens sometimes results in a token round of arrests, brothel raids, and gambling house closures. But it's never more than a charade—no one in power really wants Dreaming Street to change or vanish. Many rich men and women from the Merchant District and the Old City (not to mention members of the Sea Lord's Guard) travel to Scurvytown to indulge their tastes for pleasure. Money often changes hands to avoid inconveniencing someone important with a raid or to ensure a crime goes uninvestigated.

As long as what happens in Dreaming Street stays on Dreaming Street, the Watch is willing to look the other way. The Captains' Council sees the street as a sort of safety valve, a place where the darker urges of the city's inhabitants can be safely exercised, with no one really getting hurt. Unfortunately, that thinking is completely unrealistic. There are some truly disturbing and sick activities taking place in the back rooms and basements of the ramshackle buildings of Dreaming Street. Ritual torture, forced prostitution, drug addiction, ritual murder, the veneration of forbidden gods—if a perversion has a name, chances are it's happening on Dreaming Street.

No criminal organization dominates Dreaming Street. Ever since the Back Alley War, most of the folks there have been independent operators. Over the years, the "businessmen" of Dreaming Street have become quite proud of their independent status, only pulling together for one thing: keeping any outside organization from taking over the street. Which is not to say that Finn, Mister Wednesday, or any of the other lesser criminal figures of the city don't have interests and followers on Dreaming Street—just that none of them can claim control of the Street (or the rest of Scurvytown for that matter). This situation makes Dreaming Street a great place to enter the world of professional vice—and the site for constant low-level hostility between the warring criminal powers of Freeport.

Description

Dreaming Street runs several blocks—in truth, it's a neighborhood now, not a single street, but the name has stuck. Ramshackle old buildings slump against each other in all directions, lining dirt roads that teem at night with customers and victims. Some venues display their wares for all to see: prostitutes lean from balconies cajoling passersby, while doormen shout out the virtues of gambling halls and floor shows. Other operations are more circumspect and less friendly to strangers, and it takes the right knock on a locked door to allow access.

Some of Dreaming Street's venues attempt to provide the illusion of luxury inside, draping red velvet over rotting floorboards and dressing whores in second-hand ball gowns. But the beauty is only skin-deep and purposely so; anyone who truly wants luxury goes elsewhere for it. In other corners of the street, even a pretense of beauty (or cleanliness) is too much effort; the patrons of a drug den don't care that their refuge from the world is a filthy hovel crawling with vermin. Dreaming Street is a place of masks, and the faces behind those masks can be ugly.

Key Figures

The following characters can be found on Dreaming Street.

Lady Jane

Lady Jane (*female human journeyman*) is the madam of the Torchlight Academy, one of the most popular brothels on Dreaming

Scurvytown Overview

The poorest, dirtiest, and most dangerous district in Freeport, Scurvytown is a ghetto for those without hope, money, or morals.

Buildings

Decaying wooden buildings that haven't been repaired or maintained in decades.

People

Dirty, poverty-stricken, and desperate, turning to crime or begging to make ends meet.

Roads

Unpaved, muddy, and littered with garbage, narrow alleys wind through the shadows.

Descriptive Elements

The whole district stinks of human waste and rotting fish, and the foul air teems with mosquitoes. Beggars plead for funds or sell their pathetic belongings from broken stalls. Gangs of thugs demand protection money from shopkeepers, and citizens prowl Dreaming Street looking for chances to wreck havoc.

Street. No one takes her claim of being a member of an aristocratic family very seriously—but if she wants to call herself a "lady," no one's going to argue with her. Aristocrat or not, Lady Jane is one of the most influential vice mongers of Dreaming Street; she has clients in high places, several well-armed thugs as retainers, and is rumored to have some skill in witchcraft. And she bears a grudge.

Largo Dorn

Largo Dorn (*male dwarf apprentice*) spends most days leaning against a wall in the mouth of an alley, scrutinizing passersby and saying nothing. But if someone walks up to him and says the right phrase, gives him the right amount of money, and has the right amount of desperation on their face, he leads them back into the shadows, to the door of a drug den and a wide array of illegal narcotics. A veteran of Dreaming Street, Dorn sold his morals and conscience years ago; he's allied with Finn, who supplies the dwarf with drugs and occasionally pays him to harass or kill off a rival entrepreneur.

Adventure Hooks

Dreaming Street is home to all vices, including the least offensive and unpleasant ones. Characters who enjoy a drink, a game of cards, or a pleasant evening with a willing (if mercenary) companion can find much to like on Dreaming Street. But shadows bleed from the street's darker corners, and they contaminate all they touch; nothing stays pure here for long. As characters indulge their desires and make connections on Dreaming Street, they may have to fight to save their friends—and themselves—from the temptations of sin.

No one person controls the vice of Dreaming Street, but many people want to—and some of those people are tired of sharing. Finn and Mister Wednesday are going to war, and the Street is both their battleground and their prize. As thugs and thieves employed by the crime lords battle in the street, independent operators like Lady Jane play games with their allegiances, hoping to wrest more power for themselves. And things only get messier when the Watch tries to clamp down on the violence. Can anything stop Dreaming Street from destruction—and does anyone want to bother trying?

2. The Dead Pelican

"Rats? What about the rats? Yer a big tough pirate, ain't ye? Forget the rats and drink yer rum. How about a pie to go with it? I'll give ya one fer free if'n ye just shut up about the rats."

—Shingle

The Dead Pelican is a seedy little pub, seemingly little different from dozens of other such joints in Scurvytown. But it has a colorful (mostly blood-red) history, no small amount of infamy, a clientele oddly shy about eating the food, and some very nasty secrets below the surface.

History

A sailor named Jamison opened the Dead Pelican about ten years ago. A Freeport native and ex-marine, Jamison came back to Scurvytown after years of adventures and voyages. He settled down and opened the tavern, offering cheap rum, cheap food, and tall tales for the patrons, who found him far friendlier than most of the grog merchants in the district. But Jamison had a terrible secret; on one of his voyages, he had been marooned on an island with a score of other men. When supplies ran out, he made a pact with a cannibal spirit haunting the island; Jamison murdered his compatriots one by one and lived off their flesh until rescued.

Jamison tried to resume a normal life in Freeport, but the spirit would not release him. To appease it, he founded a small, secretive cult, operating out of the Dead Pelican. The cultists would abduct and sacrifice people to the cannibal spirit, eating the organs of their victims to gain a small measure of supernatural power. As for the rest of the body, well, that was the reason Jamison's pies were so cheap (and so tasty). The cult did their best to keep a low profile—Jamison only recruited a handful of followers and preyed only on transients and sailors. But Jamison's caution was his undoing; the cannibal spirit wanted more and pushed the other cultists further into madness. In the confusion of the Succession Riots, the cultists went on a killing (and eating) spree, only to be discovered by the horrified patrons of the tavern, who turned against them and tore them to pieces.

The Dead Pelican sat empty for some time, unclaimed by any new owner. Squatters and transients would move in, but they never stayed long; they complained of bad dreams, horrible smells, and rats—always rats. Eventually, though, a washed-up sailor named Shingle scraped together enough money to buy the tavern and reopened it about a year ago. Business was not so great for a long time, what with the Dead Pelican's reputation, but Shingle paid three different priests to bless the site and guarantee it free of evil spirits. In the end, the lure of cheap booze got the patrons back on the bar stools, and the Dead Pelican is a growing business. The only problem is the rats; Shingle just can't seem to get rid of them.

Law and Order

In Scurvytown? Are you joking?

Actually, there is law and order in this district—just not much of it. The Watch has a precinct house in the district manned by a few dozen guards who patrol in teams of three or four (rather than in pairs, as they do in other districts). But these local watchmen will happily take payment (in cash, goods, or services) from local criminals and vice mongers to look the other way. When the Watch must take action, they do so with as much violence and brutality as local thugs. The commanders of the Watch realize their operations in the district are compromised, but that's the way it's always been—best to keep up appearances and stop the worst of crimes from spilling out into the city.

The numerous gangs of Scurvytown enforce their own brand of order (but "law" doesn't really factor into it). Groups such as the Blackened Knot control neighborhoods or streets, demanding protection money from the residents—and occasionally earning that money by chasing off outsiders, thieves, or rival gangs. More often, though, gang members are the biggest threat to their own neighborhoods, criminal thugs who kill each other in the streets for pathetic scraps of power.

Buildings in Scurvytown tend to have two kinds of security—none or lots. Most residents can't afford a lock on their door or bars on their windows, assuming they have a roof over their heads at all—but then again, they generally don't have anything worth stealing, either. The more powerful (and more dangerous) denizens of Scurvytown, on the other hand, know better than to leave their hideouts unprotected—locks, bars, guards, and traps surround the belongings of the district's movers and shakers.

Actually, the rats are only the smallest part of Shingle's problem. The reason squatters complained of the smell in the tavern is because Jamison dug down into a disused sewer tunnel that runs under the building. Before he was killed by the mob, Jamison hid the worst evidence of the cult's crimes—skeletons, belongings, pie-making utensils, and the bloodstained coral amulet housing the cannibal spirit—in this tunnel and boarded up the entry. The spirit is still down there, still angry, and surrounded by a teeming horde of rats. The rats have eaten the remains of the cult's sacrifices and are warped by unnatural power; these rats have grown human-like faces resembling the dead cultists and worship the cannibal spirit in their own bestial way—and they hunger for living human flesh.

Description

The Dead Pelican is a one-story building of old, stained timbers. Rather than paint a sign at the front, Shingle nailed a stuffed pelican over the doorway, and superstition prevents thieves from taking it. Narrow alleyways at the side and back of the building are the tavern's "outhouse," and rats skulk in the shadows, watching the patrons go about their business.

Inside, the tavern is much like any of its rivals in the district—low, dirty, dark, and full of drunken sailors. Rats can occasionally be seen scuttling under tables or hiding in the corners. A plate of pies sits atop the bar, rarely touched. An unpleasant smell can occasionally be detected over the stink of unwashed patrons; it gets notably worse in the tavern's large cellar, where Shingle keeps barrels of rum. The entry to the sewer tunnels lies undetected under the ruins of Jamison's old ovens.

Key Figures

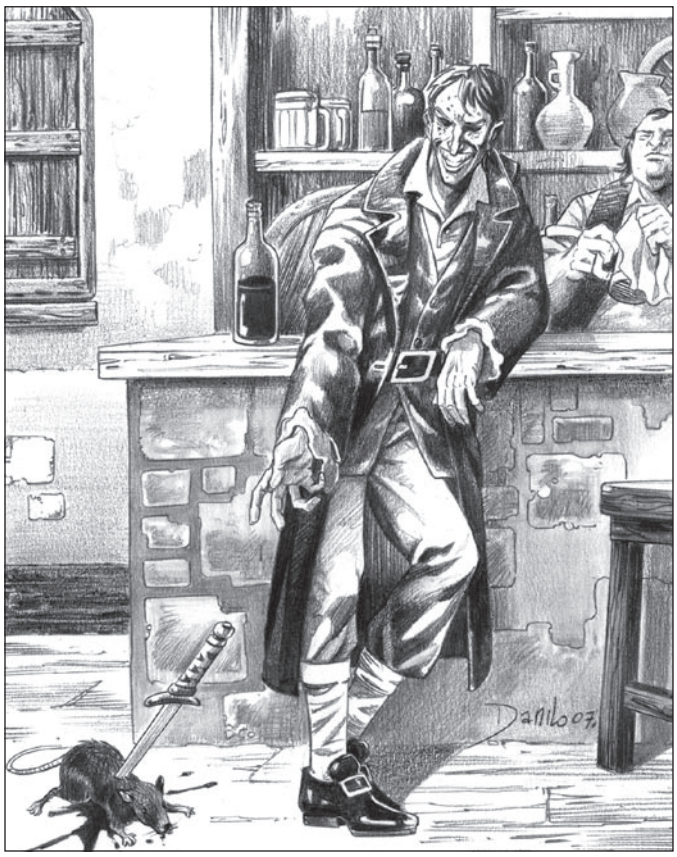
The following characters can be found at the Dead Pelican.

Shingle

Shingle (*male human apprentice*) may be ugly, skinny, pockmarked, bucktoothed, and not very bright, but he has one great gift—his lack of intellect and imagination makes him absolutely fearless. He simply can't understand who would be spooked by the history of the Dead Pelican or why no one will eat the pies he buys from reputable bakeries. And as for patrons getting spooked by rats, they're annoying vermin, no more. If Shingle's worried about anything, it's not the rats, it's the Pelican's low profit margin; he's on the lookout for a backer, a get-rich scheme, a windfall, or anything else that can put some extra coin in his pockets.

Adventure Hooks

The rats that teem and fester under the Dead Pelican are the devoted servants of the cannibal spirit, but that entity wants more than rats and sewage. It wants a body all its own, one assembled from still-warm flesh, and it needs tools with which to make it. It sends its vermin



minions out through the sewers into Scurvytown and the rest of the city to obtain occult relics and to abduct victims. Across Freeport, reports are coming in of warped, strangely intelligent rats carrying off riches and people. Can they be followed to their lair—and can any hunter survive both the rat swarms and their hungry god?

The rats aren't the only ones using the sewers under Scurvytown—the filthy tunnels are also byways for thieves, cultists, treasure hunters, and other unsavory characters. When a local burglar realizes the Dead Pelican is built over a sewer line, Shingle gets a visit from Finn, who wants to use the tavern as an access point to the tunnels. The barkeeper accepts, and soon the Pelican becomes a center for smuggling and vice—and that attracts attention from all sides. What happens when the Canting Crew attempts to invade from below? When the Watch makes a raid? When the rats finally decide to swarm up into the building full of tasty man flesh?

3. Otto's Blades & Baldrics

"You want a magic sword? Here, try this one. It's sharp, it's heavy, and if you know what you're doing you can destroy someone's world with it. That's all the magic I'm trusting you with."

—Otto Parsam

Any pirate, soldier, adventurer, thug or thief who's plied her trade for a while knows the value of weaponry and armor. Some put up with whatever tools they can find (or steal), but others have more refined (or desperate) tastes and look for unusual, finely crafted, or even magical weapons and protection. Finding high-quality arms and armor can be a difficult and expensive proposition, but Otto's Blades & Baldrics, a store located in one of the roughest sections of Scurvytown, is a beacon to weapon collectors and professional killers alike.

History

Otto Parsam has done it all—he's been a freebooter, a mercenary, an adventurer, an explorer, a privateer, and a hero. But those were his wild years, and when middle age came calling, Otto knew he had to settle down. Still, a life of excitement is hard to turn away from, so he came to Freeport about ten years ago and set up shop in Scurvytown—because while he could have established his store anywhere in the city, he wanted to stay close to the action. And after a decade of selling weapons and armor—the things he knows best in this world—to priests and pirates alike, Otto maintains he wouldn't live anywhere else.

Otto's Blades & Baldrics provides a wide array of weapons, armor, shields, tools, and other life-saving devices. The primary focus is on weaponry, from the traditional (cutlasses, axes, and crossbows) to the unusual (muskets, whips, and exotic weapons from obscure countries on the Continent), along with ammunition, cleaning equipment, and other accessories. While Otto may be able to find any kind of weapon given time, it's easier (and cheaper) to lay your hands on something simple like a sword or longbow. The store isn't as well stocked with armor, but shoppers can usually lay their hands on items like leather, light chainmail, or wooden shields (and most pirates don't want anything heavier). Hard-to-find and expensive items such as magic swords, elven chainmail, and amulets of protection blessed by the gods



> **Mysterious Blaze Destroys Scurvytown Tenement!**
>
> *~The Shipping News*

depend on whether Otto likes you. Such items are not just rare but dangerous, and he doesn't traffic in them lightly or casually display them. If Otto does have such an item in stock, buyers need to prove they're legitimate and make an appointment in advance to view the item—and haggling isn't on the agenda.

The store receives new stock on a semi-regular basis. Otto does some second-hand trading but won't buy items if they're damaged or poorly maintained (if they're stolen, he makes up his mind on a case-by-case basis). His contacts on the Continent send him new stock every month or so, primarily common weapons. He can request special or rare items from them, but the turnaround time tends to be weeks or months. The store's other main source of stock is the Freeport Auction House; Otto always attends the monthly auctions, bidding on both mundane and exotic weapons, armor, and magical items.

Description

Otto's Blades and Baldrics is one of the few brick-and-stone buildings in Scurvytown, and a marked contrast to the decaying wooden tenements around it. The two-story building is surrounded by wide alleyways on all sides—too wide for a thief to easily cross without being seen. The single door is metal and securely locked, while the windows on both levels are small and protected with iron bars.

The shop is a single, thirty-foot-square room; in one corner is a small counter where Otto sits most of the time. Weapons and armor hang from the ceiling and are arranged according to size. Otto can use a stepladder to allow a closer look at the items or lower them using a series of pulleys and chains set into the ceiling. Sundry tools and equipment are kept behind the counter in drawers or on the back wall. Otto lives in an apartment above the shop, which is positively opulent by Scurvytown standards; this is also where he keeps the most valuable items under lock and key. His reputation is such that even the greenest local thieves give his place a wide berth.

Key Figures

The following characters can be found at Otto's Blades & Baldrics.

Otto Parsam

Otto Parsam (*male human master*) is a grizzled, middle-aged man who may still be one of the deadliest swordsmen in Freeport. He doesn't excel at customer service—he speaks in short sentences, and anyone entering the shop will usually be greeted with an abrupt "What are you looking for?" before they've stepped beyond the threshold. However, it only takes a little encouragement to get Otto to recount stories about his adventures; he knows he's too old to continue that life. He misses his wandering days and finds the settled life more boring than he would like. Frankly, he looks forward to the occasional break-in attempt at the store (and the resulting fracas), and he would almost welcome a little excitement like the Succession Riots again.

Adventure Hooks

As tensions rise between the various factions, pirate crews, criminal organizations, and gangs in Freeport, Otto is selling weapons faster than he can replace them. He's looking to hire some assistants—agents who can obtain (by whatever means) new stock for him in the city or from the Continent. There are a slew of challenges and adventures to be faced in amassing and keeping that stock—and it gets more complicated when the ancestral sword Otto bought in an auction proves to be a very powerful magical item—one with a curse spreading to the whole store.

Thieves, hobgoblins, pirates, thieves, anarchists—Scurvytown is just full of troublemakers, and the poor working folk of the district need a champion. That's Otto's excuse for strapping on his weapons and armor and jumping into local politics, anyway. Whoever he aligns with won't get much choice in the matter; they gain access to arms and equipment and the services of a veteran warrior who doesn't have much interest in diplomacy, subtlety, or taking orders. How will the characters cope with Otto as their enemy—or their ally?

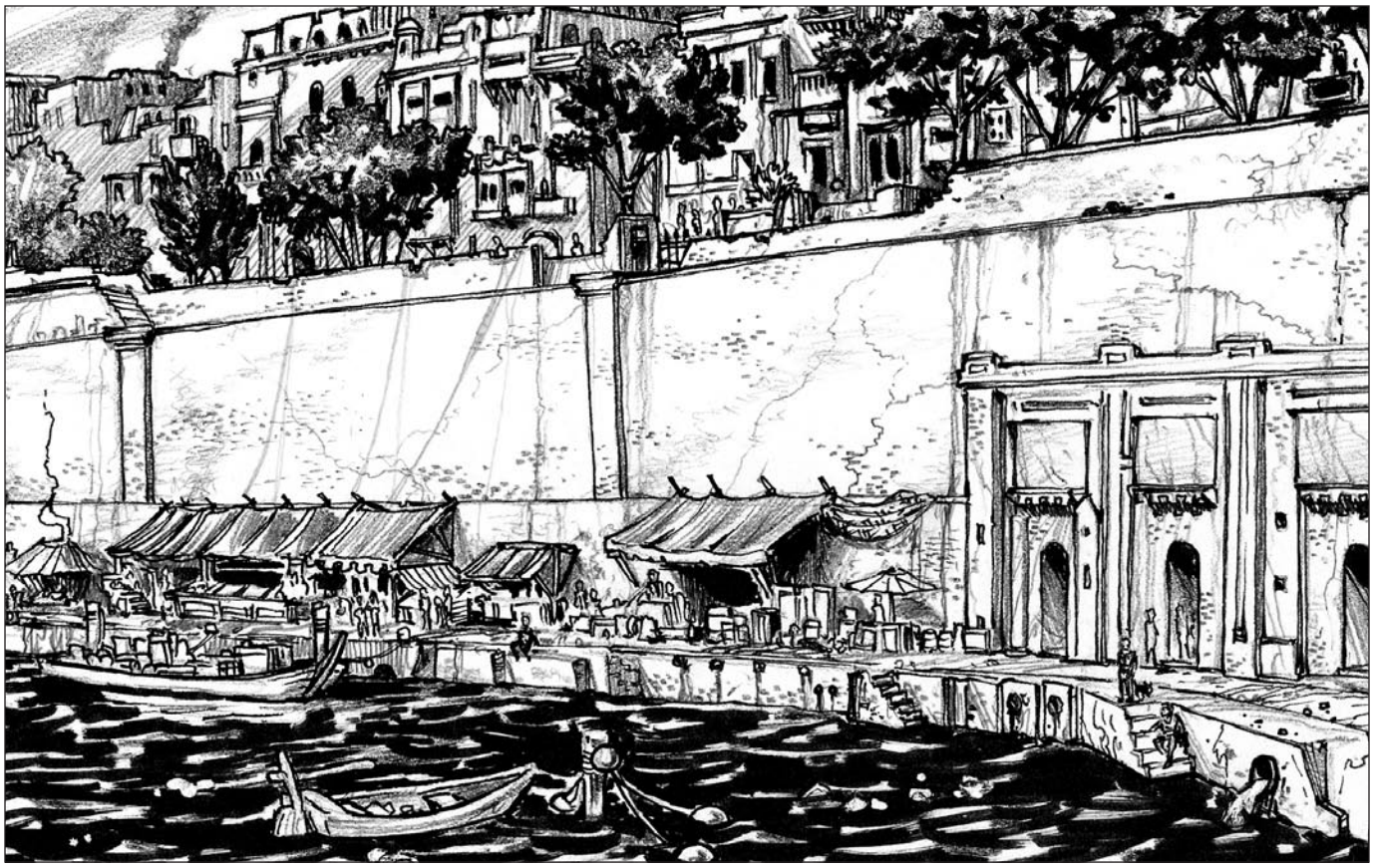
4. The Freeport Fishery & Market

> **"Stuff and nonsense! The Freeport Fishery takes every precaution to ensure that Freeport eats only the freshest, healthiest fish! Your dysentery is obviously your own doing, and if you say otherwise I'll have you up on charges! Now get out of my office!"**
>
> *—Mortimer Quango*

One of the staples of any Freeporter's diet is fish harvested from the fertile seas around A'Val and the other islands of the Serpent's Teeth. The harvesting and preservation of this vital foodstuff was long ago determined too vital to be left solely in private hands, so the Freeport Fishery is actually funded and administered by the Captains' Council.

History

It says a lot about the priorities of Freeport's founders that the fishery was established after Dreaming Street—but not long after; a pirate has to eat, after all. Originally, the fishery was an informal coalition of fisherman and traders, operating from a few shacks on the Scurvytown piers. It soon became a focus of crime, racketeering, and price fixing, not to mention poor hygiene. After one too many summers marked by outbreaks of botulism and ludicrously high prices, Captain Drac personally stepped in (legend has it food poisoning caused by bad clams was the last straw). The criminal elements were



driven out, several fishmongers were arrested, the entire operation was overhauled, and control of the fishing industry was passed to the newly created Ministry of Fisheries.

Decades later, the fishery runs as smoothly and efficiently as anything in Freeport can. Fishing boats tie up every morning at the pier to dump the dawn catch; longshoremen haul the fish to the processing building, and there, workers clean, slice, and prepare the fish for sale. Ministry observers track every stage of the operation, making sure everyone does their job correctly and that fishermen are properly paid for their catch. But these officials are, of course, open to bribes.

In addition to the processing operation, the fishery's market is one of the few places (other than Dreaming Street) that draws upstanding citizens into the squalid streets of Scurvytown. All manner of fresh seafood can be found in the market, from large tuna and swordfish caught in the deep waters, to crabs and scallops from nearby lagoons and coves. Even exotic fare like squid and oysters are readily available most of the year.

Description

The fishery proper is a large warehouse on the edge of Scurvytown, several piers feeding into its rear entryway. It's far better maintained than most buildings in the district, but decades of salt air, fish guts, and seagull droppings have stained it a variety of unpleasant colors. In front of the fishery, stalls and outbuildings spill out into the fish market square, and tarpaulins and umbrellas keep the sun and the gulls off the merchandise.

Surprisingly, the interior of the fishery isn't as smelly or as hot as visitors would expect; the Ministry pays the Wizard's Guild for an enchantment that keeps the internal temperature low, even in the height of summer. More than sixty workers take care of buying, inspecting, gutting, and preserving the day's catch from the fisherman that work the waters around the islands. Another twenty-five men and women maintain and administer the market area. The fishery also contains a small shrine to the God of the Sea, and most of the fishermen are avid worshippers. A priest from the temple visits the shrine once a week, and every spring, there is a ceremonial blessing of the fishermen. Nearly everyone in Scurvytown tries to attend this solemn ceremony, since they know the fishermen's catch is their best hope to eat in the coming year.

Aside from the area near the tanneries in the Eastern District, the few blocks around the fishery are some of the worst smelling in the entire city. On a hot summer day, the locals say the stench knocks seagulls out of the sky. All the fish guts dumped into the water also attract sharks. When gang members decide to send someone swimming with the sharks, the piers near the fishery are popular launching points for their victims.

Key Figures

The following characters can be found at the fishery.

Mortimer Quango

The post of Minister of Fisheries is a coveted political appointment. The current minister is Mortimer Quango (*male human apprentice*), a former actuary who scored the job by bribing influential public servants. His sole claim to fame is that he may be the most crooked politician in the ministry's history. From the first day of his appointment, Quango made it his mission to skim as much money as he could from the fishery without being noticed. Whether he's cutting corners on safety standards, taking

Legends of Freeport: The Spiderkith

It's a strange, strange world, and even the most hardheaded skeptic accepts that monsters exist in the jungles and that sometimes they make their way into Freeport. But there's a limit between being willing to entertain the idea of the existence of the unknown, and your mind being so open your brain falls out.

Everyone accepts that there was some sort of giant spider living in a Scurvytown tenement building several years ago. Its lair was uncovered one Swagfest, the creature was killed, and the couple of unfortunates trapped in its webs were given a decent burial—terrible and a bit nasty but really not that unusual. The rumors that the spider was more than just a spider, that it could talk and change shape and had magical powers is just silly. That's the kind of thing you hear from some drunk with more rotgut than blood in his veins.

And as for the stories of a whole colony of spider-like intelligent beings with supernatural powers and a secret agenda hiding in the disused sewers under Scurvytown, masquerading as Freeport citizens, moving through the poor populace of the district, luring drunks and children into their web-filled tunnels to feed upon them? *Ridiculous*!

Let's have no more of such talk. Let's just have a few more drinks and then go look for that treasure chest they say is hidden under the old Varney house. No, there's no need for you to bring your friends. You can trust me. I promise, you'll see no spiders… not before they see you…

kickbacks from sailors to sell spoiled fish, firing staff but continuing to draw their wages, or embezzling from the fishery's coffers, Quango is almost obsessed with abusing his position. When the Captains' Council finally realizes what he's up to, he hopes to be on a ship headed for the Continent with more stolen gold than he can spend in a lifetime.

Sheila Whitelick

Sheila Whitelick (*female human apprentice*) is a gutter and cutter in the fishery, unremarkable and soft-spoken. Many of her acquaintances know she has an uncanny knack for finding valuable items in fish guts—rings, watches, jewelry, and other swallowed goodies. Some of the locals know Sheila is the woman to see if you need to smuggle goods in with the daily catch—or if you want a body dumped into the sea along with the fish guts at night. Very few know about her membership in the Brotherhood of the Yellow Sign, her uncle in Cabbage Crack, or that she's a "fishwife" in a very real (and rather disgusting) ritual sense. And no one knows what she plans to do to the city's food supplies when the Brotherhood finally makes their move.

Adventure Hooks

Mortimer Quango's most recent scheme seems simple; rather than pay the Wizards' Guild to maintain the enchantment on the fishery's internal temperature, he pays a much cheaper mage to do so and pockets the difference. Unfortunately, his hireling has more confidence than skill and makes an almighty mess of the spell. When the entire fishery is frozen in ice, the city needs someone to rescue the trapped workers before they perish (and before the city's food supplies run low). Once they are freed, investigators need to find out what happened—and track down Quango before he absconds for the Continent.

While the savage humanoids of Bloodsalt prefer red meat, they still have a taste—and a need—for fish. But rising racism within Scurvytown is making it increasingly difficult for Bloodsalt representatives to visit the fishery safely, and many vendors refuse to sell to them. Things come to a head when members of the Blackened Knot (page 76) attack a party of hobgoblin fish buyers in the market square. When the hobgoblins' guards fight back, there's a bloody riot at the fish market. The Sea Lord's Guard mobilizes, only to be faced by hobgoblin Redblades poised for a confrontation. And in the chaos, the Brotherhood of the Yellow Sign puts into play its own plans for the fishery.

5. The Mouth of Hell

"What'll you bet, player? Your house? Your gold? Your soul... what? You're prepared to bet your soul? Um... look, how about we just stick to the house and the gold this time, alright?"

—Solestris Pine

Few now living in Freeport know or care about the historical presence of the fierce Church of Retribution. This small but fanatically devout sect of inquisitors built a temple in Scurvytown to defend Freeport from infernal influence, but it faded into the fog of history decades ago, leaving little behind. Now the old temple has been reborn—as the Mouth of Hell, a nightclub and gambling house that teases customers with hints and promises of dark, blasphemous powers behind the scenes.

History

For a brief time, the Church of Retribution held the fate of Freeport in its hands. In the years before the Great Raid, the church brought its inquisition to Freeport—not to bring down the pirates but to ferret out diabolists, fiends, and supernatural evils, of which the city had its fair share. When word came of a "demonic invasion" targeting Freeport, the church's inquisitors assembled an army of followers and loyalists and sailed out to meet the demons on the island of Devil's Cry, somewhere outside the Serpent's Teeth. They never returned.

For two centuries, the remnants of the church limped along, a handful of aging priests performing sporadic services to an empty temple, while the inquisition and their crusade faded into legend. The last members of the church vanished shortly before the Succession Crisis; there was a rumor that demonic forces had reached out to

The Mouth of Hell: Asking for Divine Retribution?

~The Shipping News

destroy them or opened a door to hell within the temple, but no one really cared enough to confirm it. The decaying building became a hideout for thieves and a flophouse for transients, a giant waste of space too gloomy to reclaim, too historic to tear down.

Then last year, the temple was sold to Solestris Pine, a mysterious elf from the Continent. His crew of tight-lipped assistants spent weeks refurbishing the temple, while rumors spread about Pine's background—that he was a cultist, a demon worshipper, an inquisitor. When the rumors reached fever pitch, the doors opened to the Mouth of Hell—a massive gambling hall, brothel, and nightclub, right in the heart of Scurvytown! Playing on the use of "hell" as a slang term for "gambling den," Pine built a place where the dealers boast of their crookedness, gamblers are encouraged to bet their own souls, the women claim to be demonic temptresses, and blasphemy is the order of the day.

It's all for show, of course; anyone who really tries to bet their soul is talked out of it, the games are no more crooked than those in any gambling den, and the women are no different than the whores of Dreaming Street. But the show works wonders, and the Mouth of Hell has become one of Scurvytown's main attractions, stealing customers from Dreaming Street and giving jobs to unemployed locals. Everyone's happy with the hall of blasphemous joys, except for a few devout stragglers, who mutter darkly about the insult to the inquisition and the black schemes of hell. And no one listens to people like that anymore.



Description

The Church of Retribution was built from black stone and masonry—a brooding two-story cathedral covered in gargoyles, cornices, iron spikes, and other sternly devout decorations. A bell tower rises above the building, though the bell is long gone. The church decayed badly over the decades, but Pine and his followers have done extensive repairs, and it's in better shape than ever. Torches burn at all times outside the massive double doors of the cathedral, which open at sundown to admit the titillated gamblers and drinkers of the city.

A single, enormous room takes up most of the interior of the club—the former chapel to the God of Retribution, now occupied by gaming tables. A stage has been placed where the altar used to be, and local minstrels and entertainers desperately vie for a chance to perform. Side rooms—once naves, cells, and drawing rooms—now house bars, a restaurant, and private rooms. Several more private rooms occupy the bell tower, where the whores of the hall entertain their clients. Extensive cellars house food and drink supplies, storerooms, and quarters for some of the staff. However, much of the cellar region remains untouched; a lingering pall of danger haunts these rooms, the memory of the black powers that once fought the lost saviors of the city. Pine suspects that there may be secret passages in the cellars leading to the sewers but isn't inclined to investigate—just in case something unholy really *is* waiting at the other end.

Key Figures

The following characters can be found at the Mouth of Hell.

Solestris Pine

Solestris Pine (*male elf journeyman*) cultivates a reputation as a trickster, a manipulator, a consorter with dark powers, and a dabbler in black magic. While some of that is true (including the dabbling in magic, though it's not that black), the truth is that Pine is a businessman and a showman. He knows the financial value of novelty and that people will pay to pretend they're transgressing their own morality. Pine figures the thrill of the Mouth of Hell will wear off in a year or two, and then he and his staff will move on to the next opportunity. In the meantime, he's making lots of money—and being very careful not to overplay his hand. He's not just worried about getting in trouble with the local clergy—there are too many stories about the inquisition for him to be entirely comfortable in the lowest cellars of his nightclub.

Adventure Hooks

The Mouth of Hell's success has taken the city by surprise, and while many citizens enjoy its pleasures, others are unhappy. Pine's main enemies are his rivals, the halls and brothels of Dreaming Street that are losing customers to him. They want the Mouth of Hell to close, and they don't care how it's done. Lady Jane frames a Mouth

employee for murder, painting him as a real devil worshipper; the clergy of the Temple District preach against the blasphemous goings-on, and religious extremists attempt to storm the Mouth. The council needs someone to get to the bottom of this mess, work out what's really going on, and defend Pine and his crew from the schemes of both criminals and believers alike.

Solestris Pine is flirting with danger with all this talk of demons, soul stealing, and black magic. The old inquisition actually did bind demons within the temple, and the wards that stop them from escaping and taking form are strong—but mortal fear and belief can make them weaker. The demons are reaching out with the remnants of their supernatural power, affecting the emotions and wills of patrons and staff. "Accidents" keep happening, tempers (and sanities) are fraying, and the Mouth of Hell is attracting some very unsavory customers. Can anything stop the madmen, cultists, and gamblers of the city from unlocking the gates of the real Hell?

6. The Chumhouse

"We don't like your kind round here. But I'll tell you who does like the taste of yer filthy, nonhuman skin—the sharks. Get 'em, boys!"

—Abel Wackets

One of the roughest taverns in Scurvytown is the dilapidated structure that lies at the very end of one of the shorter piers. Even the Broken Mug down in the Docks has a better reputation than the Chumhouse. And that was before the Chumhouse became the headquarters for the Blackened Knot, a group of racist vigilantes commanded by Freeport's former hangman. These days, no one with any standards comes to the Chumhouse—which still leaves it with plenty of customers.

History

A local named Enoch converted this unused warehouse into a tavern over fifty years ago. Everyone thought he was crazy to open a tavern at the end of a pier instead of on Dreaming Street, but he quickly proved the naysayers wrong. Mind you, he did it through volume of customers and not quality. Still, the Chumhouse has a loyal clientele who are happy to endure the nightly fistfights and occasional knifings for the low price of the booze.

The tavern's location also led to its sanguine name. One night, during a particularly violent brawl, the wooden floor of the tavern broke and several badly wounded pirates tumbled down into the waters below. Unluckily for them, the fish guts and blood from the nearby fishery attracted packs of sharks to the waters below; after the mayhem subsided (and wagers on the shark-pirate battle were paid up), the bar was labeled the Chumhouse. To this day, sharks are sighted underneath the Chumhouse more often than any other part of Freeport Harbor.

Old Enoch left town about ten years ago after selling the Chumhouse to a pair of dwarf brothers. Garen and Pulma Stonebrake maintained everything just the way the Chumhouse's patrons like it—cheap booze, lousy entertainment, tolerance for fights, and a reinforced floor. They might have thought that made for loyal customers, but they didn't figure in human belligerence and fear. Racism towards nonhumans has been rising in Freeport since the start of the Reclamation Project, and some of Scurvytown's thugs don't distinguish between orcs, hobgoblins, dwarves, or anyone else with a different physique. And a lot of the Chumhouse's regular customers became very unhappy with "stunted rock-eaters" running their favorite bar, taking their money, and (presumably) stealing their women.

When Abel Wackets turned those thugs (and others) into the vigilantes of the Blackened Knot, he needed a place to base the gang—and the new members had just the place. Garen Stonebrake

Common Shops of Scurvytown

In addition to the businesses and locations found in this district, there are a number of smaller shops that may be of use to adventurers.

Taverns and Inns

Scurvytown has many watering holes.

7. **The Old Whore:** A strip club and tavern, the Old Whore takes its name from the horrid hag that sits out front.
8. **Fish Stew:** This restaurant is noted not for its awful fish stew but for its great gambling.
9. **Dread's Place:** A dangerous pub, only tough pirates or those with a death wish brave this bar.
10. **Heave Ho:** Yet another tavern, Heave Ho offers terrible food, worse ale, and sick women.

Businesses

A few small businesses here offer everything from weapons and armor to supplies and equipment.

11. **Razor's Edge:** Although this shop specializes in sharpening swords, it does brisk business selling weaponry.
12. **Kill Shop:** This small shop sells axes, swords, and other weapons. In the back, they sell torture equipment.
13. **Plunder:** A pawnshop, Plunder has a strange and eclectic inventory.
14. **Jeffers Goods:** A butcher and general store, Jeffers Goods is a front for a gambling den.

Diversions

Dreaming Street is the thriving heart of Scurvytown's prostitution, but there are many more dens of iniquity throughout the district.

15. **The Grunt:** A particularly foul "garden" where companionship is cheap.
16. **Horus's Heap:** A rundown warehouse rumored to employ forced prostitution.
17. **The Junk Store:** This infamous brothel is noted for letting anything go within its walls.
18. **Blood Den:** This was a popular gaming hall, but criminal elements and fixed games have driven away most business.

The Blackened Knot

The Blackened Knot isn't the only gang in Scurvytown, nor the only one motivated by racism and fear of difference, but they are one of the most well known in the district—not well liked (even by those they claim to protect), just well-known. Their avowed reason for existing is to keep nonhumans out of Scurvytown and to raise awareness of how nonhumans are stealing jobs, women, and money from Freeport's human majority. This reason translates into a gang that likes to beat up anyone different, engage in violence for its own sake, extort protection money from local merchants and families, and generally blame all their own shortcomings on others.

The members of the Blackened Knot are all human, all male, and all less-than-sterling examples of their race and gender. Many are former longshoremen, fishery workers, or sailors unable to find work—a fact they blame on nonhumans taking their jobs, rather than their own lack of initiative or intelligence, or on their preference for sitting around getting drunk every day instead of going out and looking for work. With the exception of Abel Wackets and a few of his lieutenants, none possess great intelligence, courage, or combat skill—a deficiency they make up for with loyalty, stubbornness, and a willingness to drink themselves into a fighting fury to beat up the weak.

The Blackened Knot takes their name from two places. One is metaphorical; they are a gang that came together like a knot, and they've been blackened by the ashes of the Great Green Fire that drew them together to protect their district. That's what they tell people, anyway. The other, more concrete, reason is the weapon they all use—a hangman's noose, blackened with tar and pitch. The noose (or rope-hammer) is an effective weapon; it hits hard but can be rolled up and hidden easily, and it's cheap to make or replace. Particularly vicious gang members sometimes push nails or fishhooks through the noose for extra effect.

The Chumhouse is the center of operations for the Blackened Knot. From here, they organize their raids on their nonhuman neighbors, drink cheap grog before "patrolling" the streets, and produce barely literate pamphlets extolling humans to fight the "lesser races" before Freeport drowns in a sea of racial impurity, depravity, and free thinking.

took a long walk off a short pier, and after some very rough treatment, Pulma was persuaded to sell the Chumhouse for a ridiculously low price to Abel Wackets before sailing out of Freeport forever. Now the Chumhouse is a human-only tavern, one run—not particularly well—by Wackets and his cronies.

Description

The Chumhouse sits at the end of a pier, not far from the fishery. It's a dilapidated, single-story ex-warehouse with windows that look out over the harbor and one large door. The wood of the building is slimy and stained from years of salty air and lack of maintenance, and the constant stink of blood, fish, and salt hangs in the air. There's no sign above the door; if you don't already know about the Chumhouse, you're not welcome.

The interior of the building is even less inviting. A low bar runs along one side, barrels of rotgut and beer sitting behind it. Low tables and stools fill the room, all of them dirty and in bad repair. A small door leads to a privy—a hole in the floor overlooking the water—and a storage room where the gang keeps tools, weapons, and pamphlets. The only thing in good repair in the tavern is the floor, which is reinforced with multiple layers of planks. A portrait of Old Enoch still hangs above the bar, and it is tradition to toast to his memory.

Key Figures

The following characters can be found at the Chumhouse.

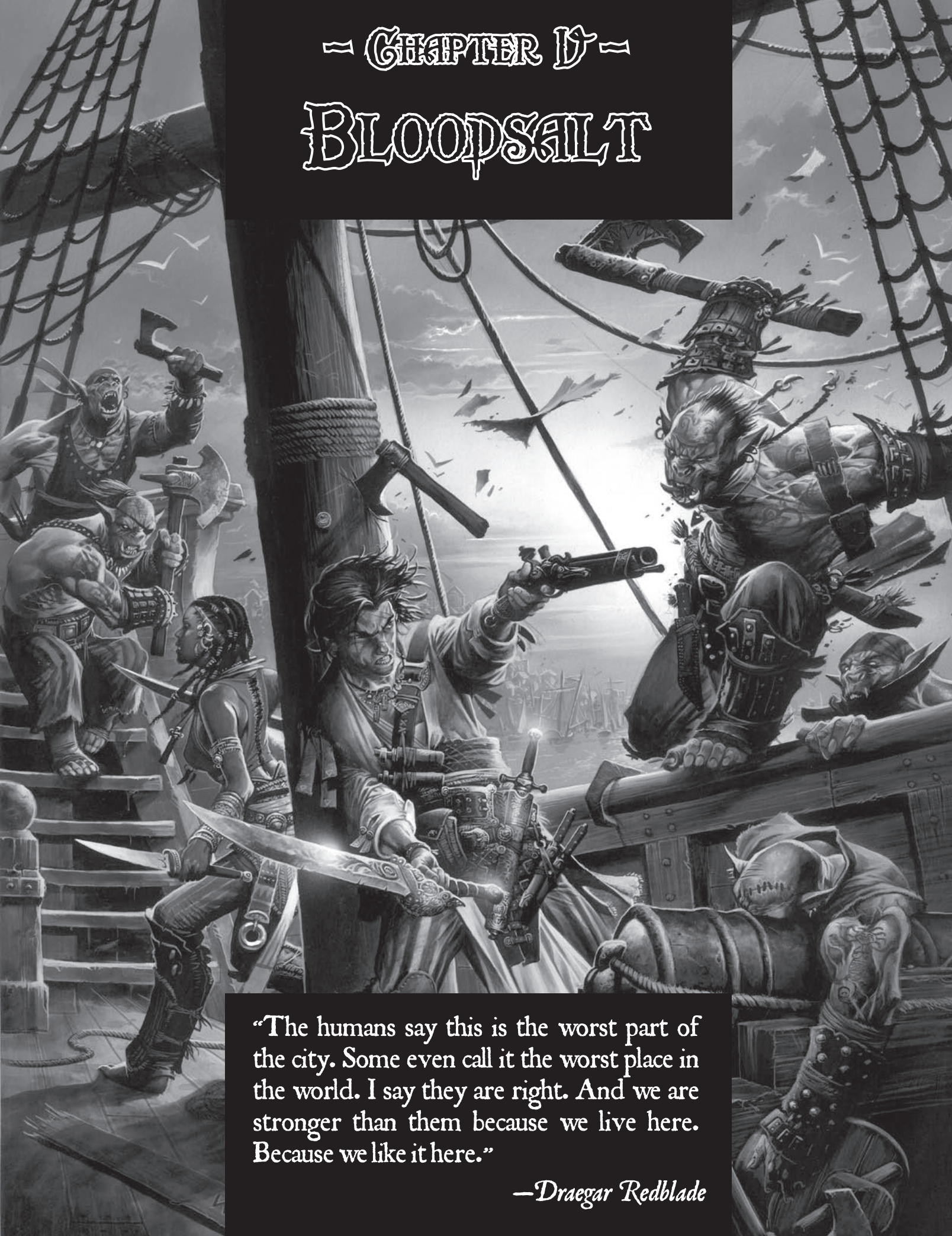
Abel Wackets

Abel Wackets (*male human journeyman*) is a thickset middle-aged man, bald with a thick moustache, his arms and hands crisscrossed with scars and burn marks. He was once the chief hangman of the Old City Court, a trusted instrument of Freeport justice—he used his access to the courts to frame innocents in return for payment from the city's crime lords. When evidence of his guilt got out, Wackets spent a year in prison before being spat out, broke and disgraced, into the ghettos of Scurvytown. Before the Great Green Fire, Wackets joined up with like-minded thugs, extorting local merchants for a few coins—but with the exodus of the orcs to Bloodsalt, he sees a power vacuum in the district he wants to fill. A psychotic, racist bully (but a cunning and oddly charismatic one), Wackets wants power but doesn't really know what to do with it, and he is doomed to be little more than a local warlord. But in Scurvytown, that might make him a force to be reckoned with.

Adventure Hooks

Any nonhuman characters that become prominent or well known in Scurvytown may attract the unwelcome attention of the Blackened Knot. The response is small at first—threats and insults, gang members spitting at them in the street or glowering at them in bars. Then come the attacks—not just on the characters but anyone identified as a friend or ally or who does business with them. When the people of Scurvytown turn against the characters for fear of retribution, only a trip to the Chumhouse and a confrontation with Abel Wackets might turn the tide.

The chum of the fishery attracts the mother of all sharks, a monster nearly the size of a warehouse. This creature attacks during the night, intent on knocking the whole pier down and devouring anyone or anything in its path! As the patrons of the Chumhouse flee for their lives, the upheaval tosses many people into the jaws of the beast. Who can save the Chumhouse before it sinks beneath the waves? And why would anyone *bother*? Could this be an opportunity to redeem the Blackened Knot and make them into the local defenders they claim to be?



— Chapter IV —

Bloodsalt

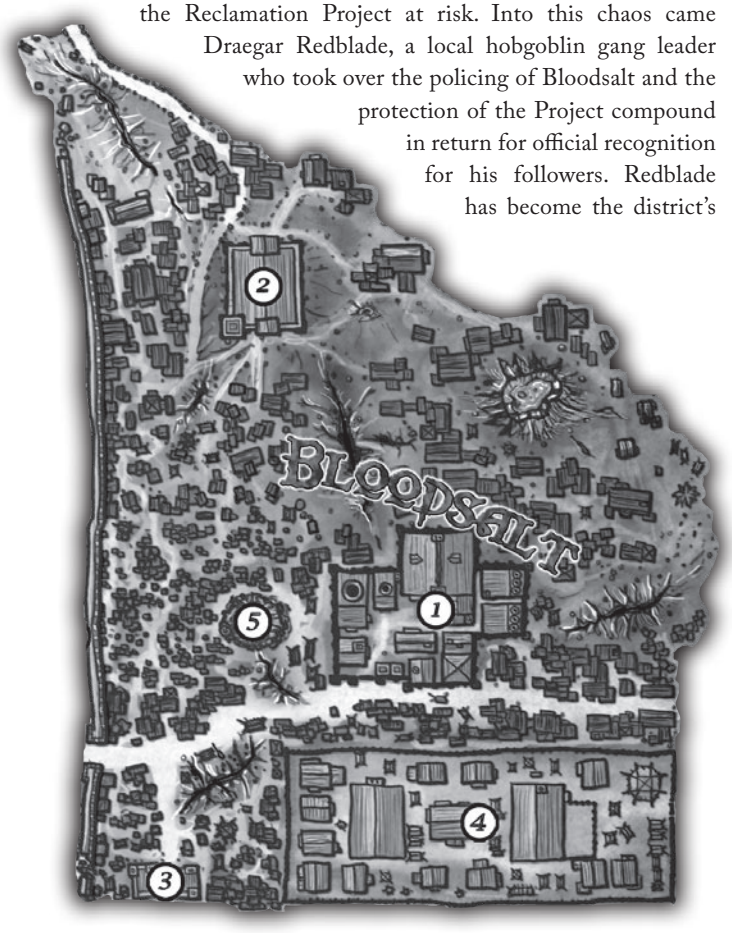
"The humans say this is the worst part of the city. Some even call it the worst place in the world. I say they are right. And we are stronger than them because we live here. Because we like it here."

—Draegar Redblade

In the wake of the Great Green Fire and the Wizard Guild's recruitment of nonhuman workers for its Reclamation Project, Freeport underwent a massive jump in population—and some of the newcomers were too aggressive to get along with their civilized neighbors. Faced with cramped conditions and the threats of riots in Scurvytown and Drac's End, the Captains' Council decided to expand the city and create a new district, a region where the orcs and hobgoblins working on the project could live in relative peace.

After a few months, the unnamed district took form on the edge of the city, a curve of shanties, crude housing, and tents outside the walls of the Eastern District. At the center of the district, the Wizards' Guild built a compound to house the Reclamation Project's alchemical workshops and facilities, which were proving too dangerous to keep within the Old City. Savage workers would line up each day at the compound to collect tools, equipment, and barrels of chemicals and then trudge into the wasted lands north of Freeport to work the soil. The fears of the Wizards' Guild soon proved well-founded, as various alchemical compounds soaked into the ground of the district, leaving it desiccated and dull red in color; soon the name "Bloodsalt" was coined by the inhabitants, and it stuck as the name of the district.

Bloodsalt rapidly became the most violent and dangerous place in Freeport; orcs and hobgoblins clashed every night over old tribal grudges and new animosities. Meanwhile, the nonhumans left in Scurvytown came under pressure from the human citizens to join their own kind in Bloodsalt, whether they were workers, pirates, or working families. Bloodsalt became a war zone, and the Watch proved unable (and unwilling) to police the district, putting the Reclamation Project at risk. Into this chaos came Draegar Redblade, a local hobgoblin gang leader who took over the policing of Bloodsalt and the protection of the Project compound in return for official recognition for his followers. Redblade has become the district's unofficial warlord and governor, and the Captains' Council seems content to let him run Bloodsalt as his personal kingdom.



Bloodsalt is a ragged excuse for a district, a dangerous place for both locals and visitors. The Redblade Militia enforces its will on the weak, while engaging in regular brawls with the orc pirates of the district's south. Workers toil under the hot sun every day for a handful of coins, while poor orc and hobgoblin families live in fear of gangs and random violence. Even walking down the street is a hazard in Bloodsalt; your next step could punch through a thin shell of earth into a pocket of acid or flaming chemicals, a terrible side effect of the alchemical pollutants leaking from the Reclamation compound. A few of Bloodsalt's inhabitants fight to better themselves and protect their friends and neighbors, but for most in the new district, life is every monster for himself, and the weak are nothing but victims cowering in the dark, waiting for the axe to fall.

Locations of Interest

The following locations can be found in Bloodsalt.

1. The Reclamation Project Compound

"Don't come crying to me because some idiot goblin stepped in something it shouldn't. As far as I'm concerned, this whole damn district could fall into a pit of green slime tomorrow. Hell, they should give me a medal if that happened!"

—Thomas Kenzil

The compound at the center of Bloodsalt houses the district's reason for existence—the headquarters for the Wizards' Guild's program to restore life to the soil of A'Val. Wizards and alchemists work in the compound's laboratories to perfect the Knorberrtal Program, while its factories pump out chemicals to be applied by orc and hobgoblin workers. In the short term, though, the toxic byproducts of the program have blighted the earth around the compound—not that the humans running the project seem to care.

History

When Tarmon and the Wizards' Guild began the Reclamation Project, they set aside a wing of their guild house to contain laboratories and workshops. It didn't take many explosions and clouds of acidic smoke to make them realize it was best to continue their research outside the populated and wealthy Old City district. Given the influx of savage nonhumans into the city and the problems they were causing, the council decided to kill two birds with one stone and establish a new district to house both the workers and the project.

Initially, the compound was small and lightly guarded, little more than a few workshops full of alchemical boilers behind a fence. As the scale of the project increased, so did the compound's size, and more laboratories, living quarters, and offices were erected behind a larger wall. The increased security proved necessary as the project made its mark on the local landscape; the chemicals leaking from



the laboratories damaged the soil of the district, leaving it blood red and lifeless. Worse than that, chemicals would mix unpredictably just under the earth's surface, creating pockets of dangerous substances—acid, green slime, and even oil that caught fire when exposed to air. As inhabitants of Bloodsalt lost limbs or lives from treading in hidden sinkholes, the savages turned their ire on the Project Compound with strikes, riots, and arson attempts.

Harsh retaliation from the Wizards' Guild and the Redblade Militia quashed the riots, but to maintain the peace, the guild had to overhaul their safety procedures within the compound. The leaks have slowed, and the contamination of the soil has stopped—but the ground on which Bloodsalt stands is still a danger to inhabitants, and their sullen hate of the guild will not fade anytime soon. The compound's security has been increased, and Maelsom Brass, a specialist in fighting orcs and hobgoblins, has been placed in charge of protecting the guild's investment.

Description

Inside the compound are more than a dozen one- and two-story buildings. Most are laboratories and factories, containing boilers, mixing vats, stills, and vats of chemicals. The largest building in the compound is the Project Office, which also acts as living quarters for the wizards and alchemists who work within the compound. Almost all of them have homes within Freeport's walls and prefer to stay there rather than in the less comfortable (and vaguely chemical smelling) rooms here; still, they have a place to stay when working late or if unrest in Bloodsalt makes it dangerous to leave. A single-story building acts as a dormitory for the guards, most of them mercenaries hired by the Wizards' Guild; Maelsom Brass also stays in this building.

Key Figures

The following characters can be found at the Reclamation Project Compound.

Thomas Kenzil

Thomas Kenzil (*male human journeyman*) is a long way from being the most respected member of the Wizards' Guild—not due to a lack of magical skill, rather a lack of ethical standards and diplomacy. Bluntly, Kenzil doesn't care what he has to do to get what he wants or who he insults in the process. That's why he now has the "prestigious" position as head of the Reclamation Project—which requires him to spend a lot of time stuck in the compound, keeping track of equipment and work details and constantly dealing with the savage races that he loathes. He hates the job, but it's been made very clear to him either he does this for a few years or he's out of the guild and unwelcome in Freeport. Resentful and surly, Kenzil has taken to embezzling, cooking the project's books, and skimping on safety precautions to the point where a number of alchemical factories may soon become unsafe.

Maelsom Brass

Maelsom Brass (*female dwarf journeyman*) is the head of security for the Project Compound and is an ex-soldier with decades of experience fighting orcs and hobgoblins. Unlike Kenzil and many of her fellow dwarves, she doesn't despise the savage races; she respects them for their strength and their skill and is careful to never underestimate them. She's being well paid for her work at the compound and takes it very seriously. Her subordinates like her for her wry sense of humor



and her unswerving loyalty. If Brass has a flaw, it's that she micro-manages everything, taking too much responsibility for the running of every last aspect of compound security. Should something happen to her, chaos might quickly follow.

Adventure Hooks

Dozens of workers turn up each day at the compound, and they get paid in cash every night. That's a lot of money pouring through the compound, and Kenzil decides he wants a bigger piece of it. Unfortunately, Brass keeps the payroll under tight guard, and if Kenzil uses magic to steal it, suspicion will immediately be cast upon him. Instead, Kenzil recruits a group of thieves to act as his agents. The plan is for the thieves to rob the monthly payroll coach that comes from the Old City; it travels a secret route, but Kenzil has supplied his agents with the details. The characters might be the thieves, the coach guards, the investigators attempting to find the culprits, or anyone else involved in the heist. No matter what, they best be careful; Kenzil doesn't plan to leave any witnesses alive after the robbery takes place.

The alchemical compounds used in the Knorberrtal Program are complex on their own; when they're combined, almost anything can happen. An alchemist in one of the workshops has just mixed three things that really shouldn't be mixed, and the result is… well, that's the question. It could be a volatile explosive that blows a hole in the compound's wall and sets nearby homes on fire. It could release hallucinogenic fumes that drive the surrounding inhabitants into frenzied riots—not to mention leaving the compound full of insane mages. It could be a highly addictive and pleasurable drug Kenzil decides to produce and sell, and he hides the drug lab from Maelsom Brass.

2. Redblade Barracks

"We are the law in Bloodsalt, and our law is the law of the strong! Tonight the dung-eating orcs will taste our steel. Tomorrow the humans will follow suit. For blood! For power! For Draegar!"

—Rakhuum Sharktooth

A district where humans and elves fear to tread but is still nominally under the control of the Captains' Council must retain some kind of law and order. The Redblade Militia—a small army of belligerent, swaggering, yet disciplined hobgoblins under the control of the warlord Draegar Redblade—supplies just that. This battalion of savage killers operates from their fortified barracks at the northern end of Bloodsalt, from which they send out patrols to enforce Redblade's whims with an iron fist.

What no one realizes is the fatal weakness existing in the armor of the Militia, a flaw built into the very stones of their barracks that may eventually lead to their downfall—or to the service of the Unspeakable One.

History

It quickly became apparent that the human troops of the Watch and the Sea Lord's Guard were incapable of policing the new district. The orcs and hobgoblins resented them and were far more likely to gang up and attack interlopers than respect their authority. Riots were destabilizing the district and jeopardizing the Reclamation Project, a massive investment the Captains' Council needed to protect. It was at this tumultuous time Draegar Redblade approached the council with a proposal—he and his hobgoblin militia would police Bloodsalt for a fraction of the cost of human troops in return for the authority to enforce the law their own way. It was a naked grab for power on Redblade's part, and the council knew it, just as they knew it was the best offer they were going to get before Bloodsalt went up in flames. The paperwork was signed and the Redblade Militia became the law.

Draegar Redblade's recruits were the fiercest and most disciplined warriors in Bloodsalt, and they cut a bloody swathe through the riots. Hobgoblin squads swept through every alleyway and clearing, punishing any who resisted their demands, making it clear they (and not the uncaring humans) were in charge. Over the course of a few weeks, Bloodsalt fell into line—all but the orc pirates that had been forced into the district by the racist thugs of Scurvytown. Conflicts between hobgoblins and orcs became a fixture in the district that continues to the present day.

In order to consolidate his power over the district, Draegar arranged for the council to build a barracks to house his followers. As it turned out, this was the warlord's one mistake. Looking to keep costs low, the council used a quantity of unused bricks gathering dust in a warehouse to complete the construction of the barracks. These bricks were unused materials from Milton Drac's work on the Freeport Lighthouse, materials that had been consecrated to the power of the Unspeakable One—and that still bear the Primal God's unholy taint. Unbeknownst to human and hobgoblin alike, the barracks has been infected with a modicum of the Unspeakable One's power, a power that reaches out in dreams to eat away the sanity of the Militia sleeping within

the building. The god's influence is slow and subtle, but its effects are starting to show, and the Redblade Militia is becoming unstable and losing its discipline.

Description

The Redblade Barracks house is a large, low building of stone, wood, and bricks, situated on the northern half of Bloodsalt. The building was designed as a fortress in case the inhabitants of the district ever turn against their oppressors. Reinforced double doors at each end can be barred and bolted from inside, and narrow windows serve as sniping posts for archers while also preventing entry from outside. The area around the barracks is devoid of houses or any form of cover, and two pair of militia hobgoblins patrol it day and night.

Although savage, the Militia are disciplined (for now) and under Draegar's firm control, and the inside of the barracks house is as clean and well maintained as that of any human army. Pallets and beds are arrayed at each end of the building near the doors, leaving space for several dozen hobgoblins to bunk down. Any intruder will have to contend with a room full of warriors before penetrating further. Internal walls surround kitchens, vaults, and Draegar Redblade's personal quarters.

The red bricks composing these walls look ordinary, but a seam runs through the middle of each one. Should someone crack a brick in half along this seam, they would find the Unspeakable One's bizarre symbol stamped in gold ink, imprinted with his maddening essence. But the secret of the bricks remains undetected, and so the hobgoblins bunking down in the barracks find their dreams filled with horrors and the enticements of madness.

Key Figures

The following characters can be found at the Redblade Barracks.

Rakhuum Sharktooth

Rakhuum Sharktooth (*male hobgoblin apprentice*) earned his name as a pirate, killing a shark armed only with a long knife. The young hobgoblin is stronger and even more savage than his brethren, one of the few capable of matching the strength of an enraged orc. For his strength and his discipline, Draegar has made Rakhuum his lieutenant and the second-in-command of the Redblade Militia. In return, Sharktooth has pledged undying loyalty to Draegar—but then there are the dreams. He dreams of a hideous face, unending madness, and glorious destruction. The dreams tell him to strike down his leader and come to the service of the Unspeakable One. Rakhuum's sanity is slowly fraying under the strain, and he is becomingly increasingly erratic, consumed by conflicting desires and the need to kill someone. Anyone. Everyone.

Adventure Hooks

Anyone seeking to upset the balance of power in Bloodsalt is going to have to deal with the Redblade Militia, and the hobgoblins are far from pushovers. They are well trained, vicious, and utterly loyal to Draegar Redblade. Furthermore, they have the support of the Captains' Council, who supplies them with weapons and resources in return for their service; if outsiders try to destabilize the Militia, they may draw the ire of the Sea Lord's Guard. The only way to convince the council to withdraw their approval of the Militia may be to present them with proof of their crimes—but that proof is in Redblade's quarters, heavily defended in the center of the barracks.

They may be disciplined and loyal, but the Militia is also under the influence of the Unspeakable One, making them potential allies for the Brotherhood of the Yellow Sign. Visions and dreams urge Rakhuum Sharktooth and other Militia members into the jungles of A'Val to seek the ruined temple buried under Black Dog's Caves and retrieve blasphemous artifacts for the cult. With half his followers gone, Draegar Redblade is hard pressed to maintain control in Bloodsalt; he needs outsiders to track down his missing Militia members and bring them back to the fold. But will his new allies be able to overcome Sharktooth and the other mad Militiamen—and do they really want to restore them to Redblade's control?

Bloodsalt Overview

The "new district" of Freeport is the home of the city's orcs, hobgoblins, and savage races, who live in harsh conditions and follow aggressive leaders.

Buildings

Despite being only a few years old, most are shoddily built and in poor repair, cobbled together from scraps of wood and broken stone.

People

Orcs, hobgoblins, and other savage nonhumans—many scarred from exposure to dangerous chemicals or lives of constant battle—reside here.

Roads

There are no true streets in the district, just bare earth with buildings arrayed at random and alleyways separating them.

Descriptive Elements

The soil is dry, crusted with salt, and stained a dark red; occasionally, pedestrians fall into hidden sinkholes of dangerous chemicals. Noxious smells and fumes issue from the heavily guarded Reclamation Project compound into the rest of the district. Obscene and misspelled graffiti covers the wall that separates Bloodsalt from the Eastern District.

Redblade Kills Rival in Duel, Grip on Bloodsalt Tightened

~ The Shipping News

Law and Order

Neither the Watch nor the Sea Lord's Guards patrol Bloodsalt; the inhabitants of the district react badly to humans telling them what to do. Instead, order (of a kind) is maintained by the Redblade Militia, a gang of hobgoblins commanded by Draegar Redblade (see **Chapter Thirteen: Denizens of Freeport**). The Militia is nothing but bullies and sadists, but they do enforce a kind of law—Redblade's law, where the strong dominate the weak, power belongs to those who take it, and the only truly illegal acts are insolence, rebellion, and refusal to obey the Militia's demands. That said, those demands have to fall within certain limits; Redblade must still report to the Captains' Council and justify the activities of his followers. If the Militia goes too far, the council may cut their payments or even remove their power, so Redblade remains cautious and does his best to cover things up when the inevitable occurs.

The Militia operates out of Bloodsalt's north side, which is mostly populated by hobgoblins. The south side is dominated by orcs, and those pirates haven't any love to spare for their ancestral rivals. There are constant clashes between the Militia and the orc pirates who infest Krom's Throat and other southside bars. Win or lose, each side retreats to lick its wounds, relieve anger by hurting anyone weaker, and wait for the next rematch.

Most dwellings in Bloodsalt don't have much in the way of locks—many of them don't even have doors. Here, theft is only illegal if you get caught, and murder is only a crime if you kill a member of the Redblade Militia. The strong are at liberty to go where they like, take what they like, and hurt whom they like. That said, most of Bloodsalt's inhabitants are willing and able to defend their homes, no matter how squalid. A thief who kicks in the door of a hovel better be prepared for a fight because the orc or hobgoblin family inside will be waiting to strike back.

3. Krom's Throat

"It ain't any kind of night 'til I fill me gut with bloodgrog and kill a few people. So let's get liquored up and riot, ya bastards, and go crack open some hobber heads!"

—Karl the Kraken

Before the founding of Bloodsalt, Krom's Throat was the toughest, most dangerous dive in Scurvytown, a festering hole fit only for orc pirates. Not much has changed except for the location; Krom's Throat has been relocated to Bloodsalt to cater to the new district's orc population. It's still a dangerous place for any human or elf to approach, let alone enter—and if you're a hobgoblin on the south side when the bloodgrog starts to flow, may all your gods help you.

History

Founded a century ago, Krom's Throat was one of the most notorious dives in Scurvytown, a wretched hive on the edge of the city. Ownership changed over the years, but the clientele didn't—orcs and half-orcs fight over booze and food and just for the sheer joy of bloodshed. Krom's Throat was a Freeport institution, one that tourists never cared to visit, and the Sea Lord's Guard preferred to leave it and its patrons alone.

But when the orcs of Scurvytown began relocating to Bloodsalt, Krom's Throat lost both clientele and protection. The rising tide of racism in Scurvytown made it difficult for Cragwipe, the tavern's owner, to buy supplies or stay in operation, and orcs coming into the district to drink came under attack from vigilante groups like the Blackened Knot. Cragwipe saw the writing on the wall and made an easy decision to relocate a few hundred feet to the southern end of Bloodsalt and get all his customers back. The tavern was dismantled and rebuilt (not very well but no one cared), and now it operates much as it always did—loudly, messily, and bloodily. The only real difference is it occasionally gets raided by the Redblade Militia, and when it does, the denizens rouse from their swill and give as good as they get.

Description

Krom's Throat is a stern-looking structure on the edge of Bloodsalt, made of cinder blocks messily plastered together (the same blocks it was built from in Scurvytown, more or less). There are no windows (though there are occasional gaps in the walls to let air in) and just one door, a slab of oak half a foot thick. There's no sign outside and no need for a bouncer or secret knock; anybody who walks in that isn't an orc won't last long.

Inside, the tavern is an offense to civilized sensibilities. There are no tables, no barstools—there's not even a bar. Four cisterns, each the size of a cathedral bell, run along the wall opposite the door; at the bottom of these titanic vats are scores of iron nipples. A handful of coin gets you the right to fight for a spot at those teats all night. It doesn't matter which tank you end up squeezed underneath, either—the only drink on the menu is bloodgrog, the orc favorite. As for food, Cragwipe usually sets up a trough of pig's feet, squid arms, and live eels. The same payment gets you a chance to nose into that line, along with lodging for a night. Those orcs that can't fit into the building when the doors close for the night usually bed down in nearby shanties or hovels; some sleep in the streets, but they risk being picked up by the Redblade Militia for loitering.

Krom's Throat sees more than its share of violence. It wouldn't be a night without at least a half-dozen brainings, clan wars, brawls with the Militia, and general bloody mayhem. Around daybreak, when the party ends, the blubbery snores of orc sailors bedded down in the underbrush is enough to chill even the hardiest seaman. And heavens forbid you're around when Cragwipe hoses down the joint for the next night. Let's just say if you thought a dirty orc was worth avoiding, you'd probably want to steer clear of a grudgingly clean orc.

Key Figures

The following characters can be found at Krom's Throat.

Cragwipe

Cragwipe (*male half-orc apprentice*) has run Krom's Throat for about a dozen years, and in that time he's pretty much seen it all. The middle-aged ex-sailor is tough as nails but much more laidback than most of his brethren; he'd rather have a drink and make some gold than get into a fight. Getting muscled out of Scurvytown was inconvenient, but Cragwipe has simply shrugged and kept going on as before, secure in the knowledge that there'll always be money to be made getting orcs drunk. The barkeep's only secret is that he has a soft spot for the orcs of the Irontooth Enclave, and he donates a portion of his profits to them. He'd prefer his customers didn't know about that, since most see the Irontooths as weaklings.

Karl the Kraken

Karl the Kraken (*male half-orc journeyman*) is one of Freeport's most notorious criminals, a professional thug, arsonist, and killer. The tattooed half-orc used to be an enforcer for Milton Drac but went freelance after his death; he escaped his sentence in the Hulks during the Great Green Fire and has been on the lam ever since. Karl spends most of his time in Krom's Throat, safe in the knowledge that the Sea Lord's Guard aren't going to bother hunting him down in Bloodsalt. Unfortunately, there aren't many in Bloodsalt who need his services, and while Karl's happy to kill and destroy for sheer enjoyment, money is tight. He needs contacts in Scurvytown and Drac's End who can hook him up with clients—and possibly help him get in and out of the city to pull off some jobs.

Adventure Hooks

When a Militia observer identifies Karl the Kraken entering Krom's Throat, Draegar Redblade sees it as a perfect excuse to destroy the tavern; he can present the orc criminal's body to the Captains' Council, claim the bounty on Karl's head, and wipe out an enemy enclave. The Militia swoops down on Krom's Throat, but the orcs aren't going down easily; they settle in for days of siege fighting. Now the Captains' Council is getting impatient, and a wealthy merchant fond of Karl's services wants him rescued from the tavern. If Karl can be extracted from Krom's Throat and a council observer can testify that the orc isn't in the tavern, it'll be a major blow to Draegar's credibility—and money in the pocket of the team that pulls Karl out.

The notorious orc pirate Yorgo No-Nose has a problem. Three years ago, he hid a treasure map inside the walls of Krom's Throat to keep it from his enemies. He's been at sea since then, but now he's back—only to find that the tavern was dismantled and reassembled in Bloodsalt. One of the cinder blocks in the walls contains the map, but which one? His solution is to blow the tavern up and comb through the wreckage with his crew until he finds it. Will anyone discover the bomb that's been planted atop the bloodgrog vats before it explodes? Does anyone want to save Krom's Throat? And what if the vital cinder block is one of the few still left at the original site or is being used to prop up another Bloodsalt shanty?



4. Irontooth Enclave

"The humans want to control us, the hobgoblins want to kill us, and our own kind want to rob us. We owe it to our ancestors to defy all of them. Make this bloody earth your own, children, and rebuild the destiny of our people!"

—Togar Irontooth's Dying Words

Not every orc or half-orc is a pirate, thug, or baby-eating monster; there are children, weakened elders, and peace-loving types among the hulking humanoids, just as with any race. But the racists of Scurvytown don't make that distinction, and they forced many orcs living in the district to move to the harsh slums of Bloodsalt. Faced with this injustice, the Irontooth clan—a respected family of half-orc scholars, craftsmen, and merchants—has done its best to make a community within Bloodsalt, a neighborhood where weaker orcs can live without being victimized by hobgoblins, pirates, or humans.

History

Togar Irontooth didn't have to concern himself with the injustices being done to his people. The half-orc historian was a respected, well-off lecturer at the Freeport Institute who owned a manor house in Drac's End; he didn't need to care about what was happening to poor orcs in Scurvytown. But the aging half-orc had always loved his father's people. An expert in orc history and politics, Togar had contacts and associates in almost every orc family and group in Freeport. Disgusted by how the humans of Scurvytown were treating his people (and how the Captains' Council was letting it happen), Irontooth decided to relocate this family to Bloodsalt and dedicate his remaining years to protecting and helping those civilized orcs and half-orcs forced to live in the district.

The decision cost Togar dearly; he lost his position at the Institute, he lost many of his friends and professional contacts, and in the end, he lost his life. He sold his manor in Drac's End, bought land in Bloodsalt (along with a farming plot to the east of Freeport), and erected several small but livable houses behind a sturdy fence. While the land was cheap, the labor was expensive, as were the guards he had to pay to protect his enclave from pirates, thieves, and hostile hobgoblins. Many orc and half-orc tenants moved into his houses, but because he kept the rent low, he made little money back from them. For months, Togar struggled to keep the Irontooth Enclave afloat—and then he stepped into a hidden sinkhole of fuming acid while walking down the street. The half-orc scholar died shortly afterwards, surrounded by his grieving family and tenants, while creditors and opportunists prepared to steal his possessions.

But the Irontooth Enclave held them back; the tenants and the remaining Irontooths joined forces and fought off the invaders. They were aided in this by Hatchetblack, an orc pirate who threw in his lot with his weaker cousins, and by Togar's old associates at the Freeport Institute, who petitioned the Captains' Council on the enclave's behalf. The word came down to the Militia to leave the Irontooths alone, and the hobgoblins reluctantly gave the enclave a wide berth. Togar's half-siblings rallied to organize the enclave tenants, turning what was once simply a housing estate into a true community.

The Irontooth Enclave has weathered the storm, but life is far from easy behind the estate's fence. Many adults work for the Reclamation Project, while others look after children, till the fields on the Irontooth farm, or find any other work that can keep the enclave financially afloat. The head of the enclave, Torya Irontooth, does her best to maintain alliances with merchants and scholars in Freeport proper, relying on their patronage to deter the Redblade Militia. It's a struggle to feed and protect a community that never stops growing; almost every week, another family or group of orphans seek shelter at the enclave, and the Irontooths refuse to turn anyone away. But despite the odds stacked against them, the Irontooth family and their community keep working and refuse to give in to despair, fired by the memory of Togar Irontooth and the belief they can make Bloodsalt a safe homeland for a more civilized orc race.

Description

The Irontooth Enclave is a large stretch of land within Bloodsalt, measuring three blocks wide (not that Bloodsalt has blocks or even proper streets, but the area's the same size). A six-foot fence of sharp wooden stakes surrounds it, which is enough to deter the odd drunken orc pirate looking for loot or company. Were the enclave to sustain a determined assault by the Militia or a gang, the fence wouldn't be enough to hold them back; the community's leaders know this, but it's the best they have to work with. Entry to the enclave is through a heavy gate on the east side, facing the Irontooth farm and the sea. A pair of orcs—usually pirates loyal to Hatchetblack—guard this gate at all times.

Inside the fence are about a dozen single-story houses, one of which is larger than the others; this is the Irontooth "manor" where Torya Irontooth and her half-siblings live. The manor also houses Togar Irontooth's extensive library of historical documents, perhaps the best such collection outside of the Freeport Institute. The remaining houses are simple but comfortable dwellings that each house one or two orc families. Demand for housing has outstripped supply, and a number of inhabitants must live in tents. Two barns flank the central house, one of which is used for communal meals, meetings, and get-togethers; the other serves as a forge manned by Tureg Irontooth, whose high-quality smithing is another source of income for the enclave. A large tent near the entrance houses Hatchetblack and some of his followers—as well as two cannons from his ship, which he'll use without hesitation to defend the enclave.

The enclave also owns a small but successful farm not far to the east of Bloodsalt; Togar bought the land cheaply in the early days of the Reclamation Project. Two orc families, who grow barley and onions in the alchemically treated earth, work the farm. The enclave uses some of this for its own food supply and sells the rest. The farm is close to the beach, and the orcs also have a pair of fishing boats at a small dock;

Irontooth Enclave: New Hope or Last Hurrah?

~ The Shipping News

Hatchetblack's ship, *Champion's Cry*, is anchored just off shore, and a trio of pirates stays at the farm to protect it.

Key Figures

The following characters can be found at the Irontooth Enclave.

Torya Irontooth

Torya Irontooth (*female half-orc apprentice*) is the rarest of creatures—a beautiful half-orc. Before the Irontooth family's relocation to Bloodsalt, Torya was a socialite of sorts, with connections throughout Freeport's upper-middle class. She resisted the move to Bloodsalt, thinking it was beneath her; when she finally did relocate, she found almost all of her aristocratic friends considered her little more than a novelty and no longer wanted anything to do with her. The rejection spurred Torya rather than shattered her, making her realize her family and her people are more important than social recognition. She still maintains some connections within the Merchant and Eastern Districts, but she works with them to protect and finance the enclave, where she is regarded as the community's glamorous leader.

Hatchetblack

Hatchetblack (*male orc journeyman*) is a massive, dreadlocked orc pirate, who dresses in spiked leathers and is always armed with two razor-sharp axes. While he looks bloodthirsty, Hatchetblack is surprisingly personable, a former gladiator who gained a sense of both honor and showmanship in the arena, not that that makes him any less fearsome in combat. If anything, his training makes him much more dangerous than most of his barbaric peers. Like Togar Irontooth, Hatchetblack believes in a lost orc civilization that upheld ideas of justice rather than barbarism. Hoping to fulfill Togar's dream and prove orcs can be not just equal but surpass humans in compassion, Hatchetblack and his pirate followers have sworn to defend the enclave. He is, of course, hopelessly in love with Torya Irontooth but has yet to find the courage to tell her of his affections.

Adventure Hooks

While Torya Irontooth has largely turned her back on Freeport's aristocracy, not all of her former friends have forgotten her. Ludovic Nagel, one of the Rakeshames wants to marry her, not out of love but because he wants to take control of the enclave's farmland. She's spurning his advances, but he's applying pressure; many of the merchants that deal with the enclave are being intimidated by the Rakeshames. As her community runs low on supplies, Torya must find a way to deflect Nagel's advances once and for all. Meanwhile, Hatchetblack bristles with rage against his rival, knowing this isn't a battle that can be won with steel—but when the Rakeshames go on a rampage through the Bloodsalt streets, he goes on the warpath, unknowingly lured into a trap.

Togar Irontooth's library is the envy of many scholars and historians and contains rare documents unavailable anywhere else. An investigation into the history of Freeport, the Serpent's Teeth, or the ancient empire of the serpent people may hinge upon access to those documents—but Torya isn't about to give them away. In return for access, she demands help from applicants in protecting her community, possibly even the removal of Draegar Redblade and his Militia. It's a high price, but if characters really want that information, that's what they have to do—assuming one of their rivals doesn't steal those documents while they're busy elsewhere.



5. Gitch's Tower

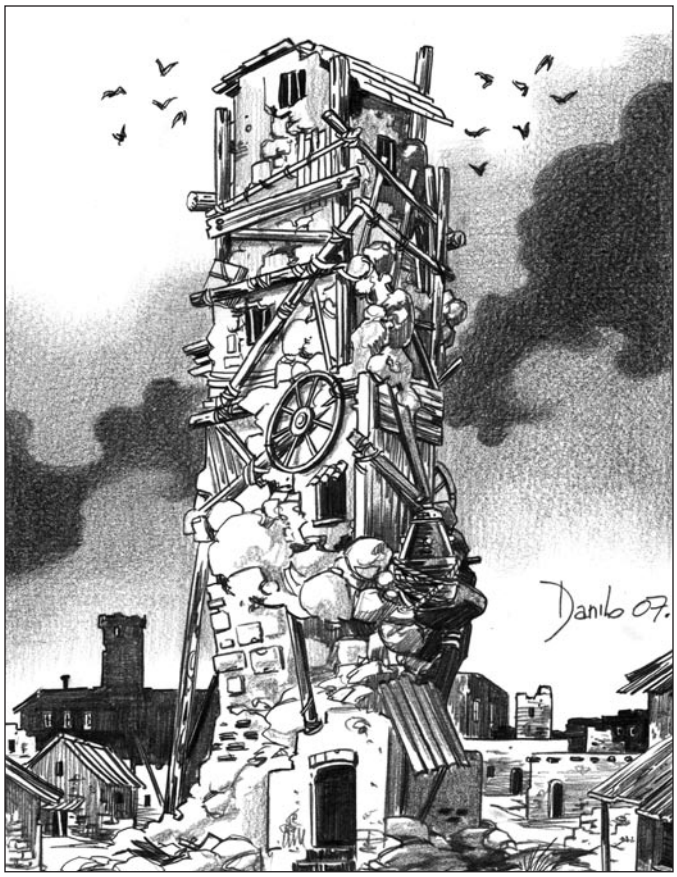
"Ya want a wizard? Well, I'm as powerful a wizard the likes of you is ever gonna meet. Ya think ya can do better? Then yer foolin' yerself! Now bend down so's I can look ya in the eye, and I'll cast me a spell that'll fix yer problems."

—Gitch

A rickety, crooked tower claws at the skyline in the middle of Bloodsalt, looking like it might fall over any minute. This is the home of the district's mightiest goblin wizard. While he may be small, ugly, and overconfident, Gitch truly is the most skilled mage in Bloodsalt's savage community—and the only thing stopping the Militia from completely enslaving their smaller, weaker cousins.

History

Gitch was never as skilled as his wizardly peers, but he had enough intellect and cunning to master a small degree of magic and put it to use. Several years ago, he managed to trap a water elemental within a brewery, tapping its power through his spells. He installed the vat on a wagon, and Freeport's Goblin Fire Department was born! For a small fee, Gitch would put out fires with the power of the elemental and make it very clear if you didn't want another fire to break out, you'd best pay him a regular fee. As far as protection rackets go, it was remarkably sophisticated for Scurvytown, and anyone who tried to get rough with Gitch or his goblin accomplices discovered the little guy knew some very dangerous spells.



Gitch's operation went smoothly for a couple of years, and he became one of the most respected goblins in Freeport (which isn't saying much, but the other goblins thought him akin to a god). Then came the Great Green Fire, and suddenly there was a real fire to deal with. In order to save Scurvytown's goblin community from destruction, Gitch released the water elemental; the creature was destroyed by the flames, but its liquid death throes extinguished numerous blazes and saved many lives. Gitch was a hero! Gitch was the goblin of the hour! Gitch… was out of a job, as were his cohorts.

The gratitude of Scurvytown's goblins wasn't enough to protect Gitch from the ire of his old customers or the rising racism of the local humans, so he relocated to Bloodsalt with the rest of his kind, hoping to find another scam to get rich. Instead, he found a ghetto full of goblins looking to him as their protector—and a gang of hobgoblins who wanted their puny brethren to work and die for their pleasure. Gitch's natural cowardice fought with his desire to be loved by his fellows (backed up by a small degree of actual loyalty to them), and to everyone's surprise, cowardice came second. His magic drove the hobgoblins off, and the goblins hailed him as their savior. They built him a tower in the middle of their ghetto and told all that Gitch the Great and Powerful was their leader!

Unfortunately for Gitch and his followers, the surviving hobgoblins joined the Redblade Militia. While the Militia has had other business to deal with since then, the time is coming when they'll turn their attention to the goblin ghetto—and the uppity wizard that lives at its center.

Description

The Tower of High Sorcery (as the locals call it) looks like it might fall over in a stiff breeze, and that's probably not far from the truth; it was assembled from salvaged wood and debris and has yet to face a storm or hurricane. Crooked and leaning noticeably off center, the tower is made from various kinds of wood, stone, and other materials—barrels, packing crates, even part of Gitch's old fire-fighting wagon—slapped together with whatever nails, plaster, and paint the goblins could steal. It's surrounded by the tiny shacks, hovels, and lean-tos of the goblin ghetto, which takes up a block or so on Bloodsalt's west side, under the shadow of the Eastern District's wall. Human visitors stand out like a sore thumb in this area because they're taller than many of the buildings (apart from the tower).

The interior of the tower is a warren of boxes, crates, stolen trash, knick-knacks and anything else the goblins have donated to their champion. The ceilings are low, and the smell is unpleasant; housekeeping is not a notable goblin talent. A ladder on the ground floor leads to the next, and a second ladder here leads up to the top floor. Gitch lives at the top and often peers worriedly out the windows, looking for signs of trouble. Up to a dozen goblins live in the bottom and middle floors to defend their leader and are ready to fire arrows and stones from the windows at invaders before fighting in close quarters.

Key Figures

The following characters can be found at Gitch's Tower.

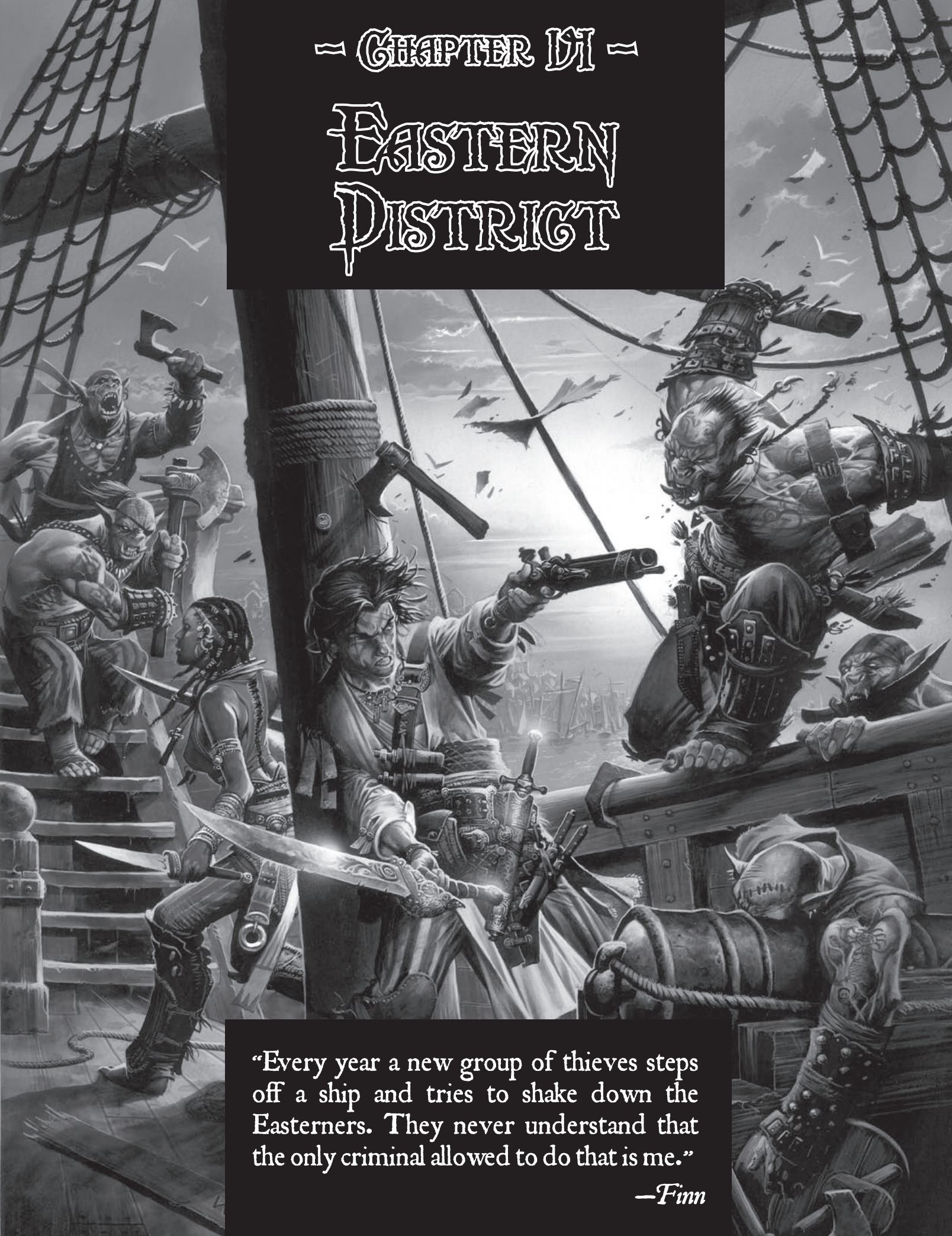
Gitch

There have been many great mages trained by the Wizards' Guild—and then there is Gitch (*male goblin journeyman*). He's no great shakes as a wizard, it's true, but he does have a measure of skill—just not as much as he thinks he does and certainly not as much as he needs. Gitch knows the hammer is going to fall one of these days, and he's desperate to find a way out of his predicament. He wrestles daily with the temptation to just slink out of Bloodsalt and leave the goblins to their fate—but then one of his admirers will give him her last roasted bat treat, call him "great one," or just gaze at him with big wet eyes, and he can't summon up the necessary lack of courage. The thing he wants desperately is an ally with the power to take on the Militia—or, failing that, a sure fire way to scam, steal, or beg enough money to hire some bodyguards.

Adventure Hooks

Shops in the Eastern District are suffering from a crime wave—a very petty one. Food, tools, empty flour sacks, and chicken feet—nothing is too minor to be lifted. Investigators find very obvious clues pointing to the Redblade Militia as the culprits, such as Militia uniforms, hobgoblin footprints, and even graffiti saying "Redblade Was Here!" The real culprits are Gitch's followers, who have dug a tunnel under the district's wall; they're hoping to bring retaliation down upon the Militia (and steal anything not nailed in the process). It's trivial to work out what's really going on—but will the investigators punish the pathetic, frightened goblins or take pity on them?

Bored and looking for easy fun, a squad of the Militia cut through the ghetto, killing several goblins and warning the rest that they'll be back. The goblins look to Gitch to save them; for his part, the little wizard finds a fury in his heart he never suspected. Knowing they'll be slaughtered in a direct battle, Gitch has a plan: invade the Reclamation Project Compound and hold it hostage! The Captains' Council demands something be done, and the Militia prepares to attack—but Gitch plans to set the alchemical factories on fire with his magic and trap the hobgoblins in the flames. It's a disaster waiting to happen, and only outside intervention might prevent an explosion that will wipe Bloodsalt off the map.



— Chapter VI —

Eastern District

"Every year a new group of thieves steps off a ship and tries to shake down the Easterners. They never understand that the only criminal allowed to do that is me."

—Finn

The Eastern District is the bastion of the middle class. In Freeport, however, middle class is not synonymous with comfort and stability. Only the wealthy can really be sure of their future. For most of the scrabbling middle class (known colloquially as Easterners) in Freeport, financial ruin is only one bad business deal away. A decade of hard work can be washed away in a matter of days. Disasters such as this are known as the "Scurvytown Express," since newly impoverished Easterners quickly migrate to the cheap flophouses of Scurvytown or, if they're lucky, Drac's End.

Easterners are always looking to make some quick cash or better their position. This ambition gives the district an exciting, dynamic feel. The streets here are full of hustle and bustle and wheel and deal.

While many folk still live in multifamily tenements, they are generally much better kept than those of either Drac's End or the festering hives of Scurvytown. Easterners are more likely to have a row house of their own, and a lucky few even have small yards.

The district is home to many small specialty shops and businesses, as well as up-and-coming sea captains and merchants. Craftsmen like blacksmiths, carpenters, coopers, and the like also make the Eastern District their home—although, those having more "olfactory impact" (such as tanners) are "encouraged" to keep their businesses in Scurvytown.

Finn's Syndicate

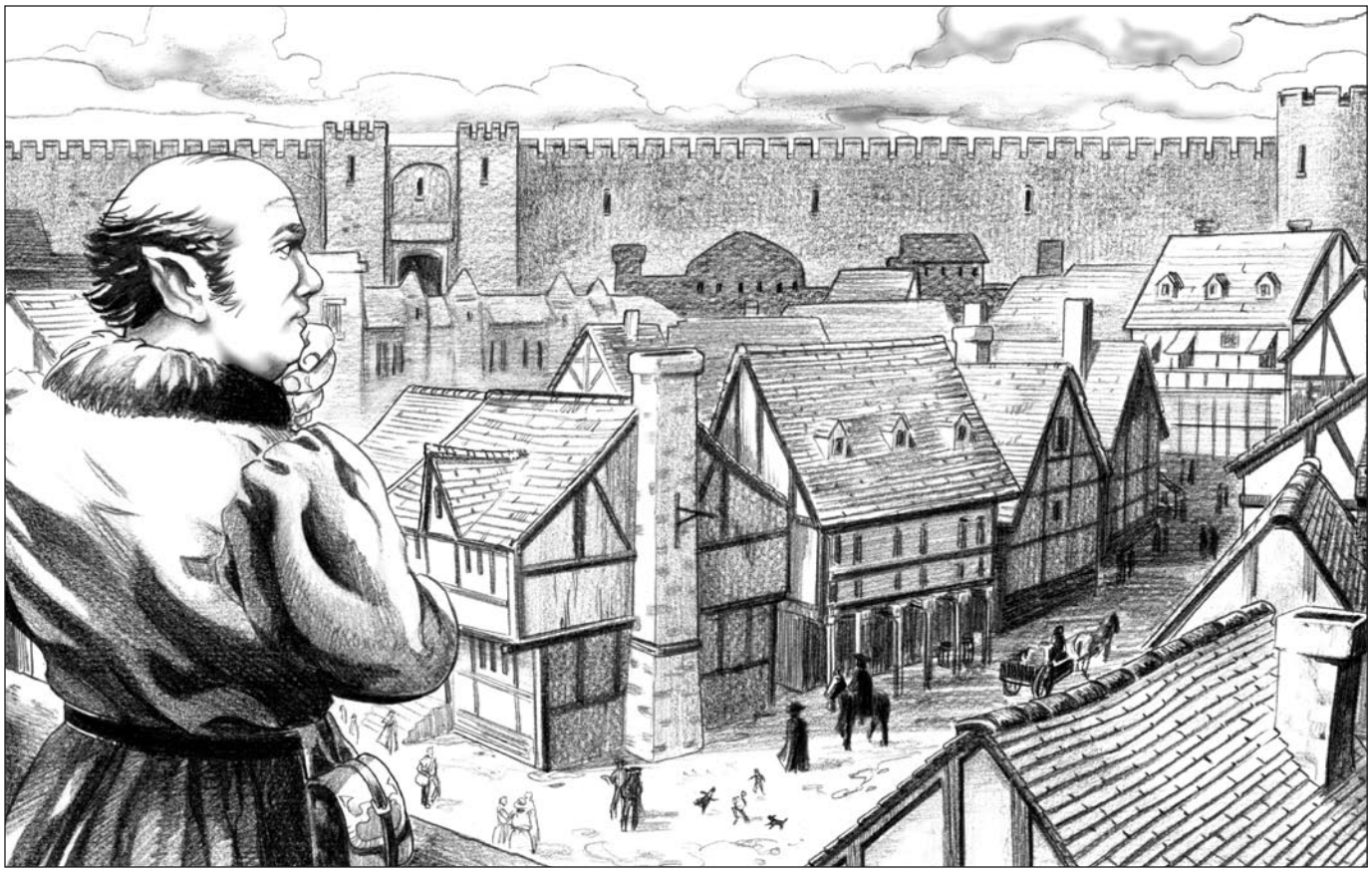
The Eastern District, it would seem, is in a difficult position. It is surrounded by the poorest parts of Freeport: Scurvytown to its southeast, Drac's End to its northwest, and Bloodsalt to northeast. The Docks, to its south, is overrun with thieves, drunks, and criminals. The Watch is corrupt and inefficient. To whom can the Eastern District turn to protect its citizens and businesses?

The answer is a halfling named Finn. Despite his stature, he is the most respected and feared citizen in the Eastern District. Officially, he is the president of the Halfling Benevolent Association. Unofficially, he is the leader of a criminal organization that controls the Eastern District. Known as Finn's Syndicate or simply the Syndicate, this group is the real power in this part of Freeport.

While Finn is certainly on the wrong side of a law, he sees himself as a pragmatic businessman. He offers services to the good citizens of the Eastern District, and they must pay for those services. Finn makes most of his money in two ways: protection and money lending. Interestingly enough, while protection in most places is indeed a racket, Finn's Syndicate actual does keep thieves and criminals out of the Eastern District. After all, if Finn let other thieves take the money of his clientele, how would the Syndicate get paid?

Money lending is big business in a place like the Eastern District. Hungry, young entrepreneurs have more ideas than cash, so Finn provides them with gold for their businesses. Struggling merchants use his money to bankroll trips in search of exotic trade goods. Existing businesses get loans to help them through the lean times. All of these ventures are risky, so Finn charges premium rates. When they are successful, Finn benefits. When unsuccessful, Finn's enforcers find a way to recoup the losses—always.

To a surprising degree, Easterners are loyal to Finn and the Syndicate. They know he's a criminal, but they also feel he's one of them. He keeps away unwanted elements, he protects their businesses, and he sponsors several street festivals each year that bring in a lot of money to the Eastern District.



Locations of Interest

The following locations can be found in the Eastern District.

1. Chambers Asylum

"Have you found the Yellow Sign? Have you found the Yellow Sign? Have you found the Yellow Sign?"

—Unknown Inmate

The mind can only take so much before it cracks. There are many causes for lunacy: the trauma of recurring nightmares, encounters with eldritch horrors, the revelation of dark secrets, and the pain of prolonged torture name but a few. When people become mad enough to endanger themselves and others, they are brought to the Chambers Asylum. Few of those interred ever walk the streets of Freeport again.

History

The Chambers Asylum was founded forty-nine years ago during the reign of Marten Drac. When he was Sea Lord, Marten became rich through rampant corruption and taxation. He gained and maintained power by the judicious use of blackmail, double-dealing, and murder. Those who truly angered him faced being locked up in Freeport's new asylum for the insane, never to be heard from again.

At the time, few Freeporters connected the building of this new asylum with the Sea Lord. It appeared to be the work Dr. Chambers, a man from the Continent who claimed to have invented new techniques to treat the insane. In reality, Chambers was a charlatan hired by Marten Drac to run what amounted a private prison for the Sea Lord's enemies. The Chambers Asylum allowed Drac to confine undesirables in its cells without the pretense of a trial. Once there, anything could be done to them.

When Anton Drac became Sea Lord, things changed at the asylum. Dr. Chambers was run out of town and priests of the God of Healing took it over. Even so, the Chambers Asylum remained a grim place. Those consigned there were often beyond help, and many were quite violent. Even the healers could not bring comfort to the inmates, and over time, the asylum began to affect the priests. It made them harder and crueler. This behavior did not go unnoticed at the temple, so when Milton Drac offered to purchase the Chambers Asylum for a hefty price, the priests quickly agreed.

Milton Drac was, of course, a leader in the Brotherhood of the Yellow Sign, a cult dedicated to the madness of the Unspeakable One. During his reign, blasphemous rituals were performed in the Chambers Asylum, and many sane Freeporters went mad within its walls. When Milton Drac and his closest cohorts were slain, the asylum was forgotten in the chaotic aftermath and the ensuing succession crisis.

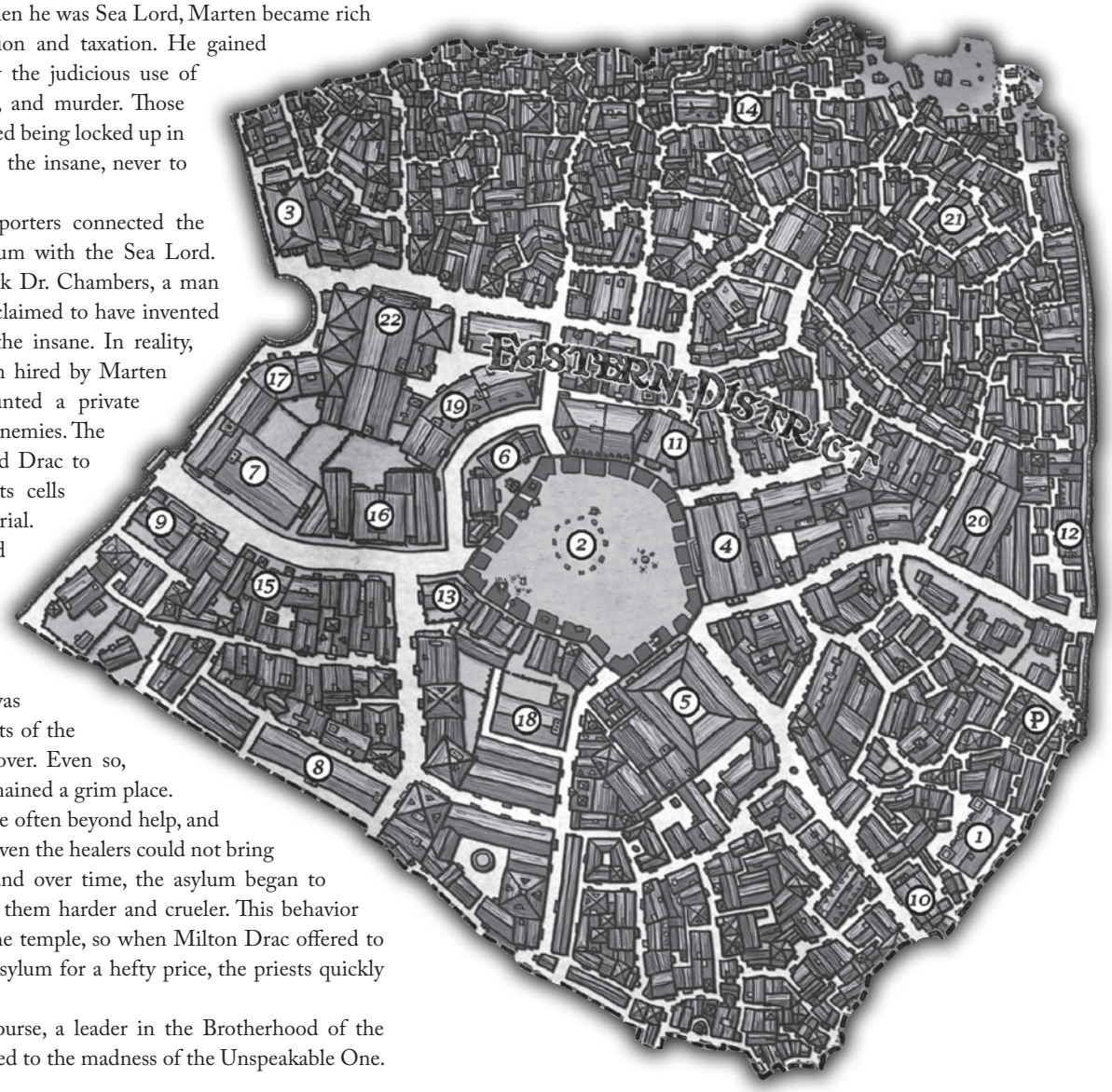
Three years ago, a self-described "life researcher" named Bianka Altanish took over the Chambers Asylum. She was more interested in using the patients as test subjects than in curing them. She leaves the day-to-day running of the asylum to Clement Moore, content to pursue her research.

Description

The Chambers Asylum is a two-story building made of stone. The top floor, where the staff lives, has windows, but the first floor does not. The building has only one entrance, a large, iron-reinforced door. Non-violent inmates are kept on the first floor in small but relatively clean cells. Beneath the streets, there is a basement level with dungeon-like cells where the most dangerous inmates are held.

Key Figures

The following characters can be found in the Chambers Asylum.





Bianka Altanish

Although her title is "life researcher," what truly obsesses Bianka Altanish (*female human journeyman*) is death. Since her youngest days, she has feared it, and this is the root of her quest for the secret of immortality. She studied at the Freeport Institute for a time and worked at the Crematorium as an apprentice priest of the God of Death for several years. Neither the wisdom of her teachers nor the secrets gleaned from corpses provided the knowledge she sought. Deciding there was a limit to what the dead could teach her, she turned her attention to the living. She used family money to take over the Chambers Asylum, which provided live patients for her research and guaranteed privacy. Currently, her experiments revolve around the application of certain elixirs and potions. If the asylum affects Bianka as it did the healing priests a generation ago, it may not be long until she goes down a darker path.

Clement Moore

Clement Moore (*male human journeyman*) was the steward of the Chambers Asylum and a low level member of the Brotherhood of the Yellow Sign during the reign of Milton Drac. He was not important enough to draw any attention after Drac's fall. He quietly kept doing his job, and the asylum was ignored. When Bianka Altanish took over, life got better for Clement Moore. Altanish lets him run the asylum as he wishes, so long as she has enough subjects for her research and no prying families start asking questions. In addition to handling the asylum's operations, Moore set up a profitable business, allowing families to deposit troublesome members at the asylum even if they aren't insane—in exchange for a sizeable fee. Clement has seen no evidence of the Brotherhood of the Yellow Sign since Drac's death. He assumes the entire cult was wiped out and now just tries to forget he was ever involved.

Adventure Hooks

Bianka Altanish gives an experimental elixir to several inmates, and it kills them. Her guards dump the bodies in Scurvytown, where it is hoped they won't attract notice. It turns out the elixir did have an effect, though, and the inmates come back to life as zombies. They terrorize Scurvytown until put down. Clues lead back to the Chambers Asylum. What is going on inside, and why is Bianka Altanish so curious about what happened to the zombies' corpses?

The Brotherhood of the Yellow Sign is not done with Clement Moore. One day he is contact by agents of the Brotherhood who have just arrived in Freeport. They want to use the Chambers Asylum for rituals once again, but Moore wants to put it behind him. How can he get rid of the cultists without revealing his own history with the Brotherhood?

2. Field of Honor

"Get your meat on a stick here! It's the best in Freeport, friends, and that's no lie!"

—Gilbert the Hawker

The Field of Honor is the center of the Eastern District, both literally and figuratively. By day, it is a commercial hub, and by night, it is home to cloaked duelists with flashing blades. At all hours, it is the heart of the Syndicate, the criminal organization that controls the Eastern District.

History

In the early days of Freeport, the pirates lived by a code of fellowship. Disputes that could not be settled in any other way were decided by formal duels outside the city walls. For hundreds of years, those duels were fought at a location known as the Field of Honor. When the city expanded over this area, it was preserved as a spacious plaza in memory of Freeport's past.

Nowadays, the Field of Honor is the hub of the Eastern District. Important businesses are located on the plaza, and nearly all transport in the district moves through it. The Halfling Benevolent Association is also here, a constant reminder of Finn's control of the district. During the day, the Field of Honor fills up with hawkers' carts, but these clear out once it gets dark.

Serkan Fights Three Duelists at Once—And Wins!

~The Shipping News

Eastern District Overview

The Eastern District is Freeport's middle-class haven. It is home to many small businesses, as well as several residential neighborhoods.

Buildings

Most are in good repair, generally of a mix of wood and stone. Residential areas are dominated by town houses. Many families live above the businesses they own and run.

People

Craftsmen, ship captains, shop owners, workers, and street vendors reside here.

Roads

Streets are fairly wide and cobbled, many radiating from the Field of Honor. There are some narrow and irregular streets near Drac's End and Scurvytown.

Descriptive Elements

Easterners wear plain but well-made clothing. Rickshaws often clatter through the streets. Hawkers are a common sight because of the Field of Honor.

Several years ago, a group of young, bored Freeporters, attracted by legends of the old pirate code, revived the practice of dueling at the Field of Honor. Their duels were tame compared to the combat to the death that used to occur on this spot, but the fights nonetheless agitated many of the local merchants. In response to this ire, the duelists changed the fight times to the deep of the night, when all the businesses in the area were closed. Finn's Syndicate, never an organization to pass up a moneymaking opportunity, began placing odds on the fighters. Now the sounds of clashing blades and clinking coins can be heard in the Field of Honor almost every night.

Description

The Field of Honor is a roughly circular plaza three hundred feet in diameter. It is cobbled with a rose-colored stone imported specially for this arena. During the day, the plaza is mobbed with people on foot, in rickshaws, or in carriages. Everyone must dodge their way through the hawkers' carts that fight for a spot each day.

Key Figures

The following characters can be found at the Field of Honor.

Darius Dorvin

Darius Dorvin (*male halfling apprentice*) is a feature on the Field of Honor. He only has one scam, but it's one he perfected with years of practice. Darius poses as a lost human child, frantically searching for his mother. While grabbing onto sympathetic (and wealthy) looking passersby and weeping for his mother, Darius filches purses and other valuables from his victims. Once he's fleeced someone, he pretends to see his mother in the crowd and dashes off. With his halfling stature, it only takes the right clothes, a bit of makeup, and a change of vocal pitch to pull off the impersonation. The fact that Darius is somewhat childish, despite being nearly thirty years old, also helps. His downfall is a very adult habit though: gambling. He loses money as fast as he steals it, which puts him back out on the plaza every day looking for new marks.

Nalini

Nalini (*female human apprentice*) is a young scribe that works daily in the Field of Honor. She writes and reads letters for the illiterate. It's not the best job but Nalini gets by. She lives in Drac's End but has found the Field of Honor is a better place to ply her trade. She aspires to become a wizard, but she has neither the money nor the contacts to do so just yet.

Serkan

Serkan (*male azhar master*) is the undefeated champion of the Field of Honor duelists. In his homeland, he was a renowned swordsman until his life took a dark turn. His storybook romance with a young princess ended in blood when he discovered she made him a cuckold. Serkan flew into a rage, killing his wife and her two lovers. He became an exile, wandering from port to port and working as a hired killer. He came to Freeport and stumbled across the duelists. Here, he thought, he might win back some small part of his honor. For the past year, he has beaten all challengers, his whirling yatagan unstoppable. Now he refuses to kill for money. Instead, he fights non-lethal duels at the Field of Honor and makes a living schooling eager young duelists. Serkan teaches swordsmanship and a code of honor. To practice the former without the latter, Serkan says, is to be little more than an animal.

Adventure Hooks

A rival duelist plans to beat Serkan by poisoning him. When the PCs overhear this plan, they have a choice to make. They can bet against Serkan and make a killing when he loses or do the honorable thing and let the sword master know of the plot. If they help him, Serkan will be impressed with their character and could become an ally or mentor.

In the press of the crowd, one of the hawkers is fatally knifed in the back. Who would want to kill this lowly street vendor? Was the man in debt to a moneylender, or did he have a rival hawker who was

Law and Order

The Watch has a new precinct house where the Eastern District, Scurvytown, and Bloodsalt meet. This location is no coincidence. Commissioner Holliver decided shortly after taking office the Watch had enough to do without getting into a war with the Syndicate. He has thus been pursuing a policy of letting the Eastern District police itself and only intervening in true emergencies. A precinct house is maintained in the area to provide a local reserve for actions in Scurvytown and Bloodsalt when things go bad. For the sake of appearances, a small patrol of watchmen does a circuit around the district at dawn and dusk every day. It is always punctual, so the Syndicate operators have no trouble avoiding it.

The local Watch Captain is Regar Shieldbreaker (*male dwarf journeyman*), a corrupt and corpulent officer put in charge two years ago. Despite his family name, Regar is not much of a combatant, though he excels at weaseling his way up the watch's hierarchy. The Syndicate pays him a modest bribe each week, and in return, he keeps out of Finn's way. Commissioner Holliver pretends he doesn't know this is going on, only asking that Regar have his men ready when other districts need reinforcement. They are in Scurvytown so frequently that most Easterners think they should move there. Some of the watchmen chafe under this arrangement and long to smack the smirks off the faces of the Syndicate's bullies, the Hellhounds.

driven to murder? Or did one of his clients find out what the meat on a stick really was?

3. The Golden Pillar Society

"I can proudly say that no organization in Freeport takes such a special interest in the city's orphans. The rich families of the city may have forgotten about Freeport's neediest citizens, but we have not."

—Tasin Berthain

The Golden Pillar Society is a fraternal organization for the wealthier members of Freeport's middle class. They sponsor many charitable works in the Eastern District and beyond. Some folks say that the members of the Golden Pillar try so hard to act nobly that they must have something to hide. Despite being a cynical view, it's true.

History

Not everyone in Freeport is a crook, conman, or corsair. There are plenty of respectable burghers who own shops, keep scrupulous records, and take pride in the merchandise they sell. These are the folk who inhabit the Eastern District. While many Easterners are young and hungry, there is an "upper crust" of the middle class who has managed to hang onto their wealth over several generations, while never quite making it to the Merchant District. They live in tasteful townhouses—not fancy by any means but comfortable enough to afford a lifestyle worlds away from the average Freeporter—a closet full of clothes, a gaggle of children with eccentric nannies, handcrafted furniture, a cellar for wine and awkward heirlooms, and an attic for mad aunties.

Among this enlightened bourgeoisie, wealth has bred a strong sense of social responsibility. They may have money now, but searching just a few branches down the family tree reveals tradesmen and servants. Go a bit further, and you may find beggars or—heaven forbid—adventurers. So the upper middle class of Freeport are especially generous to people needing a hand up. Anyone who's anyone in the Eastern District is a member of the Golden Pillar Society, a fraternal organization that specializes in charity work founded seventy-eight years ago. The society runs fund raisers for orphanages and hospices, creates jobs for criminals trying to go straight, and hosts summits on any number of cultural flashpoint issues, inviting speakers to lecture on "The Half-Orc Question" or the economic effects of the Great Green Fire.

Among this enlightened bourgeoisie, wealth has acted as a spur to charity; it also has become an ever-tightening steam valve. The burghers see the extravagant life of the Merchant District's wealthy, of the Captains' Council, and of the famous privateers who make the town their home—and they quietly lick their lips. They want the license that goes with excessive wealth, but wild living would cost them the station they've carved out—generations' worth of crawling up from the gutter blown to bits with one indiscreet night in a brothel.

Most of the Golden Pillar membership just swallow hard and dream big. But an inner core of the society found a way to indulge during the reign of Milton Drac. One evening a month, a dozen members of the society gather in the soundproofed basement of their headquarters and indulge in a wild bacchanal that would shame the coarsest sailor in the port. The basest carnal depravity, gluttony, drunkenness, experiments with unnamable potions, clarion calls to vile sex demons—all smothered by five feet of brickwork and carefully chosen retainers.

To each his own, some would say—but the burghers have a nasty habit of bringing outsiders into their affairs. Usually their riot of Saturnalia culminates in the death of a poor unfortunate—or several—from a society-run orphanage or halfway house. The young men and women sacrificed to the members' transgressive lusts are not missed. The only ones who cared about them in the first place were the "bleeding hearts" of the Golden Pillar Society.

Description

The Golden Pillar Society is based out of a well-appointed townhouse near the walls of the Old City. The building has three stories and the aforementioned basement. The small staff works on the first floor, organizing the various charitable works from well-appointed offices. Paid watchmen can be found here from dusk to dawn. The upper two floors consist of various meeting rooms and studies for society members. The offices of the society president, Jeroen Vanderzee, and the exchequer, Tasin Berthain, are also on the top floor.

Key Figures

The following characters can be found at the Golden Pillar Society.

Golden Pillar Fundraiser to Benefit Scurvytown Orphans

~The Shipping News

Jeroen Vanderzee

Jeroen Vanderzee (*male human master*) has been the president of the Golden Pillar Society for over thirty years. He ran the family business, the Vanderzee Glassworks, for all of his adult life. He is now in his sixties and has passed on the glassworks to his son, Willi. However, he retained his office at the Golden Pillar Society and now fills his days running the organization. His mind is not as sharp as it once was, and this may explain why he has no inkling of the society's dark secret.

Tasin Berthain

Tasin (*male elf journeyman*) is the exchequer of the Golden Pillar Society and the leader of its inner circle. His mother, a war widow, brought the family to Freeport and found success as an importer of fine wine and spirits from the Continent. Tasin dutifully took over the business when his mother retired, but he felt trapped by his family obligations. He wanted to break free, leave the city, and find his own path. Yet he had sworn to his mother he would keep the business running and take care of his two sisters. For decades, he has played the part of respectable merchant, which led him to join the Golden Pillar Society. It was during the reign of Milton Drac, after his mother died, that he finally began to act on his impulses. His position allowed him to organize the society's bacchanals right under Jeroen Vanderzee's nose, and the old man even signed off on the "remodeling" of the building's basement. Now Tasin neglects his family business to spend more time planning "special events" for the Golden Pillar Society.

Adventure Hooks

The Golden Pillar Society snatches up a young girl from the Freeport Orphanage, not realizing she's a relative of crime boss Mister Wednesday, who secretly watches over her. When the orphan disappears into the Eastern District, Mr. Wednesday thinks she's been snatched by Finn. Will the Canting Crew and the Syndicate go to war over the actions of the Golden Pillar Society? And what would happen if they were to find out who was really responsible?

Tasin Berthain's sisters have become concerned about their brother. The family business is not what it used to be, and Tasin has become cold and distant. When they start asking the wrong questions, Tasin panics. His sisters can never learn the truth of what goes on the basement of the Golden Pillar Society. The sisters think their brother just needs some help and good council. Tasin fears he may have to silence them. For the Berthain family, there may be no happy ending.

4. The Halfling Benevolent Association

"When you try to rip us off, we tend to forget the 'benevolent' part of our name."

—*Trask*

The HBA appears to be an organization that serves the interests of Freeport's halfling population, and it does just that. It is also is the heart of Finn's criminal empire, known as the Syndicate.

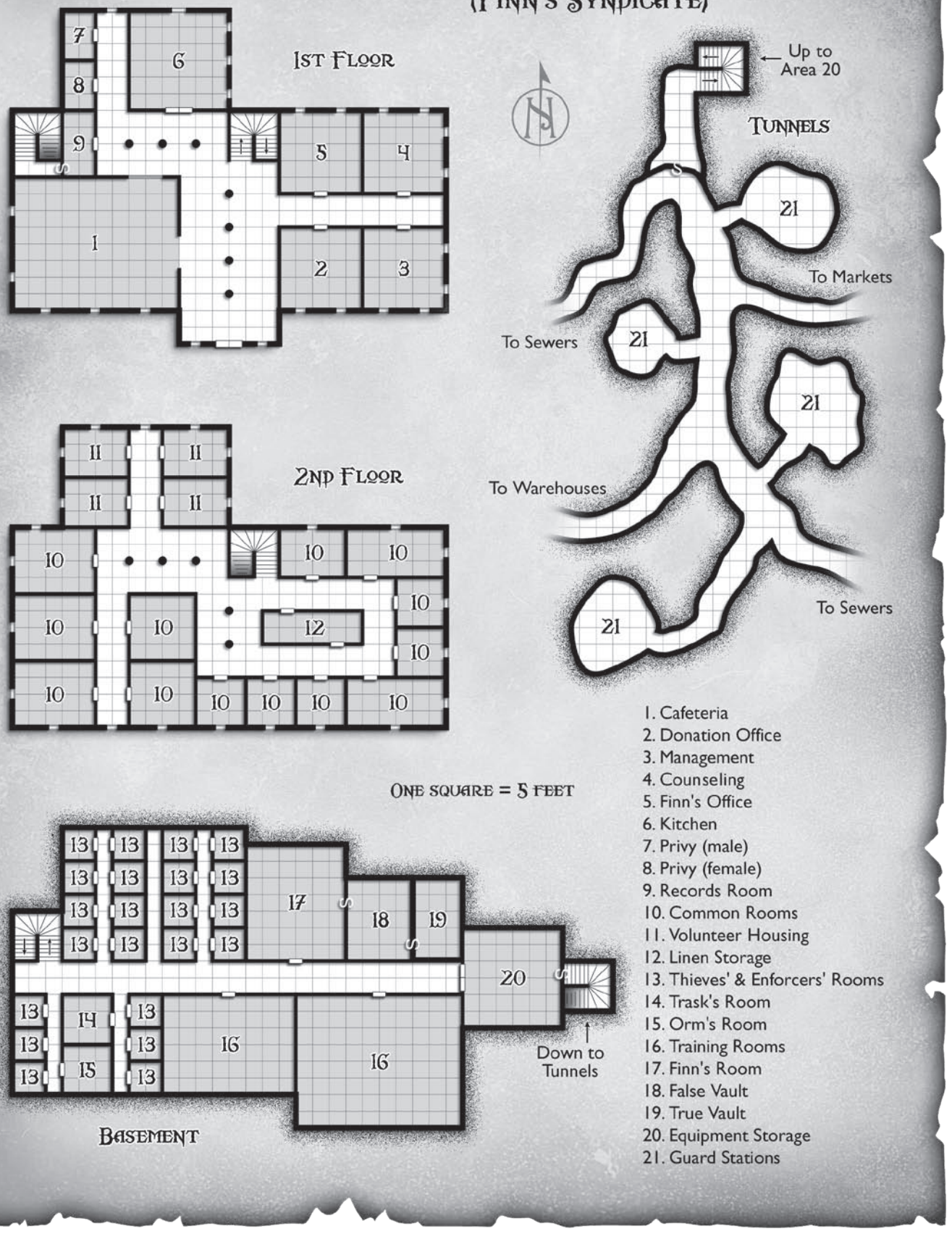
History

Founded over a hundred years ago, the Halfling Benevolent Association (HBA) began as an effort to protect Freeport's smallest citizens from injustice at the hands (and feet) of the larger races. The HBA used money to buy clout with the city's powers. Once the organization was established, it was able to provide loans to members to purchase and build homes and businesses. Donations from the HBA's success stories, plus some prudent investments, allowed the organization to prosper and grow. For a time, there was even a militia (known derisively as the "Short Swords" by other Easterners), but the HBA leadership decided it was more expedient to simply hire bodyguards when needed.

It was only a matter of time before some enterprising halflings tried to take advantage of the HBA to get rich. Thirty years ago, a group of ambitious entrepreneurs took over the organization. They used the treasury of the HBA to bankroll a huge convoy to the east. If all went according to plan, the rare commodities they imported would triple their money. The journey took over six months, but it seemed that the convoy was going to make it. They were but a day's sail from



Halfling Benevolent Association
(Finn's Syndicate)



Freeport when disaster struck. They were caught in a freak squall, and the heavily laden merchant ships were swamped or driven into nearby reefs. In the end, only a single ship made it back to the port. The rest were destroyed and the cargo lost.

The next five years were hard for the HBA. The organization was nearly bankrupt, and it lost its influence quickly. Soon, a criminal gang was preying on halflings, breaking into their homes and robbing them on the streets. The gang then began to prey on other Easterners. The whole district was soon beset, and it seemed only a matter of time before it became another Scurvytown. It was at this point Finn appeared in Freeport. He purchased the HBA for practically nothing, built up his own organization, and then went toe to toe with the gang that had been plaguing the Eastern District. Many bodies hit the cobblestones, and within a year, Finn had driven them out of Freeport entirely, never to return. This was not philanthropy though. Finn expected to be paid for the protection he offered. Since then, the HBA has been the center of Finn's organization, the Syndicate.

Description

The HBA's headquarters is a large, two-story building in the center of the Eastern District, right on the Field of Honor. Made of brick and spurning ostentation, the building, like Finn, is all business. The HBA uses the first and second floors, while the Syndicate as a whole is based out of a secret basement level. Visitors to the HBA come and go all hours of the day and night on business legitimate and otherwise. The building is protected by an array of traps and illusions cast by Finn's lieutenant Trask. Because Finn keeps a veritable hoard in the hidden vault of the HBA, he doesn't skimp on security.

Key Figures

The following characters can be found at the HBA. For details on Finn, see **Chapter Thirteen: Denizens of Freeport.**

Cyril Berryhill

Known as "Mouse" at the HBA, Cyril Berryhill (*male halfling journeyman*) has worked for the Syndicate since he was a teenager. He was Finn's assistant for over a decade, and now he performs two important functions in the Syndicate. First, he is one of Finn's advisors, and the crime lord has come to trust his analytical mind and methodical nature. Second, he is an expert assassin used when the Syndicate has an enemy that simply must go. No one but Finn and Trask know about Mouse's hidden talents. He is such an unlikely assassin that he can find a way where others cannot. His preferred method of execution is a poisoned crossbow bolt. Cyril is fanatically loyal to Finn and would never betray his master.

Orm Redleaf

Orm (*male halfling journeyman*) is in charge of the Syndicate's money-lending business. He is small, even for a halfling, but as one of Finn's key lieutenants, he is untouchable in the Eastern District. He spends most of his time in the HBA offices managing the Syndicate's finances. He has a weakness for gaudy jewelry, and his hands are always heavy with finely made rings.

Trask

Trask (*male gnome journeyman*) is another of Finn's lieutenants. He is in charge of enforcement and has several dozen thugs at his immediate command. The toughest enforcers live in the basement of the HBA building with Trask, while others are scattered about the district. Trask is a spellcaster, a skilled illusionist whose tricks have confounded many attackers. He is unpredictable by nature—Trask can be smiling and joking one minute and cold and murderous the next. His mere presence makes most Easterners uncomfortable, since a visit from Trask usually means the worst.

Adventure Hooks

Finn would like to extend his control deeper into the Docks. This would not only bring in more revenue, but it would also make a nice buffer between himself and Mister Wednesday. Finn does not want his push to be obvious, so he seeks an up-and-coming gang to be his cat's paw. Mr. Wednesday responds with his own new gang, and soon, a proxy war starts in the Docks. This provides ample opportunity for plots, counter plots, betrayals, and power plays.

There are always those that think they can escape their debts to the Syndicate by jumping on the next ship out of Freeport. It isn't that easy, as the organization has contacts in many ports. If the debt is large enough, the Syndicate will sometimes hire bounty hunters or adventurers to track down such fugitives and bring them back to Freeport. This can be used as the springboard for adventures of all sorts and can provide a good excuse to get the players to visit foreign locales.

5. Hellhound Social Club

"The Watch is a laughing stock. Everyone knows it's the Hellhounds that keep the peace in the Eastern District. You know what they say though, nothing in life is free."

— Dunbar

The Hellhound Social Club is the nexus of Finn's protection business. Run by Syndicate lieutenant Dunbar, the club is a members-only institution located just off the Field of Honor. The place has no windows, so what goes on inside is a mystery to passersby, and that is just how Dunbar likes it.

History

After the Syndicate had finished its takeover of the Eastern District, Finn wanted to reward one of his most talented subordinates, an ex-mercenary named Dunbar. He gifted the young tough with a beautiful home right off the Field of Honor. Dunbar decided he didn't need such a large home, so he brought in workers to remodel it and turned it into the headquarters of his protection racket. Thus, the Hellhound Social Club was born.

Dunbar and his thugs moved into the club twenty-two years ago. Since then, the Hellhounds have become a ubiquitous presence in the Eastern District. There are three elements of Dunbar's operation. First, there are collectors, who are responsible for rounding up the protection money. There are currently fourteen collectors, each responsible for a neighborhood in the Eastern District. Second, there are stoolies. These are neighborhood busybodies who act as informers in exchange for a bit of coin. They keep an eye on their areas and send runners to the club in case of trouble. Last are the Hellhounds proper. These are the bravos that keep Finn's peace.

Exiled Prince Chokes to Death in Kafe Ilkin! Accident or Murder?

~The Shipping News

Unlike the Watch, they do not have regular patrols. However, at least a dozen of them are always on call at the club in case a runner comes in, and more can be gathered in short order. Dunbar has trained the Hellhounds to a high standard. New recruits are carefully screened, and only the best may join. Life as a Hellhound is good, so open spots are hotly contested.

Description

The Hellhound Social Club is a large building with an enclosed courtyard. Although called a social club, remarkably little of it is designed for comfort. Only the south wing is for entertainment, and it consists mainly of a bar. The rest of the place has more in common with a military barracks, which is no surprise considering Dunbar's background. The courtyard is used for training, and the sound of clashing blades is heard here every day. The east wing is the armory, the north wing is living quarters, and the west wing is the private domain of Dunbar and his chosen men.

Key Figures

The following characters can be found at the Hellhound Social Club.

Dunbar

Dunbar (*male human journeyman*) is a tough and disciplined ex-mercenary from the Continent. He originally came to Freeport because Finn had enough coin to pay him. Having worked for the Syndicate for over twenty years now, though, Dunbar has become a loyal soldier to the organization. He is continually impressed by Finn's shrewdness and deviousness, and he decided long ago that it would be suicide to raise a blade against the halfling. From time to time, power brokers feel Dunbar out about betraying his boss, and he laughs in their faces. Mister Wednesday was the latest in the long line of men to test his loyalty. This is not to say there is no conflict within the Syndicate. Dunbar has never gotten along with Trask, for example. The gnome is always trying to get his enforcers involved in the protection racket. While perhaps natural because the jobs of the Hellhounds and the enforcers often overlap, Dunbar tires of Trask trying to chip away at his authority.

Hassel

Hassel (*male human journeyman*) is the Hellhounds' drill instructor. He trains the Hellhounds to fight with rapier and dagger in a style perfected by Dunbar. These weapons are far handier in street fighting than cumbersome axes and longswords. The Hellhounds also eschew heavy armor, preferring the mobility of leather. Hassel drills his bravos in tactics and makes a special effort to teach his students every street and back alley in the Eastern District. This gives the Hellhounds another advantage in the street fights that are their trademark. Like Dunbar, Hassel is an ex-mercenary soldier. He fought across the length and breadth of the Continent before coming to Freeport, and he has a cautionary tale for every occasion.

Adventure Hooks

While most merchants in the Eastern District have come to terms with the Syndicate, there are always a few that crave real justice. They don't want to pay protection money to criminals to ensure the safety of their businesses. A group of such businessmen tries to organize resistance to the Syndicate's protection scheme. This resistance angers Dunbar, and bodies start to hit the pavement. Will the businessmen cave or go looking for help outside their neighborhood?

Draegar Redblade sends hobgoblins to start picking fights with the Hellhounds. He is testing Dunbar's strength and trying to make Finn look weak to the Easterners. There are several major clashes in the Eastern District, and shocked citizens can only watch as humans and hobgoblins fight in the streets. How will Dunbar respond to these attacks, and will the Watch help or hinder him?

6. Kafe Ilkin

"When Libertyville started up again, I thought the kafe was doomed. My revolutionaries weren't interested in such a small affair though, much to my relief. They prefer to stay here, drink my kahve, and talk of shaking the world."

—*Arzu*

Kafe Ilkin is a hotbed of political radicalism in the heart of the Eastern District. It is a place where foreign exiles meet and make grandiose plans of reform and revolution while sipping endless cups of kahve, an exotic drink from the south.

History

About fifty years ago, a young azhar storyteller named Ilkin arrived in Freeport with a bag of kahve beans and a simple idea. He wanted to open up a kafe in Freeport like those in his homeland. He bought a failing tavern in the Eastern District from its aging owner and christened it Kafe Ilkin. He hoped that middle class Freeporters who'd had enough of drunken brawling would embrace his new venture. Kahve was a rare commodity in Freeport—one he suspected would prove an attractive alternative to beer and ale.

Success did not quickly come his way, and Freeport's middle class proved elusive customers. But slowly, Ilkin built a clientele. Kafe Ilkin was discovered by a group of Continental exiles, who adopted it as their meeting place. Other exiles and immigrants followed, and soon, Kafe Ilkin was thriving. It became a place for heated political debates over steaming hot cups of black kahve. Interestingly enough, the political anger in the kafe was always directed outward towards the various Continental governments. Freeport had provided a safe haven for these revolutionaries and dissidents, and they showed little interest in reforming the city. The few regulars who flirted with

Legends of Freeport: The Sewer Rats

Five years ago, one man's outlandish quest inspired a group of Easterners to take a stand against the thieves and criminals they saw around them. Patren Tonnelle founded the group after his refusal to pay protection money led to him being robbed and assaulted. Aware of the Hellhounds strength on the streets, Patren and his recruits took to the sewers. They captured anyone they found there after dark, gave them quick judgment by tribunal, and then executed those found to be criminals on the spot. In two years of operations, the Sewer Rats' tribunals never found anyone innocent.

At first, the Syndicate didn't notice anything was amiss. The sewers were dangerous, and it wasn't that uncommon for people to disappear down there. But when enough bodies with slit throats turned up, it became clear to Finn someone was challenging the Syndicate. He ordered Trask to sort it out. The gnome took to following Syndicate runners, using his small size, stealth skills, and illusion magic to avoid detection. It didn't take him long to figure out what was going on.

Trask then came up with a scheme to take care of the Sewer Rats. He sent out a runner with false dispatches that detailed a Syndicate meeting in a secret spot accessible only by the sewers. The runner lost his life (an acceptable loss to Trask), putting the dispatches in the hands of the Sewer Rats. As Trask hoped, Patren mustered all his men for a surprise attack but was surprised when he walked into a carefully prepared trap. Trask had lured the Sewer Rats into a shooting gallery, where archers concealed by illusions could get the drop on them. The vigilantes never returned to the surface, and Patren was last seen slipping beneath the sewage with an arrow in his back.

The Syndicate thought the Sewer Rats were dead, but from time to time, they still lose a man in the sewers. Sometimes they just disappear, other times they are found with slit throats. Rumors persist something dangerous and vengeful lurks in the sewers. Several Syndicate runners have reported seeing a filth-covered creature, half man and half beast. Others claim it's Patren Tonnelle's spirit come back to take revenge. Recently, Finn decreed no one in the Syndicate is to travel alone in the sewers. He wants to stop losing men before the Sewer Rats become bigger bogeymen in death than they ever were in life.

Freeport's politics were looked down upon because the consensus was that the local situation was far too limited in scope to bother with.

Ilkin died eleven years ago, and his daughter Arzu, who had grown up in the place, took over. She pays her protection money to the Syndicate, keeps the kahve coming from distant ports, and kicks out anyone that gets too rowdy.

Description

Kafe Ilkin is a two-story brick building. The first floor has three rooms: a main room, a hookah room, and a small kitchen. The second, much smaller story is the living quarters for Arzu and her younger sister Dilara. The entire establishment is decorated with brightly colored wall hangings in the azhar style.

Key Figures

The following characters can be found at Kafe Ilkin.

Arzu

Arzu (*female azhar journeyman*) is the proprietor of the Kafe Ilkin, which she inherited from her father. She is a vivacious woman in her mid-thirties with dark hair and smoky eyes. While not a radical, she is very protective of her clientele and does what she can to keep them out of trouble. She has a difficult relationship with her younger sister Dilara, who helps run the kafe but takes no joy in it. Arzu knows it's only a matter of time before her sister strikes off on her own.

Corbus of the Vale

Corbus (*male elf journeyman*) is an elf from the Continent. In his younger years, he was a singer and poet amongst the noble houses. He specialized in an ancient pastoral form that was out of vogue in high society. Corbus's work was ridiculed, and he was all but driven from the capital. He traveled deep into the woods, connecting with his woodland kin and learning their ways. It was there he decided that the very idea of kingship was antithetical to the original ideals of the elven people. Kings, nobles, and urban living had bred a corrupt culture that was no worthy successor to the ways of their ancestors. Since then, Corbus of the Vale has worked to organize like-minded elves and overthrow the king. A small group of these elves meets at the Kafe Ilkin, and Corbus keeps them fired up with a constant stream of fiery songs and poems.

Adventure Hooks

War on the high seas interrupts Arzu's flow of kahve from the south. She needs a brave crew to sneak or break through a blockade and bring her enough kahve to keep the kafe going.

A new group of revolutionaries begins to meet in Kafe Ilkin. Unlike the other immigrants, they want to overthrow the Sea Lord and the Captains' Council and make Freeport into a truly free city. It doesn't take long for the Office of Dredging to hear of this, since its agents often use exiles in their scheming. This brings unwanted attention to the kafe, and Arzu wants none of it. She needs help getting rid of these new revolutionaries, a task made more difficult by their seemingly bottomless funds and strange magic. Just what is going on here?

7. Strebeck's Beer Hall

"Why is it called Battleaxe Brew? Because my head felt like I'd been hit with one when I overindulged on the first batch, that's why."

—Nathan Strebeck

Common Shops

The Eastern District has numerous shops and businesses that adventurers of all stripes might find useful.

Taverns and Inns

In addition to the taverns and inns described in this chapter, one can find any of the following in the Docks.

9. Pete's: This small pub claims to have the oldest barrel of ale in Freeport. It rents rooms above the common room.

10. Seacat's Folly: This inn and tavern is noteworthy for the stuffed seacat mounted over the bar.

11. The Sea Lady's Luck: Locals claim this inn once accommodated the Sea Lord.

12. Gentleman John's: A filthy bar, Gentleman John's is perhaps better suited for Scurvytown.

13. Assad's Smoke Shop: While principally a tavern, locals come here to smoke pipes, sample its fine cuisine, and exchange news in the city.

Businesses

The Eastern District may not have the Seaside Market or the Street of Dreams, but many businesses do very well here.

14. Alchemical Oddities: This small shop sells poultices, remedies, and a myriad of other alchemical concoctions.

15. Edgar's Apparel: A noted tailor and clothier, this business does brisk trade offering quality clothing for reasonable prices.

16. The Store: This business offers a dizzying assortment of goods ranging from foodstuffs, traveling equipment, and household accoutrements.

17. Corben's Swords: This shop sells weaponry, typically swords and daggers, but occasionally maces, morningstars, and other handheld weapons. Everything is imported, so prices are a bit high.

18. The Turtle's Shell: One of the Eastern District's most well regarded armories, the Turtle's Shell custom crafts every suit of armor they sell. They work in metal and leathers, so they have a great selection to choose from.

19. Herbert's Pawn: While noted as a pawnshop, Herbert deals mostly in gems, jewelry, and art objects. He also is a moneylender and the best place to exchange foreign coins for those of a local mint.

Diversions

For those looking for fun, there's always plenty to do in this neighborhood.

16. The Devil's Luck: A large gaming house and brothel, the Devil's Luck is one of Finn's many properties.

17. Alice's House: For discreet encounters, there's no better place than Alice's.

18. The Old Stage: It may not be able to compete with Opera House in the Merchant District, but the Old Stage does have some funding and puts on excellent performances for its size.

Strebeck's Beer Hall is an Eastern District institution. Hundreds of Freeporters drink and eat there every day, just as they've done for the past century. While the place has always been popular, the introduction of a new beer, Battleaxe Brew, fifteen years ago ensured its tables would be crowded every night.

History

Audley Strebeck, an entrepreneur from the Continent, founded his beer hall over one hundred years ago. He bought up several buildings near the East Gate of the Old City, demolished them, and then began construction. Local tavern owners predicted Strebeck would go out of business in less than a year. Audley proved them wrong, and by the time he died, he had a thriving business to pass on to his family.

Two more generations of Strebecks took their turns running the beer hall. Some forty years ago, Hayley Strebeck, granddaughter of Audley, had an affair with an elven privateer. The product of this union was a half-elf bastard named Nathan. Like his siblings, he was brought up working in the family business. Unlike them, he wanted to see what was beyond Freeport.

When Nathan was twenty, he joined a company of adventurers and traveled to the Continent. He apprenticed with a sorcerer and learned how to harness magic. A few years later, he accompanied his master to the lost dwarf hold of Urmanrog. The expedition was successful, and his master brought back many priceless treasures. Nathan got a small cut of the profits but none of the magic items discovered. He was not bitter, however, because he had secreted out something more valuable than gold to the son of brewing family: a sample of Urmanrog's beer yeast.

Nathan returned to Freeport and reunited with his family. Urmanrog had been famous for its beer, and he hoped the yeast he brought home was that of the dwarf brewers. It didn't take long for Nathan to have his answer. The first test batch of beer made the family's traditional recipe taste like dishwater. Nathan dubbed it Battleaxe Brew, and it was introduced at Strebeck's Beer Hall fifteen years ago. It was an instant hit, and since its debut, the brew and the beer hall have become legendary.

Three Workmen Injured in Steam Blast Accident!

~The Shipping News

Description

Strebeck's Beer Hall is a large, brick building next to the East Gate of the Old City. It has two main sections: a three-story brewery and the beer hall proper. The beer-making process starts on the top floor of the brewery and proceeds in stages down through the building until the finished barrels are deposited in the deep, cool beer cellar. The beer hall is attached to the brewery. It's two stories tall—though really only one story with a high, vaulted ceiling. The beer hall has three public rooms: a main taproom and two smaller rooms that are sometimes rented for private functions. All of them are crammed with pine tables and chairs; a kitchen and several storerooms are in the back of the building. All told, the beer hall can seat four hundred customers.

Key Figures

The following characters can be found at Strebeck's Beer Hall.

Ethlyn Strebeck

Ethlyn (*female human journeyman*) is Nathan's older sister and the current proprietor of the Strebeck Beer Hall. Her job keeps her on her feet for twelve hours a day, and this active life has kept her fit despite her age. She jokes that her graying hair gives her an air of authority. In truth, she's had that air for decades. Ethlyn runs a tight crew that can service hundreds of customers, day in and day out. She pays a fair wage and expects hard work in return. Long-time patrons call her Ethie, her childhood nickname, but others do so at their peril.

Nathan Strebeck

Nathan (*male half-elf master*) is Strebeck's brew master. He doesn't practice magic as actively as he used to, but it comes in handy when fights get out of hand. Nathan has never revealed the source of the yeast he brought back from his travels, not even to Ethlyn. If dwarven brewers knew what he had, they would stop at nothing to get it. While he will sometimes tell stories of his adventuring days in the beer hall, he never talks about the expedition to Urmanrog.

Adventure Hooks

An unspoken truce reigns at the Strebeck Beer Hall. There's an occasional brawl, but the various gangs keep their clashes to the streets, by and large. But when two of these groups start having regular confrontations in the beer hall, Ethlyn needs help to sort it out. She doesn't want to get in the middle of a gang war, nor does she want to lose business because her taproom turns into an arena. She needs the help of people who know how to deal with unruly gangers without arousing the wrath of the crime lords.

Nathan's elven father returns to Freeport looking for his son. At first, Nathan is glad to see him. Soon he comes to realize his father has an agenda. He wants to use Strebeck's as part of a scheme, hiding men and equipment in the beer cellar. Nathan does not want to endanger the family business, but he doesn't know how to get his father to leave town. An elf privateer of vast experience, the father will not go gently.

8. The Warg Company

"Sure, you can fight your own battles...if you want to get killed. Or you can hire professionals to do the job right. You wouldn't ask a sailor to bake bread or a merchant to slaughter a pig, right? Then why pretend you townsfolk can fight?"

—Captain Galya Timosha

The Warg Company is a storied mercenary outfit from the Continent. Their Freeport outpost serves several important functions for the company, though the presence of an organized military unit in the city makes some uncomfortable. The company takes its name from an especially cunning and vicious breed of wolf. Since most Freeporters aren't educated enough to know what a warg is, the mercenaries are invariable referred to as "wolfheads" because of the company's coat of arms.



Wolfheads Thwart Robbery! Three Gangers Killed!

~The Shipping News

History

The Warg Company owes its success and longevity to the driving ambition of one man: Jander Baldewyn. He founded the company forty years ago and molded it into a fearsome fighting force. Now the Warg Company has many warbands fighting in far-flung corners of the Continent and even owns four warships to facilitate their deployment. Jander and his staff coordinate those efforts from one of several permanent outposts. Although Baldewyn is approaching sixty years of age, he still dons his armor every day and leads campaigns every summer.

Unbeknownst to anyone in Freeport, Commissioner Enoch Holliver of the Freeport Watch is a veteran of the Warg Company and a close friend of Jander Baldewyn. Holliver suggested his dual role as councilor and commissioner would make Freeport a welcoming place for the Warg Company. Baldewyn agreed and sent a team to set up an outpost. These men bought a warehouse on the border of the Eastern District and gave it a thorough renovation.

The outpost opened for business three years ago and has three main functions. First, it acts as a recruiting and training station for the Warg Company. With all the people who pass through Freeport, there is always new blood to be found. Aspiring mercenaries sign on to the company, receive some initial instruction, and then sail to another company outpost on the Continent to complete their training. Second, it is a rest center for the company. Men who've been on the front line for too long are periodically rotated to Freeport for relaxation and recuperation. Third, it sells mercenary services to the people of Freeport. Few jobs require more than six men, and they are commonly hired as bodyguards. The wolfheads are not cheap to hire, but they have an excellent reputation.

Publicly, Enoch Holliver reacted to the concerns of other councilors by limiting the number of Warg Company men in Freeport at any one time to fifty. The watchmen on the street, however, have been told not to worry about the Warg Company. Since mercenaries are constantly coming and going, and some of the men on leave stay in inns anonymously, the true number of wolfheads in the city on any given day would be difficult to judge in the best of circumstances. Typically, there are twenty men stationed at the outpost, another thirty to fifty recruits undergoing training, and a similar number on leave.

Description

The Warg Company, located southwest of the Field of Honor on the fringe of the Eastern District, looks like a warehouse from the outside. The interior, however, has been transformed over the last three years into a small fortress. The doors are thick oak reinforced with iron, and interior stone walls were built behind the original wooden ones. Those wishing to hire the wolfheads are welcome in the front office. The rest of the outpost is off limits to anyone outside the company.

Most of the original building consists of a training area for the new recruits. The true secrets of the Warg Company are underground. There is a large and growing complex with an armory, kitchen, larder, barracks, latrines, and officers' quarters. It can comfortably house a garrison of over a hundred men, and construction downward continues. When it is finished, a large strike could be assembled here in complete secrecy.

Key Figures

The following characters can be found at the Warg Company.

Captain Galya Timosha

Galya Timosha (*female dwarf master*) commands the Freeport outpost. She is one of a handful of survivors of the original company—most died or retired years ago. Her dwarven longevity and incredible toughness have made Galya a mainstay of the Warg Company. With a big nose that's been broken one too many times and more scars than a pit fighter, Galya is no one's princess. She is, however, a skilled captain whose command presence keeps her troops in line. In mere moments, she can reduce new recruits to quivering piles of jelly. She does not like Freeport and would rather be leading troops in the field, but she's loyal to Jander Baldewyn and accepted the assignment without complaint. Galya is the only person in Freeport who knows Enoch Holliver used to be the notorious Solomon Froste. Even she, however, does not know the extent to which Holliver is in cahoots with Jander Baldewyn.

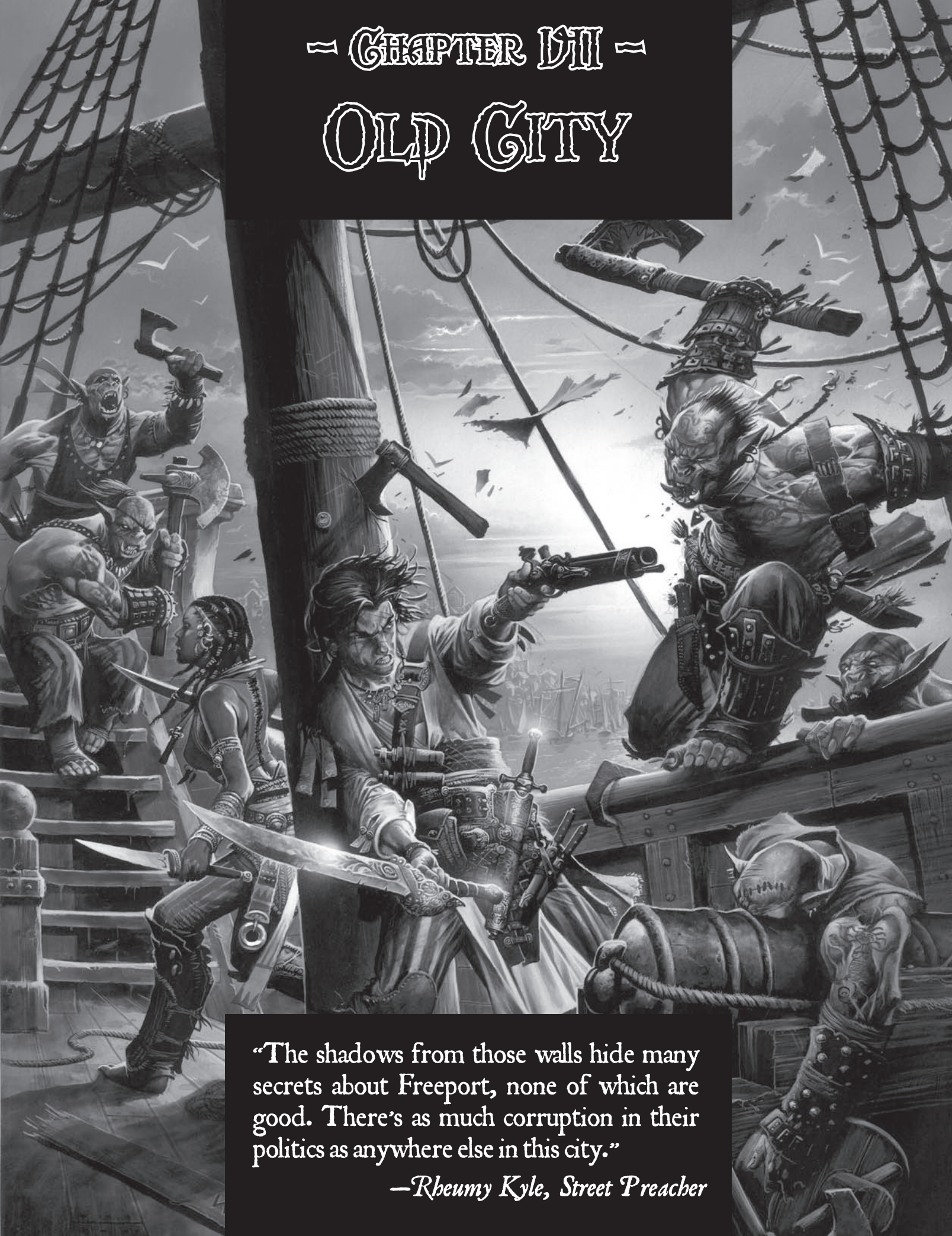
Driskoll Layton

Driskoll Layton (*male human journeyman*) leads the Warg Company's recruiters in Freeport. Every day he heads out to the Docks to extol the virtues of the mercenary life. He frequents taverns to sing martial songs and tell exaggerated tales of the company's exploits. Though he was once a campaigner, years of eating and drinking to excess have made him portly. Nonetheless, his voice is strong and clear, and his songs and stories are suitably rousing. Many Warg Company mercenaries joined up after a chance encounter with Driskoll Layton.

Adventure Hooks

Commander Marshal Maeorgan of the Sea Lord's Guard becomes concerned about the number of wolfheads in Freeport. Knowing that many ex-mercenaries serve in the Sea Lord's Guard, he is reluctant to task his own men with investigating the Warg Company. He wants to know what exactly the mercenaries are up to. Are they the benign force that Enoch Holliver paints them?

A unit of the Warg Company comes to Freeport after a long, hard campaign. When given the chance to blow all their back pay on ale and whores, they do so with gusto. They get drunk and belligerent and trash several taverns in the Docks, and yet, the Watch does nothing about them. The tavern owners decide enough is enough, so they hire some outside troubleshooters to take care of the problem. Those who interfere with the Warg Company are suddenly hounded by the Watch. Clearly, something strange is going on here.



— Chapter VII —

Old City

"The shadows from those walls hide many secrets about Freeport, none of which are good. There's as much corruption in their politics as anywhere else in this city."

—Rheumy Kyle, Street Preacher



The Old City stands at the center of Freeport. Named for the original settlement that once served as a haven for buccaneers, exiles, and fugitives, it features some of the oldest structures in the city. Unlike the other districts, the Old City's boundaries are clearly demarcated: huge walls standing over a hundred feet tall surround it. Instead of divorcing the Old City from the rest of Freeport, though, the walls unite it, reminding people of the city's strength and the fact that no one has ever conquered the city. And so long as the walls stand, no one ever will.

Entering the Old City

The walls make the Old City easy to identify and find since they tower some one hundred feet above the rest of the city and half that far below it. Patrols walk the catwalk clinging to the walls' interior and can be seen as they stroll past the crenellations and arrow slits that face the rest of the city.

Spaced evenly around the district are five towers, each stretching twenty feet above the walls. The Sea Lord's Guard uses these towers as additional barracks and living quarters. Even though many soldiers call these towers home, they are spartanly decorated. Each tower consists of several floors for barracks, storerooms, kitchens, temporary prisons, jakes, and more. Piercing the center of these floors is a twenty-foot-square hole that allows the soldiers to carry supplies to the uppermost levels using a winch and wooden platform. As well, these lifts allow the guards to bring the cannon to the towers' uppermost levels. Five guards (apprentices) and a guard sergeant (journeyman) man each tower at any given time. These watchmen serve six-hour shifts that are periodically altered to avoid forming a pattern.

Despite the defenses, travelers can come and go as they please. Five gates, each named for the district they face (Temple Gate, Drac's Gate, and so on), allow access to the warren of streets and buildings of the Old City. The guardsmen are drilled on the gate closures monthly and can have the entire Old City sealed up inside three minutes by slamming down a heavy iron portcullis and barring access with an ironbound, foot-thick wooden gate.

Inside the Old City

Past the gates are the cramped quarters of the Old City. The interior is oppressive, worsened by the towering walls that block out most of the morning and afternoon sun. While a boon in the summer, it's positively frigid in the winter. The walls also give the whole area a claustrophobic feel. It's all too easy to see the looming walls and heavy gates of the Old City as a prison rather than a fortress. For these reasons, most of Freeport's upper crust live outside of this district, preferring the more spacious environment of the Merchant District.

Most roads are narrow and twisting, the result of little forethought and the premium put on real estate here. As such, some streets are little more than tunnels burrowing through a jumble of buildings that lean against one another. Though tight, peddlers, tinkers, and minor merchants ply their wares to officials hurrying to one important meeting or another.

The residential areas of the Old City mostly lie around its perimeter. Housing types vary greatly, from a few freestanding single-family dwellings to row houses and three-story apartment buildings. Many of

the prosperous (but not wealthy) merchants and tradesmen make their homes here—only a handful of the wealthy are willing to abandon the sunny streets of the Merchant District to be closer to the seat of power. Many of the tradesmen and artisans in places like Street of Dreams live above or in their places of business.

Still, a fair population makes its home here. The place is bustling from sunup to sundown. It's the seat of government, a refuge in times of trouble, and an imposing symbol of the power of the Sea Lord. The Old City is in every way the heart of the city, and its beating keeps Freeport alive.

Locations of Interest

All of the following locations can be found in the Old City.

1. Sea Lord's Palace

"A fine place, the palace, full of all sorts of things to nick..."

—Toby Sly, Cat Burglar

Like the walls protecting the Old City, the Sea Lord's Palace is a symbol of the Sea Lord's strength. Having housed every Sea Lord since nearly the founding of the city, it looms large in the minds of Freeporters, who can only stare in wonder at the wealth and beauty contained within its walls.

History

One of the oldest structures in the city, the Sea Lord's Palace is a physical symbol of the Sea Lord's power and authority. Its construction was a costly undertaking that claimed numerous lives and incredible sums of gold. For years, work continued on this fortress-palace, and in the end, the lives lost and money spent proved worth it.

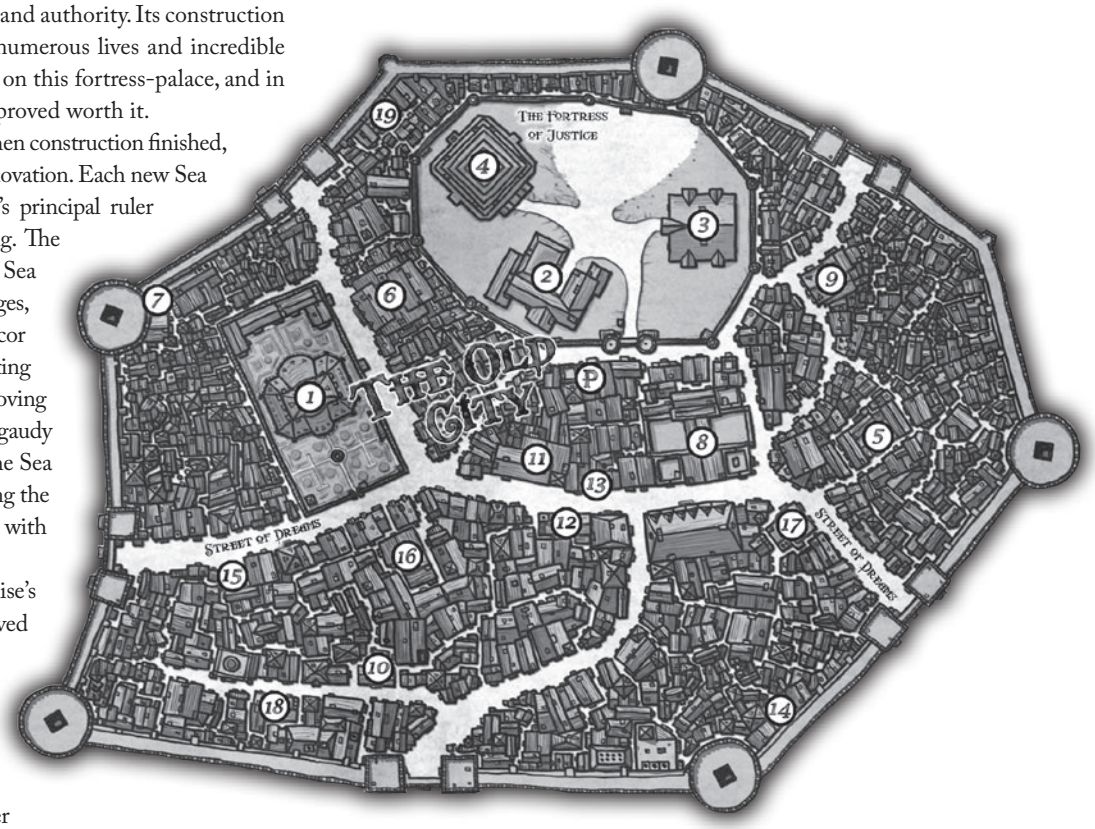
While structurally the same as it was when construction finished, the interior has undergone widespread renovation. Each new Sea Lord inspires a flurry of activity as city's principal ruler makes his mark on this famous building. The extent of the changes varied with each Sea Lord's taste—some being simple changes, light touches that improved upon the décor of the previous Sea Lord, and others gutting the place, pulling down walls, removing floors, and substituting gaudy or not-so-gaudy trappings. The place lay empty between the Sea Lord Drac and the current Sea Lord, giving the place plenty of time to become shabby with neglect and disuse.

All of that changed with Marilise's ascension. She gutted the place and moved in her belongings and her personal servants. Marilise has spent a fortune renovating the palace, removing tapestries, rugs, and other décor in favor of things more suited to her sensibilities. In a move to secure her popularity with the commoners, she auctioned off the old things and donated the money to the Golden Pillar Society.

The Street of Dreams

One obvious exception to the character of the Old City is the Street of Dreams. This wide road, at least by Freeport standards, cuts through the center of the district where shops catering to the refined tastes of Freeporters do brisk business. Along either side of the street, travelers can find just about every type of luxury good and artisan. Jewelers, woodcarvers, furniture makers, painters, tailors, purveyors of gourmet meats and cheeses, wine merchants, and more are all clustered in a relatively small area. The Street of Dreams is a rare thing in Freeport, an oasis of culture and refinement. Of course, many visitors to the street wouldn't know true culture if it sat on them, but even a newly rich freebooter freshly retired from the sea wants to have the appearance of distinction and good taste. The craftsmen here are happy to take the money of the gauche.

The name similarity between the Street of Dreams and Dreaming Street—the main drag of the red light district in Scurvytown—is a constant irritant to the upscale merchants and artisans. Getting the name of the street wrong is a famously foolish thing to do, and many a city newcomer making the error has found the prices of an offended shopkeeper suddenly raised.



Old City Summary

The Old City is home to Freeport's government.

Buildings

In the shadows of the walls stand the row houses and tenement buildings that gradually give way to stone administrative buildings of the Old City's center.

People

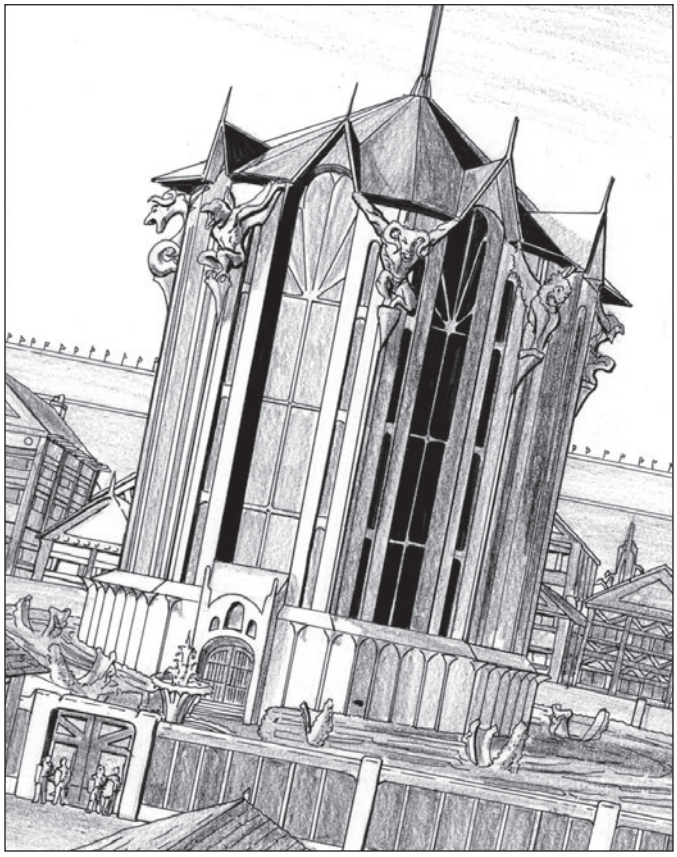
During the day, the Old City is alive with the press of foot traffic. Most are well-dressed politicians, clerks, and the other people that make up Freeport's bureaucracy. The rest hail from all over the city, bound on some errand or another. At night, the district empties, and a quiet descends on the place.

Roads

With the exception of the Street of Dreams and a few other wide avenues, most streets in the Old City are narrow and winding, restricting all traffic to pedestrians only.

Descriptive Elements

No matter where one is in the Old City, the walls are visible. They fill the horizon and artificially shorten the days. The Old City is quite active and cosmopolitan during the daylight hours, but at night, the welcoming atmosphere vanishes as the streets empty. Those who remain are suspicious of strangers and quick to call the Guard.



Description

The Sea Lord's Palace stands at the heart of the Old City, by far the most impressive of all the administrative buildings in the area. Protected by a fifteen-foot-high stone wall topped with a row of sharpened iron spikes, the only access to the grounds is through the black iron gate that faces the street. A squad of four Sea Lord's Guards prevents access to all but those on official business with the Sea Lord. Those who linger are encouraged to move along by the guardsmen's stout cudgels.

Just beyond the gate are the palace grounds. It is immediately clear no expense has been spared, for the gardens are exquisite. Carefully manicured by a staff of a dozen gardeners, there are topiaries depicting sea dragons and other monsters all arranged around a large fountain of polished marble. Rows upon rows of aromatic flowers stand along the gravel pathways to reach hidden areas for private meetings or secret trysts. At the far end of the grounds behind the palace are the servants' quarters where the household staff retires at the end of every day. There are dormitories for both men and women and larger quarters for married couples. In addition, there is a full kitchen and dining hall to accommodate the serving staff.

The gardens may be fine, but the palace is the wonder. At five stories tall, it towers over the walls, granting an impressive view of the district. The palace was constructed in an octagonal shape from white stone imported at great expense. The roof comes to a sharp point along which lightning rods rise. At each of the roof's corners are massive gargoyles that spew rainwater away from the foundation. Numerous windows offer expansive views of the gardens below, as well as the rest of the Old City. Though constructed to be comfortable, make no mistake—the palace is as much a fortress as it is a home.

Inside, the décor is elaborate—walls covered in paper imported from the Continent, furniture shaped and crafted by the best woodworkers, and tapestries woven to capture the history of the city. In the halls are portraits of the past Sea Lords, presented in their best light, of course. The floors are all polished wood, except the ground floor, which is tiled in white-veined black marble. Even the doors are fine, made from stout oak but covered in gold leaf and ornate patterns.

The Grand Ballroom dominates the ground floor. The ceiling rises up through the first floor—an impressive spectacle perfect for impressing visiting dignitaries. At the far end is a dais that holds chairs enough for each member of the Captains' Council. Like the entrance, the floor is black marble. The rest of the ground floor consists of a massive library, sitting rooms for guests, and a modest audience chamber for personal meetings with the Sea Lord.

The second and third floors contain the guest quarters, each a large and comfortable suite with a bedroom and sitting room. There are accommodations enough for twenty guests at a time. The fourth floor is the Sea Lord's living quarters, featuring a dining hall, secondary kitchen, meeting rooms, and a small hall for private performances. Finally, the uppermost level has the sleeping quarters for important dignitaries and the Sea Lord's family members.

Key Figures

Though the palace is her home, Marilise is rarely here, leaving the day-to-day activities to the old chamberlain, Tomas Fleetfoot, whom she kept on since he is extremely knowledgeable about the palace's history and the personalities and nature of her predecessors.

Captain Amos Shent

Amos Shent (*male human journeyman*) came to the palace with Marilise. An old friend and skilled warrior, he earned his place at her side when he took a crossbow bolt in the chest to protect her. This act won him her favor, and ever since, it has fallen to him to protect her. His primary duties include commanding the palace guards, maintaining security, and protecting the Sea Lord. He makes regular circuits through the palace and randomly searches rooms, including those held by the servants.

Even though he is in his mid-fifties, Amos is a burly man with a thick, muscled frame. He's short, just over five and a half feet tall, but he makes up for lack of height with his strength, determination, and no-nonsense disposition. His brown hair is graying, and he has bright blue eyes. He's never without his breastplate—a piece of equipment he learned to appreciate when it took four hours to extract the bolt from his chest.

Carissa Fenwick, Head Maid

Joining the staff some twenty years ago, Carissa Fenwick (*female human apprentice*) is a force of nature. She is nominally in charge of the entire household and makes all decisions about hiring, firing, and assigning duties. Even the chamberlain, Tomas Fleetfoot, bows to her every command. Carissa does not judge the nature or actions of her employer, though she's known to cluck her tongue with reproof when she learns of some wrongdoing. Now on her third Sea Lord, she's seen it all and can anticipate the needs of her mistress.

Carissa is in her late forties, and the years show. She is thin and tall and has a narrow face and pinched features. She keeps her black hair pulled back in a bun. She's never seen out of uniform—a black dress with white cuffs and hem.

Thomas Fleetfoot

The Fleetfoot family has been running things in the Sea Lord's Palace since the construction of the building by Captain Cromey, the second Sea Lord of Freeport. Tomas (*male halfling journeyman*) grew up within the walls of the palace and took over the operation of the home from his father, who retired after Anton Drac's assassination. Tomas's place was uncertain in the wake of Drac's fall. Fearing he would somehow be implicated in Drac's corruption, Tomas was more than cooperative with the Sea Lord's Guard and the Captains' Council, spilling every filthy secret he could about his master. As an unexpected consequence, it became clear Tomas knew far more about Freeport's high society than anyone would have expected. Such a font of useful information would be wasted in the Tombs, so he was allowed to keep his post.

Adventure Seeds

To welcome a group of dignitaries to Freeport, Marilise hosts a grand ball in the palace. All of the city's elite are invited. With the concentration of such important figures, she's doubled the Guard presence. As planned, the guests arrive, and it seems the event is a success. However, the next morning, one of the noblemen who attended the ball finds his wife dead of apparent poisoning. He is suspicious of everyone who was present, and so he turns to the PCs to find the true culprit.

While at a tavern in the city, the PCs overhear a drunken servant who was recently fired from the palace's staff talking about the fabulous treasures he found there. He claims he hid them away during the upheaval surrounding Drac and plans to sneak back into the palace to recover them. Of course, his loose lips wind up landing him in trouble, and a few hours later his body is found in an alley. Do the PCs try to find the treasure, or do they warn the palace in hopes of a reward?



Fortress of Justice

"It's amazing, really. Every day, folks line up in front of the Fortress, claiming to have some complaint or concern. And every day, the guards bust a few heads and shove the crowds back. You'd think people would learn."

—Karibda the Foul, Prognosticator and Letch

A compound containing three administrative buildings clustered behind a tall, stone wall topped with barbed spikes, the Fortress of Justice serves as a barrack, training compound, and processing center for trials in the Courts.

2. The Guardsmen's Facilities

The Guardsmen's Facilities is the headquarters of the Sea Lord's Guard and Freeport Watch.

History

Of the three buildings that serve as the engines of government, the Guardsmen's Facilities was the first constructed, but ensuring the city's laws was not its original intent. Built shortly after the city was

Daring Escape from Fortress of Justice Infuriates Commissioner!

~The Shipping News

founded, the building served as the seat of the despots' power. Those pirate captains with the most power and influence used this place to administer their brand of justice. Anyone who opposed them, broke the pirate's code, or simply irritated them died horribly on the steps of this old building. This practice continued throughout Freeport's golden age up until Captain Drac took the title of the first Sea Lord. To secure his power, Drac established the Sea Lord's Guard to police the city streets and make certain his enemies had no chance of rising against him. Knowing the building's sinister reputation, Drac made it the headquarters for the Guard.

Description

The only entrance into this somber building is through the main gate that faces Mollusk Street. Inside the gate is an iron portcullis that is closed at night, and a crew of veteran guards protects the gate. Though disciplined and cautious, they have a reputation for being sadistic. Should any problems arise, they can summon reinforcements in moments by blowing the signal whistles worn about their necks.

Flanking the gate are two enormous towers that hold an entire company of guardsmen each. Armed with repeating crossbows, they are crack shots and quick to put down any they deem as trouble. These guardsmen protect the gate and walk the wall surrounding the fortress.

During the day, the gate is swarmed with relatives of the prisoners, as well as curiosity seekers, preachers, petitioners, and protesters seeking entry. Citizens are not permitted to carry a weapon into the compound. Persons trying to do so are not permitted to enter. Should they persist, they are given a sound beating, and if not jailed, they are tossed out onto the street.

Inside the headquarters are the barracks, dining hall, kitchens, infirmary, and training facilities. There are usually ten new recruits at any given time. Recruits are responsible for all of the cooking and cleaning in the building. There are also twenty members of the Sea Lord's Guard stationed here, plus a sergeant, captain, and the commander.

An armory located on the first floor holds weapons and armor for up to two hundred and fifty men. In addition to the standard-issue smash sticks, there are swords, spears, shields, bows, and crossbows here as well. Two guardsmen are on hand at all times to manage the inventory and dispense weapons and armor to those members of the Sea Lord's Guard who need them.

The second floor holds all the men, with private, single-room quarters for the sergeant and the captain. The commander has a separate wing, where there is an office, dining room, library, and bedroom. Although Marshal Maeorgan has tried and tried to get the guardsman to call it the Commander's Wing, old habits die hard and everyone but him still refers to it as the Commissioner's Wing.

A training ground fronts the Guardsmen's Facilities. The Sea Lord's Guard drills here, marching in formation and running mock battles. This is also the place where duels may be fought between soldiers and old scores settled. The duels are supposed to be non-lethal, but from time to time "accidents" happen and a guardsman is retired permanently.

Law and Order

Protecting the Old City is the Sea Lord's Guard. While the rest of the city falls under the protection of the Watch, the Sea Lord's Guard still patrols the streets of the Old City. Captain Nigel Trent (*male human journeyman*) runs a tight ship, and his men are renowned for their discipline and no-nonsense manner. Rumor has it that the commissioner leaned heavily on the captain to make sure his daughter's streets were the safest in Freeport.

Key Figures

Marshal Maeorgan holds the position of Commander of the Sea Lord's Guard. Since gaining the post, he has taken steps to transform the Sea Lord's Guard into a professional fighting force, and to achieve this end, he has come to rely on two men. The following characters can be found at the Guardsmen's Facilities.

Captain Emery Shent

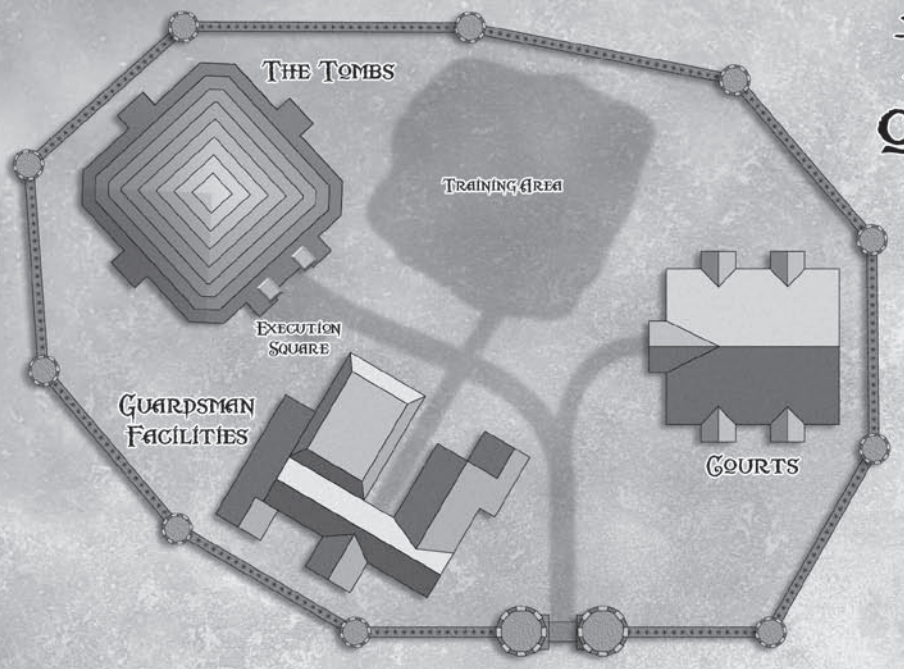
Second in command of the Sea Lord's Guard is Captain Emery Shent (*male human master*). Despite rumors of his unspeakable tastes and diversions, Emery is a strict disciplinarian, and he has a reputation for brooking no nonsense among his men. Emery joined the ranks of the Sea Lord's Guard over a decade ago. He distinguished himself by saving Milton Drac's life as a young recruit, swiftly climbed the ranks, and eventually named captain by the new commander. While on business, he is the consummate professional, personally overseeing the drills and tactical training to convert his men into a fighting force equal to any Continental army. But off duty, it's said his interests lie in the pleasures of the flesh, and more than one watchman has been paid to look the other way and keep their captain's secrets safe.

Emery Shent is a middle-aged man with thinning brown hair, craggy features, and pale blue eyes. He wears a thick moustache that droops down on either side of his mouth. Nearly always dressed in full uniform, he keeps his grey jacket pressed and his decorations polished. He keeps a saber in a scabbard at his side.

Sergeant Ruben Carsdale

Beneath Emery Shent is the dreaded Sergeant Ruben Carsdale (*male human journeyman*). He's a crude, brute of a man famous for his volatile personality and his eagerness to resort to violence to get his point across. He rules through fear and fists, daring any man in the Sea Lord's Guard to stand against him. However, Ruben changes his tune when in the presence of his betters. He becomes a simpering

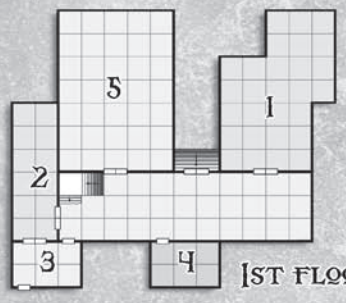
Fortress of Justice



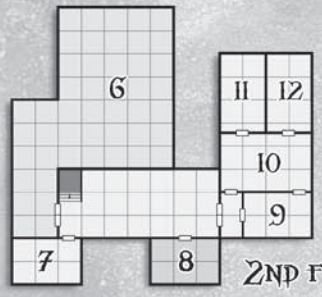
Fortress Overview

0 60 120
One inch = 120 ft.

Guardsman Facilities



1st floor

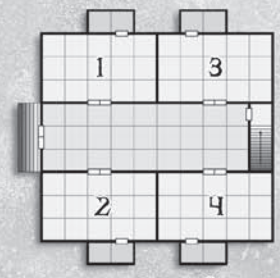


2nd floor

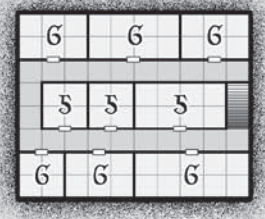
1. Armory
2. Dining Hall
3. Kitchen
4. Infirmary
5. Training Hall
6. Barracks
7. Sergeant's Quarters
8. Captain's Quarters

Commissioner's Wing
9. Office
10. Dining Room
11. Library
12. Bedroom

Courts



1st floor

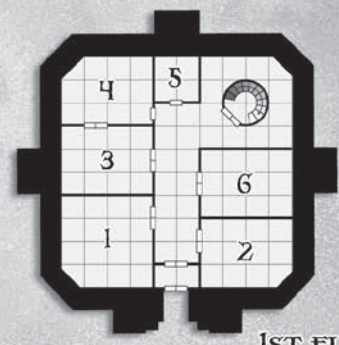


Basement

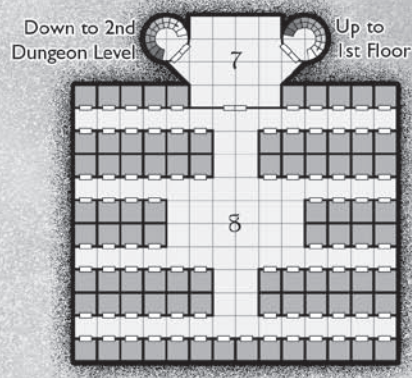
1. Courtroom
2. Courtroom
3. Courtroom
4. Courtroom
5. Council Rooms
6. Records Storage

One square = 10 feet

The Tombs



1st floor



Dungeon Levels

1. Barracks
2. Jailor's Quarters
3. Mess Hall
4. Kitchen
5. Larder
6. Chapel
7. Guard Post
8. Prisoner Commons

sycophant, eager to please his masters. Ruben Carsdale is short, thick, and hairy. At the start of his shift, his uniform is always clean and crisp, but after a few hours, it's noticeably dark with sweat. He keeps a pistol in his belt and a sword in a scabbard at his side.

3. The Courts

"Lunch and a verdict, that's Freeport for you."

—Gorgen Redbelly, Halfling Agitator

The second building in the Fortress of Justice compound is a building called the Courts. This is where justice is dealt from the benches of some of the most powerful individuals in the city—the judges. Long has Freeport's criminal system been suspect, for what justice can be had in a town run by crooks? Over the life of the city, for every honest judge dedicated to the rule of law, there have been two on the take, selling their judgments to the lawyers.

History

About the same time as the Captains' Council formed, work began on the Courts. Since no one wanted to fund the construction, the Courts were built from materials salvaged from old ruins, timber cut from the island's forests, and boards harvested from ruined ships that washed up on the islands of the Serpent's Teeth. Given the haphazard effort to build the place, it took almost a decade for the building to be finished enough to be used—though legends abound about collapsing floors, sagging ceilings, and crooked walls. The shoddy craftsmanship proved to be the structure's undoing just ten years later when the entire building collapsed after a slight tremor, killing all the judges and a dozen lawyers.

The second attempt at erecting the Courts saw a bit more funding pour in from undisclosed sources to ensure proper building construction—one worthy of such an important process. Even though almost half of the funds vanished into the pockets of politicians, enough remained to erect a grand, stone building. It would take another ten years for it to be completed, but when it was done, it rivaled the palace in terms of expense and grandeur.

Description

The Courts is a massive building constructed of imported Continental stone. It has a peaked roof on which is mounted a row of lightning rods. The face of the structure has a row of fifteen-foot-tall, narrow, stained glass windows that capture the likenesses of past Sea Lords and important citizens. A pair of towering bronze double doors at the top of a short flight of steps leads to its cavernous halls inside.

Just beyond the doors is the main entrance, where a small staff of clerks and guards inspect each visitor and collect weapons. On the other side of the main entrance is a large hall with equally large doors set on either side. The floor here is polished mahogany, and in the center is a large statue of an unknown man on a horse, lit from above by a round skylight set in the roof. While the Courts building is open, which is only five days a week for five hours each day, people pack the halls. Lawyers meet with clients, while chained criminals stand glumly, awaiting their sentences. Clerks and servants scurry from cluster to cluster, taking notes, delivering messages, and filling the air with the din of their chatter.

Through the doors to either side of the great hall are two more hallways equipped with four more doors on the opposite sides. The smaller halls lead to courtrooms. The courtrooms to the south are used for criminal cases, while the ones to the north are for civil cases. Each courtroom is more or less identical. About a dozen benches form an aisle leading to a pair of tables, each with three or four chairs. At the far end of the courtroom is a high podium that towers over the entire room. The judge reaches a leather chair by climbing a set of steep steps. This a challenging proposition for a hale judge and positively impossible for the old ones. Many courtrooms have fantastic contraptions that involve a jumble of pulleys, ropes, and harnesses for hefting an elder justice to his seat.

Behind the courtrooms are more halls, stairs, offices, and private rooms where a judge can hold private conferences with attorneys and their clients. It's easy to get lost in these labyrinthine passages, and many a doddering judge has vanished only to be found months later, dead and partly devoured by the rats that seem to infest this place.

Key Figures

Among the various clerks, scribes, messengers, guards, visitors, prisoners, politicians, and countless others, there are six sitting justices. The Courts can accommodate up to eight judges, but for some reason, the Sea Lord, like her predecessor, seems loath to fill these vacancies.

Judge Horatio Jones, Civil Court

Horatio Jones (*male human journeyman*) had an esteemed career as a prosecutor. Famed for never making plea bargains, he was responsible for the interments of countless citizens in his time in Freeport. Milton Drac appointed Jones a judge about a decade ago. In this time, he's developed a reputation for handing down outrageous punishments, requiring incredible reparations to the guilty. Those who don't do as the judge demands are thrown in the Tombs until Judge Jones feels they've learned their lesson. Horatio believes strong punishments deter future crimes, and therefore, he metes stiff penalties to those he finds guilty.

Judge Jones is in his forties and has thinning brown hair, fat jowls, and big eyes. He's put on a few pounds and has a tendency to sweat a lot.

Legends of Freeport: The Hat

In serious tones, with plenty of anxious glancing over shoulders, locals may mention at various times how throughout Freeport's history there have been men and women who act on the Sea Lord's behalf. Having special authority to dispense justice in whatever manner they like, they follow their own rules, acting as judge, jury, and executioner. Reports vary wildly, some saying there's an entire squad whose sole purpose is to expose and destroy sinister cults while others suggest there are lone men, such as the Hat (who was a master of disguise and deception), capable of ferreting out some of the darkest secrets in the city. Whether or not such men still operate in Freeport is a matter of some debate, but every now and then, a gang up and goes missing, or a few highly placed merchants suddenly leave, never to be heard from again. Is this the work of the Sea Lord's secret police, vigilantes, or someone else?



Judge Alistair Strummer, Civil Court

Another civil judge, Alistair Strummer (*male human journeyman*) is a radical who bucks tradition by handing out unusual sentences. Rather than ordering fines, incarceration, or death, he requires the convicted to perform tasks of backbreaking manual labor for the betterment of Freeport. Examples include painting warehouses, draining swamps, working in Bloodsalt, or scraping barnacles off the piers. Alistair's methods may be unconventional, but most Freeporters approve, seeing the improvements all over the city. Rather than paying the high costs of housing and feeding prisoners, they get something back from those who break the law. It's not easy work, but it's better than hanging, so most criminals in the city have nothing but good words for this judge and even watch out for him.

Alistair is in his mid-fifties, thin, with narrow features and head of graying black hair. He has dark eyes and lined features. When he thinks, he tends to pucker his lips and tap them with his forefinger.

Judge Charlene Rhodes, Civil Court

Judge Rhodes (*female human apprentice*), a new justice appointed at the same time as the current Sea Lord, is something of a maverick. She's more interested in defining Freeport society than in upholding the law. It's a well-known fact she has a grudge against magic users, and when such an individual is brought before her, she hands out stiff penalties. The same intolerance extends to the various religious institutions, and some claim she has priests arrested on trumped up charges just to harass them.

Charlene is in her mid-thirties. She has long, brown hair that she pulls up in a bun. Stern countenance, narrow eyes, and a tendency to scowl make this otherwise attractive woman thoroughly unpleasant.

Judge Shamus McGowan, Criminal Court

Judge McGowan (*male human journeyman*) is alarmed by the terrible overcrowding of Freeport's prison and is attempting to find other ways keep violent criminals away from society. Those found guilty in Judge McGowan's courtroom are forcibly deported, sent to the Hulks, or marooned on one of the many tiny islands around Freeport.

Shamus is a gaunt man in his late sixties. His reedy voice shakes when he speaks, and he always appears on the verge of collapsing into frightened tears. He has thin, gray hair and sallow features. A few of the guards place bets on when the old man will keel over.

Judge Alfred Ubu, Criminal Court

Also known as "Bloody" Judge Ubu (*male human journeyman*), this justice is a spectacularly flamboyant psychopath and sadist. He's particularly fond of sentencing criminals to death in horrible—though very creative—ways. There is the standard beheading and hanging, as well as drowning, immolation, and dismemberment. Judge Ubu was one of the many corrupt officials to flourish under Milton Drac. Commissioner Williams sought to remove him from office, but the judge had very powerful friends on the Captains' Council.

Although Alfred is thin, he has pleasant features, a quick smile, and a disturbing habit of chuckling when he hands out his sentences.

When not in dark judges' robes, he wears clothes cut in the latest fashions.

Judge Frederick Drent—Criminal Court

Another newcomer, Frederick Drent (*male human apprentice*) is about as corrupt as they come. Soft Frederick—as the crime lords call him—has never given a significant punishment to anyone affiliated with Freeport's numerous crime lords. Community service, token fines, and stern reproofs are the extent of his judgments. Of course, this never applies to minor criminals, petty thieves, or dishonest merchants. Judge Drent is especially harsh with these poor souls, condemning them to stints in the Hulks as a means to conceal the rather obvious fact he's on the take.

Attempts to expose Drent's corruption have all been for naught. He's well insulated from his enemies, thanks to the toughs supplied by his employers. The Sea Lord is well aware of his misdeeds, but she has yet to act, which enrages certain members of the Captains' Council.

Drent is a man in his middle years. He has widely spaced features, greasy red hair, and freckled skin. He speaks with a lisp and is rumored to have disturbing hedonistic impulses that can only be calmed by the most depraved bordellos in the city.

Adventure Seeds

One of the PCs has just watched a gang assassin rub out a prominent merchant. The killer can't afford to be identified—at any cost! Life for the PC and his group of adventurers becomes difficult when various thugs try to take them out. Then the real assassin steps in to finish the job. The commissioner sends a court summons to the PC to testify against the crime lord who ordered the merchant killed in the first place. Will the PC go to court and send the crook to jail? What happens if the gangsters try to use magic to rub out the PC?

A party who chooses to keep their identities secret contacts the player characters about a job. The mission is simple—they are to protect a man, ask no questions, and make sure he's safe. The deal is too lucrative to turn down. When they take their posts, they discover their charge is none other than one of Freeport's judges—Frederick Drent. Over the night, Drent leads them into one vile place after another, always disappearing into a back room and leaving the PCs under orders not to interfere, no matter what they hear. Shrieks and screams sound from within, tugging at the character's consciences. Will they interfere? Who hired them anyway? Were they hired to witness the judge's excesses?

4. The Tombs

> "I'd rather be strung up on the gibbet than spend the rest of my days in the Tombs."
>
> —*Caddy McPhee, Butcher*

Sometimes even the most brilliant lawyer can't keep a crook from going to jail. The main prison in Freeport is located inside the Fortress of Justice and is known throughout the city as the Tombs. They'll tell you the building got its nickname because it was based on an elaborate mausoleum from the Jungle Lands, but the denizens of the underworld know differently. Many criminals who end up in the Tombs are never heard from again.

History

As a city founded by cutthroats and criminals, the question about what to do with the assorted scum that don't abide by Freeport's simple laws was an important one. While the city was a haven for expatriates and their ilk, it wasn't acceptable for people do as they wanted—the city would collapse into anarchy. So, to deal with undesirables, Francisco had a compound constructed to lock away the folks that couldn't function within the bounds of Freeport's loose laws.

In the centuries that followed, the Tombs, as they've come to be called, have developed quite a reputation. Having held psychopaths, murderers, rapists, slavers, and countless other repellent individuals, the Tombs have welcomed countless members of Freeport's criminals, interring them to a wretched fate in a dripping cell. Those who wind up here are rarely seen or heard from again, as if they were swallowed up by the fetid darkness. Disease, rats, and even other prisoners can snuff out a life quite quickly, but there are whispers of terrible things that stalk the alleys between cells in the dark of night, dragging their meals bodily through the slots in the door and leaving a mess of bloody meat and echoes of screams.

Description

The building is solid brick. There's a main floor above ground, with bars on all the windows, and reinforced walls that are three feet thick. The roof of the building is shaped like a ziggurat—it has no real reason for its appearance except to look massive and foreboding.

The first floor is the headquarters for the jailer and guards. There's also a mess hall, kitchen, larder, and chapel to the God of Penitence. Small groups of prisoners are taken here daily to hear sermons, sing hymns, and pray for forgiveness.

The prison cells are located on two levels underground. There are sixty cells on each floor, each cell approximately eight feet by six feet. Each can hold three prisoners, but most hold several more. The walls of the cells are constructed of large, stone blocks. With a lot of hard work, persistence, and some sort of digging tool, these heavy blocks can be loosened.

Prisoners are fed twice a day with meals slipped through the small slots at the bottom of the cell doors. Some popular menu items—gruel, boiled bones, stale bread crusts, and fish head soup. Meals are served with a small cup of dirty water. Many prisoners go hungry, and some have even died of starvation.

Other ways to die inside the Tombs include death by venomous vermin, food poisoning, succumbing to disease, and being murdered by your fellow cellmates. Prisoners kill each other over food, scraps of clothing, insults, vendettas, and grudges—or sometimes for no reason at all.



The Tombs are riddled with cunningly concealed tunnels. These passages range from cramped shafts leading nowhere, to elaborate avenues enabling a prisoner to either escape or keep in contact with his criminal allies. The Sea Lord's Guard has done its best to brick up these routes, but most prisoners know of at least one passage. Unfortunately, the destination of these tunnels varies a great deal. Some lead to the sewers or other locations in the city, while others end abruptly, old stains signifying the fate of the would-be escapee. Perhaps the worst passages are those with no end that wind deeper and deeper into the earth. Only the most desperate would take these tunnels, for prisoners are quick to recount tales of those lost to the depths who vanished with a stifled scream.

Key Figures

The Tombs hold a motley assortment of criminals, from vile rapists, raving murderers, to political prisoners that have somehow fallen through the cracks to spend their remaining days languishing in the bowels of Freeport's terrifying prison.

Alten Redfeld

The Ghastly Guest (*male human journeyman*), as he was known, is one of Freeport's most notorious killers. He led a campaign of terror, striking down citizens at random. The fact that his murders had no patterns, no motives, made it nearly impossible for the Watch to catch him. In fact, he was never captured; he turned himself in with no explanation as to why he did what he did or why he turned himself in. Those in adjacent cells claim Redfeld whispers prayers to someone or something in the dead of night.

Gaunt and having big green eyes and a head full of wispy, gray hair, Alten seems unassuming enough. He's dressed in clean prisoner's garb and spends his days sitting on a stool, staring into space.

Greminy Greeg

Greminy Greeg (*male human master*) is among the worst criminals in recent memory. He began his career as one of Freeport's most notorious criminals by stalking the streets of Drac's End, raping and murdering prostitutes, both male and female. The remains were so thoroughly violated that, in most cases, the Watch would have to wait for someone to be reported missing before they could identify the bodies. To make matters worse, there were never any witnesses. The murderer simply vanished without a trace.

It wasn't long before Greeg's unholy cravings took a turn for the worse. Leaving Drac's End, he moved into the Merchant District and set his sights on harvesting the fresh youth loitering there. Never particular about gender, Greeg stalked the sons and daughters of Freeport's elite, racking up a dreadful body count and paralyzing the upper class with fear. The Sea Lord, feeling pressure from the council among others in the city, spared no expense to track him down and even paid the Wizards' Guild handsomely to locate the villain. In spite of their best efforts, none could identify the killer.

The nature of the crimes aside, what made his capture so appalling was Greeg's position as a beloved priest of the healing god. Noted for his work with children and his life-long efforts to ease the suffering of the poor, the fact that such a virtuous man could in fact be a ruthless killer and sexual predator appalled the city. He was to be hanged, but his temple paid enough gold to have him imprisoned indefinitely. Greeg's sentence was to be put in the Hulks, but for some reason, perhaps a hidden ally, he has remained in the Tombs instead.



Greeg is a corpulent man with moist lips and small, piggish eyes. He has fat jowls and greasy hair. Time as a prisoner has not been kind to him, and he's sick with a number of diseases. Greeg has paid for his crimes several times over, since the other prisoners in the Tombs visit their own brand of justice on this wretch.

Marius Edgel

Easily one of the Tombs' oldest residents, Marius Edgel (*male human journeyman*) has survived in this inhospitable prison for almost a decade. At the peak of his career as a notorious crime lord, he managed upwards of a dozen operations, including smuggling, extortion, larceny, and even murder. In particular, Marius managed a small circle of assassins in Freeport and on the Continent, and several high profile assassinations fell squarely on his shoulders. The Continent's efforts to extradite the man had all failed since Freeport had no intention of turning over one of their citizens, so a team of killers came for Marius instead. After thwarting eight attempts on his life, Marius realized he could not continue to run his business on the "outside," so he voluntarily turned himself in. Allies in the legal system made sure that his time in the Tombs was for show, and he was free to come and go as he pleased.

In the ten years he's been a prisoner, Marius has actually spent less than a year in the Tombs. Much of his time is spent in a state of semi-retirement at his house in Libertyville. When he returns to Freeport, he visits his posh offices in the Tombs, where he manages various businesses. His filthy cell is just a front. A cunningly concealed door against the back wall leads to a comfortable apartment that has tunnel access into a house in the Merchant District.

Although he's nearly sixty, Marius is in great shape. He has short brown hair and brown eyes.

Adventure Seeds

Alten Redfeld finally receives a message from his real or imagined master and decides it's time to leave the Tombs. He kills the guards, throws open the doors to all the cells, and uses the chaos that follows to mask his escape. Scores of prisoners spread out into the city. Some try to hide, others use the chance to continue their campaign of terror, and through it all, Redfeld haunts the city once more, striking down random citizens in an orgy of violence.

Even the guards admit there are more than the usual monsters behind bars in the Tombs. A bit of movement out of the corner of an eye, a suspicious trail of slime, and a mutilated prisoner all point to something down in the depths, though what, no one knows. After a few guards go missing, the Watch—in conjunction with the Sewer Watch—makes forays into Underside to track down and put to the sword whatever is lurking beneath the sewers. Patrol after patrol vanish, sending waves of panic through the city. Depleted, Commissioner Holliver begins rounding up recruits to fill the ranks of the Watch and deal with whatever lurks below before it starts preying on citizens.

5. The Marquis Moon

"Honestly, I don't know what the attraction is. The place is filthy, the ale foul, and the food... well... it's positively lethal."

—Angris Dellorough, Attorney

There are a number of taverns and pubs scattered throughout the Old City. They make a good business catering to the politicians, lawyers, and guards, offering food, drink, and places where the powerful can meet privately and negotiate deals. Of course, these establishments are all of varying quality, and at the bottom of the heap is the Marquis Moon.

History

The Marquis Moon has had a seedy reputation almost since it opened its doors for business. It offered accommodations to those who needed a discreet place to conduct business, which made the place popular with the movers and shakers in the city as they could negotiate secret deals without attracting undue attention. Unfortunately, its value as a political haven quickly evaporated as a series of scandals erupted with the Marquis Moon at the center.

The Marquis Moon reinvented itself as a flophouse with lodging rented by the hour. Those with coin could buy rooms for extended periods, and those who wanted a few moments of carnal pleasure in the comforts of a room—instead of a piss-soaked alley—could rent one. The Marquis Moon has served a number of famous Freeporters, offering apartments to those leading double lives. Milos, a serpent person and cultist, paid handsomely for lodgings here for a time and transformed a shabby room into a well-appointed chamber that contained the tools of his trade and countless volumes of occult lore.

The owner eventually died, and the Marquis Moon passed to his worthless son, Ficca, who was more concerned with using his rooms than actually running the business.

Description

This sagging brick building has seen better days. Positioned between two larger tenement buildings and tucked away on a side street, it is easily overlooked by passers-by, which is just the way its patrons like it. The building is two stories and roofed with old ceramic tiles. Occasionally, one slips free and shatters on the cobbles below—regulars keep an eye upturned to avoid the often painful precipitation. A thick stone slab serves as the step up to a grimy wooden door set with a single window filled with expensive blue glass. A sign hangs overtop, featuring a painting of a lascivious noblewoman straddling a crescent moon.

The interior is little better. A large central room holds several tables surrounded by mismatched chairs. The floor is wooden, though years of accumulated filth conceal all but a few nails that poke up through the muck. Running against the back wall is a bar where Ficca spends most of his time.

A narrow flight of stone steps winds up to a long hall that forms the spine of the second floor. Lined with numbered doors, from which issue suspicious grunts and moans along with the occasional tittering laugh, the place stinks of smoke, excrement, sweat, and desperation. Beyond each door is a shabby room equipped with a mattress, table, honey pot, and a tattered rug. A few rooms have wardrobes, while others have basins and pitchers filled with impossibly foul water. None of these rooms have windows—or rather they once did but were bricked up at some point.

Key Figures

The following characters can be found here.

Ficca

The owner of the Marquis Moon is a rather foolish young man (*male human apprentice*) who has a tendency to scowl and mutter.

Disinterested in most things, he spends his time picking his nose and paying the cheapest whore available to entertain him behind the bar. If he has any redeeming qualities, they have yet to be revealed. He wears brown breeches splattered with suspicious stains. His shirt is little better, marred as it is by the leavings of his last meals.

Adventure Seeds

Given the Marquis Moon's poor reputation and its appeal to Freeport's more villainous types, the player characters should have plenty of opportunities to come here and rub elbows with Freeport's scum. This is an ideal place to gather facts about a current mission or to find employers for the next one. Most adventures featuring the Marquis Moon should be forays into the disturbing underbelly of Freeport. In a way, the Marquis Moon is a portal into the corruption and reprehensible behavior found in other parts of the city.

6. The Baths

"I've heard Freeporter's believe soap causes warts to appear in the nether regions. Too bad, really. This city would be far nicer if it weren't for the stink."

—Feminy Splitz, Ruffian

For those with delicate sensibilities, there are few places in Freeport where a sod can scrub off the salt of the sea, wipe off the traces of his last encounter in an alley, and soak away his cares and concerns. Freeport stinks, it's true; however, people eventually get tired of their own curious odors, and when they do, Krovz and her baths are ready to take their pennies.

History

The Baths are one of Freeport's oldest bathhouses and one of the only ones present in the Old City. Established during the days of Drac and Francisco, it languished for generations as an oddity, a novelty affordable only to Freeport's elite. In fact, all sorts of whispers and rumors grew up around this place. Some claimed strange men with stranger habits haunted the waters, lying in wait to give the bathers a pinch where they least wanted or expected it. Others said the waters were fouled, and those who spent time in them were bound to find worms in their stool. Despite the superstitions, the Baths somehow survived long enough for an enterprising dwarf matron named Krovz to purchase it.

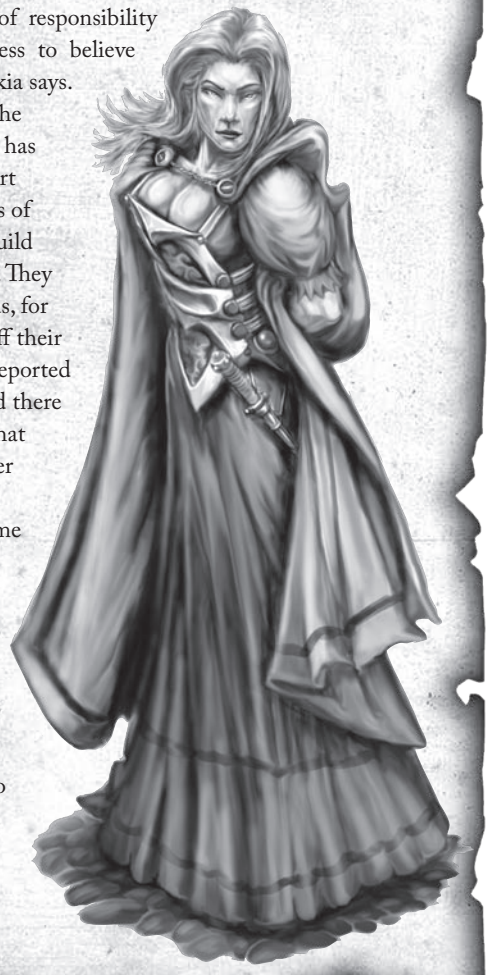
From out of nowhere, Krovz took charge, cleaned the place up, kicked out the lascivious folks that used the place to make filthy deals in the saunas, and turned the business around. She put her engineering skills to good use and refurbished and renovated the place in a matter of months. She devised a system of coal-fired boilers and steam pipes to offer hot baths for the first time. The luxury of a hot soak was a novelty to the cutthroats and freebooters of the port but one they took to with great pleasure.

Since she's taken ownership, the sordid history of Freeport's Baths has become a thing of the past. Attorneys come here between sessions to negotiate deals and meet new clients. Members of the Captains' Council enjoy the atmosphere and indulge in the comforts only such a place can offer. And much to the amazement of the locals, it seems Krovz actually runs an honest shop.

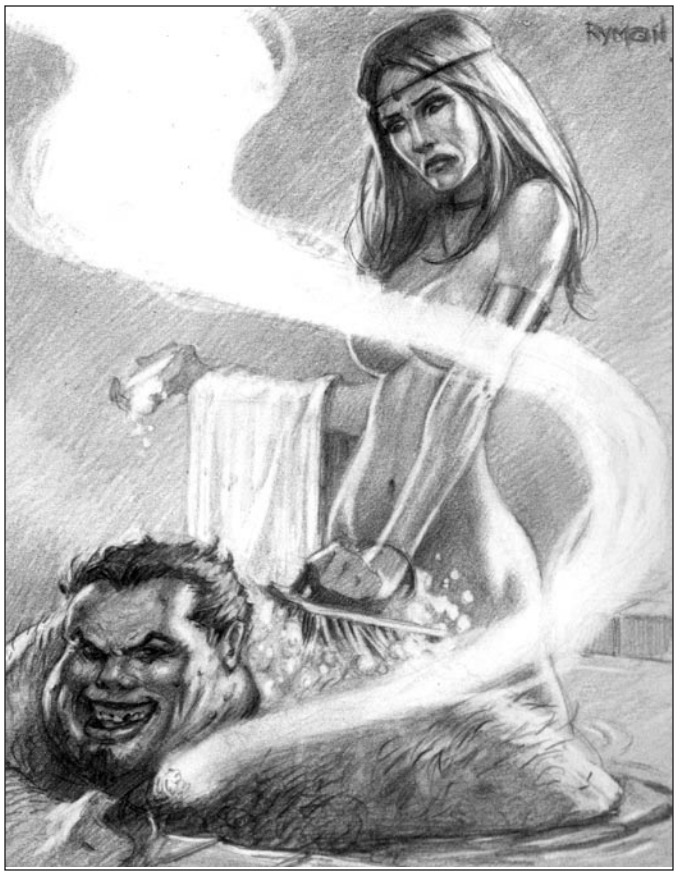
Cult of the Dragon's Blood

Not all of Freeport's hidden cults are bent on the annihilation of the city or the world. Founded by Eudokia Kasovar (*female human master*) nearly a decade ago, the Cult of the Dragon's Blood's tenets are simple. They believe dragons were the first sentient race, and when humanity awoke from their primitive origins, the dragons came forward and blessed a few, infusing their blood with that of their own. Over the eons, the bloodlines have run pure, passed down from generation to generation. Eudokia believes, after a particularly strong revelation, these select few mortals chosen were the inheritors of the future and that it is her role to gather the elect for some grand occasion. While uncertain of what this future is or what it means to be the inheritor of it, her frequent visions guide her in selecting those touched by the dragons, which has led to the slow and constant growth of her cult in the Old City.

Eudokia has managed to build a small following of loyal cultists. They meet in the cellar belonging to the first cultist she converted, a smallish man named Jozan Feg (*male human journeyman*). In every case, before meeting the high priestess, these members had no idea about their ability to work magic. The surprise and delight becomes a heavy sense of responsibility and a willingness to believe whatever Eudokia says.



The Cult of the Dragon's Blood has made some effort to lure members of the Wizards' Guild but to no effect. They must be cautious, for those who rebuff their advances have reported to the guild, and there are suspicions that Eudokia is either mad or is the plaything of some darker power. Now that Tarmon is on the Captains' Council, Eudokia has advised her fellow cultists to lay low for now.



Description

There are two separate public baths and about a dozen private baths (reservations required). The cheapest baths are in the East Bath, while the West Bath offers a relaxing environment and has drinks and massages available for additional fees. The private baths are much pricier, and there's no limit on how much they can cost—depending on the other services requested. For the right price, a private bath can turn into a catered party with attendants, musicians, and discreet companionship.

Key Figures

The following characters can be found here.

Krovz

Krovz (*female dwarf journeyman*) came to Freeport to forget her past. Haunted by the memories of her past—the goblins that spilled through the cracks of her peoples' defenses—she came to this cutthroat city to find a new life. What she found was a filthy city filled with filthier inhabitants. At every turn, she was reminded of the stench of the goblin blood that stained her hands, and she felt as if she could never be clean. So, purchasing the bathhouse seemed a natural choice.

After a decade of owning the business, she's made a small fortune catering to Freeport's finest. She's made a few contacts with high-priced courtesans for extra services and spent a good deal of coin on masseuses, massage oils, herbs, and incenses to make the place classy and to distance it from the den of iniquity it once was. She succeeded.

Standing just over four feet tall and nearly as wide, Krovz is a homely dwarf with thinning red-brown hair, plain features, and a bulbous nose. Her body is block-like and unappealing to most, though it's whispered there is a licentious half-orc who has gained her affections.

Adventure Seeds

The PCs blunder into the wrong private bath and see something they shouldn't, maybe a member of the Captains' Council in a compromising position or the crime lord Finn making a back room deal. That information could be worth money to the right people. The PCs may also have stumbled into a whole lot of trouble they didn't expect.

Word spreads through the Old City when a prominent noble's daughter is found murdered in the Baths, her corpse floating in the hot water. Rumors abound she knew something illicit and was silenced before she could reveal her secrets. Since the case implies a noble family being involved, the family hires outside investigators to track down the killer and bring him to justice. As the characters investigate, they uncover a disturbing conspiracy involving a few members of the Watch, a crime lord, and a number of other notable citizens.

7. Argyle McGill's Curio Shop

"Ever heard of a left-handed smoke sifter? Know where to go to find a glass orc eye in a hurry? Is there any place that still has copies of the first printing of Marten Drac's Who's That Behind You? The answer to these and many other odd questions can be found within Argyle McGill's Curio Shop."

—Thulmir Quent, Broker

Argyle McGill's Curio Shop is one of the Old City's best-kept secrets. Buried in a dark corner of this district, the Shop, as it's known, holds some of Freeport's strangest treasures. Adventurers frequently come here to sell oddities, art objects, and the more esoteric goods they pick up during their exploits.

History

The Shop has been in business for at least two decades, catering to Freeport's most discerning customers, though no one knows with certainty when exactly it opened. Most people believe it's always been there, tucked away in a darkened corner of the Old City. In truth, McGill opened his doors nearly thirty years ago, with a shop full of uncanny items that range from common junk to the potent artifacts that would be banned if anyone of consequence had an idea that such goods were within the walls of the city's center.

Description

Standing two-stories tall and drenched in shadows cast by the high wall against which it stands, it sits between two large buildings—a brothel and an old factory. A sign hangs out front, painted with a single, enigmatic word: "Shop."

The darkness inside makes the exterior look bright and sunny by comparison. Judging by the dust, the thick curtains drawn over the lone window haven't been moved in years. Much could probably be said of the majority of the room's contents. But then, looks can be deceiving.

It is difficult to know where to look first, as there appears to be absolutely no rhyme or reason to the manner in which the items are placed—or thrown, in some cases. Argyle does not deal in everyday, pedestrian items such as weapons or armor, but the more esoteric the

item in question, the more likely it is Argyle either has it or knows where to get it. While he may not have a magical ring or wand, chances are there is an item that serves the same purpose; the shop contains an enchanted belt buckle, a charmed ship in a bottle, and even a pair of magical socks. The price Argyle charges for his curios is extravagant, but since there is nowhere else in Freeport that sells anything like them, he is free to charge what he likes.

For most of both his steady and new customers, the main floor is usually the only one they ever see. What his clientele do not know is there aren't two floors to the curio shop but three. Underneath the chair he occupies whenever he is not showing someone around the premises is a latch that opens a hidden stairwell into the basement. This is the real treasure trove.

In stark contrast to the chaos above, the basement is neatly organized and moisture-free, each wall stacked from floor to ceiling with books: histories, biographies, journals, occult explorations, and even erotic literature. While spellcasters will be disappointed there are no spellbooks, they are certain to discover works about famous members of their craft, which may even allow them to create new spells of their own.

All of the books in the basement share three characteristics: they are rare, they are exceedingly expensive, and they are for sale. Because many of the pieces here have been banned outright by the Temple of the God of Knowledge, Argyle only allows those he trusts to peruse his collection, and gaining that trust can take years.

Oddly, Argyle does not appear to take any extraordinary security precautions to protect his collection. Upon closing his shop each day, he simply locks the front door and climbs up to the second floor by a ladder directly behind his desk. Perhaps his relative obscurity has managed to keep his shop safe, or maybe Argyle is such a good judge of character that extra measures haven't been necessary. Or maybe there is more to this shop than meets the eye.

Key Figures

The Shop caters to a small but loyal base of customers, and from time to time, cloaked figures may be found wandering through the haphazard aisles. The only constant is Argyle McGill.

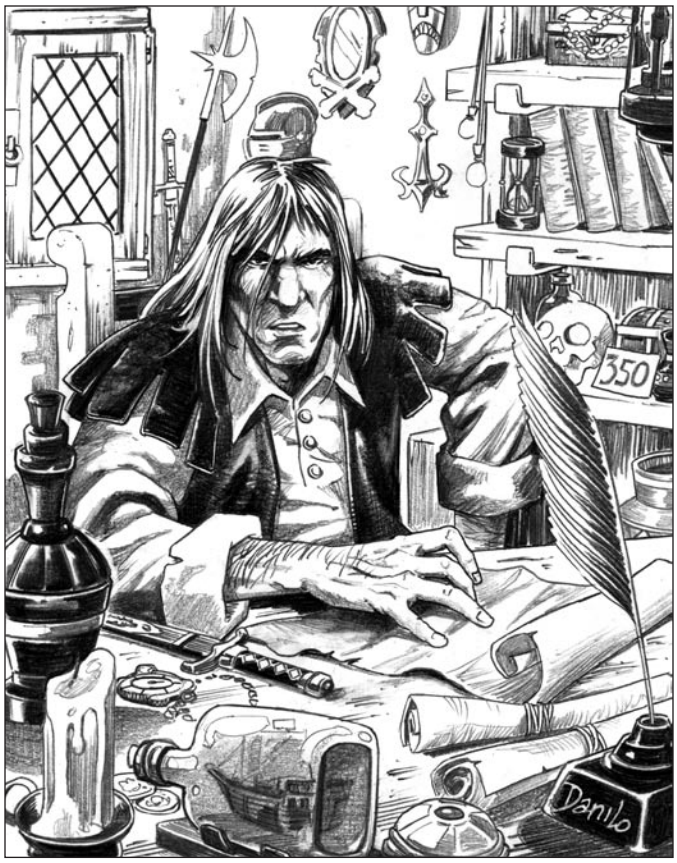
Argyle McGill

Most days, McGill (*male human master*) sits behind his desk, almost completely obscured by piles of scrolls. It's clear from looking at him he was a man of the sea at one time, likely many years ago. He wears his hair long, and his face is deeply lined. His eyes are perpetually narrowed from decades of squinting at something far off in the distance. His natural hair color may have been black, but there's too much gray shot through it now to be completely sure. His hands are as weather-beaten as his face, yet they show absolutely no signs of shaking, and his grip is quite firm.

Whenever Argyle receives a new guest (he can uncannily recall if someone has been in before, even if it was many years ago), he waits to get out of his chair until they've had a chance to acclimate to the gloom. He introduces himself, makes a bit of small talk, and asks if they're looking for something in particular. If they hadn't guessed it already, newcomers to the shop will recognize Argyle's seaman past by his tendency to begin every few sentences with a drawling "Yarr."

Adventure Seeds

For the first time in his life, Argyle has misjudged one of his customers, resulting in the theft of one of his precious books. In order to keep his shop below the notice of the Temple of the God of Knowledge, Argyle has discretely circulated word he is looking for someone who would be willing to retrieve an artifact on his behalf.



While on another adventure, the PCs discover an odd statue carved from jet to resemble a six-armed woman, studded with jewels and wearing a girdle of snakes. After some cursory investigation and research, the PCs are unable to find a buyer, nor can they find anyone who knows anything about the disturbing idol. What they do find is a name—Argyle McGill, and the characters are told this man may be interested in the statuette and may know its secrets.

8. The Wizards' Guild

> "There's no doubt about it, there's something strange going on in there. Oh, I know, they are wizards and all, but I suspect something far darker, far more perverse than the usual sorts of nonsense that happens in such places."
>
> *—Obaen Renk, Merchant*

Some thirty years ago, a cabal of wizards selected Freeport as their new home. It was a glorious event, celebrated with much fanfare and ebullient spectacles, all of which left their mark on the imagination of Freeport's citizens. With pride, Freeport accepted the wizards, believing they were somehow safer, somehow protected by the sheltering hands of these learned men and women. How wrong they were.

History

Freeporters remember the founding of the Wizards' Guild vividly. Pyrotechnics filled the sky, immaculately clad djinn flew through the streets waving shimmering banners, and dozens of waterspouts exploded in the harbor in tribute to the power of wizardry. Stories of its marvels are still recounted in taverns across Freeport. Unfortunately, it was all a lie.

The Wizards' Guild's officially dates its existence to thirty-two years ago, but it has been a part of Freeport for over one hundred fifty years. During the reign of Sea Lord Cromey, a small group of wizards quietly set up shop in the city. They were members of an organization—or cult, as some on the Continent branded it—called the Esoteric Order of Starry Wisdom. The wizards of this order were devoted to a power, one prohibited in some nations, known as the Crawling Chaos. In addition to being a patron of sorcerers, the Crawling Chaos was associated with the underworld and the power of the night. In other words, the Starry Wisdom initiates were not eager to make their presence or adulations well known, and they kept a strict regimen of secrecy.

This group had come to Freeport seeking an artifact known as the Azoth Stone. Last seen in ancient Valossa, the Azoth Stone was said to allow followers of the Crawling Chaos to peer through all of time and space. Members of the order hoped to find the Azoth Stone under A'Val or the nearby seas, and over the decades that followed, they mounted an exhaustive search of the area.

A century of fruitless searching taxed the wizards of the order. Some died, some left Freeport for other locales, and some turned inward in the pursuit of ever more arcane avenues of research. The half-dozen remaining wizards still dedicated to the Crawling Chaos realized the order was in danger of complete dissolution. When an underwater cave was discovered several leagues from Freeport, they decided to descend into the depths en masse in a final attempt to find the Azoth Stone. None ever returned.

The remaining members of the Esoteric Order of Starry Wisdom carried on for several years, but the end was clearly in sight. At this point, a young wizard named Tarmon took over its leadership. He decided the only way to keep the order alive was to go public. It was his plan to create a "Wizards' Guild" in front of all of Freeport and bring new blood into the organization. He also courted civic leaders by trading magical favors for special treatment.

Tarmon's plan worked spectacularly. The Captains' Council enjoyed the prestige such an organization brought the city, and Anton Drac was pleased to have powerful wizards ready to defend the city. These relationships were solidified ten years after the Wizards' Guild's public debut when Tarmon became an official advisor to the Captains' Council and the Sea Lord.

The Esoteric Order of Starry Wisdom thus survived into Freeport's new age. It forms a secret inner circle of the Wizards' Guild, and only the most trusted members of the Wizards' Guild are initiated into the order. To all outward appearances, Tarmon is a kindly old wizard, and the Guild is a powerful but benevolent organization. The wizards have not completely forgotten their ancient allegiance to the Crawling Chaos. Nor has the Crawling Chaos forgotten about them.

Tarmon's seat on the Captains' Council has elevated the Order and the Wizards' Guild to a level of unprecedented power. Thus far, the inner cabal has remained quiet and has not made a move to shift politics any more in their favor. It could be the cabal is building its resources to make another attempt at locating the coveted Azoth Stone, and using funds borrowed from the city coffers ensures they'll succeed, or perhaps, the council is biding its time to prop up more of their members and take over the city.

The guild has a great degree of latitude, enjoying far more freedom than other citizens do. To ensure the continuation of their agreeable relationship, the guild provides its services to the city's government for free or at a drastically reduced price. For instance, the wooden warehouse that houses the Office of Public Records in the Warehouse District is filled to the rafters with piles of extremely flammable paper. The guild maintains a series of wards to suppress fire and prevent it from going up like a tinderbox if someone were to drop a torch. Additionally, the guild has agreed to participate fully in any defense of the city from outside

Common Shops of the Old City

Many of the shops and businesses in the Old City attend to the needs of the politicians and administrators, and as such, they are often beyond the means of most Freeporters.

Taverns and Inns

While the Old City may seem like it shuts down at dark, there are places worth exploring after hours.

10. **The Keelhaul:** An embarrassing and disreputable tavern, the Keelhaul is a haunt favored by pirates.
11. **The Black Rose:** Merchant princes often dine here and hold private meetings during the day. At night, it transforms into a popular nightclub.
12. **Devilfish:** Another fine restaurant, it is one of the Sea Lord's favorite places to eat.

Businesses

The Street of Dreams is the primary site of the Old City's commerce.

13. **The Wizard's Pouch:** This tiny shop seems larger inside than out. Catering to Freeport's wizards, the Wizard's Pouch sells strange ingredients useful only to spellcasters.
14. **Gregor's Brewery:** Many mistake this place as a tavern by its name, but in truth, it's a successful apothecary.
15. **Sunken Treasures:** This small shop sells exotic imports from all over the world.
16. **Tirwin's Fine Clothing:** A popular clothier, Tirwin's is fast becoming one of the most popular tailors in the city for the elite.
17. **The Matchlock:** This business specializes in firearms and is currently one of the only sellers of them in the city.

Diversions

For those looking for fun, there's always plenty to do in this neighborhood.

18. **Mickey's Pleasures:** A minor brothel, this place languishes in the shadow of the Serenity House.
19. **The Gentleman's Club:** This is a private club for the Old City's elite. Guests are attended by nude servants and plied with fine foods, liquors, and company if desired.

invaders. So long as the guild is willing to assist the city in its public, and sometime not-so-public, needs, the wizards are free to do as they please.

Description

The Wizards' Guild is a large, marble building that stands in the center of the Old City, towering over the Street of Dreams. Its spotless marble walls encircle the compound, pierced once by a pair of two large bronze doors. Flashing arcane glyphs shine forth from the surface, reminding all that approach of the power contained within, as well as serving as the only warning the wizards are willing to give to thieves. Just inside is a public area—the only one in fact. It is an airy atrium with a high ceiling fitted with skylights. Mute guards, whom few believe are human, prevent access to the recesses of the building and bar the way of any who dare to enter without the express approval of a guild member. Not even the Sea Lord can enter without the permission of Tarmon or Thorgrim, the guild's Lord Defender.

The chambers so zealously guarded are mostly laboratories and apartments for guild members and apprentices. The real treasure, however, is its arcane library. Whispers of strange pocket worlds and doorways that lead to far-flung lands occasionally filter out of the place, but Tarmon assures any who query these "extra-dimensional" spaces merely serve to contain the guild's most treasured possessions. The years of searching the surrounding seas were not without reward, and the guild has perhaps the most comprehensive collection of Valossan artifacts in the world.

Key Figures

The Wizards' Guild is home to an assortment of eclectic wizards, sorcerers, witches, and warlocks. Many of its members hail from distant lands and have unsettling demeanors, to say nothing of strange appearances. For the most part, these spellcasters are loners and rarely venture far from the guild building. When they do, Freeporters have learned the hard way to keep their distance. Tarmon is described in **Chapter Thirteen: Denizens of Freeport**.

Thorgrim, Lord Defender of the Wizards' Guild

Born almost three centuries ago, Thorgrim (*male human master*) was a bold and savage warrior, fearless and counted among the greatest of his clan. Never quite satisfied with his own talents, he ventured far from his tribal lands, descending into the depths of the earth for some hidden power, but his search ended abruptly, cut short by the fetid breath of a gorgon that transformed him into a stone statue. What seemed like the briefest instant passed, and suddenly a young man was standing before him. The man, it turned out, was a wizard named Flavian, and he had just happened along and found Thorgrim in his sorry state. The warrior was devastated to learn nearly two hundred and fifty years had passed and that everyone he had known and loved was gone. Into this strange new world, Thorgrim emerged. He vowed to serve Flavian, and in exchange, the wizard taught him magic. In the intervening years, Thorgrim had many more adventures and learned of the Esoteric Order. He traveled to Freeport, believing if he could find the Azoth Stone, he might somehow be able to reach through the veil of time to his lost kin. He offered his services to the guild, who saw value in his martial skills, as well as his magical ones, and so it was Thorgrim gained his current title.

Adventure Seeds

After fifty years beneath the waves, two of the missing wizards reappear in Freeport. What has transpired since they vanished has distressed them—specifically that the order has come out into the open. Add to this that the so-called Wizards' Guild has, for the most part, lost its devotion to the Crawling Chaos, they see they have no recourse but to take charge of the guild and put it back on course. Naturally, such an act is not in Tarmon's best interests, and so tensions mount, threatening to plunge Freeport into an arcane civil war.

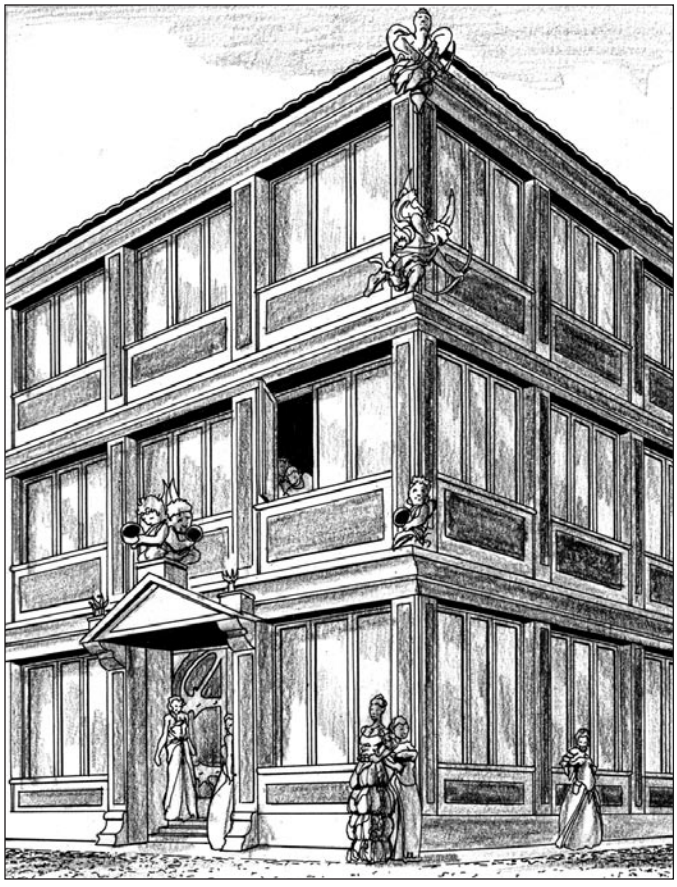
When an apprentice wizard uncovers the guild's origins, he flees to warn the city. However, the betrayal is swiftly uncovered, and the guild mounts a smear campaign to discredit the boy, while using potent magic and minions to bring the apprentice back into the fold. All of this might transpire without anyone knowing better, but the apprentice went to the PCs for help. Will the heroes protect the boy or turn him over?

9. The House of Serenity

"Clean, discreet, and professional. The House of Serenity is the best brothel in Freeport, no doubt about it."

—Carlen Fusque, Destitute Noble

Freeport has no shortage of brothels. From the filthy alleys in Scurvytown to the flophouses in the Docks, there is an outlet for just about every vice. Among these pleasure dens, one stands at the fore—the House of Serenity. This bordello specifically caters to Freeport's elite, offering the finest courtesans for those with coin enough to sample their delights. This is no place for the rude and uncultured; it is a retreat for those of discerning tastes.



History

The House of Serenity has been serving Freeport's elite for years. In this time, it has emerged as one of the most prominent brothels in the city, whose fame has spread far beyond. Sailors dream of spending a night in this place, while travelers come from far away lands to sample its delights. The fact that the Serenity House survived almost complete destruction during the Succession Riots is a testimony to its power and success, as well as those of money who would not see the House fade into history.

Description

The renovated and rebuilt Serenity House is just as inconspicuous as the old one. Nothing about its façade indicates its purpose or what its four walls contain. Three stories tall, it occupies the corner of Main and High Streets. The external walls are polished sandstone fitted with numerous windows on all sides. Terracotta tiles roof the building, and each corner features a cherubic angel that drains the rainwater from the gutters by showering the streets with its delightful streams.

Once inside, there's no mistaking this place for anything other than a bordello. The interior is soft and inviting. Statues of scantily clad beautiful men and women fill the entrance, looking down on the patterned floor with mischievous expressions. Archways on either side lead to entertaining rooms where affections are as free-flowing as the wine. These rooms are where the courtesans await their guests, offering their talents to any with the coin to spend and the libido to sate. At the far end of the hall is a dramatic staircase leading to a balcony lined with doors that open into the private bedchambers. Twin staircases head up from here to the top level, which holds offices, sleeping quarters for the staff, and storerooms.

A night in the House of Serenity costs a great deal. The prices place it well out of the range of most sea dogs, and the majority of the House's clientele come from the wealthy men from the Merchant District too timid to venture into the flesh-pits of Scurvytown. Members of the merchant's guards save up several weeks of pay for a single night in the House of Serenity. It is substantially safer and cleaner than Freeport's other bordellos, as well as a cultural cut above. The ladies and men that dwell within are more accurately termed courtesans than prostitutes.

The pleasures offered by the House of Serenity are of the standard nature. Companionship, conversation, a pleasant meal, some light entertainment (singing or dancing), and physical intimacy with the woman (or man) of one's choice are the House's fare. House management heavily disapproves of activities beyond those. Those seeking more outré physical pleasures are advised to take their perversions to Dreaming Street.

Key Figures

Sylvia Rathrow is the most important individual to call the Serenity House home, though the building is home to two dozen women and about a third that many men.

Sylvia Rathrow

All of the Serenity House's success comes from one woman—Sylvia Rathrow (*female human journeyman*). Almost thirty years ago, she began her career as a common whore in Scurvytown, picking up clients at her regular haunts on Dreaming Street. She was different from the other women, though; she had ambition. She may not have been as pretty as the other prostitutes, but she had a sly wit, keen mind, and legendary skills. Over the years, she gained a sizeable pool of clients who were both wealthy and influential, and she was able to convince them to fund the opening of her own brothel, far away from the dangerous warrens of Scurvytown. They agreed, and she opened the House of Serenity. Her business was so successful she was able to pay off her debts in less than a year and fill her stables with the best companions money could buy.

In the years she's run the Serenity House, she has spared no expense in recruiting the very best women and men. She pays local priests to screen the staff to ensure everyone who works for her is hale and healthy. To encourage her employees to go above the call of duty, Sylvia pays well and, more importantly, takes care of those who retire from the Serenity House. Anyone who works until they are no longer viable can continue working here in the kitchens, laundry, or keeping the rooms clean. And those who retire receive a small pension to pay for their room and board for years after they leave. As a result, Sylvia has her pick of the best in the city, and some even say beyond.

Sylvia has aged gracefully. Never beautiful, she does have pleasant, if a bit plain, features. Her once auburn hair is mostly gray, and care lines have appeared around her mouth and eyes. Although she is advancing in years, she cuts a fine figure and wears clothing that emphasizes her good qualities.

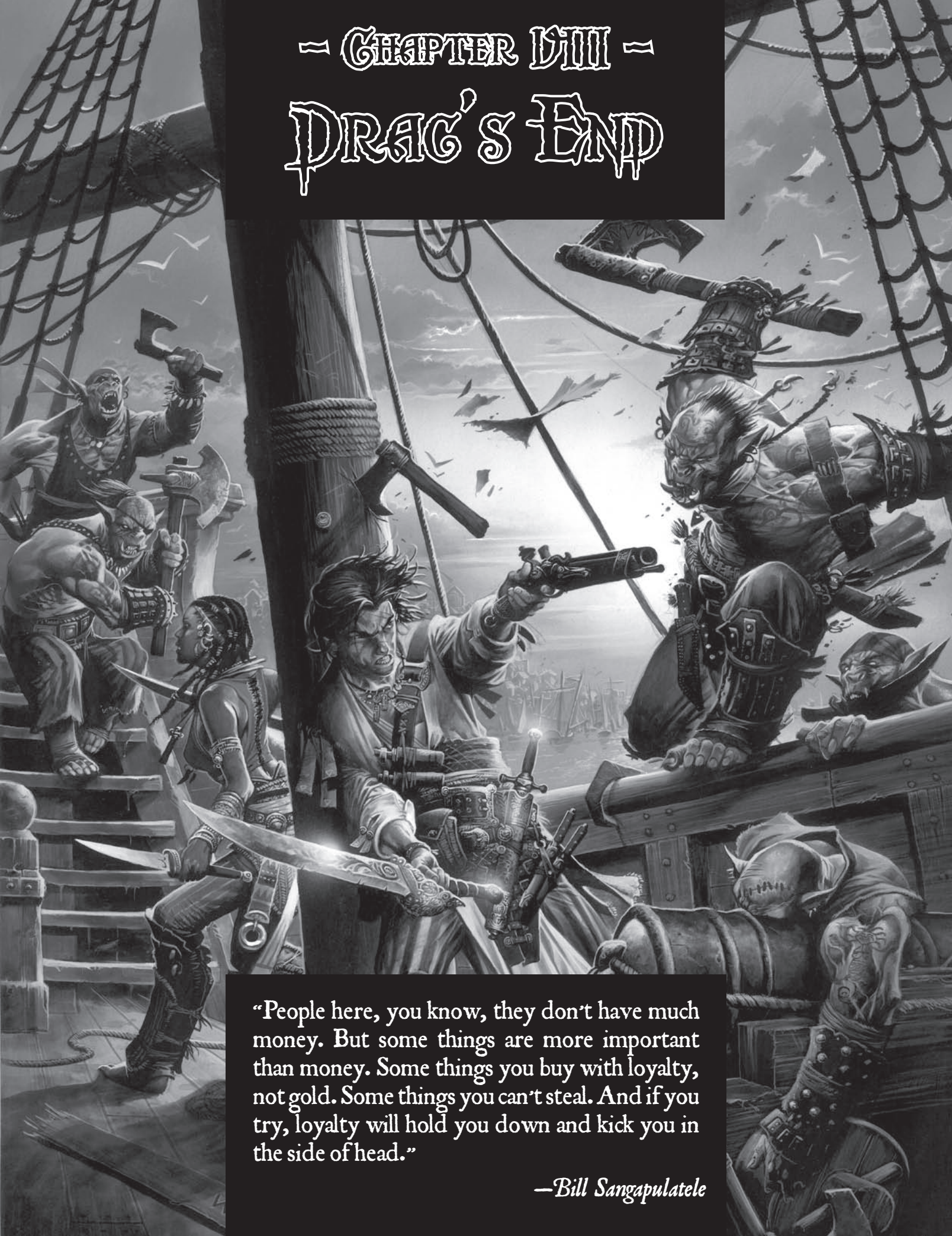
Lexi

A beautiful young woman and talented courtesan, Lexi (*female human journeyman*) is a popular girl at the Serenity House. The reason is simple. She augments her skills with magic, subtly altering her appearance, voice, and her clients' moods. Lexi didn't choose this life, and while she recognizes it's far improved over her stint in her abusive father's brothel on Dreaming Street, she yearns for more. For a time, she appreciated Sylvia's kindness in accepting her, especially given her pedigree, but she began to suspect Sylvia, like others before her, exploits her. She's tolerated this so far, but the old anger that drove her to murder her father seems to be returning, and she fears someday she might kill again.

Adventure Seeds

One of the reasons the wealthy do business in the Serenity House rather than a brothel in Scurvytown is because Sylvia knows the value of discretion. Many of her clients come to her establishment to escape the hustle and bustle of the city and to spend time in the company of those who pretend to dote on them. Should someone or something compromise the client's anonymity, the effects of Sylvia's business would be disastrous, which is just what's happening. Sylvia has received a threatening letter in which the blackmailer demands an incredible fee, or he will expose the names and identities of everyone who does business here. How this person acquired this information, Sylvia's not certain. She'll pay the required fee, but she knows when she does, the blackmailer will simply want more. So, she turns to a competent band of investigators to track down this villain and bring him to her.

One of Sylvia's girls discovered the bloody remains of one of her coworkers. The body is a mess, and it seems whoever did this took their time because the walls are spattered with blood, and crimson handprints stain the carpets. Angered, Sylvia checked the records, but to her surprise, the girl had no clients the previous night. Unsure of what happened, Sylvia has the mess cleaned and buys the silence of the one who found her. The next morning, another courtesan is dead, and now Sylvia begins to panic. She closes the doors, sends the girls to safe-houses throughout the city, and searches for someone who can find the bastard who is killing her girls.



— Chapter VIII —

Drac's End

"People here, you know, they don't have much money. But some things are more important than money. Some things you buy with loyalty, not gold. Some things you can't steal. And if you try, loyalty will hold you down and kick you in the side of head."

—Bill Sangapulatele

Freeport sits nestled against the remaining jungle of A'Val. Drac's End is where the pressing mass of the city starts to peter out against the greenery and farmland that covers the rest of the island. Although the area around the city is clear-cut and patrolled by the Sea Lord's Guard and Watch the threats of A'Val's interior keeps most people who can afford better housing away from this part of town. Of course, the number of people in Freeport who *can't* afford better housing is considerable, and Drac's End is home to the poorer elements of the city's population. Sailors and longshoremen keep shabby rooms in rundown rooming houses. Families live in crowded, noisy tenements, and the smell of humanity is palpable to one walking the streets.

This doesn't mean Drac's End is a terribly dangerous place. Compared to Scurvytown, the streets here are a haven of safety and civility. The people here may be poor, but they are in large measure honest folk just trying to get by. The district also features an amazing variety of cultures and races from across the known world, all packed into the crowded dwellings. Foreigners fresh off the boat often gravitate to Drac's End—those with the sense or morals to avoid Scurvytown that is. The cheap rents and the presence of the Freeport Institute (the lone bastion of higher learning in town) is also an attraction to many, and the students of the school only increase the district's diversity.

The people of Drac's End live packed together here in slipshod buildings, fully realizing they are the human shields between Freeport and the rest of A'Val. Never was that more obvious than during the Great Green Fire, when Drac's End was ravaged for days by fire, smoke, and burning ash. Many houses burned down, and many more were damaged and still bear the scars of the flames—every resident knows someone who perished or was permanently injured by the fire. The disaster could have reduced the district to ashes, but it pulled through—if anything, the people of Drac's End became stronger for their ordeal. There is a community here now, one that looks after its own and fights back against threats that might destroy it—whether that be the threat of famine, the travails of poverty, the political machinations of the rich, or the supernatural forces prowling the jungle. Life is hard in Drac's End, but it's not all bad, and most people here have hopes for a better future, whether they're realistic or not.

Drac's End Overview

This working class neighborhood houses much of the raw labor force that keeps the industry and trade infrastructure of Freeport trundling along.

Buildings

Rundown and occasionally fire-damaged, made from timber or coarse stone.

People

Laborers, sailors, and working families, dressed in cheap and much-repaired clothing.

Roads

Winding streets and alleys, made from pressed earth with occasional planks and stones.

Descriptive Elements

Tents and makeshift buildings often appear overnight on streets and clearings, only to disappear later. A significant number of nonhumans, scholars, and artists live and work here. Barrels of sea water for fire fighting can be found outside many homes.

Locations of Interest

The following locations can be found in Drac's End.

1. Tent Town

"I use-ta live in a mansion, ya know, a gods-damned mansion. Now look at me, living out of a piece-uh canvas. Life just ain't gods-damned fair in this town, I tell ya."

—Dirk Haslinger

Tent Town isn't a place, exactly, or at least not a single place. The locals give the name to the pockets of tents, lean-tos, and squatter habitats that appear and disappear through the district. Scattered along the southern edge of Drac's End, the ever-changing territory of Tent Town plays home to transients, sailors, the homeless, and the very poor. These shanties are also the focus of Drac's End's criminal activities, a hideout for thieves, and a place where richer citizens can come to buy drugs, stolen goods, or information.

History

There have always been stretches of open space in Drac's End without any buildings at all, and squatters have claimed these areas over the years. They camp out there under the stars, right in the shadow of the walls of the Old City but afforded none of its protections. The Watch rarely patrols these areas, and the Captains' Council occasionally makes noises about cleaning out the "transient problem," but for the most part Tent Town is left alone.

The population of Tent Town varies radically with the seasons. During the dry months, when the weather is pleasant, Drac's End is packed to the gills. It's difficult to find a clear patch of ground to lie down on, much less pitch a tent. The only areas that are regularly clear are the roads, thanks to the regular traffic of carts and pedestrians. During the rainy season, Tent Town shrinks, as no one likes getting caught out of doors during a monsoon. Every year, though, the poorest residents are rained out; people can find some shelter in the kinder parts of the Temple District, but even these places are quickly packed to overflowing.

Many residents of Tent Town are sailors that abandoned their ships, seeking a new berth or different purpose in life. Others are transients who came to Freeport and ran out of money, thieves in hiding, itinerant laborers doing their best to stay out of the sinkhole of Scurvytown, residents left homeless after the Great Green Fire, or anyone else down on their luck. A few rare souls are those who choose to live a bohemian, outdoors existence, but for the most part no one lives in Tent Town who doesn't have to do so.



Crime is more common in Tent Town than anywhere else in Drac's End; it's the frayed edge of the district, where the sense of community and solidarity is weak or nonexistent. Drug dealers, thieves, smugglers, and pirates set up shop in the roughest areas for a night or a week and then move on before the authorities catch them. Tents are hard to defend or lock up, so thefts and robberies are common—not that many residents have much worth stealing. Fights—over territory, resources, or anything else—are not uncommon and the losers of such conflicts might have to pitch their tents in some of the least desirable places.

Description

Walk around any corner in Drac's End, and you may find yourself in Tent Town. Rough tents made of canvas or burlap are the most common "buildings," but there are other, even less respectable accommodations—shacks assembled from driftwood, lean-tos that incorporate packing crates and barrels, or simple mounds of blankets and refuse. There are definite "neighborhoods" within Tent Town, better or worse territories; the least desirable locations are located around ditches, common privies, and refuse areas, while better locales have less traffic, access to clean water, and the occasional protection of the Watch.

The external cleanliness or squalor of a Tent Town neighborhood tends to mirror the interiors of the residences as well. Those in the less-desirable areas are usually dirty and squalid; the residents have few possessions and no luxuries, and the tents stink of unwashed bodies and abandoned hopes. Residents in better areas are still poor, for the most part, but may have retained some of their belongings from better days, along with some sense of domestic pride.

Key Figures

The following characters can be found in Tent Town.

Dirk Haslinger

Dirk Haslinger (*male human apprentice*) remembers better days—days when he was a big fish in the small pond of crime in Drac's End. A drug dealer (and user), he staked out a territory along the border of Drac's End and the Eastern District and lived inside a ramshackle mansion on the north side of the district. The good times didn't last; the Great Green Fire destroyed the mansion, and the drugs destroyed Haslinger. Now he drifts around the worst neighborhoods of Tent Town, living out of a tent that's little better than a canvas sack and surviving on what he can steal or scrounge. A burned-out wreck, Dirk still hears a lot of what's going on in Tent Town and the underground of Freeport, and he might provide information to anyone prepared to pay him in drugs, money, or even a decent meal.

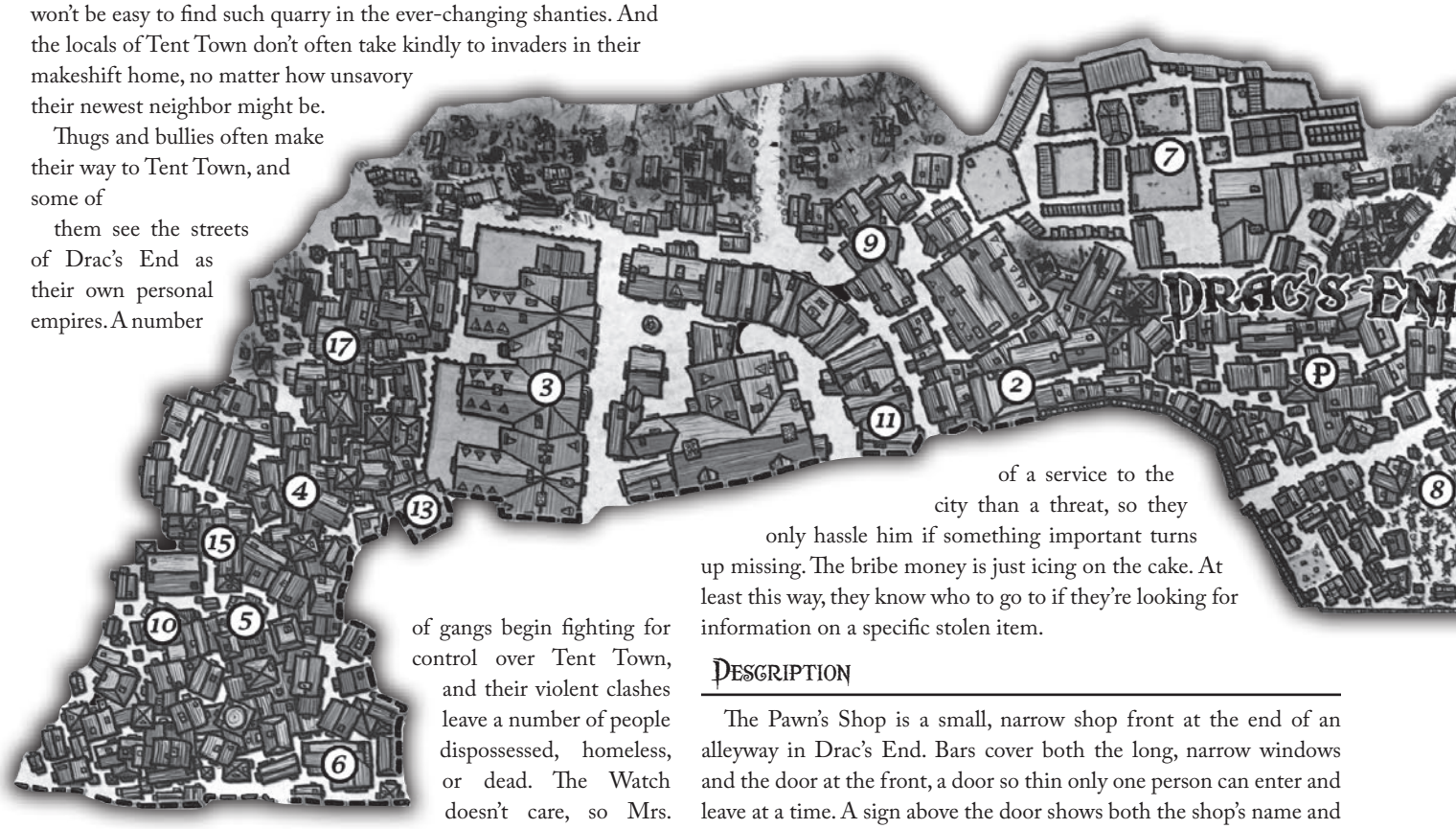
Mrs. Miggins

Irene Miggins (*female human journeyman*) is one of the best known faces in the better parts of Tent Town. This cheerful, middle-aged woman does her best to look after the transients and poor families living rough in Drac's End; she organizes communal cooking facilities, gives shelter to children in her large, dry tent and gives what she can spare to those with nothing. All that takes money, and few know that Mrs. Miggins has a hidden sponsor; she's an agent of the Office of Dredging who keeps tabs on events and visitors within Tent Town. Mrs. Miggins truly cares about her neighbors and sees her work as protecting the poor of Drac's End from the dangers of the city. But still, no one likes a spy, so she does her best to keep her arrangements secret.

Adventure Hooks

Tent Town is a place people go when they have nowhere else left, but it's also a place some people go to hide from trouble or enemies. From mad cultists to anarchist agitators to spies from the nations on the Continent, the enemies of Freeport can find a place to vanish in the tents and shacks of Drac's End. Anyone looking for a refugee from justice should start their search here, but it won't be easy to find such quarry in the ever-changing shanties. And the locals of Tent Town don't often take kindly to invaders in their makeshift home, no matter how unsavory their newest neighbor might be.

Thugs and bullies often make their way to Tent Town, and some of them see the streets of Drac's End as their own personal empires. A number of gangs begin fighting for control over Tent Town, and their violent clashes leave a number of people dispossessed, homeless, or dead. The Watch doesn't care, so Mrs. Miggins pulls some strings to find protection for her neighbors. Can the newcomers stop the gang violence from tearing Tent Town apart? What happens when the gangs join forces to fight back against the outsiders? Will Mrs. Miggins be revealed as an agent of the council? And what if the Rakeshames decide this is a prime time to victimize the lower classes?



2. The Pawn's Shop

"I'll give you fifty for it. No, I don't care how much you think it's worth. You think you can sell it somewhere else without someone asking questions? No? Fine. Did I say fifty? I meant forty. Any more complaints?"

—Egil Horne

Drac's End has several secondhand shops where people can buy and sell whatever goods they can get their hands on. The owner of the Pawn's Shop, Egil Horne, is a bit less curious than are others about where his goods might have originally come from. In blunt terms, he's a fence.

History

No one really knows what Egil Horne did before he set up his shop over ten years ago, and no one much cares. All that matters is that anyone looking to buy or sell just about anything can come to the Pawn's Shop and try their luck, no questions asked.

The Watch knows Horne's a fence, but he makes enough money to pay them to leave him alone. They see him as more of a service to the city than a threat, so they only hassle him if something important turns up missing. The bribe money is just icing on the cake. At least this way, they know who to go to if they're looking for information on a specific stolen item.

Description

The Pawn's Shop is a small, narrow shop front at the end of an alleyway in Drac's End. Bars cover both the long, narrow windows and the door at the front, a door so thin only one person can enter and leave at a time. A sign above the door shows both the shop's name and a rough painting of a chess pawn.

The store is quite dark inside; Horne prefers not to see the faces of his clientele too clearly—or for them to see too far into the depths of his haven. The security on the building is incredibly tight for a place in Drac's End, mostly to keep the clientele from getting any ideas. The windows and doors all bear good locks, as do the cases around the store, while Horne always keeps a weapon or two on hand (and he knows how to use them). Behind the store area, other locked rooms contain additional merchandise and Horne's living quarters.

Key Figures

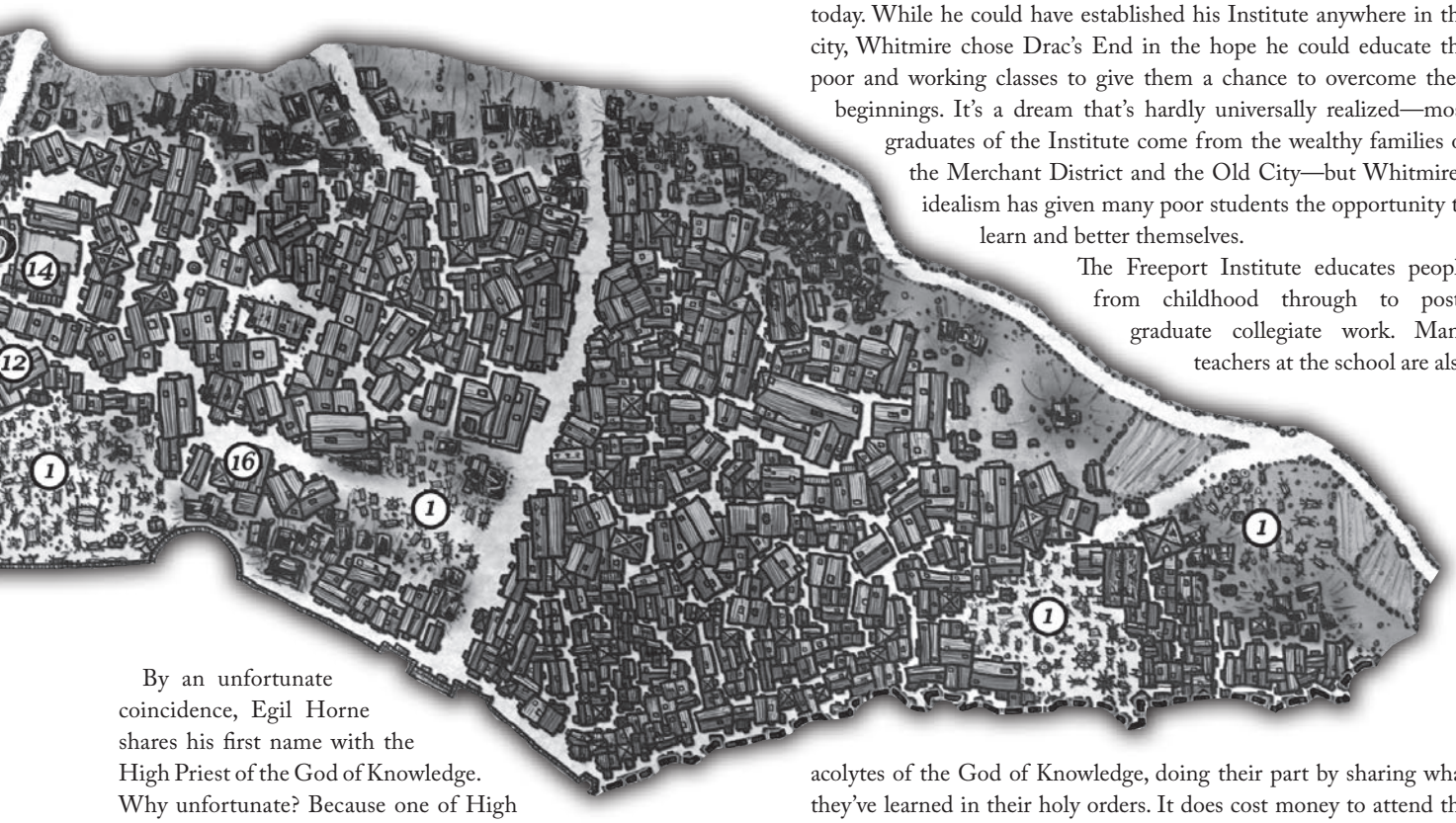
The following characters can be found at the Pawn's Shop.

Egil Horne

Egil Horne (*male human journeyman*) is a businessman, pure and simple. He's happy to buy just about anything from anyone at a below-market price, as long as he's reasonably confident that he can turn it around later—and that the real owners aren't going to come around to give him any grief. If he gets hassled by the law or anyone else over anything, he's usually more than happy to hang the people out to dry who sold him the goods in question. After all, it should be their problem, not his.

Adventure Hooks

If you need something unusual, rare, or dangerous—or want to dispose of such an item—the Pawn's Shop is your first port of call, though it might be necessary to get on Horne's good side for the best service. He has constant problems with thieves, so if someone were to track down "his" merchandise, he would certainly be grateful. He occasionally comes into possession of reputed treasure maps or hears rumors about unusual places. Knowing the dubious nature of such things, he sells them cheaply up front but expects a share in the eventual take (if any).



By an unfortunate coincidence, Egil Horne shares his first name with the High Priest of the God of Knowledge. Why unfortunate? Because one of High Priest Egil's enemies has sent him a cursed artifact—but thanks to a foolish messenger, the artifact is in Horne's hands, and the curse is upon *his* head. With his life and soul in danger, Horne needs help, and anyone freeing him from the curse will be in his good books. But dispelling the curse won't be easy and may mean transferring it back to High Priest Egil—who's sympathetic but not that sympathetic. And the cultists who created the curse aren't going to stand still while their work is undone.

3. The Freeport Institute

> "Teach history? Dear boy, I lived through history. And if you'll sit down and stop looking around my office for anything worth stealing, I might even tell you something about it."
>
> —*Professor Mandarus Whitmire*

While Freeport is hardly the first place people might think of when discussing seats of higher learning, there *is* a temple to the God of Knowledge in town. Wherever you find such a place, you generally find a school as well. Of course, Drac's End wouldn't be the first place in Freeport where most people would think of building a school either. But the dean of the school—Professor Mandarus Whitmire—has dedicated his life to shining a bit of light into the darkness where it's most needed.

History

Mandarus Whitmire founded the Freeport Institute over one hundred fifty years ago, and the venerable elf still heads the school today. While he could have established his Institute anywhere in the city, Whitmire chose Drac's End in the hope he could educate the poor and working classes to give them a chance to overcome their beginnings. It's a dream that's hardly universally realized—most graduates of the Institute come from the wealthy families of the Merchant District and the Old City—but Whitmire's idealism has given many poor students the opportunity to learn and better themselves.

The Freeport Institute educates people from childhood through to post-graduate collegiate work. Many teachers at the school are also acolytes of the God of Knowledge, doing their part by sharing what they've learned in their holy orders. It does cost money to attend the Institute, but the Temple of Knowledge has set up scholarship funds for poor children and young adults. As long as they were born in Freeport, poor applicants have a good chance of gaining admission. Proving this, of course, can be a difficult process, possibly involving trips to the Office of Public Records.

Description

The Institute is a massive, multi-story building ironically placed in the poorer district of Drac's End, towering above impoverished and uneducated masses who could never afford the Institute's high tuition on their own. The building is so large it blocks access from most of Drac's End to the Merchant District, which is just the way the powerful in Freeport like it, and they have long subsidized the institute for this very reason—as well as the fact that it gives them a decent place to send their children to school. Built from stone and timber, the Institute came through the Great Green Fire unscathed, and it continues to be well maintained by its wealthy patrons.

The various rooms of the Institute house classes, study halls, multiple libraries, offices, and all the trappings required of a place of higher learning. Classes tend to be small and cover many academic topics: history, languages, philosophy, and mathematics are the most common



courses. But the Institute is prepared to teach almost anything if an instructor wishes to conduct a course. Few people actually live within the Institute, as most students and teachers have homes locally, but Professor Whitmire and some of his associates keep quarters at the top of the building.

Key Figures

The following characters can be found at the Freeport Institute.

Professor Mandarus Whitmire

Mandarus Whitmire (*male elf master*) is old even for an elf, but he has lost none of his intellect and faculties. After several human lifetimes of exploring and studying the known world, he came to Freeport in the hopes of sharing the greatest treasure of all—knowledge. Whitmire has been around long enough he knows most of the rich and powerful in town—after all, he educated many of them. However, the studious elf has absolutely no interest in politics and no agenda beyond spreading knowledge as far and wide as possible. He is a close friend of High Priest Egil of the God of Knowledge, and the two meet often to discuss scholastic topics.

Adventure Hooks

The history of Freeport is filled with secrets and hidden knowledge, and many an adventurer or pirate has met their end due to ignorance of those secrets. The libraries of the Freeport Institute hold information that could be vital to the well being of an explorer—or even the well being of the whole city. Professor Whitmire is happy to share the knowledge held at the Institute, but finding that information isn't always easy; keeping track of every book in the libraries or out on loan is problematic at best. Getting hold of the right tome could take five minutes or a desperate race against time to scour the city.

Although most of the Institute's teachers come from the Temple of Knowledge, the school is prepared to accept anyone with qualifications and a desire to teach. That attitude lands them in trouble when Masson Francisco, charismatic head of the Liberty Movement, persuades Professor Whitmire to allow him to teach a course in political theory. The conservative families of the Merchant District are dead set against giving Francisco a chance to pollute their children with his ideas and threaten to cut funding to the Institute—but the poor of Drac's End want a chance to hear his ideas and are prepared to fight for it. Academic dissent may turn into violent dissent if the students have their way. Can a compromise be reached before the Captains' Council and the Merchants' Guild turn the Sea Lord's Guard onto the protestors?

4. The Cluster

"I still don't remember what I've seen of the world beyond Freeport. But some days I think that if I stay in the Cluster long enough, the world will come to me and tell me."

—Lucius

Stretching around the Freeport Institute at the western edge of Drac's End is the neighborhood called the Cluster—a collection of dormitories, boarding houses, taverns, and shops. The Cluster is home to a wide variety of students, academics, artists, visitors, and alternative kinds of folk, including many members of the nonhuman races.

History

The Cluster sprang into being shortly after Mandarus Whitmire founded the Freeport Institute and has continued to grow over the last one hundred fifty years. It's perhaps the wealthiest area in Drac's End, not on an individual level, more so because of the constant passage of visitors and their funds—not to mention the proximity of the Merchant District.

As well as students and Institute staff, the Cluster is also a popular destination for free thinkers, musicians, scholars, cultured merchants, and all kinds of travelers. The bars and halls of the Cluster are one of the few places where the poor and the wealthy might rub shoulders over a drink, discuss the art on display at a gallery, or get into a fair fight over who cheated at cards.

Description

Dozens of buildings of all kinds are crammed together in this neighborhood (that's why it's called the Cluster, after all). Space is at a premium, and even calling the passageways between the buildings "alleys" is a stretch. Still, the Watch heavily patrols them, as well as wardens from the Temple of Knowledge and vigilant locals, making this one of the safest parts of town.

Inside the buildings of the Cluster, the neighborhood quickly betrays its academic leanings. Students live and work in almost all the buildings, easily recognized by their ink-stained sleeves, strained eyesight, and appalling haircuts. Books, scrolls, musical instruments,

Gods-Mocking Poet Struck by Lightning! The Cluster Reacts

~ The Shipping News

unwashed clothes, half-eaten plates of food, empty wine bottles, unfinished experiments, and inexpensive prostitutes—these are the hallmarks of academia in Freeport, and all can be found within the Cluster.

Key Figures

The following characters can be found in the Cluster.

Lucius

Lucius (*male human journeyman*) is a former librarian from the Temple of Knowledge whose checkered past is a mystery to everyone—including himself. A native of Freeport, he was expelled from the temple ten years ago for improper behavior, spent several years traveling the world, and then returned to the city with a treasure trove of obscure books and no memory of the previous five years. When his lost memories began to spill into his nightmares, he attracted the attention of the Brotherhood of the Yellow Sign, who kidnapped and tortured him to learn his secrets. Allies of High Priest Egil rescued him, but even after the cult was destroyed, the nightmares persisted, and his memories remained lost.

Two years ago, Lucius left the temple (under better terms this time) in search of his past. The scars of his torture have left him too frail to withstand much travel, so he instead came to the Cluster—the one place in Freeport where the past might come to him. Lucius works as a freelance scribe and translator, a role that gives him access to many works of obscure lore, books of ancient knowledge, and visitors from faraway climes. He hopes that, over time, something will jog his memory or give him some insight into his lost years. In the interim, he makes a comfortable if simple living, enjoys the constant stream of new sights and old lore, and drinks himself into a stupor whenever the dreams return to plague him.

Oskar Broadhammer

Oskar Broadhammer (*male dwarf journeyman*) has been a miner, sailor, stonemason, and blacksmith at various times in his life, but now he finds other people to do manual labor. Anyone who needs a crew to unload a ship, build a house, or excavate a drain comes to Oskar, who (for a fee) finds day laborers and workers from the folks of the Cluster or the transients of Tent Town. Oskar travels throughout Drac's End every day, recruiting and hiring, and keeping an eye open for new faces with new skills. Oskar tries to do his best for the community while also making a profit; he's decent and reasonably honest but not above finding warm bodies to do something shady as long as "his boys" are paid well and not put into too much danger.

Adventure Hooks

The Cluster is a hotbed of activity, discussion, and tension. Although the place is usually quiet, quarrels, fights, and even riots break out here from time to time, especially when there's an influx of strangers that don't fit in well with those already there. Ancestral grudges, rival cultures, academic differences—the Cluster is a place where the whole world may be found, and that means all the pedjudices and tensions of the world as well. Characters may be caught up in violent arguments (or start violent arguments), or have to work with someone who's already decided she doesn't like their political/ethnic/academic background.

The Cluster enjoys better sewers than anywhere else in Drac's End, thanks to the relative wealth of the area—and more importantly, its

Law and Order

The Watch has a precinct house in the middle of Drac's End, and a few dozen guardsmen patrol the district. A few of them are locals, born and bred in Drac's End, while most others are newcomers or transfers from other districts. There's a strong sense of loyalty towards the district within the local guardsmen, and they do their best to make Drac's End a safe place for their families and friends. But most guards feel no affection for the cramped streets and poor faces of their childhood, though, and will take bribes, ignore their duties, or abuse their authority.

Drac's End is the largest district in Freeport, both in area and population, and no matter how hard the Watch tries, they can't patrol every neighborhood all the time. For this reason, many citizens of Drac's End work to protect their own streets. While not brutal vigilantes like the Blackened Knot of Scurvytown, there are many "neighborhood watch" groups around the district who do their best to watch for criminals or defend their families from robbers and pirates. Bill Sangapulatele has provided martial training and low-cost weapons to a lot of citizens, and anyone attempting to prey upon the "easy marks" of Drac's End may be in for a nasty surprise.

Very few buildings in Drac's End have locks at all. Most citizens bar their doors from the inside, while neighbors keep watch on each other's houses during the day. Most homes have no glass or bars on their windows, but the windows are so small or narrow that few thieves could enter that way.

proximity to the Merchant District. That hasn't gone unnoticed by the criminal elements of Drac's End, and a coalition of thieves and students have started digging a tunnel, hoping to bypass the walls and subterranean defenses to break into the Merchant District undetected. The only clue to their activities is the sound of digging in the night—and the increasingly unpleasant smells coming from one part of the neighborhood.

5. The Indecipherable Scroll

> "I don't care how avant-garde your play is - you recite one more line of that claptrap, and I'll turn you into a newt. Understood?"
>
> — *Professor Wilmina Gertz*

One of the most notable places in the Cluster is the Indecipherable Scroll, a small tavern that specializes in poetry readings, bardic performances, and amateur plays. This is considered the seat of cutting-edge culture in town, which perhaps says more about Freeport than the quality of the culture in question.

History

Not every mage enjoys the ivory tower atmosphere of the Wizards' Guild or the dry discussions of the learned professors of the Freeport Institute. Bored by her fellows in both institutions, Professor Wilmina Gertz decided that running a tavern would be both a challenge and a chance to interact with a more interesting cross-section of Freeport's populace. For more than ten years, the Indecipherable Scroll has been a haven for the students of both the Wizards' Guild and the Freeport Institute. Both groups see the Scroll as a place to freely exchange ideas—and a place to escape the boorish thugs that inhabit the rest of Freeport.

(The boorish thugs, for their part, cooperate by avoiding the Scroll. The students might seem like easy pickings, but even the roughest goons aren't dumb enough to mess with a wizard of the Professor's caliber.)



Description

Like many other buildings within the Cluster, the Indecipherable Scroll is an old building located in an alley somewhere within the maze of the neighborhood. Regulars and locals know where to find it, but visitors may wander lost for some time before finding the unassuming tavern. The exterior boasts a placard with a scroll covered with squiggles, sigils, and scribbles—scribble that some say changes when no one's watching.

The tavern's interior is comfortable, well lit, and generally quiet (except when there's a performance in progress, or when the odd case of "artistic differences" or "clash of thaumaturgic theories" flares up). Musicians, actors, and performance poets use a low stage at the back of the main room, and a small reading room and library lie further inside the building.

Key Figures

The following characters can be found at the Indecipherable Scroll.

Professor Wilmina Gertz

Crouching over books to decipher ancient text is no way to spend your days, let alone your nights. For all her considerable magical talent and academic knowledge, Professor Wilmina Gertz (*female human master*) prefers a life with a bit more variety—not to mention more music, more conversation, and more drinking—than do her colleagues. Managing the Scroll (while teaching both scholars and mages a few nights a week) keeps her spirits up and her mind sharp. It's a busy job, but her magical gifts make it easier—and while no one's quite sure whether she's capable of making good on her threats to turn troublemakers (and lackluster performers) into toads or weasels, no one's interested in finding out first-hand.

Adventure Hooks

The Indecipherable Scroll is the perfect place for performers to try out new material, learn details about the region, or simply enjoy the atmosphere. It's also a great place for mages to find others with similar interests and perhaps learn new spells. Other characters may find it useful as a place to meet academic contacts, discuss political theory, buy black-market magical goods, or simply have a quiet drink.

Despite her bartending ways, Wilmina Gertz remains one of the most powerful wizards in town, and her talents are in high demand. She's choosy about who she helps, though, and that has made her some enemies—enemies that want her either working for them or out of the picture entirely. When those enemies use despicable means against her—blackmail, kidnapping her loved ones, or sending powerful agents to destroy the Indecipherable Scroll—Gertz needs allies to help her out of the situation.

Legends of Freeport: The Ruler of Skulls and Shadows

Every neighborhood in Freeport has its tall tales, its tavern legends, its stories told to scare children into bed. The hard part is working out which stories are just fairy tales or urban legends and which are based in truth. One story known by more than a few residents of Drac's End is that of Lord Bonewrack, King of the Hungry Shades. It's a scary tale, but fortunately, everyone who hears it agrees that it must be fiction. Please, gods, let it be fiction.

There is an old stone on the jungle's verge (so the story goes) that throws a cold shadow day and night, a gateway into darkness. Step into that shadow, and you step *through* that shadow, into a half-world of monochrome and madness. Freeport still exists on the other side, but not as it was. Streets are distorted and bordered by crazily leaning houses. Everything is black and white. The only light seems to come from the Sea Lord's palace. A path twists between warped buildings and through the drunkenly askew gates of the Old City. Crawling blots of darkness ooze across streets. Standing where the palace should be is a black tower, windowless and opalescent. Its angles disdain mere geometry, and shadows dance sinuously on its battlements.

Inside, eerie music fills numberless rooms and endless hallways. In its heart, two figures sit upon black glass thrones. One is Lord Bonewrack, a richly attired elf who softly plays a silver flute. The other, dressed in black silk, is the brittle skeleton of his sister, Ariadne. Living shadows flit along the room's walls, hungry for the flesh and the light of the living, held in check only by their master's desire. Lord Bonewrack—gaunt, ancient, his skin dead white, his staring eyes, and long, jet black hair—demands a suitor for his "sleeping" sister, an elf of perfect breeding and consummate beauty. If the visitor does not measure up, Bonewrack releases his shadows and laughs madly as they tear the intruder into bloody rags.

It's a terrifying tale, but some listeners always object—if Bonewrack always destroys those who find his realm, how does anyone know about the shadow world? And where's this evil stone now, since the jungle was decimated in the Great Green Fire? There aren't any easy answers. But the rumor that the shadow stone was uprooted and used as the cornerstone for a boarding house built after the fire, and that shadows now prowl the streets of Drac's End some nights searching for suitors and sacrifices to Lord Bonewrack's madness? That's a story that no one wants to hear. Not yet, anyway.

6. Tranquil Shark Protection Agency

"Shark stops moving, shark dies. Tranquil shark must move while not moving. That is secret of tranquil shark. Also hitting enemy very hard in side of head. That other secret."

—Bill Sangapulatele

Freeport is a dangerous place, no matter where you live, and there are few citizens of the city who haven't needed protection from their enemies at some point. The oddly named Tranquil Shark Protection Agency exists to meet the security needs of Freeport's less affluent citizens. Headed by the smiling Bill Sangapulatele, the Tranquil Sharks use martial arts, community connections, and plain old common sense to defend their clients from assassins, debt collectors, and other enemies.

History

Hailing from the islands far to the south, Bill Sangapulatele worked for a time as a pirate but found it too bloody and cruel a calling for his tastes. Instead, he honed his skills in the Tranquil Shark style (a martial art native to his homeland) and then moved to Freeport about six years ago to found his protection agency. Over the years, the cheerful foreigner has become a valued member of the Drac's End community, beloved by both clients and neighbors, and a number of locals have come to train under him and work for his agency. Sangapulatele even provides free training in combat to locals if asked; such training is very basic, but it's enough to let people defend themselves in a crisis.

The Tranquil Shark Protection Agency is very firm about its services; Sangapulatele explains to potential clients his job is to protect them and not to intimidate or beat up enemies. He usually has his guards work in two-man teams. An obvious bodyguard stays near the client, while a less conspicuous partner scouts around nearby for trouble. Bill does not believe in unnecessary violence and teaches his men to avoid fights when possible.

Description

The Tranquil Shark offices can be found in a two-story building near the Merchant District. A sign outside the offices consists of a set of blunted shark's teeth embedded into a wooden shield. The neighborhood is very quiet, and strangers may feel like many of the locals are watching them—because they *are*—and anyone making trouble may find the citizens surprisingly well-trained in self-defense.

The first floor of the agency is split between a combat training room and an office with a couple of writing tables that Bill and his scribe use. He meets prospective clients, or their agents, in the office. The upper floor is used as sleeping quarters for Sangapulatele and his employees. He has roughly a dozen agents (male and female) in his employ, all of them natives of Drac's End and trained in the Tranquil Shark style, which incorporates a number of armed and unarmed combat techniques.

Key Figures

The following characters can be found at the Tranquil Shark Protection Agency.

Common Shops

Much of Drac's End burned in the Great Green Fire, wiping out many businesses, taverns, and other locations. As a result, many of the establishments have either rebuilt or vanished.

Taverns and Inns

Some of the first buildings rebuilt were the inns and taverns; the students of the Freeport Institute wouldn't have it any other way.

9. The Grog Pot: A modest-sized tavern, the locals are a bit more welcoming and pleasant than others in the district.

10. The Mermaid: This small tavern is the favorite haunt of students and bohemian types that inhabit the western fringes of this district.

11. The Scholar's Quill: A fine inn and restaurant, guests of the Temple of the Knowledge God tend to stay here.

12. The Sword and Anchor: Easily one of the worst taverns in Drac's End, it is a filthy place with sawdust on the floor and the smell of stale beer in the air. The locals are notoriously close-mouthed and suspicious.

Businesses

Most shops in Drac's End exist to meet the needs of the Freeport Institute.

13. Finnegan's Books: A large bookstore in the shadow of the Freeport Institute, it offers a good selection of popular books, as well as supplies for writing, including inks, paper, parchment, sand, and other needs of the academy.

14. Treacherous Plots: This tiny grocer sells fresh foods to locals. It's also rumored to be a good source of snakeweed.

Diversions

For those looking for fun, there's always plenty to do in this neighborhood.

15. Dead Poets: This small diner is a typical hangout for Institute students. It's a good place to argue about art, politics, and current events.

16. Melted Pot: The Melted Pot is a tiny theatre for aspiring poets and acting troupes.

17. The Lucky Lady: This cheap flophouse sells some food and drink, but much of their business goes towards supplying students with mind-altering substances for a low price.

Bill Sangapulatele

Bill Sangapulatele (*male human journeyman*) is a large, broad-shouldered man with the features typical of southern islanders. He comes across as a very calm and balanced person. He is capable of great violence when necessary but tries to avoid incidents. He is very generous, especially with friends, and even potential customers will get small trinkets. He does not speak much, but when he does, he quickly gets to the point. He is friendly and smiles a lot.

Adventure Hooks

Obviously, Sangapulatele can provide some extra protection for characters, their homes, and their families, should the need arise. Alternately, his men might be protecting someone the player characters wish to attack—possibly someone that needs taken out of the picture. Persuading the Tranquil Shark Agency to withdraw their protection is a tough call, but so is beating down their defenses to reach the real enemy.

The Tranquil Shark Agency provides protection and security services to the poorest citizens of Freeport, which sometimes means defying the richest citizens. The wealthy powers of the city sometimes reach out to hurt Drac's End, whether through the political power games of the Captains' Council, the brutal amusements of the Rakeshames, or any other ways. By standing up for the underdog, Bill Sangapulatele has made powerful enemies, and now they're reaching out to take him down. Can the Tranquil Shark Agency protect itself on the physical, social, and financial front all at once, or will Bill need the help of his allies and neighbors?

7. Fang and Claw

"Damnit, I told you not to get so close to the cage! Now that it's tasted human blood it'll be impossible to train! Hmm? Oh, yes, I suppose we should bandage his arm. Or what's left of it."

—Omar Nkota

Located on the northern rim of Drac's End, Fang and Claw is a business dealing in buying, selling, trapping, and training wild animals. The market for such creatures is variable, but Fang and Claw had managed to stay in operation for more than a dozen years.

History

Fang and Claw has been in operation for more than twenty years, and owner Omar Nkota sells animals to whoever needs them. One significant source of income is in training and selling watchdogs (or similar beasts) for other merchants. Another is in providing exotic pets

and mascots to pirates. Sure, a captain can get a parrot or a monkey, but there's more prestige in a panther, jungle devil, or baby land shark—at least, until it eats you. From savage creatures to aristocratic pets, Nkota has sold them all.

Recently, though, business has been lean—the Great Green Fire not only killed much of Nkota's stock but also decimated the bestial population of the remaining jungles. In an attempt to adapt to changing times, Nkota has taken on board a partner, the trader Sarien, and is focusing more on creatures from the Continent or other islands. Many of these beasts are even more exotic and unusual than the animals of A'Val—and more dangerous as well.

Description

Fang and Claw operates out of a compound in the north of Drac's End that spills out of the vague city limits into the cleared section around Freeport. A high iron fence surrounds the compound—partially to keep out thieves but, more importantly, to stop escaped animals from getting out and rampaging through Freeport.

Inside the compound, the primary building is a combination of an office, living quarters, an infirmary (injuries are all too common), and equipment stores (Nkota sells many animal training tools and accessories). Cages, warrens, hutches, pens, and other animal habitats take up the rest of the compound. The exact composition of Fang and Claw's stock varies considerably over time, but on any given day, one can find multiple native birds, smaller animals, and mundane beasts. More unusual creatures such as land sharks, giant lizards, and the like may also be present, depending on what Nkota and Sarien have recently trapped or purchased.

Key Figures

The following characters can be found at Fang and Claw.

Omar Nkota

Omar Nkota (*male human journeyman*) was born and raised in Drac's End but left decades ago to look for adventure on the Continent. When adventure found him—in the form of a savage land shark that left him with permanent injuries and nearly killed him—Omar returned to the city of his birth, where the dangers were smaller and had fewer teeth. A skilled animal trainer, he opened Fang and Claw after spending a year trapping (and occasionally taming) many of the creatures found in the jungles of A'Val. Gruff, Omar is more comfortable with animals than he is people; he keeps negotiations brief and tries to make certain the beasts he sells will be well tended. Although well into his fifties, Omar still has the skills of a longtime hunter, and anyone attempting to rob him must contend with both his combat abilities and a variety of guardian animals.

Sarien

Sarien (*male elf apprentice*) is Omar's partner in the business. While Omar stays in Freeport and keeps things running, Sarien captains a small ship, the *Menagerie*, which travels to and from the Continent transporting exotic creatures. Sarien is a skilled animal handler, as well as a trader; he was originally part of the *Menagerie's* crew but bought out the captain a few years ago and went into partnership with Omar. Largely easy going, Sarien's only bad habit is constantly worrying about his beasts getting free within Freeport; that happened once with a land shark years ago, and the cleanup bills were a nightmare.

Adventure Hooks

Fang and Claw was the source of most of the guard beasts found in Freeport's wealthy estates and compounds. Thieves may want to pump Omar for information about specific targets; although taciturn, the old man likes to talk about his work. More morally upright characters may still want to consult Omar about the beasts possessed by their enemies; alternatively, Omar may need allies to stop thieves using the information they've tricked out of him.

With pickings in the jungles of A'Val increasingly lean, Omar and Sarien plan a tour of Windward, Leeward, and the islands outside the Serpent's Teeth in search of new creatures for their pens. Of course, many of those creatures are exceptionally dangerous, and the traders are offering handsome wages to trappers, bodyguards, and sages for the trip. As well as wild animals, the *Menagerie* will also have to contend with the threat of pirates, sea devils, and other adversaries.

8. Belle's Well

"Water! Get your water right here! Best water in town! Less than half the nightsoil or salt content of other wells! Nectar of the angels! Cures all ills! Water!"

—*Belle Banks*

Located in one of the poorer stretches of Drac's End, this well seems much like any other that dots the district and all of Freeport. Its claim to fame, though, is its eccentric "guardian," Belle Banks, who believes "her" well provides the best water in town.



Wells in Freeport

While a number of freshwater streams run off Mount A'Val, none of them make it to the south half of the island. Freeport's fresh water needs are, instead, met by the underground water table. Dozens of wells are scattered through every district, except for the Docks (can't drill a well through the sea bed, after all), and access to these wells is free. Mind you, it's not unknown for thugs in Scurvytown or Bloodsalt to claim a well as their own and charge the locals for its use.

The water drawn from Freeport's wells varies in quality, but at its best, it still tastes of minerals. Residents looking for purer water put up tanks to collect rainwater or use the services of the professional water handlers of the Eastern District.

Ever since the Great Green Fire, residents of Drac's End have been alert to the possibility of another fire (not to mention the threat of burnlings). Water is the best tool for fighting such fires, but fresh water is too important to waste. Saltwater, on the other hand, is plentiful and not good for much else. Many residences maintain barrels of salt water for fighting fires (or taking the occasional bath), refilling them every week or two as the water evaporates.

History

Like most other wells in town, this one was sunk more than two centuries ago when Captain Drac founded Freeport; providing fresh water was an immediate priority for the city's creator and remains an ongoing concern for the modern Captains' Council.

The well gained its notoriety when Belle Banks, a resident of Tent Town, saw (or claimed to see) an angelic creature emerge from it one night. No one else saw it, and everyone knew Belle hadn't been right in the head since her husband ran off with a barmaid, so the locals don't give her tale much credence. Ever since then, though, Belle has claimed the well as hers to protect; she lives in a tent near the well and calls out to all passers-by to drink of its special waters.

Description

Belle's Well looks like an ordinary well. A ring of bricks and stones surround a shaft that goes down to the depths of A'Val, and it has a bucket and pulley for hauling up water (some wells in better parts of town have pump mechanisms). Belle has decorated the stone ring with shells, colored pebbles, and daubs of paint. Unlike most wells, this one is housed within a small pen (a canvas roof supported by four poles); the locals humored Belle by erecting it, due to her fears that the special waters of the well would be polluted by rainwater.

Several tents and lean-tos can be found near the well, as this section of Drac's End contains part of Tent Town. One of these belongs to Belle Banks, though the harmless madwoman generally only goes there to sleep. During the day, she can be found next to the well, encouraging people to drink, chatting with the locals who use the well for drinking and washing, and peering down into its depths in the hope of seeing another angel.

Key Figures

The following characters can be found at Belle's Well.

"Bonny" Belle Banks

Not much has ever gone right for Belle (*female human apprentice*). She was born poor and lived poor—never making it out of Drac's End—and when she got married to Jack Banks, he threw their money away, landed them in Tent Town, and ran off to sea with some strumpet. When Belle saw her angel climb from the well and take to the sky—on the day she'd been seriously contemplating jumping into that same well and ending it all—it turned her life around (and broke her precarious sanity, according to her neighbors). Belle now dedicates her life to protecting the well and sharing its blessings with others. Between the charity of her neighbors and washing laundry (with the holy waters, of course) Belle makes enough coin to get by, but even without that money she'd probably survive on hope alone.

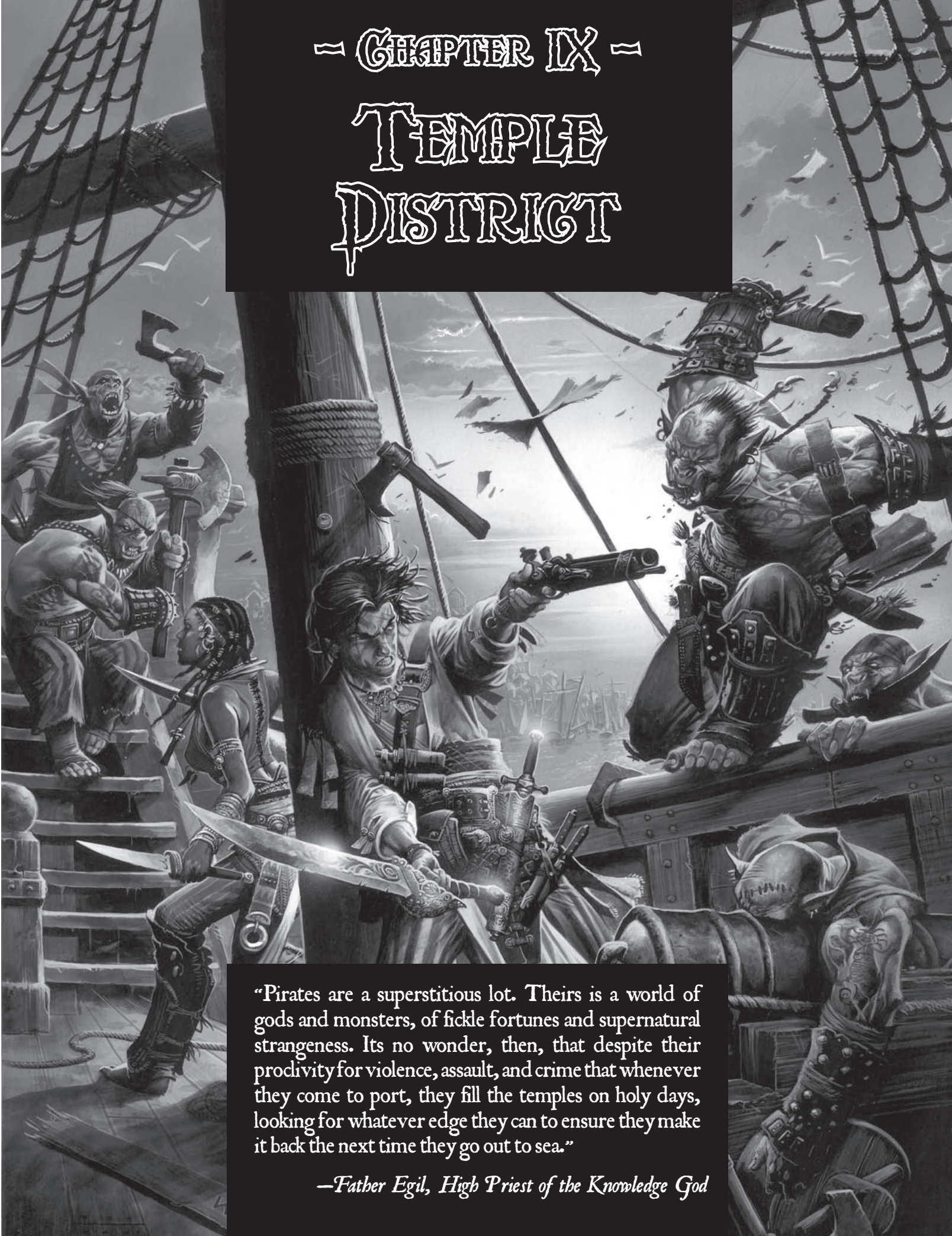
Adventure Hooks

When a fire breaks out in Drac's End and a swarm of burnlings overrun the district, Tent Town is in danger of going up in flames. It's all hands on deck to fight the flames, but the saltwater barrels soon run dry. In the race to save Tent Town, every source of water is needed—but the burnlings are doing their best to cut off access to the wells. Can the fire fighters reach Belle's Well before the burnlings—and can the locals survive the elementals' assault while the defenders struggle to draw enough water?

Just what was the "angel" Belle saw emerge from the well years ago? No one gives her story much credence—but maybe they should. There are many lost ruins of the serpent people's empire still buried under A'Val and Freeport, and no one's ever explored the depths below the island. Does the underground lake connected to the well have secrets of its own? Is there a colony of inhuman beings swimming through its waters? Does the water of Belle's Well really have mystical—or dangerous—properties? When a thief throws a valuable treasure down the well, the only way to retrieve it is to go down and find out first hand.

What Did Belle See? The Shocking Truth of Belle's Well!

~ The Shipping News



— Chapter IX —

Temple District

"Pirates are a superstitious lot. Theirs is a world of gods and monsters, of fickle fortunes and supernatural strangeness. Its no wonder, then, that despite their proclivity for violence, assault, and crime that whenever they come to port, they fill the temples on holy days, looking for whatever edge they can to ensure they make it back the next time they go out to sea."

—Father Egil, High Priest of the Knowledge God

Freeport may be a den of sin, a place where wickedness and moral vacuity are the norms, and where piety and upstanding behavior are far from the thoughts of pirates and cutthroats walking the labyrinthine streets of the city, but Freeport's perilous nature and sudden, violent calamities enable religion to thrive here. Freeporters turn to the gods for protection. There is no sense of spiritual enrichment; rather, it's about appeasing powerful entities and cozying up to those with a bit more influence to spare oneself from the worst of the hardships one's bound to face in this City of Adventure. So while Freeporters might not be stellar followers, they are regular in their observances to the gods who watch over their lives.

Entering the Temple District

The Temple District stands to the northwest of the Old City, a physical border between the upscale Merchant District and the rundown Drac's End. The arrangement and height of the temples does a good job of concealing the squalor of the poorer district and the naked decadence of the richer, minimizing disgust and envy from each respectively. Ringing the temples is a wide avenue known as Pious Walk. Statues of holy men and individuals favored by the gods and temples decorate the street—often sitting right in the middle of the road. The statues include all sorts of figures, from images of kneeling women to dashing swashbucklers, crusty pirates, and robed priests wearing somber expressions. Many, though not all, statues bear plaques to indicate the name and deed for which they are remembered.

Inside the Temple District

Of the gods venerated in Freeport, four have the largest congregations. They are the Gods of Knowledge, Pirates, Warriors, and the Sea. Since they are closely aligned with the values and occupations of most Freeporters, they occupy the largest temples and have the most political clout. The rest of the religions are crammed into the district wherever they can find a place. Some of the lesser-known gods have simply been thrown together and share a single temple. The bottom line is that if someone worships it—and said worship doesn't require the maiming or killing of other living beings—it probably has a representative here.

It's almost inevitable that the odd "unacceptable" religion does crop up from time to time in the Temple District. The district is self-policing in this area, though. If a group of worshippers' practices are merely odious or offensive (the obnoxious midnight sex orgies of the God of Debauchery or the violent initiation rituals of the God of Pain), the followers of such deities are "asked" politely (or sometimes not-so-politely) to leave the district.

Extreme, savage, or destructive religions are not permitted at all, though some occasionally disguise themselves in the trapping of other deities and "hide" in plain sight. When discovered, the larger churches quickly, quiety destroy them.

Temple District Summary

The Temple District contains most of Freeport's legitimate religions and cults.

Buildings

Freeporters worship a staggering array of gods, and their wide-ranging devotion most clearly shows here. While it contains only eighteen buildings, the streets are choked with preachers, shrines, and flocks of robed clerics. Those buildings range from massive cathedrals whose size and majesty rival the Sea Lord's Palace to miniscule and forgettable shrines bearing a single icon of whatever strange god is worshipped there. Little else is here aside from the temples. There simply isn't room for the normal sorts of shops and restaurants one might find elsewhere. Street vendors, where permitted, sell sausages, pies, and other light fare, but those seeking a real meal must head to the Merchant District or Old City.

People

The Temple District is full of priests and their attendants. Armored knights of the God of Retribution walk alongside studious scholars of the Knowledge God. At street corners, advocates of the Love Goddess whisper blessings to passers-by, offering intoxicating roses to those whose attention they strive to snatch.

Roads

The cobbled streets wind through the district, maneuvering past the larger temples as they make their way to the Merchant District, Old City, or the Cluster in Drac's End. Individual stones often bear carvings to invoke the blessing of a particular god or recall a specific historical event that has some religious significance.

Descriptive Elements

The Temple District is distinctive not for the impressive churches, not for the throngs of pious servants that hustle and bustle, chant and preach, but rather for its atmosphere. The very air is pregnant with divine might, and those who come upon this district feel the heavy hands of the gods resting upon them.

Locations of Interest

All of the following locations can be found in the Old City.

1. Fool's Market

"Ya know the old adage about a fool and his money? Let's just say there are plenty of fools in the Hall of the Gods."

—Gamey Rind, Vagabond and Prophet

The Temple District has plenty of legitimate religions, but it is also home to innumerable crackpots, fakirs, and zealots, each proselytizing their own strange take on the subject of divinity. The mad, deranged, and misled gather here, hoping to find others who share their odd predilections for religious inspiration. For most, they wind up even more alone, lost in a sea of searching and hopeful people, each claiming to have some other version of divine inspiration, some other story, some other belief to which they desperately cling in the hopes of finding meaning in this dangerous world. For them, the Hall of the Gods is their shelter; for here, in this massive temple, all are welcome.

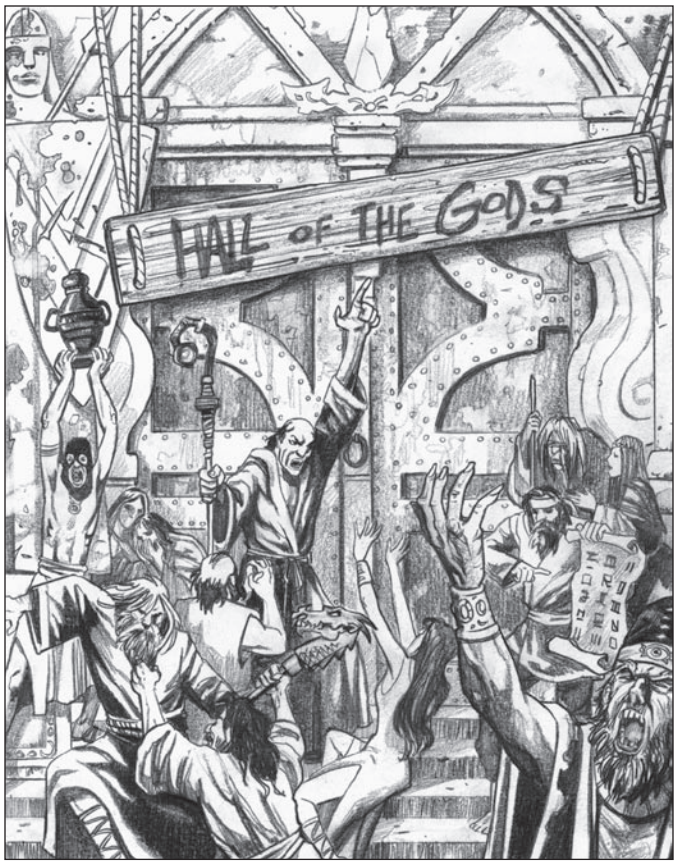
History

The Hall of the Gods, or Fool's Market as it has come to be known, occupies the old Temple of the God of Valor. Three decades ago, the Valor God's priesthood all died under suspicious circumstances. Some claimed they were accidentally poisoned, while others suspected they were murdered, perhaps as a lead up to the rise and fall of Milton Drac. In any event, the temple stood empty for almost twenty years. Given the lack of real estate in the Temple District, it was only a matter of time before religious squatters moved in and claimed the building for themselves.

The people who staked a claim were a group of philosophers and scholars who were keenly interested in studying religion and its impact on Freeport. They invited some of the smaller clerics working in the district, urging them to set up shop in this large temple. At first, a few small, legitimate faiths were established under the same roof, but as the years passed, more and more religious types came and set up their own shrines. It didn't take long for scores of different religions, each with its own priest, shrine, and idol to pack the Hall. Although some of the priests are genuine, many more are not. These charlatans are here to make a few quick coins. Once they've made a mint, they pack up, change their dogma and god and then drift over to some other corner in the temple.

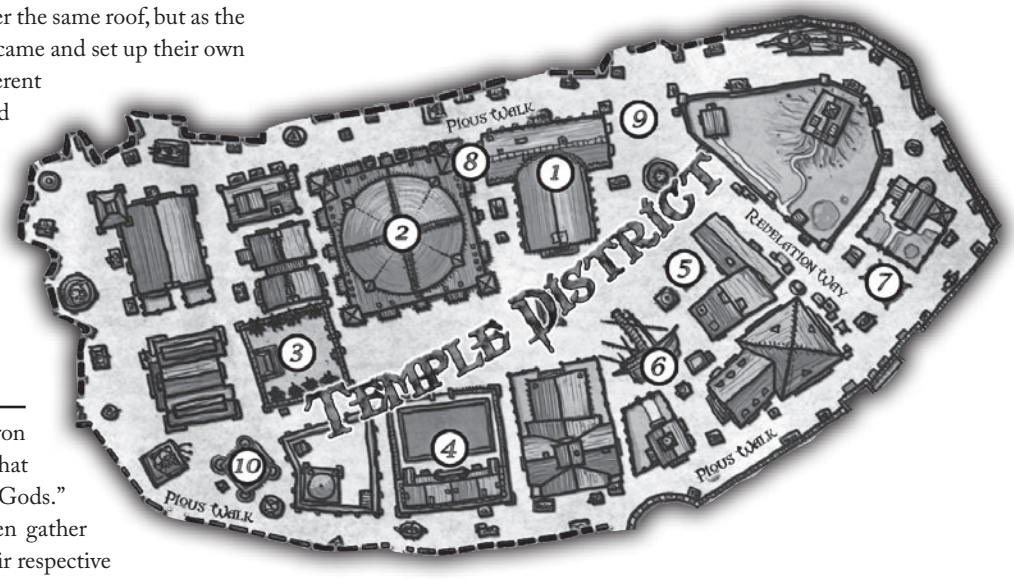
Description

Hanging above the pitted and rusting iron doors is a crudely painted wooden sign that announces the building as the "Hall of the Gods." A riot of multicolor-robed men and women gather on the steps, debating the finer points of their respective



faiths, chatting about their latest revelations, or flailing about in the throes of some otherworldly entity. Many hand out cheap pamphlets that explain the tenets of their beliefs, while others call out blessings, promises of salvation, or whatever else they can think of.

There's little evidence remaining of the temple's original purpose. The new priests have stolen or defaced the old icons, incorporating them into their religion to serve as holy relics and oddities that somehow prove the truth of their message. Even the inscriptions and holy symbols that once decorated the walls have all but vanished, cemented or painted over to make the place a house of all gods rather than just one.



Speakers of Truth Give Sea Lord an Earful!

~The Shipping News

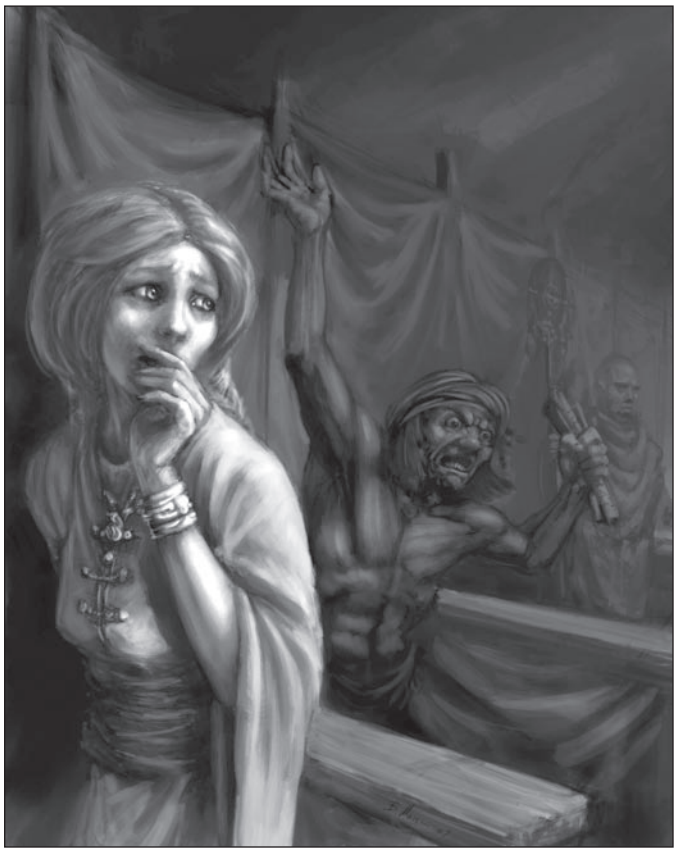
The main worship hall is now full of small shrines and altars dedicated to a dizzying number of deities. One or more faithful servants are at each stall, praying, chanting, intoning, swinging their censers, or calling out to visitors to come and hear their message. The place is full day and night, so moving through the area is slow and laborious. Each "vendor" offers a pitch about his religion and why the visitor should follow the path he reveals, and if they could toss a few coins his or her way, all the better.

Key Figures

One can find a hundred or more priests and priestesses, each of a different god or doctrine. Part of what makes this place so unpredictable is that new beliefs bloom and wither each day, and at the start, there's bound to be a new fresh-faced, eager man or woman filled with certainty they have the next big thing, to call out to the masses only to be swallowed by the sea of similar hopefuls.

Gamey Rind

Not all of the people that fill the Hall of the Gods claim they're priests or even have much to say about the gods. Beggars, vagabonds, and the shiftless collect here, clogging the aisles and cluttering the streets around the temple. One such man is Gamey Rind (*male human apprentice*), a colorful character who's gifted with the occasional and rare prophetic outburst. Generally, his pronouncements are weird and disconnected, but when the foretelling is upon him, his eyes roll back in his head, and he vomits a little. As his body shakes, he spews out a random phrase or a dire warning. At first, people discounted him as mad, but after his prophecies began to come true, people reassessed the old man. Some have even tried to sponsor him, inviting him into their homes, but each time, Rind refuses, claiming he prefers the streets than to be closeted away in some rich man's study.



Gamey is in his early fifties, stinks of sweat and wine, and spends more time swilling whatever he can afford. He wears a tattered red robe, plucked from a murdered priest four years ago, but he wears no shoes and is perpetually filthy. His most treasured possession is a strange, brass amulet that he found with the robe. He's afraid of revealing it to anyone lest they try to rob him, but he's beginning to worry. His fits began the day he stole the amulet, and he's thinking his uncanny ability may somehow be tied to this bauble.

Sister Regina

Sister Regina (*female human apprentice*) is appalled. Newly arrived from the Continent, she came to Freeport in the hopes of revitalizing her church. When she found her temple, she discovered a gaggle of charlatans, mystics, and twits overran it. She quietly selected a corner of the hall and erected an altar to the proper god of the temple. She's not ready to use violence to throw out the rest, believing naively she can reveal to them the error of their ways by showing them the path to the God of Valor.

Regina is a young woman with long, brown hair worn in braids. She wears a blue robe trimmed in silver and an amulet of her god around her neck. She's idealistic and tries to see the best in every situation, but the resistance she's faced since coming to the city is worming its way into her heart. She genuinely believes most people in the temple are good, if a bit foolish, but their unwillingness to join her is fast proving too much to suffer.

Pastor Wasten

Most of the altars and shrines inside the Fool's Market are temporary, as easy to tear down as they are to assemble. Priests come here and vanish just as quickly as some new belief bubbles up in the throng. Pastor Wasten (*male human journeyman*) is the exception, for his shrine to the God of Fish has stood since the week after the Hall of Gods opened its doors. He's the one who painted the sign out front, so he's a bit more involved in the day-to-day management of the place, encouraging newcomers in their beliefs and offering wise bits of advice to those who'll listen.

Wasten's story is particularly absurd. He claims ten years ago, while piloting his fishing boat in the deeper waters, a giant whale burst out of the sea, swallowing both him and his vessel and all of his catch. For days, he lived inside the whale, subsisting on fish he had caught and passing the time dicing with a merman named Charles. Wasten might have been content, for Charles was good company, but he missed

Strange Gods

Those looking for a new spiritual path need only stroll through the teeming crowds of the Fool's Market, and they're bound to find something of interest. Even if they don't, if they wait a week and then return, they'll find a brand new collection of new and obscure religions waiting for them. What follows is a sample of the sorts of religious groups, sects, and cults one might find here.

God of Hinges

This small sect believes hinges are in fact a gift from a very specific god, and the sign of the hinge represents new opportunities. The followers of this god walk with their hands together. Whenever they encounter someone new, they make a grand showing of opening their hands like a book. Only then do they speak.

The Readers of the Golden Platter

These friendly well wishers wear black vests and breeches and greet everyone who walks by their booth. Theirs is a mysterious religion that grew out of even more mysterious writings that suddenly appeared on a golden dinner platter. It commanded the readers to go out and be overly friendly to all they meet.

Degriers of Mold

This lone priest worships the God of Cleanliness. He spends most of his time scrubbing his altar.

The Speakers of Truth

These priests refuse to speak a lie and are truthful in everything they say, even when it is tactless to do so. They are quick to offer up truths about the people they meet, which directly led to at least one death and a dozen slaps since their founding last week. There are bets in the Fool's Market about how long they will last.

The People of Westerly Newness Desired

This strange fellow sits in a wooden chair staring into space. It's not clear what he believes or why he's here, but every once in a while, he blurts out a string of nonsensical words. Exactly who his followers are, no one is sure.

The Lemon Merchants

A trio of three portly men dressed in saffron-colored robes spends their time in the Hall of the Gods singing songs about fruit.

The Doubters of Green

This quartet of madmen hands out pamphlets to explain the various theories on why the color green exists. The most popular theory is it was the result of a tremendous divine sneeze.

Hand-holders

This kindly old wizard spends all of her time explaining how to do each and every thing. Her brochures go to great lengths to discuss how to perform mundane tasks from properly wiping one's rear, to properly drinking a tankard of ale, and describing in exquisite detail the three preferred methods of breathing.

Commission for Logical Pricing

Three crusty old men sit around a table and shrilly debate fair pricing. For the last three days, they've argued about the logical price for a thimble, weighing the investment of time and labor that went into manufacturing the object, as well as debating supply and demand for it.

Other Groups

Other groups include the *Proponents of the Ally Without, The Critics of Yellow Rabbit, Ministry of the Duck, The Mystery of the Fiery Cobra, Forgers of the Divine Template, Seekers of the Eldritch Deer, Followers of the Hammer, Keepers of Quirt, The Mechanics of Galledar, Society of the Anthropomorphic Beast, Adulterers of Cheek, Heralds of Color, Advocate of the Sore Foot, Makers of Yellow, The Cult of Tubers,* and the often annoying *Gee's Complaint.*

Law and Order

The Watch does not have a precinct in the Temple District since this quarter falls under the protection of the Sea Lord's Guard who extends their patrols. This situation is a problem because the Sea Lord's Guard clearly places a higher priority on protecting the Old City, and the Temple District is almost an afterthought. To compensate for the often lackadaisical commitment to policing its streets, most temples have templars to protect them.

Freeport and all his friends. Charles, seeing his companion's distress, suggested Wasten pray to the God of Fish for guidance, for all mermen knew this god was wise and blessed those who shed salty tears—the tears of creation fashioned the seas, after all, and gave home to the fish. Wasten did as instructed, and moments later, seven fish swam up and out of the depths of the whale. The merman urged the fisherman to follow them, claiming they would lead him home. Wasten bid his companion farewell and swam deeper into the great beast, wriggling his way through the tunnels, seeing strange cities and people, waving to them all as he went. The fish led him deeper and deeper, until the walls seemed as if they would crush the life from him. Finally, Wasten saw the light, and pushed through the last few feet only to find himself in a dirty alley in the Docks. He admits it's strange that a whale's anus is connected to side street in Freeport, but, he claims, that is the miraculous part of his tale. From that day forward, Wasten has been Freeport's first and only priest of the Fish God.

Most people are sure Wasten's tale is the result of a bit too much wine from the Rusty Hook or a bad loaf of rye down in Scurvytown, but he denies it, claiming the whole experience is the pure and complete truth. To show his dedication, he wears a large fish on his head and hangs smaller fish from his dirty robes.

Talbous Mog

The first few years Talbous Mog (*male gnome apprentice*) resided in Freeport, he prowled Scurvytown and the Docks, selling his healing services to the criminal scum of the city. He charged outrageous prices for anyone who needed a bit of discreet repair. It never mattered who or what he helped, so long as the gold was good and fast in coming. His mercenary nature gained him the title, Apostle of Greed, and eventually, he wore out his welcome. Rather than leaving Freeport, he set up shop in the Fool's Market, offering miraculous treatment to anyone with the money to pay for it.

Adventure Seeds

People in the Fool's Market are mostly harmless, but from time to time, someone comes along and causes trouble. The number of freaks and oddballs provides the perfect cover for sinister groups to recruit new members for their cults. At any given time, there's a half-dozen or more worshippers of forbidden gods here, ranging from servants of the God of Slaughter to members of the Brotherhood of the Yellow Sign.

Sister Regina tries to find a peaceful path to cleansing the temple, but after many months, she grows frustrated and snaps. She calls upon divine might and lays a curse on the place and all within it. With the crowds screaming in pain and confusion, she strides out of the temple and Freeport. An opportunistic group of cultists seizes the opportunity and bends the magic to serve their own dark purposes. Rather than having the curse affect only those in the temple, they turn it outward so it harms all of Freeport. To reverse the curse, the PCs must find Regina and convince her to lift the dire spell. Naturally, the best means to do so is to help her restore her temple, but there are people in the city that would rather the Temple of the God of Valor stay dead.

About a month ago, one of the priests, a servant of the minor God of Blue Flowers is found dead, stabbed in the face a dozen times. The victim was a peaceful character who preached tolerance, love, and the celebration of blue flowers everywhere, so the people of the Fool's Market can't fathom why anyone would murder him. Pastor Wasten begs the PCs to find the responsible party, and in exchange, he's willing to volunteer a bit of information about some of the more sinister groups that operate out of the Hall of the Gods.

2. Temple of the God of Knowledge

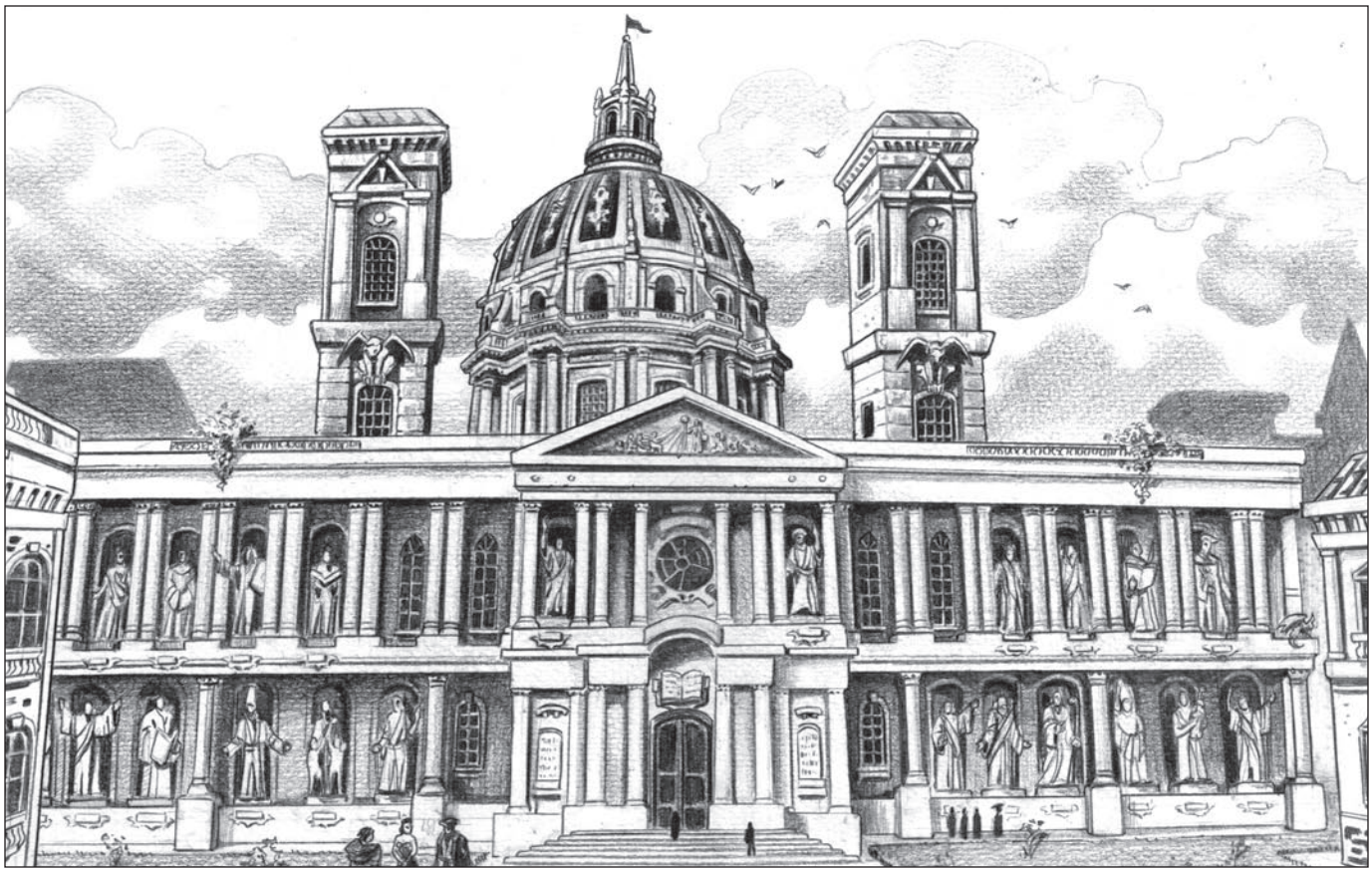
"Sure, sure, their priests helped expose the old Sea Lord for the crook he was, but you know some of them just ain't human, don't you? I heard that most of 'em are snake people wearing the skin of honest folk they ate. So sure, if you want to trust 'em, go ahead. Just don't turn yer back, or you might find yerself their next snack."

—Brother Yuel, Priest of the God of Retribution

Surprisingly, the God of Knowledge has many adherents in Freeport. Given the city's place as a trade hub, it sees people from all over the world, offering these priests a golden opportunity to learn from the travelers and acquire fascinating documents and archeological artifacts they might have to offer. In fact, many of the priests spend their days on the wharves, watching for new and unusual arrivals to interview and question in the hopes of learning a new rumor or getting a new lead about one of the many subjects of interest to the temple.

History

The Temple of the Knowledge God has always had a presence in Freeport, but rarely did it have a congregation of any substance. Few Freeporters had much use for such heady pursuits as education. Instead, the temple survived by the treasures it recovered from its archeological expeditions, from endowments given by successful wizards and scholars, and from a constant source of funding from the mother temple on the Continent. If it hadn't been for this external support, the priesthood might have been relegated to a minor cult,



joining the rest of the lesser religions in the city. However, the order—despite its meager turnout for holy days—remains one of the most prominent religions in Freeport.

The Temple of the Knowledge God was suddenly thrust into the center stage during Milton Drac's reign. When a young priest named Egil hired a team of local heroes to investigate the disappearance of a friend, he set in motion a series of events that gradually exposed the Brotherhood of the Yellow Sign and its plot to channel the energy of their terrible god, the Unspeakable One. Through his efforts, those of K'Stallo, a serpent person masquerading as the temple's high priest, and a band of heroes, they managed to expose the Sea Lord's corruption and his part in the plot, thwarting the evil schemes of the mad cult.

K'Stallo was never committed to the God of Knowledge, since he was a priest of Yig. He was willing to fulfil his duties, but really, he was concerned mostly with the lore the temple held. He relegated most of the tasks expected of the high priest to Egil and when he had what he needed from the temple, the serpent person retired from his position and named the young man his successor.

Egil's ascension was not greeted with enthusiasm, for he was young and untested, and his promotion appeared to be an act of favoritism. Egil had long endured the criticism of his elders, suffering accusations of being Thuron's pet (or even lover), but he accepted the new position and vowed to be a worthy successor. Within hours of gaining the title of high priest, his rivals and enemies took a third of the congregation and left the temple in protest. They would not return until Egil abdicated his position and gave the title to a more worthy candidate. Egil's hands are tied. He feels wrongly treated since he has more or less run the temple since the real Thuron's death, but he can't explain this, for doing so would reveal his part in deceiving the priests over the last few years. If it his brothers learned Egil had protected a serpent person pretending to be the high priest, disgrace would be the least of his worries.

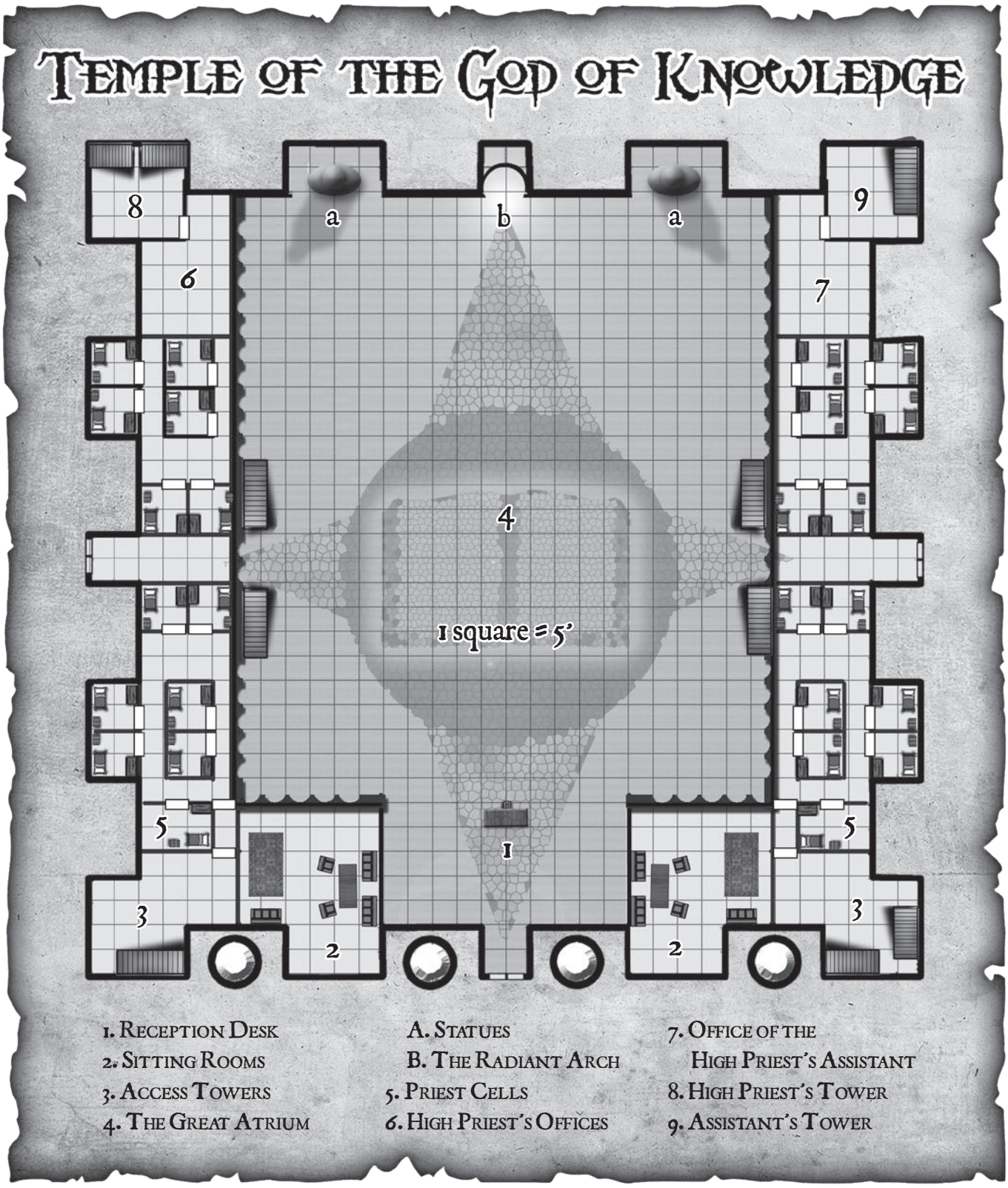
Description

The Temple of the Knowledge God is massive, easily the largest in the Temple District. It is a large square building capped with a bronze dome rising some one hundred feet above the rest of the quarter. Smaller buildings and a grand walk surround it, while two square towers rise from the rear.

The building's exterior reflects the temple's extreme wealth. Statues of robed men wearing pious expressions stand in alcoves, each representing one of the thirty-three scholars to whom the God of Knowledge first revealed himself. Bronze plaques hold their names

Will the Schism Tear the Knowledge Temple Apart?

~ The Shipping News



and list their great deeds. Demonic gargoyles with twisted, leering faces hide in shadowy corners, representing the perils of ignorance. The many pale columns that flank stained glass windows bear intricate inscriptions of holy text that circumscribe the supports from top to bottom. And here and there, scattered across the temple's surface are symbols and friezes demonstrating enlightenment, the sciences, learning, and technology.

Of the three entrances, only the one facing north is unlocked day and night. This doorway opens onto a short hallway that ends at a reception desk where visitors can make appointments with the priests

or gain access to the temple's impressive library. The entrance's walls feature brilliant murals celebrating the process of learning and the sacrifices made by martyrs on behalf of knowledge.

Beyond the entrance is the Great Atrium. Skylights set in the roof a hundred feet overhead light this enormous room. Archways pierce the east and west walls leading to living quarters, and staircases lead up to the repositories found on the second, third, fourth, and fifth floors. Against the far wall is the Radiant Arch from which shines a constant golden glow representing the light of knowledge. It is here where the priests make their daily absolutions and prayers to their deity.

Two magnificent statues flank the arch. Standing thirty feet tall, they depict robed men with their faces uplifted and expressions filled with wonder. Their arms extend out to their sides, palms facing up. Even the floor is a breathtaking—a massive, tile mosaic that offers pathways to the great open book in the center.

The temple comfortably houses its acolytes, offering more than two dozen cells each equipped with a cot, lamp, and writing desk. Two larger cells hold ordained priests whose duty it is to oversee the daily functions of the temple. The high priest and his assistant have offices and living quarters in the towers. The high priest lives in the southeastern tower, while his assistant lives in the southwestern one.

The upper levels hold the temple's lore. Endless small rooms hold scrolls, tomes, and books, all carefully catalogued and arranged, using an organizational system passed down since the founding of the church in Freeport. Each room has a librarian, whose duty it is to ensure everything stays in order and to assist those in finding the information they seek. In addition, each floor holds a scriptorium filled with desks for the priests to copy manuscripts into illuminated volumes.

Key Figures

Since Egil became high priest, the temple has been divided. Egil and his assistant control the temple and have eighteen lesser priests in their service. Ten other clerics protest Egil's post and refuse to return until he steps down. For now, they gather in the gallery where they take turns reciting scripture and arguing about the finer points of their dogma.

High Priest Egil

Egil's (*male human journeyman*) climb to power in the Temple of the Knowledge God defied anyone's expectations. He was always a mild priest, preferring to spend his time with his beloved books and scrolls. He never had a taste for temple politics, keeping to himself and his books. Fate had other plans for the young priest, thrusting him into the center of a vast conspiracy that would shake Freeport at its foundation.

Like many acolytes in the temple, Egil was an orphan. Plucked from the streets, the temple raised and educated him and taught him to read and write and to use the head on his shoulders. Egil took to his training and found he loved learning.

Egil never wanted the power thrust into his hands, but he believes the God of Knowledge has mandated his ascent. Unfortunately, his post has created tensions within the priesthood, leading many to splinter off in rebellion. Egil now works to reconcile the rift and restore the temple to its former greatness.

Egil is young for a high priest, having just turned thirty. He has tonsured brown hair, open, honest features, and a warm smile. His brown eyes are inquisitive and friendly, and he has a relaxed demeanor. He wears the vestments of his station and rarely leaves the temple these days.

Brother Ansel

Brother Ansel (*male human master*) is behind the schism. An old friend of the original Thuron, Ansel was dismayed when his friend and colleague cut him off, setting aside nearly twenty years of friendship for a young upstart. Ansel simmered and watched, looking for some clue as to what was really going on, but the more he worked to distinguish himself, the more Egil eclipsed him. Finally, when Egil was appointed high priest, Ansel had had enough. He gathered those loyal to him and left the temple, assembling under the shelter of the gallery, where he and his fellows protest Egil's claim as high priest.

Adventure Seeds

The Temple of the God of Knowledge is rife with potential adventures. Since each priest must spend some time away from Freeport and gather lore from all over the region, the temple is always eager to hire experienced adventurers' assistance. The temple doesn't pay particularly well, but it does pay on time.

In addition, the temple is always looking for rare and precious items, specifically books, scrolls, and other inscriptions that reveal important historical events and can shed light on ancient times and civilizations. Should the adventurers stumble onto such items, they are bound to attract the attention of the temple, which is certain to offer a fair price for the find.

A rival secular organization known as the Antiquities Scholars has been, of late, causing trouble for the Temple of the God of Knowledge. Their agents tend to frequent the same ruins and have been more successful in ferreting out critical historical objects and information. The temple is growing rather frustrated, which explains why they haven't dealt with the temple in Freeport. Unfortunately, the problem is about to get worse, for an Antiquities Scholars expedition has come to Freeport, bound and determined to extract what information they can about the Valossan Empire. The temple already has a great deal of information on this subject but is interested in hiring the PCs to monitor the archeologists and report on what they learn.

3. Temple of the God of War

"To survive on the high seas, you need to know how to hold a sword. But sometimes not even that's enough, so a wise pirate makes damn certain he drops a few pennies in the War God's coffer. A cutthroat needs every advantage he can get."

—Pierre Montepellier, Swashbuckler

Freeport is a city built on violence, founded by pirates who are some of the most vicious, nasty fighters in the world. While the city has done its best to divorce itself from its dodgy past, the fact remains that people in the city are not afraid to resolve their disputes with a cutlass or pistol. For this reason, the God of War remains one of the more popular deities in the city.

History

The temple of the War God was one of the first shrines erected in the city. A particularly devout pirate by the name of Father Trusk—a

War Priest Cripples Vendor in Fruit Dispute!

~The Shipping News

hard man with a dubious bloodline—consecrated the site by killing a dozen men who came to do the same to him. When the melee was through, and as the hot blood of his enemies cooled on his naked chest, he dropped to his knees to give thanks to his bellicose master. He offered up the souls of his victims, burning their viscera in a great heap in the center of the clearing. A messenger appeared in the flames and demanded Trusk raise up a new temple to keep the fires of war burning hot in the hearts of Freeporters. Trusk could do nothing but accept the burden the messenger laid upon him, and so he spent his days constructing the temple that still stands to this day.

There are few priests here these days. Two years ago, a coward poisoned their ranking cleric, following on the heels of a rash of poisonings that sorely depleted the temple's ranks. Cultists who worshipped Abaddon—The Lord of Doom whom the War God opposes—infiltrated the temple and worked to destroy the group from within. The culprits were unmasked and brutally executed—but not before the damage was done to their numbers and reputation.

Description

The Temple of the War God is simple and crude by the standards of the God of Knowledge. Squat, square, and built from wood culled from the jungle that once covered this part of A'Val, the exterior walls are dark with old blood from its more savage roots when adherents would perform blood sacrifices to their master in exchange for the fires of wrath to carry them unscathed through the worst battles. Those days, thankfully, are in the distant past, and the temple is more legitimate in its demands and practices.



Most of the compound is an open training area covered in thick sand bearing suspicious stains. Palms grow on either side of the courtyard but are not there for decoration. They hold bundles of skulls tied with human hair to serve as grim reminders of what awaits those who fail. This area is where the war priests spend hours in training, honing their fighting skills for the inevitable day when their patron god calls for their aid in prophesized climactic battle against the Lord of the Bottomless Pit.

Broad stairs lead into the worship hall at the back of the training area. It's small but beautiful, featuring a polished wood floor and a simple altar at the end. Suits of armor—each of a different style ranging from that worn by orc berserkers to dwarven plate or even mail coats of fine mithral—hang on wooden dummies along either side. Over the altar is the banner of the War God, a field of red with a black skull.

The War God's priests believe only the strong—those blessed by the War God—survive. Those who are weak—or who are weakened somehow, whether through illness or old age—are doomed to fall to the strong eventually, which is the proper way of things. The young replace the old in a never-ending cycle of renewal that ensures only the best live on to see a bright tomorrow.

The temple also sponsors the fights that take place in the Docks, having a particular interest in the One Ring. The clerics train pit fighters in exchange for half of the fighter's winnings. Those who have studied at the temple usually enjoy a great deal of success in the pits, and in some cases, they reign as champions for years at a time. The current champion at the One Ring has resisted the temple's overtures, causing no shortage of trouble within the temple. Rumor has it the priests work to train their own contestant to defeat the current champion, so they can regain their proper place of respect in the Docks.

Key Figures

The War God has the respect and fear of many Freeporters, but his actual congregation is quite small.

Father Cadiggen

Father Cadiccen (*male human master*) came to the Temple of the God of War at just the right time. His predecessor had been poisoned, as had a number of key priests, leaving the temple on the brink of disaster. Cadiccen uncovered the conspiracy, personally beat the cultists to death with his bare hands, and hung their bloodied bodies from the front gates. He was the natural choice to succeed the high priest, and he stepped into the role perfectly. What no one knew was that Cadiccen is actually a cultist of Abaddon, and he destroyed his fellows after their aborted attempt to destroy the temple. Cadiccen felt

such an attack was reckless and wasteful. Why destroy what can better serve your ends intact?

Cadiccen hides his true allegiance to the Lord of the Bottomless Pit well. Although the God of War expresses his displeasure, causing the eyes of the statues to bleed, food to spoil, and water to foul, Cadiccen claims these manifestations are in fact more efforts by the cultists to destroy them. Cadiccen has recently changed the tenor of the temple's dogma, setting aside excellence in combat in favor of raw violence and encouraging conflict as the only solution for dealing with one's enemies.

Father Cadiccen is in his mid-thirties, with close-cropped black hair and rugged features. He has dark eyes and wears a severe expression. He dons black robes trimmed in red, and a slightly modified symbol of the War God—a brass skull fitted with horns—hangs around his neck.

Adventure Seeds

The Temple of the God of War draws some concern from neighboring temples. While everyone is accustomed to hearing the sounds of practice swords striking each other, no one expected to hear screams and cries for mercy. To make matters worse, the priests seem to have short tempers, and whenever they get into a disagreement on the streets, violence always follows. This development has led other priests to look for protection, fearing a conflict with some of the city's best warriors.

Cadiccen instructs his followers to increase their presence on the wharves and recruit more men and women to fill their diminished ranks. The recruiters have a tendency to drag unwilling acolytes back to the temple for instruction. The PCs might be called to investigate the disappearance of a son or daughter, or they might investigate the temple when one of their allies goes missing.

4. Temple of the God of the Sea

"Freeport may be home to hundreds of gods, but everyone, and I mean everyone, has an idol to the Sea God at home. Can I wrap one up for you?"

—Brother Wilford Vinely, Godshop

While many respectable people wouldn't be caught as a waterlogged corpse in the Temple of the Pirate God, just about everyone in Freeport pays tribute in one way or another to the Sea God. This is an island city-state, after all, and every soul in the place relies on the sea for some aspect of their life, whether through the import or export of goods or through shipping, fishing, or merely to redirect the god's wrath and give sailors a gentle sea for their next voyage.

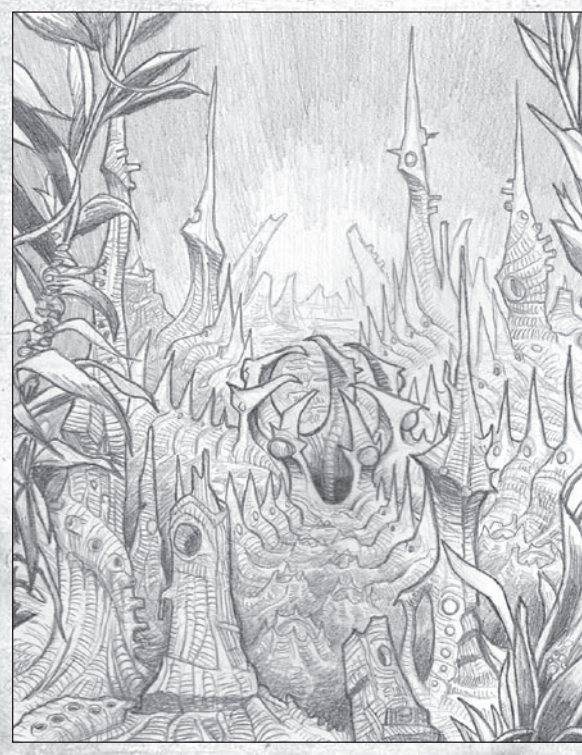
History

For as long as Freeport has existed, there's been a shrine to the Sea God. When the first priest to the War God received his revelation that he should found a new temple, work was already underway on the new Sea God's Temple. At first, this structure was nothing more than a shrine erected around a pool of briny water. Pirates would come here and give a portion of their wine. But in time, the water turned into a foul soup of rancid, salty wine, so the clerics shifted the practice to the sea.

Secrets of Freeport: City Beneath the Sea

Some thirty leagues due east of A'Val, deep beneath the waves, there is a lost city somehow preserved through the ages. Curiously, the city does not seem to be part of the ancient Valossan Empire but is, instead, something else entirely. For one, the architecture is unusual; there are no hard angles, and the buildings are not designed for human (nor humanoid) inhabitation. These buildings look like they were built by madmen. The layout of the city is so random and unsettling that to behold it in full is enough to trigger feelings of unease and nausea, as if it does not belong in this world and was conjured up from the diseased imagination of some insane god. Stranger still, nothing has taken root here. Nothing grows on the old stones, and eerily, it is free of sediment. It is perfectly clear of any debris, almost as if it had just appeared intact yesterday from whatever time and place that birthed it.

Those who know of the city have different theories regarding the origins of this place. Mother Lorilee suspects it appeared after the hurricane that hammered into Freeport five years ago—that the place had always been there but was hidden, perhaps by magic, perhaps by something else. Poul Reiner of the Society of Lobstermen, believes it is something else entirely, a sign of some coming catastrophe. In any event, whatever it is, it is clearly not of this world, and it is not Valossan in design or origin. For now, the secret of the city is safe, but it is just a matter of time before someone or something discovers its existence.





Just over six centuries ago, a pious sailor named Samuel Frest left his fortune to the priests, who then used the funds to erect a proper house of worship for the god. Until then, Freeporters believed the only temple the religion needed was the oceans, for it is beleived that the god sleeps beneath the waters of the Serpent's Teeth, and when angry, he stirs and mutters, giving birth to tremendous storms and treacherous waters. Regardless, work continued, and after fifty years, a fine temple stood around the original shrine.

The Temple of the Sea God has stood over the centuries, unharmed by the hurricanes that sometimes slam into the city, resisting upheavals and war, and any other calamity that has befallen the city. Most people think the Sea God shelters the place from destruction, but the fact is the priests are careful to sustain this illusion by cleaning and doing upkeep at night.

The Sea God's servants spend most of their time in the harbor, communing with the sea and the creatures living in it. They had good relations with the merfolk who lived in the Serpent's Teeth region, and before they vanished, the temple leaders would visit their watery neighbors in their undersea homes.

Spotting a follower of the Sea God is easy. They all go about wearing diaphanous aquamarine robes that strikingly resemble the waters around the Serpent's Teeth. Most dye their hair green and braid it with strands of seaweed.

Description

The Temple of the Sea God may not be the biggest temple in the district, but it is impressive enough in its own right. Standing two stories tall, it has a large, open courtyard. A pool of saltwater stands in the middle—the same pool that has stood here for almost eight hundred years—and on clear warm days, the priests hold their services here. Worshippers and clergy climb into the pool and splash about until they are sufficiently wrinkled, at which point the high priest calls the services to an end.

The rest of the temple holds the priests' private quarters, prayer rooms, and an indoor chapel for inclement weather. No expense has been spared for this hall. Saltwater fountains fill the air with mist, while gaudy tile mosaics of the Sea God and sea creatures decorate the walls and floor. The ceiling is the most impressive because it is painted to give everyone the perspective of being underwater.

Key Figures

The Temple of the Sea God has a large congregation, as befits a city the relies on the sea for survival. It therefore has many priests and acolytes to attend to the people that come to pay their respects to this ocassionally violent and tempestuous god.

Mother Lorilee

The leader of the Temple of the Sea God is a priestess called Mother Lorilee (*female human master*), a handsome woman in her early sixties who has held the post for almost fifteen years. Her oneness with the Sea God is unquestioned. As an acolyte, Lorilee was once tossed overboard by pirates while traveling out of Freeport as a missionary. Despite being over twenty miles from the nearest patch of dry land, she not only survived but also beat her assailants back to Freeport. When the pirate ship arrived, the followers of the Sea God were waiting for them. They sank the ship in the middle of Freeport Harbor, the top of its mast standing for years as a warning to those who would wrong the Sea God's chosen people.

Lesser Shrines and Temples

What follows is a brief overview of some of the other religions that have taken root in Freeport.

7. Temple of Death

The God of Death has a small-but-rabid following of worshippers in Freeport. They gather in a tiny building a few hundred paces from the Fool's Market. The Temple of Death prepares bodies for whatever fate awaits them—usually the Crematorium.

8. Shrine of the Magic God

Nestled away in an alley formed by the Temple of the God of Knowledge and the Fool's Market, the God of Magic's shrine is a strange place maintained by an even stranger priest named Xort.

9. God of Roads

In the center of Revelation Way, on the north side of the Temple District, stands a statue of The Traveler. Rising some nine feet tall and resembling a cloaked man shielding his eyes from the sun as he looks off to the east, the statue is a landmark, helping locals find their way around the city. The statue is not named, and it's covered in bird dung, but many Freeporters come to The Traveler to touch his stony cloak before undertaking a long journey.

10. God of Strength

On the southern edge of the Temple District is a small temple dedicated to the God of Strength. While tiny by comparison to the more fabulous buildings, it is open and airy, having no walls, and just a roof supported by four pillars. A granite altar stands in the center of the stone-tiled floor. This religion is on the rise, as the Temple of the God of War has grown more sinister and withdrawn over the last few years. Fighters who don't necessarily subscribe to the bloodthirsty ways of the God of War may come here and receive a small blessing and prayer from Brother Giorgie (male half-ogre apprentice).

Other Gods

Some religions are so small or scattered, they lack a formal temple altogether.

God of Nature

Few Freeporters have use for nature and its trappings, turning to other gods, such as the God of the Sea, to stave off the worst of nature's violence, but to venerate the jungles, which hide no shortage of terrible things, the dirt, and animals is just silly. As a result, the God of Nature has a very small following on the island.

God of Penitence

Scattered throughout the city are pockets of clerics who worship the God of Penitence. These priests and priestesses don white robes and walk barefoot through the city, muttering and chanting their prayers to their distant master. They claim mortals are born with the burden of wickedness and only through constant devotion and denial of one's impulses can a individual ever truly know peace. Since they call for self-denial, they are unpopular, appealing to old women and ex-convicts who have seen the error of their ways after a few minutes of imprisonment in the Tombs or a gang rape in the Hulks.

God of the Sun

In the Plaza of the Gods, an open square between the Temple of the Knowledge God and Fool's Market, where priests sometimes gather to debate and discuss theological matters, there's a mosaic pattern of a fiery sun bearing a man's face in the center of the yellow disk. A mysterious sect of six men and women come here during the hottest part of the day, strip naked, and lay on the ground, arranged so they look like the spokes of a wheel. They remain there, unmoving, for exactly three hours, at which point they don their robes and vanish into the city. They never speak and have no temple. Local laity of other temples claims these people were slaves who had their tongues torn from their heads. Others suggest these men and women are travelers from the distant land of Hamunaptra who have lost their way and seek guidance in the light of the sun.

God of Thieves

The God of Thieves has no temples, no clergy, no order, but he has his followers. One merely has to walk the streets of Freeport to feel the tug of this mischevious god. Not all thieves pay their respects to the God of Thieves, but the wise ones do and they give one stolen coin in twenty to an urchin, whom it's said the God of Thieves favors.

Captains' Council Seeks Sea God's Blessing at Start of New Year

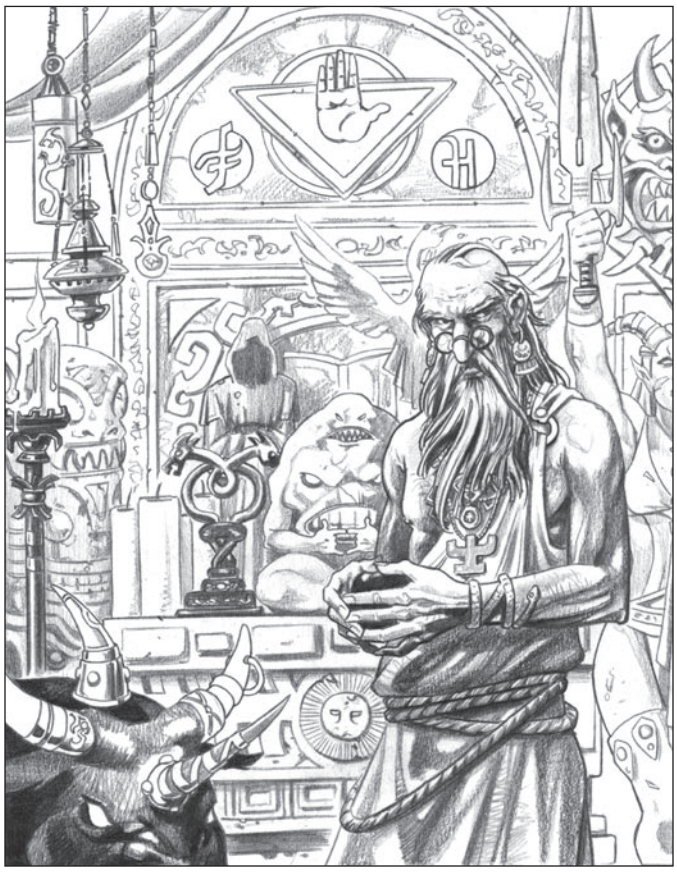
~The Shipping News

Lorilee has long, gray hair braided with seaweed. She wears a circlet of pink shells given to her by the merfolk, and she dons the customary robes of her temple and spends much of her time walking the harbor. Of late, Lorilee has spent more and more time in the seas searching for the lost merfolk, which has forced her to cede some of her powers and authority to Sister Gwendolyn.

Sister Gwendolyn

The Captains' Council has always maintained a representative of the Temple of the Sea God as a sign of respect. This is currently Sister Gwendolyn (*female human journeyman*), a member of long standing who is both popular and influential. However, the two roles she plays—second in the temple and councilor—keep her busy and prevent her from looking too closely at her peers' often-shady pursuits. Practical and self-assured, she has a strong personality and is a natural leader.

Gwendolyn's relationship with Mother Lorilee, leader of her temple in Freeport, is difficult. Gwendolyn respects the wishes of the high priestess and tries to anticipate her desires, but Lorilee's frequent expeditions beneath the waves make it challenging, especially when the matriarch dresses her down for not thinking of something she sees as obvious. While such treatment chafes a bit, Gwendolyn tolerates Lorilee's eccentricities because she knows something serious distracts the mother from the day-to-day duties of the temple.



Adventure Seeds

Sister Gwendolyn has been patient. She genuinely respects Mother Lorilee, but she feels other matters have distracted the matriarch, who pays far more heed to the missing merfolk than to her congregation in the city. Lorilee no longer confides in Gwendolyn as she once did, which makes Gwendolyn all the more suspicious. She is keen to find out what is distracting Lorilee, and if a threat exists, she would like to know about it so she can help the city make preparations.

Shortly before the Succession Crisis, the merfolk uncovered a sunken city some thirty leagues from Freeport and brought their findings to Mother Lorilee. Intrigued, Lorilee accompanied the merfolk scouts to explore it. What she found was puzzling. The city was completely free of debris. Only the stones remained, neither sand nor silt settled on the structures, and no vegetation took root. It was as if the sea was afraid to reclaim this site. Add to this the curious architecture and odd symbols, and it was positively strange. Lorilee is concerned that this city may have some connection to the Brotherhood of the Yellow Sign or some other cult, but before she involved others, she would exhaust her own resources first. The merfolk then vanished, and only the shark-infested ruins of their village remain. Believing there is some link between the sunken city and the vanished sea peoples, Lorilee and a few trusted initiates scour the depths to find their missing allies. She's hesitant to tell Gwendolyn, since her second is a notorious gossip, and if word got out in Freeport, it would certainly draw the Lobstermen and who knows what trouble would follow.

5. Godshop

"Welcome! Welcome! What brings you to my humble house? Incense? Icons? Relics? I have it all. Everything is for sale in the Godshop!"

—Brother Wilford Vinely

The Godshop is an ecumenical shop that caters to religious types by selling accoutrements of faith, from holy symbols and incense to ancient religious tomes and icons. The shop also specializes in serving the needs of new religions and has several arrangements with local craftsmen to produce specialized items for newer cults and sects.

History

The Godshop opened its doors for business some thirty years ago. The proprietor, Wilford Vinely, saw an opportunity to turn a quick coin by providing much-needed services to the priests of the Temple District. Until he set up shop, the temples would pay premium prices to import their materials from the Continent—or enter contracts with local craftsmen to produce vestments, symbols, and other religious items,

and usually of varying quality. Vinely, ever the shrewd businessman, knew how to negotiate, which was something the priests often lacked. He moved his shop into an abandoned shrine, purchased all sorts of weird items that were bound to appeal to the various clergymen, and threw open his doors for business.

Description

It's obvious the Godshop was once a temple, but to which god, no one can say. The shop may be small, consisting of an open area and a dais at the back, but it's packed with goods. Vinely is careful to keep goods relating to the major faiths well stocked, but he also has an assortment of more bizarre and esoteric items for the smaller faiths. Behind a curtain at the back of the shop are Vinely's offices. A trapdoor to a hidden vault sits under his desk. Below, he keeps a small selection of illicit goods to sell to adherents of forbidden gods. He hides this side business well, but many suspect he does more than just peddle incense.

Most of the stock is quite valuable, cast of gold and silver and often studded with precious gems. He has rare herbs, odd idols, and oils from faraway lands. Security, then, is one of Vinely's top priorities, and he employs a dozen well-trained and loyal guards. On occasion, guards from the temples come by to add their support. The temples value the service Brother Vinely provides to both them and their followers in exchange for a reasonable discount on items purchased.

Key Figures

Aside from his guards, Vinely has no other employees. During business hours, Vinely is always here, with a big grin and a ready handshake.

Brother Wilford Vinely

Wilford Vinely (*male human journeyman*) owns the Godshop. Rather than subscribing to a particular faith, Vinely claims to follow the forces of commerce, seeing it as his role in life to bring the faithful the items they need, usually at a fair price but always with a hefty profit. Brother Vinely's lack of a strong direction in his faith makes him a friend to all and a foe to only a few. Only the righteous are offended by his refusal to take sides in matters of faith.

Vinely's no idiot. He realizes there's business in selling goods to priests of evil gods and so he does dabble in forbidden merchandise. He knows the risks, though, so he keeps these supplies in his cellar, under lock and key.

Brother Vinely is an older man of average height and stout build. He has white hair, beard, and moustache and wears a pair of spectacles on the end of his nose. He wears white robes that make his beard seem a bit yellow. Around his neck hang the holy symbols of a dozen or so gods, all of which are for sale at a bargain price.

Adventure Seeds

Brother Vinely plays a dangerous game. While he's been careful to cultivate good relationships with the various temples in the district, his willingness to dabble in the forbidden and the occult risks disaster. Vinely is willing to pay for unusual objects taken from cult temples and shrines, but he's very careful about his dealings and sometimes works through intermediaries—folks he can trust. Should someone try to double-cross him, he doesn't think twice about sending some of his guards to teach the offender a lesson.

Vinely is careful when dealing with shady priests, for he knows that he'd be kicking on the end of a rope should it become common knowledge that he did business with cultists. However, a nasty rumor begins to circulate around the Temple District painting Vinely as a cultist and sorcerer. Soon, anyone who has done business with the man is suspected of living a double life and so the various priests of the temples, along with old Vinely, are willing to pay a high price to anyone who can find the gossip and silence him for good.

6. Temple of the God of Pirates

> "You know what happens when you paint a turd blue? You have a blue turd."
>
> —*Anonymous*

Freeport has worked hard to soften its origins as a pirate haven, masking the often-bloody past with the façade of a robust trade city. Despite the efforts of the Captains' Council and the Merchant District, some of the city's least desirable elements, such as the God of Pirates, are here to stay. It's not like you can blame them; the Pirate God is not one to forgive an insult, and wise Freeporters live in fear of this fickle god.

History

Observances to the Pirate God have been a tradition here, upheld by everyone from the whores in the Docks to the crusty salts that roll in from ships bearing the skull and crossbones. The Pirate God, at least in the early days, was more like a spook, a demonic figure men needed to appease before setting sail. But as the city grew, and people flocked to its streets, worship of the Pirate God started to gain ground and attract an actual following.

Decades later, the Cult of the Pirate God became the Order of the Pirate God, and people from all over the city gave the "priests" their coin and offered up prayers in the hopes that he would spare them his wrath. The other temples in the district kept their distance his piratical followers, always keeping an eye open when one of them passed on the street. They secretly urged the Captains' Council to ban it from the city, but the city leaders refused, themselves fearful of angering the god. And even if they did ban his worship, people would still make sacrifices since no one in their right mind is willing to risk the wrath if they stopped. So it seems the Pirate God is here to stay.

Description

The Pirate God's temple might be amusing if it were not for his sinister nature. The temple is actually an old beached caravel dragged up through the city streets and left tipped on its side in the center of the Temple District. From the crow's nest, the skull-and-crossbones flag flutters in the wind. The interior has been rebuilt to compensate for the angled floors. The hold, accessed from the street, is the worship hall, and it bears two rows of benches donated from pirate ships over the centuries. At the back is the pulpit, a huge intimidating tower fashioned from the bones of some sea monster. Every day, the minister of the order comes to preach fire and death, warning the congregation to live in fear of the Pirate God lest he visit misfortune on their heads.



Many honest sailors pay homage to the God of Pirates for two reasons. First, they know the god holds sway over the sea, competing with the comparatively more peaceful Sea God. Second, they want to avoid the god's more fervent worshippers while at sea. They figure if the God of Pirates is going to have his followers attack anyone, chances are better the targets will be non-believers.

The priests of the Pirate God stand out. They are almost all ex-pirates saved from drowning by some happenstance. As a part of their induction, they are each asked to come up with the gold to purchase an expensive earring. They wear this earring at all times as a symbol of respect. Anyone who finds a Pirate priest's body and returns it to the temple—along with the earring—receives both the earring and the blessing of the Pirate God.

Key Figures

The Temple of the Pirate God has a small but capable stable of priests, each prowling about the city and preaching of impending doom to nonbelievers.

Peg-Leg Peligro

The high priest of the Pirate God is an ex-buccaneer by the name of Peg-Leg Peligro (*male human journeyman*). Father Peg-Leg, as he's known to most, spent his younger years sailing the high seas, plying the pirate's trade. During one battle, he fell overboard into a sea frothing with sharks, and one took his leg before he could be hauled out of the water. He swore to the Pirate God he'd dedicate his life to his worship if he survived, and so far, Peg-Leg has kept his word.

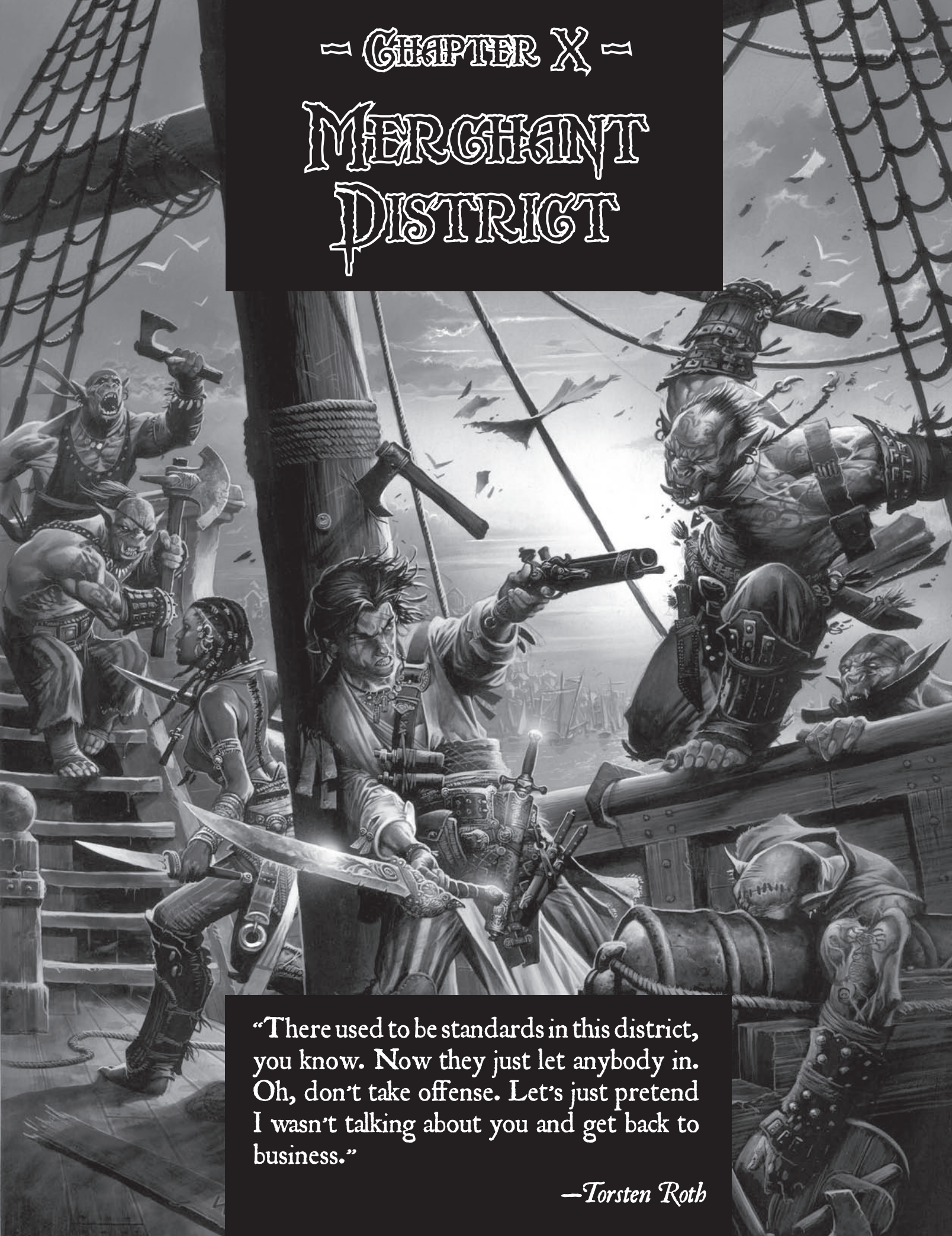
Peg-Leg presides over huge masses at each of the city holidays, but he's also been known to hold impromptu services in the Docks, usually in the most raucous taverns frequented by the roughest kinds of cutthroats. He's tall and has a patchy beard and moustache. He has the eyes of a fanatic and a tendency to swear. He wears long black robes and the gold earring that signifies his faith.

Peligro did a brief stint on the Captains' Council after the Law of Succession was repealed. The Council needed to fill the Privateer's Seat, and knowing Peligro's loyalties to the city, they pressured him to fill the slot. Peligro agreed, but as soon as his term was up, he bowed out, vowing he would never do it again—he'd rather swim with the sharks.

Adventure Seeds

Part of the reason the Temple of the Pirate God survives is presumably because the priests gain the favor of the deity and protect the city from piracy. People pay the temple a great deal of gold to keep the priests are happy, but should a band of ruthless pirates attack the city or vessels coming and going from Freeport, one can bet that the people will turn against the priests. In the event this occurs, Father Peg-Leg will happily pay adventurers to put a stop to the renegade pirates—and he is unlikely to be too curious about the methods employed.

There are scandalous rumors about how priests of the Pirate God are actual pirates that use their positions to feed information back to their allies at sea. While Father Peg-Leg would never stoop to such treachery, he's well aware members of his clergy sometimes maintain their old ties. He keeps an eye on his fellow priests, and he's always listening for reports of skullduggery about his men.



— Chapter X —

Merchant District

"There used to be standards in this district, you know. Now they just let anybody in. Oh, don't take offense. Let's just pretend I wasn't talking about you and get back to business."

—Torsten Roth



The Merchant District is the swankest part of Freeport, home to the rich and influential upper classes. Many residents of Freeport never enter this part of town—and wouldn't be allowed to stay long if they did. Only the wealthy are welcome here, and the teams of private guards that patrol the district make this abundantly clear to those of the lower class who might wander into the area.

Wave Street is the main drag that runs right through the center of the district. It starts up at the west gate of the Old City and goes from there to the Plaza of Gold, the highest point in the city proper. It continues past the plaza and down to the sea to the Marina, a private pier utilized solely by the city's seafaring elite.

Despite being isolated from the rest of the community simply by its standards of wealth, the Merchant District still shares borders with other parts of the city. Drac's End and the Temple District form the Merchant District's northern border. The Warehouse District and the Docks form the southern border. The Old City, with its towering curtain wall, sits to the east. Freeport Harbor and the foothills of inner A'Val form a natural barrier to the west.

Always the center of Freeport's wealth and power, the Merchant District remains the most prosperous place in the city. But the riots, famines, and troubles of the last few years have not stopped short at the district's borders. Few here have truly suffered, but many fear that they yet might. The Sea Lord might claim their finances, their business could dry up, or their servants might turn on them out of greed and jealousy. The scions of the Merchant District swagger in public, but in private, their paranoia continues to rise.

Locations of Interest

The following locations can be found in the Merchant District.

1. The Plaza of Gold

"Oh my stars, look! Nifur Roberts, out in public! And who is that she's strolling around with? Quick, buy some grapes from that grubby little vendor while I pump her for gossip. Nifur! Darling!"

—Julianna Grossette

The Plaza of Gold is the centerpiece of Freeport, an open space within the Merchant District in which the wealthy meet or simply

House vs. House: The Trade War Escalates!

~ The Shipping News

strut about to be seen. During the day, the place is a bustle of activity as people rush back and forth on one sort of business or another. It's rare to watch for long without seeing some aristocrat or merchant sweeping along Wave Street with a retinue of underlings and bodyguards. On fine evenings, the plaza is filled with the same sorts of people, now engaged not in business but pleasure. They flit back and forth between lavish private dinner parties and events at the Freeport Opera House, or frequent one of the many gourmet restaurants or exclusive clubs.

Temporary stalls—little more than wheeled merchandise carts—are scattered throughout the Plaza, selling imported food and luxury goods to the district's residents. Unlike the other markets in Freeport, selling items in the Plaza of Gold requires a permit from the city, and these are handed out only to those who can establish their bonafides (and pay the exorbitant cost).

History

The Plaza of Gold is one of the oldest areas in Freeport, outside of the Old City itself. It's the hub around which the Merchant District was built, back in the era of the fourth Sea Lord. Actually, the Fountain of Fortune (see below) came first; the Plaza formed around the fountain, the Merchant District formed around the Plaza, and Freeport's fortunes formed around the Merchant District. This is the moneyed heart of the city—beautiful, wealthy, and for the most part empty. No one *lives* in the Plaza; they only pass through it.

Description

The Plaza of Gold is a wide, cobbled space on a broad hill, the highest place in the city—and yes, the wealthy *do* look down on the rest of the city from here. Many avenues and lanes lead off from the Plaza, along which can be found expensive stores and luxurious cafes.

The most notable feature is the Fountain of Fortune—carved from marble, thirty feet wide, surrounded by a circular seating area. The fountain's marble sculpture depicts the God of Luck standing on the crow's nest of a ship's rigging that stabs out from the center of the fountain's base. Merfolk surrounding the rigging hold gilded pitchers, from which waters stream in the four cardinal directions. The God of Luck holds aloft a marble staff, out of which a continuous spray jets up and then cascades down into the fountain's base. Local legend has it that the fountain is enchanted, and that anyone who throws a coin into it may be granted a stroke of good fortune at some point in the day.

Key Figures

The following characters can generally be found at the Plaza of Gold.

Emma Butley

Fifteen-year-old Emma Butley (*female human apprentice*) doesn't belong in the Plaza. The permit showing she has the right to sell imported fruit in the Merchant District belongs to an older, more regal woman—who had a heart attack last week in the Drac's End tavern where Emma and her family live. Emma reported the death to the Watch, but kept the woman's permit, cart, and supply of fruit for herself. Now she's selling grapes and apricots as fast as she can, and making more money then she'd ever dreamed possible. She doesn't want to be arrested, but she doesn't want to return to Drac's End either; she's looking for a way to score a real permit, and some more fruit to sell.

Merchant District Overview

Freeport's wealthiest and most upmarket district, where the rich and powerful live, shop, and sometimes even work.

Buildings

High quality, well designed, and kept impeccably clean.

People

Well-dressed merchants and nobles, accompanied by servants and bodyguards.

Roads

Broad avenues paved with regularly cleaned cobblestones.

Descriptive Elements

Ornate magical streetlamps are on every corner, created by the guild to burn forever without fuel, so the Merchant District is well-lit every night. However, some of these lamps were destroyed or stolen in the Succession Riots, and have yet to be replaced.

Adventure Seeds

While the wealthy like to believe themselves above the crime of Freeport, the Plaza of Gold is the site of more high-class con games than anywhere else in the city. One favorite goes like this. A well-born captain approaches a wealthy mark and explains that he has a ship laden with precious cargo that he can't sell here. If he can just get someone to cover his docking fees, he would be able to leave, sell the goods, and return with double the fees for the kindness. Of course, the "captain" doesn't even have a boat or crew, much less any cargo. It's the kind of grifting that some characters might frown upon—and others might wish to try for themselves.

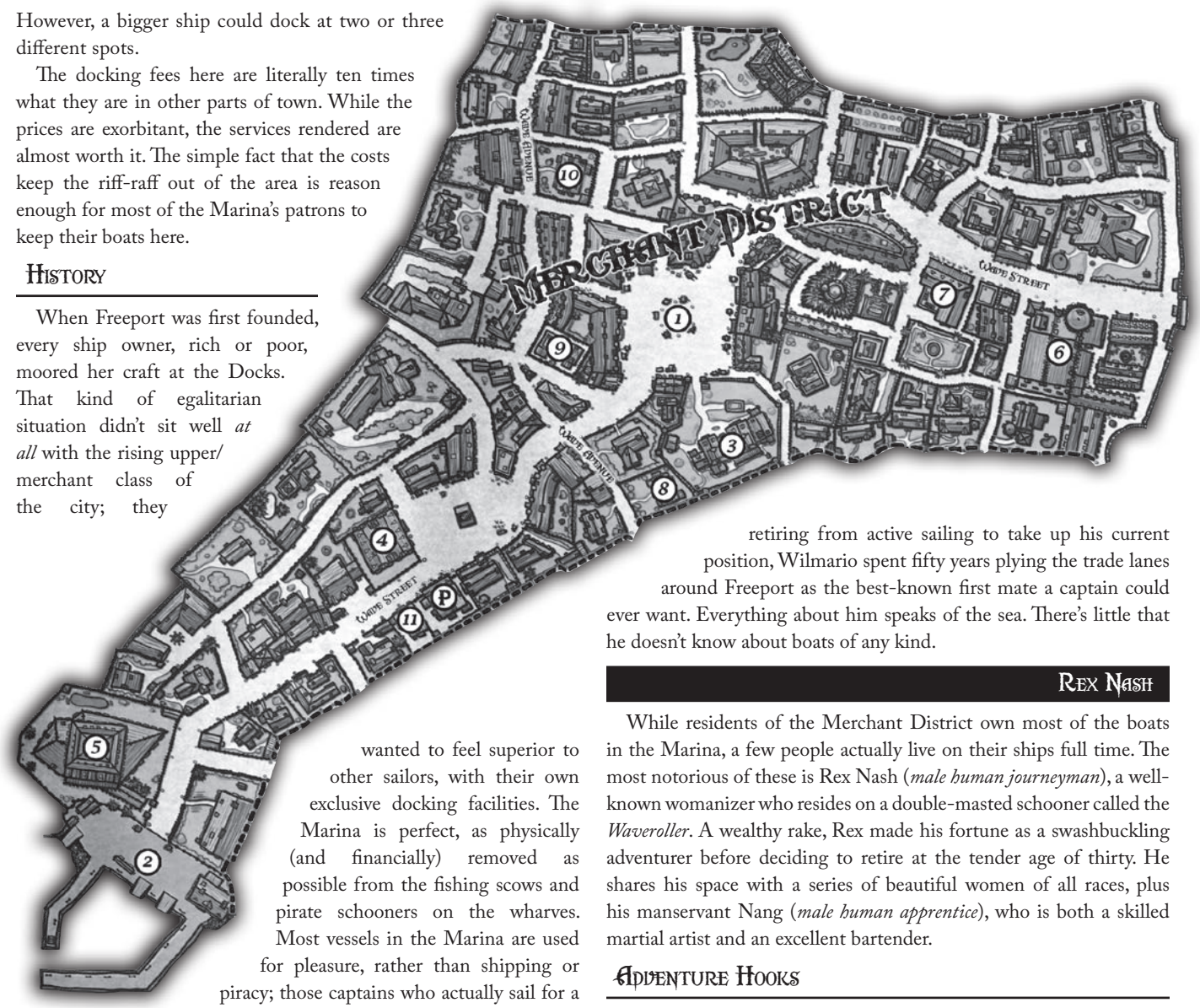
The sun comes up on a scene of horror in the Plaza—a young nobleman dead in the Fountain, his throat cut. The wealthy are in uproar: this is the kind of danger their money is supposed to *protect* them from! The investigation turns up a lead—a young fruit vendor was seen leaving the Plaza late the night before. But now Emma Butley is nowhere to be found. Is she a witness to the crime or the perpetrator? And what price will she put upon her information?

2. The Marina

"Pour another drink for the lady and myself, would you, Nang? And pass me my longbow; I'm sure I just saw a sea devil climb up the side of Roth's schooner. Shall we investigate, my dear?"

—Rex Nash

Situated at the watery end of Wave Street, the Marina features the best-kept docks in all of Freeport. Most of the slips here are built only for smaller boats, mostly yachts, not the cargo-carrying ships that pull in at the piers along the rest of Freeport's shoreline.



However, a bigger ship could dock at two or three different spots.

The docking fees here are literally ten times what they are in other parts of town. While the prices are exorbitant, the services rendered are almost worth it. The simple fact that the costs keep the riff-raff out of the area is reason enough for most of the Marina's patrons to keep their boats here.

History

When Freeport was first founded, every ship owner, rich or poor, moored her craft at the Docks. That kind of egalitarian situation didn't sit well *at all* with the rising upper/merchant class of the city; they wanted to feel superior to other sailors, with their own exclusive docking facilities. The Marina is perfect, as physically (and financially) removed as possible from the fishing scows and pirate schooners on the wharves. Most vessels in the Marina are used for pleasure, rather than shipping or piracy; those captains who actually sail for a reason *still* berth at the Docks.

Description

Located at the far western edge of Freeport, the Marina consists of several piers cut off from the rest of the island by a tall, wrought iron fence topped with vicious spikes (and allegedly bearing magical alarms). This is one place where the Merchant District's lighting system doesn't reach; at night, the lamplight reaches only a short distance into the Marina, and the ships bob in darkness.

The Marina is guarded twenty-four hours a day by a team of twelve guards. Two stand at the sole gate into the Marina at all times, while another two or three patrol the waterfront. Because of the poor lighting, the guards carry torches as they patrol.

Key Figures

The following characters can generally be found at the Marina.

Wilmario

Wilmario (*male half-elf journeyman*) is the Marina's dock master, a striking individual with long hair and bright, green eyes. Before retiring from active sailing to take up his current position, Wilmario spent fifty years plying the trade lanes around Freeport as the best-known first mate a captain could ever want. Everything about him speaks of the sea. There's little that he doesn't know about boats of any kind.

Rex Nash

While residents of the Merchant District own most of the boats in the Marina, a few people actually live on their ships full time. The most notorious of these is Rex Nash (*male human journeyman*), a well-known womanizer who resides on a double-masted schooner called the *Waveroller*. A wealthy rake, Rex made his fortune as a swashbuckling adventurer before deciding to retire at the tender age of thirty. He shares his space with a series of beautiful women of all races, plus his manservant Nang (*male human apprentice*), who is both a skilled martial artist and an excellent bartender.

Adventure Hooks

The only hole in the Marina's security is the lack of illumination at night. That's never been a major issue in the past, because the darkness would hamper any intruders as much as it did the guards. But that was before the rise of the orc and hobgoblin community in Bloodsalt. The savage races have far better night vision than humans, and a group of them plans a midnight pirate raid on the Marina. Such an attack would be sure to net a great deal of plunder, while at the same time incurring the wrath of Freeport's most powerful and wealthy traders. Those surviving the attack would be willing to pay handsomely for the return of their stolen belongings—or simply for revenge against the denizens of the new district.

Rex Nash hasn't been in the adventuring habit for nearly a decade, but old skills die hard. He's pretty sure something fishy is going on in one of the ships berthed near the *Waveroller*. More people go on board than come out again, her owner takes her out more often than the norm, and he's almost certain he saw something inhuman in the rigging one night. Cultists? Drug smugglers? Political scheming? No matter what, it needs investigating—but not by a man going to the House of Serenity to celebrate his fortieth birthday tonight. Look into it, would you?

Law and Order

Just about every building in the Merchant District is protected by a unit of private guards employed by some rich family or other. Larger buildings have more guards, as do those with particularly valuable contents. Most guards are recruited from mercenary companies on the Continent, rather than from the unreliable locals; they are well-paid and difficult to bribe or intimidate.

Many of the district's residents rarely go anywhere without a retinue of bodyguards. When the person is at home, these bodyguards join up with the house guard, although their declared duty is the protection of their charge rather than of any building. The wealthy may assign their bodyguards to others from time to time; it's not unusual for an aristocrat to assign a bodyguard to his family members, assuming he has enough to go aroun-d. In a pinch, house guards may serve as bodyguards, but this risks exposing one's property to thieves.

Every window in the Merchant District features a set of decorated iron bars; these bear stout locks, as does every door. Even the manhole covers in the street are locked, and iron grates bar the spots where the sewer tunnels cross in or out of the district.

Employing private guards may be the norm for the Merchant District, in many cases it's overkill. The Watch patroling the streets here are the best of the best, having cut their teeth in the nastier parts of town, and bring to bear their experience and willingness to use force to make sure the Merchant District's streets are the safest in the city. When not walking their beats, they can be found in the all-Watch tavern, the Last Port (**Location 11**), sipping ale, playing darts, and swapping lies about their dalliances with ripe wealthy daughters.

3. The Merchants' Guildhouse

"Yarr, I tell ye, there are days I think hard about shovelin' all my stock onto a barge and shifting over to Libertyville. Sure, they're murderers and pirates, but that's still a damned improvement over dealin' with the soddin' Merchants' Guild."

— Argyle McGill

The Merchants' Guild is one of the most powerful organizations in town, rivaling even the Captains' Council. While the councilors may hold the reigns of political power in the city, the true economic might of Freeport is in the collective hands of the merchants.

The Merchants' Guildhouse is a club for every merchant in town, and membership is compulsory. To sell anything legally from a shop or stand in Freeport, you *must* be a member of the Merchants' Guild. The fees for this run on a sliding scale, usually amounting to two percent of a merchant's annual income.

What do merchants get for that fee? Not much, in the poorer districts; you're in the club, but not particularly welcome at the clubhouse or the parties of the wealthy. More and more of the smaller merchants are getting fed up with the guild's monopoly on trading rights, and are looking for options—whether that means relocating to Libertyville, trading on the black market, or simply refusing to pay. The guild is still healthy, but it's not as stable as it used to be, and the most powerful members are starting to bicker over control of the organization.

History

While Freeport had traders and shopkeepers even before the days of Drac and Francisco, the guild didn't emerge as a force in the city until the reign of the fourth Sea Lord, the rise of the middle class and the construction of the Merchant District. In the wake of Marquetta's "Back Alley War" with the Thieves' Guild, a delegation from the growing Merchant's Guild persuaded the Council that regulation of trade would stabilize the city, force out thieves and fences, and put money back in the Council's depleted coffers. It didn't drive out the black market (if anything it encouraged it), but it *did* make for a stable business environment—and made the guild wealthy and powerful to boot.

Unfortunately for the Merchants' Guild, there's no *official* mechanism for enforcing their monopoly on merchant licensing in Freeport. The City Guard enforce the law, not the guild, and most days the Guard are more interested in catching thieves and muggers than in serving a small fine on a baker who's selling unlicensed pumpernickel. So when the guild hears about a rebel merchant, they have to take matters into their own hands.

For several years, guildmaster Torsten Roth had a secret agreement with the Joy Boys, a group of disaffected young aristocrats who fancied themselves gangsters. Roth diverted guild funds to the Joy Boys and their leader Mendor Maeorgan; in return, they would beat up, terrorize, and intimidate merchants that refused to cooperate with guild demands. Only Roth, Maeorgan, and his closest lieutenants knew about the arrangement. The Joy Boys only enforced guild business outside the Merchant District, maintaining a lower profile close to home.

But the Joy Boys are no more; the gang disbanded after seven members died during the Great Green Fire, a terrible tragedy that struck the Merchant District to its core. Mendor Maeorgan went into hiding until recently, the guild lost its secret enforcement arm, and every week another merchant decides it's worth the risk of a fine and lets her membership lapse. The rot is setting in, and the most powerful merchants are constantly debating what can be done to set things right.

Description

The Merchant's Guildhouse is a sprawling, luxurious manor, set on the slopes of a low hill, and surrounded by both thick lawns and thick walls. Guards patrol the grounds at all times, and only allow entry to merchants with current membership (and their guests). While some

of the wealthier members of the guild would like to consider the manor their own private club, the building is actually open to any active members in town.

The Guildhouse's interior is richly appointed, featuring a smoking room, a well-stocked bar, and a gourmet restaurant, as well as a private bathhouse and several meeting and discussion rooms. Members of the guild and their honored guests are welcome to avail themselves of the facilities at any time. However, those who cause a disturbance risk being barred from the establishment or even having their guild membership revoked—a harsh punishment, as it robs a merchant of her ability to operate legally in Freeport.

Key Figures

The following characters can generally be found at the Merchants' Guildhouse.

Torsten Roth

Torsten Roth (*male human journeyman*) is forty-five, well-dressed, and one of the richest men in Freeport. He is head of both the Guild of Merchants and the powerful Roth merchant family (with interests in mining, fine wines, and exotic goods). He's also an annoying, self-agrandizing, condescending snob who thinks most people (including his fellow guild members) are beneath him. He has plenty of money, but what he wants more is political power—power that could make him even richer. Several years ago, to this end, he publicly aided and supported Milton Drac in the hopes of being elected to the Captains' Council. That proved to be a *big* mistake, and he lost a significant amount of influence after Drac's fall from grace. He's still angry about that.

Right now, Roth's top priority is to cement his control over the Merchant's Guild; as membership begins to slide, some of his rivals are *daring* to question his judgment. Once those rivals are silenced, he then wants the guild to regain its slowly fading strength. He wants a new group of enforcers under his control. He wants to be on the Captains' Council, and then to become Sea Lord. He wants *everything*. All he has to do is work out how to get it….

Jessapine Holimon

Tall, ethereally beautiful, and as tenacious as a pit bull, Jessapine Holimon (*female half-elf journeyman*) has worked hard for years to reach her current level of success (unlike a certain rich-born guildmaster). She is the most successful importer and retailer of women's clothing in Freeport, and the daughters of the guild leaders wouldn't purchase their gowns from anyone else in town. Jessapine is quite influential within the guild, and she is convinced Torsten Roth is leading it on the road to ruin. Could she lead it back to glory? Well, it's worth finding out. Currently she's consolidating her political support within the guild, but she wants to follow that up by taking Roth down a peg or two. All she needs is evidence that he's been up to no good.

Adventure Hooks

Many smaller merchants are unhappy with the demands of the guild; they don't want it disbanded (it serves many uses), but they would like to see its stranglehold over trade in Freeport broken. A group of them is making a presentation to the Captains' Council soon, hoping to convince them to relax the trade regulations, and break the guild's hold on power. Torsten Roth is adamant that the presentation goes unheard, and is pulling every political string he can find—including his association with Mendor Maeorgan. He threatens to embarrass the Sea Lord by releasing the details of her cousin's criminal activities. Sea Lord Maeorgan needs someone to get that evidence, while the small merchants need protection from Mendor and his new gang, the Rakeshames.

Before the Succession Crisis, Torsten Roth supplied Milton Drac with items for his lighthouse. One odd material was a metal called "Serpent's Blood" from the southern jungles, a soft, greenish substance that turned rock-hard when treated. Drac didn't use all of it in his arcane work, and a chest of the stuff has been gathering dust in a warehouse since the Crisis. However, it was sold last week to a member of the Wizards' Guild, who wanted to use it for alchemical experiments. Unfortunately, Serpent's Blood is also used in the summoning of demons, and the experiments have taken a *very* bad turn. Now a demon is loose in the alchemical factories of Bloodsalt and must be stopped. But when the paper trail leads from the factories back to Torsten Roth, suddenly Jessapine Holimon wants that demon captured, not destroyed!

4. The Gilt Club

"Let me tell you, friend, there are stories about Marcus Roberts that—kaff! Kaff! Ah, sink me, that hurt. Fetch me a brandy, would you? I don't feel very well...."

— Millant Lefevre

The Gilt Club is the exclusive club the Merchants' Guildhouse, associated as it with the filthy workings of actual commerce (deucedly close to real work, don't you know), could never manage to be. The annual dues for membership in the Gilt Club are so expensive as to be far beyond the grasp of all but the wealthiest people in town. Nonetheless, membership is technically open to any and all, even those beyond Freeport's borders—but to become a member of the Gilt Club, you have to be invited. The standard procedure is for a current member to bring along a prospective member as a guest for an evening. This gives the other members a chance to see if the prospective member is "Gilt Club material". If they approve of the newcomer, an offer to join can be extended. Few who are afforded the opportunity—and who can *afford* the opportunity—turn it down.

The Power of Money: The Gilt Club and the Politics of Freeport

~ The Shipping News

History

Although based in Freeport, the Gilt Club was established by wealthy noblemen from the Continent, aristocrats with far more money to burn than even the most successful pirate, who wanted a place where they could relax in opulence when visiting the city.

The Gilt Club is governed by the entire membership, which elects a president to serve for one year at a time. Millant Lefevre has been the president for the past seventeen years. Most members feel that the extremely cultured elf lends an atmosphere of propriety, culture, and exclusivity that the club was lacking in the past. Or so they tell outsiders.

Description

The exterior of the Gilt Club is surprisingly low-key. Yes, it's a large and well-appointed manor house, but there are several of those in the Merchant District. A closer inspection reveals just how strongly built the house is, and how well guarded.

As for the inside, the Gilt Club is more lavishly outfitted than an emperor's castle; it makes the Sea Lord's Palace look like a cheap shanty in Scurvytown. The floors are all polished wood or marble. The walls are paneled with the finest woods, decorated with intricate marquetry. Every bit of metal seems to be of the finest gold, keeping the place true to its name. The bar here stocks only the best ales, liquors, and wines. The kitchen features dishes from the best chef in the islands. Special cigars are hand-rolled for the members of the club.

Key Figures

The following characters can generally be found at the Gilt Club.

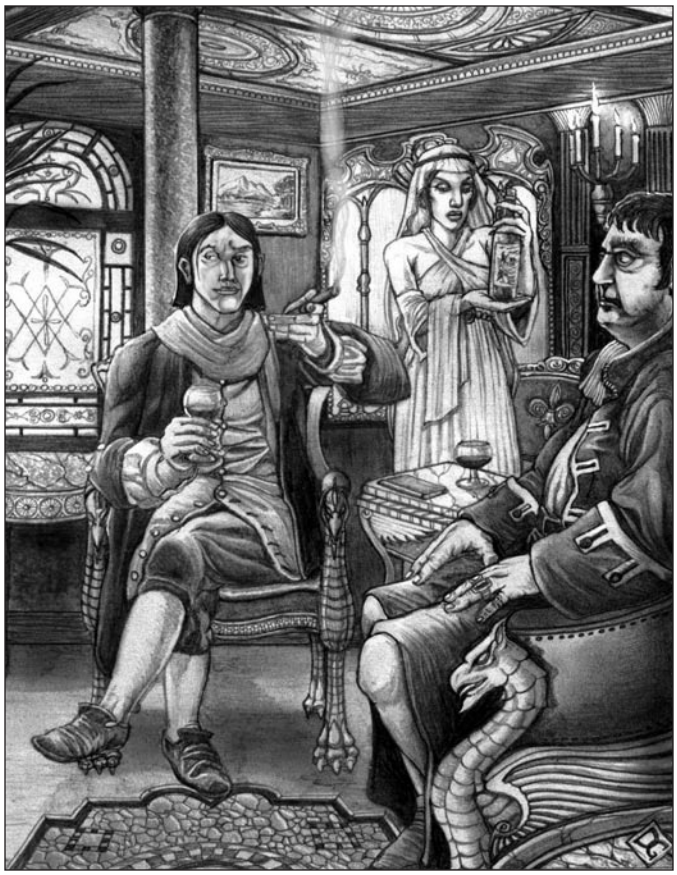
Millant Lefevre

While Millant Lefevre (*male elf journeyman*) *is* cultured and elegant, the real reason he keeps being elected president is somewhat less salubrious. Lefevre is a skilled blackmailer, who has enough dirt on the club's members to bury the city's aristocracy alive. The least of his demands is that he continue to be elected to office every year, and paid a handsome salary to manage the place. Lefevre has put safeguards in place; the secrets he knows will be revealed in the event of his untimely death or disappearance, no matter the cause, and everyone in the Club knows it. As a result, when the elf sneezes, everyone in the place offers a handkerchief.

Adventure Hooks

A scoundrel has stumbled upon Lefevre's blackmail materials and absconded with them. Nearly every member of the Gilt Club is desperate to find the thief, hiring detectives, adventurers, and assassins to get back the evidence. Meanwhile, Lefevre himself wants the stolen materials back and will pay handsomely for their return. But how did the thief know about the materials in the first place? Who's behind the robbery? Could Lefevre be playing a scam to further his own ends?

Elves may live a long time, but they aren't immortal, and they aren't immune to disease. Some unnatural contagion is ravaging Lefevre's health, and the members of the Gilt Club will do *anything* to save his life. Money is no object—and nor is the prospect of sending adventurers into the serpentine ruins miles under A'Val in search of a cure.



5. The Last Resort

"Don't worry yourself about this, my lord. I promise you, when you come back from the dining room, any evidence of this—unpleasantness—will have been cleaned away. All part of the service."

—Bobbin Brandydale

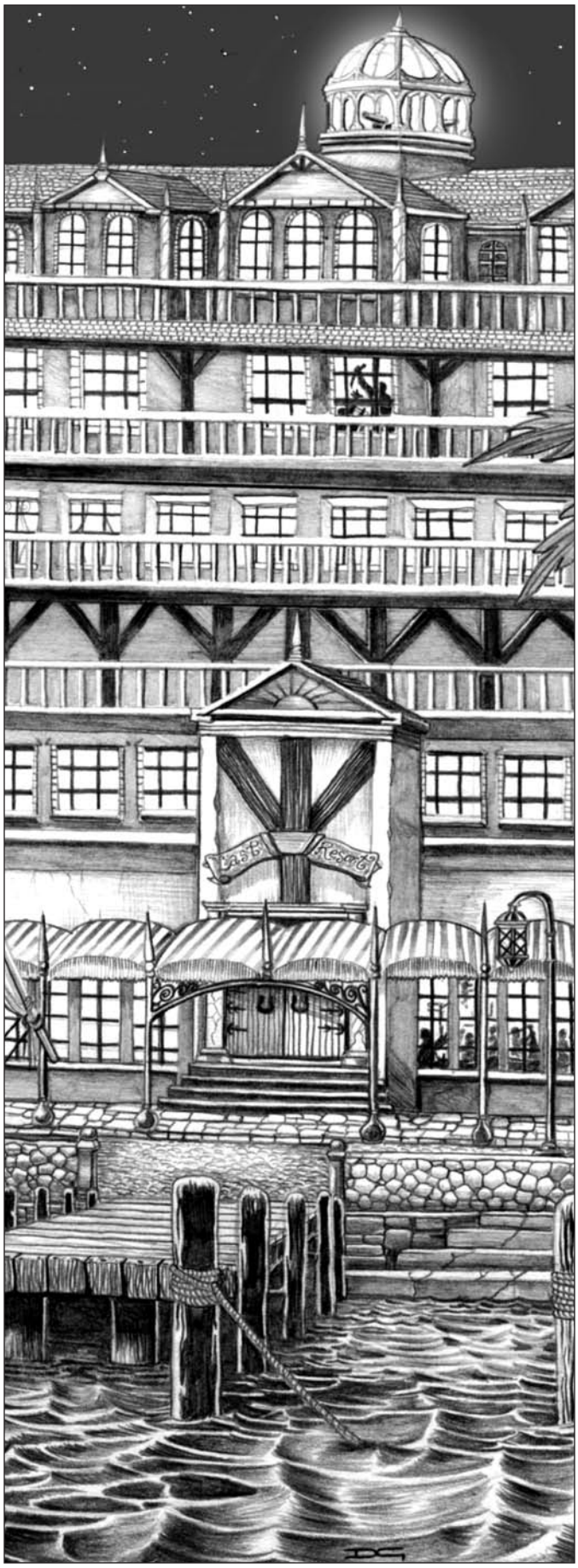
The Last Resort is the finest hotel in town. It overlooks the Marina and one of the most scenic vistas of Freeport Harbor. The main lobby is open to the air during the pleasant seasons, only shuttered up during the rainy season or for hurricanes.

History

A friendly and well-mannered family of halflings led by its patriarch Bobbin Brandydale operates the Last Resort. The Brandydales have overseen the operation of this establishment since its founding shortly after the Fountain of Fortune was installed in the Plaza of Gold. They are well known, not only for their legendary hospitality but also for their discretion. What happens inside the walls of the Last Resort stays within those walls—at least if the Brandydales have anything to say about it.

Description

The Last Resort is an expansive, beautifully designed manor house overlooking the sea, with many windows and balconies. While it may seem open and airy, it is in fact one of the most well guarded places



in the city. The hotel employs over twenty guards, and many of the residents keep their own personal bodyguards on the premises with them.

Inside the heavily guarded walls, the Last Resort features elegant, lavishly appointed rooms and luxurious living. Prices range from the merely expensive for a private room to utterly exorbitant for a full suite. Each room is decorated only with items of the highest quality and the latest styles. The wealthy from all around the region literally flock to the place as one of the most exclusive getaways around. The fact that Freeport still has a rough-and-tumble reputation only adds to the allure, especially among aristocrats who like to slum with real cutthroats—while closely watched by their bodyguards, of course. In reality, few of the hotel's guests ever wander outside of the Merchant District.

Key Figures

The following characters can generally be found at the Last Resort.

Bobbin Brandydale

Bobbin Brandydale (*male halfling journeyman*) has been the manager of the Last Resort for more than twenty years. He's seen it all, he likes to boast—but only in the comfort of his own quarters, talking to his closest family members. In public, he is the soul of discretion, and does almost anything to protect the privacy and comfort of his guests. That includes illegal and immoral acts, if needs be, and his guests know it—and pay richly for that extra level of service. Decades of covering up for the rich and powerful have left their mark on Bobbin, who feels little pity or empathy for those disadvantaged by his guests'… little accidents. It would take a great deal to shock Bobbin's sense of outrage back to life—and take very little, perhaps, to deaden his conscience to the point where he becomes as monstrous as some of his patrons.

Lady Sylvia Reinmark

The rooms in the Last Resort are literally fit for a king, and visiting royalty of all sorts have stayed here over the centuries—not all of their own free will. In fact, there is one ruler currently residing in exile in the hotel. Lady Sylvia Reinmark (*female human journeyman*), former Baroness of a Continent nation, fled to Freeport ahead of a revolutionary mob. While no longer in charge of her ancestral homelands, she managed to abscond with enough of the country's treasuries to live out her banishment in style. Lady Sylvia has been a guest at the Last Resort for nearly ten years now, and has no plans to ever leave Freeport, which is not to say that she's not getting bored. She welcomes novelty and excitement, and may pay adventurers to tell her of their exploits. She may also be prepared to hire agents to protect her interests; some of the rhetoric coming from Libertyville reminds her of the revolutionaries of her homeland, and the last thing she wants is to be rousted from her place of safety.

Adventure Hooks

The Last Resort's management is well known for its discretion. Still, stories will get out about important clientele—clientele who may need local agents to do their work, or may become the targets of assassins, thieves, and political intrigues.

A series of disappearances and murders in Scurvytown and the Docks have the lower classes of Freeport up in arms. Several witnesses

claim to have seen a group of aristocrats with some of the victims—aristocrats staying at the Last Resort. But the owners of the hotel stymie any investigation; the Brandydales will not allow their guests to be harassed, and they have enough social connections and dedicated guards to deflect unwelcome attention. Is the Last Resort the home base for a family of rich, bored killers? Can they be brought to justice? And what of rumors that these killers are more than human—that they have dark, supernatural powers and an unquenchable thirst for living blood?

6. The Freeport Opera House

"No, no! B-flat, you tone-deaf harridan! Gods, I wish this place was still haunted—the ghost might have killed a few stagehands, but at least she could sing!"

—Rickard Burbage

One of Freeport's few bastions of cultural enlightenment, the opera house is a magnificent place for experiencing all sorts of entertainment. It hosts not just operas but also a variety of stage shows, from concerts to plays and everything in between. Prices for the shows vary widely; the wealthy can afford the best boxes, while the middle classes can vie for a spot in the nosebleed sections. A wide cross-section of Freeport's inhabitants attend the shows, making this one of the few places where the wealthiest members of the community can rub shoulders with the less fortunate without fear of some kind of clash. People come here to be entertained, after all, not to rob or pick fights with each other.

History

A consortium of aristocrats built the Freeport Opera House just over a hundred years ago in an effort to bring some semblance of culture to Freeport. The Sea Lord at the time commissioned a brand-new opera from one of the greatest composers of the day, Fiarella Donadrien. This ancient elven songstress poured so much of her heart and soul into the composition that she died shortly after its first performance. Ever since, every time Donadrien's masterpiece was played in the opera house, her ghost returned to listen to the tune. During the show, the ghost would hide backstage, swept up in the majesty of the notes; after the show was over, she would remain for a day and invariably kill a person or two involved in the opera's production.

The 100th anniversary of the Opera House's construction was to have featured performances of Donadrien's opera every night for a month, surely dooming the city to a cultural bloodbath. Desperate to prevent a disaster, the opera house's director at the time, the gnome Gorsky Glitterlights, had the Opera House exorcised and the ghost laid to rest. But before the commemorative performances could begin, Freeport erupted in the Succession Riots; Gorsky was killed in the riots, the Opera House closed its doors for several months, and the anniversary passed without any performances.

The Opera House reopened under a new director, actor Rickard Burbage, and since, it has focused less on opera and more on theater. But recently, the House's patrons have indicated that they'd like to see a greater emphasis on opera at, well, the *Opera* House, and Burbage has sulkily fallen into line. The delayed anniversary performance of Donadrien's opera is due to take place quite soon, and promises to be one of the cultural and social highlights of the season.

Description

The Opera House is an imposing three-story construction, featuring an altogether unnecessary array of gables, turrets, parapets, buttresses, cornices, and the occasional stone gargoyle. No amount of theatrical excess was too much for the original builders, and overly sensitive foreign architects have been known to weep in horror upon seeing the building. Large double doors at the front allow patrons to enter, while several doors at the back lead down alleys to convenient taverns and hotels.

A massive chandelier dominates the interior of the building, hanging above the stage and the orchestra pit. Box seats are arrayed along the sides of the auditorium, while cheaper seats line up from the pit nearly to the ceiling. Behind the stage are catwalks, cramped spaces for stagehands to manipulate props and the curtain, a few dressing rooms, and (it's rumored) numerous secret doors and passages riddling the building and even leading to the roof.

Key Figures

The following characters can generally be found at the Freeport Opera House.

Rickard Burbage

Rickard Burbage (*male half-elf journeyman*) was the most popular actor in Freeport before taking on the position of director of the Opera House. There are days he regrets that; taking responsibility for an entire theater is far more work than simply being the flamboyant center of attention. He's compensated for this by commissioning, directing, and of course having starred in several plays and musical works since becoming director. The renewed focus on serious opera (of all things!) will take the spotlight off him, which has made Burbage increasingly irritable as the date for the anniversary show draws near. Burbage is a skilled actor, singer, and all-around performer, but his true passion is for seducing the wives and daughters of Freeport's nobility. His personal charisma is formidable, and he backs up his romantic skills with a small talent for magic and enchantment. Behind the swashbuckling and seductive exterior, though, is a cold, callous heart that craves only fame, wealth, and adulation.

Adventure Hooks

Everyone assumes that Donadrien's ghost—if it ever existed—was exorcised five years ago. The truth is that the ghost was banished for a time, but not destroyed. It still haunts the Opera House, unable to appear until the opera is finally performed again. The exorcism attempt and the years of being denied access to mortal victims have left the ghost increasingly angry; it hungers for music, for attention, and for bloodshed on a truly "operatic" scale.

The Opera House is one of Freeport's most important public venues, and as such is a nexus for political and social intrigues. Politicians and pirate captains meet masked in private boxes to plan villainous escapades; socialites appear in increasingly ornate gowns to be seen on the arms of foreign ambassadors and gossip about which of their peers are conspicuously absent. The Opera House could be the scene of an assassination attempt, a drug deal, a meeting of conspirators, or countless other intrigues. And everything gets that bit more complicated when the sailors in the cheap seats get drunk and start throwing fruit and knives at the stage….

7. Maurice's

"I recommend the venison, madame. Hmm? Those 'large and unpleasant' gentlemen near the door? I'm sure I don't know who you mean. And I advise not asking so many questions."

—Portia Gallowgrange

This elegant restaurant is widely regarded as the finest eating establishment in a city, known for its widely varied cuisine. It specializes in seafood, of course, but it's also just as famous for its thick and juicy steaks and its air-light desserts. It's also well known in less wholesome circles as a focus for organized crime within the Merchant District.

History

A fixture in the Merchant District for more than ten years, Maurice's has long been a popular destination for gourmets of every stripe. Meals at Maurice's are hardly cheap, but the least expensive items on the menu are within the grasp of the middle class, who might come here on special occasions. Meanwhile, the wealthy residents of the Merchant District take advantage of it regularly, indulging in seven-course banquets almost every day.

That popularity is why Maurice's was the target of a terrorist attack several years ago; an explosive device was set off at lunchtime as part of a campaign to destabilize Freeport in the wake of Milton Drac's death. Several patrons were killed, Maurice himself was injured, and the restaurant was ruined. Once he recovered, Maurice wanted to restore his restaurant and good name, but the cost of rebuilding was far more that he could afford. In the chaos of the Succession Riots, none of the local aristocrats were prepared to invest in the restaurant; desperate, Maurice borrowed the necessary funds from Finn and the Syndicate.

Several years later, not a day goes by that Maurice doesn't regret that decision. It's not just the interest on the loan eating into his profits that worries him; it's the fact that Finn uses the restaurant as a way into the Merchant District. Syndicate thugs deliver food from the Docks, clean the restaurant, even wait tables—not because they want honest jobs, but to give them an excuse to enter the District every day. The Syndicate uses Maurice's as its secret base of operations in the Merchant District, a place to plan crimes, sell drugs, and launder money, and Maurice is powerless to stop them; Finn has made it clear he will ruin or even kill Maurice should the chef defy his wishes.

Description

The restaurant operates from a large storefront, with a ship's wheel hanging over glass-fronted doors. Several tables at the front allow diners to sit outside on pleasant days.

The internal decor has a distinct nautical theme to it, but it's laced with class through and through. The restaurant is very large, capable of sitting two hundred people at a time, and it's often full. A string quartet wanders between the tables, playing favorites both old and new.

Maurice rarely takes reservations from anyone not on the Captains' Council. In fact, there is a private table exclusively reserved for the Sea Lord. There's also an agreement that Finn or any of his lieutenants will be seated anytime they wish, but no table is specifically set aside for them lest it attract attention. There hasn't yet been a situation where both the Sea Lord and Finn visited Maurice's at the same time, but that possibility features in Maurice's worst nightmares—what if he could only fit *one* of them in on a busy night?

Key Figures

The following characters can generally be found at Maurice's.

Maurice

Maurice (*male human journeyman*), a thin man with long, just-graying hair, is a skilled and personable chef. He has turned down offers to become the personal cook for dozens of wealthy merchants, aristocrats, and royal leaders, preferring to show off his creations to a wide and varied audience. He used to be a lot happier with that decision; he also used to be known as a jolly, carefree man. Four years struggling under the yoke of organized crime have left him melancholy, jumpy, and occasionally cranky. But still, he takes pride in the quality of his food and his restaurant; he has to take pride in *something,* after all.

Portia Gallowgrange

Portia Gallowgrange (*female halfling apprentice*) has been employed as the maitre d' at Maurice's for several years now, and almost all the clientele agree that she's one of the most pleasant, organized, and charming professionals they've ever met. They'd be shocked to learn just what kind of professional Portia is—that she oversees Finn's interests in the Merchant District, is a skilled thief and an occasional spellcaster, and that she'd kill pretty much any one of them without blinking an eye.

Adventure Hooks

Maurice is becoming increasingly desperate, and desperate men do foolish things. A few months ago he borrowed money from Mister Wednesday, who knew about his debt to Finn and was prepared to lend him money at a low interest rate; Wednesday wants to push Finn out of the Merchant District and move in to fill the vacuum. Maurice took Wednesday's money, but hasn't used it to pay off Finn; he's too scared of what the halfling crime lord will do in retaliation. While the money lies hidden in Maurice's home, Mister Wednesday is putting pressure on Maurice to make good on the loan, and Finn is becoming suspicious about the number of Easterner rogues appearing at the restaurant. When Mendor Maeorgan gets wind of the situation, he sends his gang to trash the restaurant and steal the money, hoping to provoke his rivals into action. Can anything prevent all out gang war spilling into the streets of the Merchant District, or save the finest restaurant in Freeport?

"Trial of the Necromancer" Opens at Freeport Opera House

~ The Shipping News



Crime isn't the only thing going on at Maurice's, of course; there's also the constant stress of operating a popular restaurant. Fine dining is one of the privileges of the wealthy and powerful, and like every other privilege they enjoy it's one they'll try to deny their rivals. When Masson Francisco attempts to have a pleasant meal at Maurice's, Torsten Roth decides to demonstrate the power of the Merchants' Guild by denying him dinner. He tries to fill up every table in the restaurant with his fellows, flunkies, and employees before Francisco and his allies arrive. Will he manage to edge out the visitors from Libertyville? How will a group of pirates, well-dressed or not, react to being denied? And what happens when the kitchen runs out of steaks during the inevitable showdown?

8. Maeorgan Manor

"This is our city, boys. Our money. Our power. Our destiny. And the time is coming to take what's ours. No matter who stands in our way."

—Mendor Maeorgan

Located at 100 Wave Avenue, just off Wave Street, this comfortable townhouse seems little different from any others in the neighborhood. But locals still gossip about how the former tenant was brutally murdered several years ago, and boast about how the current occupant is the Sea Lord's cousin. They might be less pleased about the status and notoriety of 100 Wave Avenue if they knew that it sat atop a buried shrine to the Unspeakable One, that the unholy energies of that shrine have reached out to taint the aristocrat living there, and that their neighbor seeks nothing less than to engulf Freeport in a tide of violent gang warfare.

History

"Checkered" doesn't even begin to describe the recent history of what is now known as Maeorgan Manor. It served for many years as home to Councilor Verlaine, the powerful and wealthy head of the Captains' Council. Verlaine was an ally of Milton Drac, but the mad Sea Lord had no loyalty for his underling; when it suited his needs, he butchered Verlaine and his servants, and then tried to pin the blame for the crime on his enemies.

After Verlaine's death and Drac's downfall, the house at 100 Wave Avenue sat vacant for a time. Realizing it might take months or longer for a relative to come forward and claim Verlaine's estate, young aristocrat Mendor Maeorgan and his gang, the Joy Boys, decided to make the place their headquarters in the meantime. None of them actually lived here; they simply made it their hangout and bullied their servants into keeping it clean.

When Marilise Maeorgan became Sea Lord, the last thing she wanted was a disreputable cousin embarrassing her or causing shame to her family. She pulled a few strings with the Office of Public Records and had the townhouse signed over to Mendor's name. She also made it clear he either needed to reform his thuggish ways or (at the very least) be as circumspect as possible about his activities. Mendor chose the latter; he spent most of his time lounging around the newly named Maeorgan Manor, while the Joy Boys became increasingly active in the Warehouse District, the Docks, and Drac's End.

When the Joy Boys disbanded after the Great Green Fire, Mendor went into hiding from his enemies and his cousin's displeasure. For the

last few years, he's lived a (relatively) quiet life, only leaving the Manor on rare occasions, his dreams of ruling Freeport's underworld gone up in smoke. But in the last few months, things have changed. After his discovery of the Jaundiced Altar, Mendor Maeorgan is a changed man: charismatic, driven, and corrupted by ancient evil. He's already recruited several dozen members for a new gang, the Rakeshames, and is again operating minor criminal activities out of Manor Maeorgan. Once again, the townhouse at 100 Wave Avenue is a nexus for the young, spoiled, and disaffected sons (and occasionally daughters) of the aristocracy—and the neighbors know better than to complain about the loud parties and bad manners on display.

The Joy Boys and the Rakeshames

The Joy Boys were a gang—more of a club—of spoiled rich kids, the bored lesser scions of wealthy merchants and noble families. While they pretended to be criminals, they were never much more than thugs. They beat up merchants, robbed the working class, and got into bar brawls for fun, not because they needed the money. When Mendor Maeorgan became their leader, he had ambitions to make the gang into a real force in Freeport's underworld; the first step on this path was his secret arrangement with Torsten Roth, by which the Joy Boys became covert enforcers of the Merchants' Guild.

Everything changed during the Great Green Fire, when seven members of the Joy Boys died fighting the fires that threatened the poor folk of Drac's End. That, at least, was the official story. The truth is that the seven aristocratic bullies were herded at sword point into a hovel by agents of Mister Wednesday, who then set the tenement alight. Wednesday's message—that Maeorgan had become too big for his breeches, and was *not* welcome to try playing with the real criminal powers of the city—did not go unheard. The Joy Boys disbanded, the rich thugs went back to learn the family business, and Mendor Maeorgan went into seclusion in his townhouse.

With a renewed lease on life (and some very disturbing new gifts) Mendor Maeorgan has now formed a new gang, which he has dubbed the Rakeshames. Like the Joy Boys, it's composed of rich wastrels and aristocratic thugs, male and female, who want to let off steam, break things, and torment those poorer than themselves for fun. But there is a dangerous undercurrent in the Rakeshames that the Joy Boys never quite tapped, a level of resentment at those in power and the desire to tear *everything* down. While the Joy Boys dreamed of being criminals, the Rakeshames—thanks to Mendor's influence—dream of being terrorists, of turning Freeport into their brutal playground and forcing every citizen—*especially* their parents—to obey their whims.

Now, those dreams are largely unformed; the Rakeshames mostly indulge in raucous parties, buying and selling drugs, and occasional sorties into the poorer parts of town to wreck havoc. But this may change soon. Mendor Maeorgan is collecting weapons and resources, and has exposed a few trusted lieutenants to the power of the Jaundiced Altar. The martial and supernatural strength of the gang is growing, Maeorgan is looking for more interesting ways to apply his little army, and one of these nights….

Description

Manor Maeorgan is a well-built two-story townhouse on a small block of land, situated behind an iron fence and a gardened lawn. A few well-paid servants (employed directly by the Sea Lord) keep the grounds tidy and make occasional reports to their mistress about what her cousin is up to. Mendor is aware of this, and makes sure to keep the worst of his activities secret.

The interior of the townhouse is well appointed, but not exceptionally so; Maeorgan and his cronies like comfortable surroundings, but their tastes really aren't that well developed. This is for the best,as really good furnishings would not stand up well to the Rakeshames' constant parties, bad table manners, and occasional temper tantrums. There are usually a half dozen Rakeshames lounging around the Manor, some with personal guards and servants in attendance. Some of these guards are unwilling witnesses to the excesses of their charges, while others regularly lend a hand with the Rakeshames' activities.

The manor's well-stocked wine cellar hides a secret passage leading down to a secret temple of the Unspeakable One, constructed by Milton Drac's henchmen several years ago. This is where Mendor Maeorgan found the Jaundiced Altar last year, which started him on his terrible transformation. Mendor keeps this area as a secret armory, stockpiling weapons and equipment donated by his cronies (or taken from their victims). An additional exit from the temple leads into the sewers, just inside the Warehouse District; Mendor and his closest accomplices use this to slip in and out of the Merchant District without being spotted.

Key Figures

The following characters can generally be found at Maeorgan Manor.

Walter Dalloway

Walter Dalloway (*male human apprentice*) is a typical member of the Rakeshames. The dissolute fourth son of a large banking family, Walter felt little pressure from his family to enter the family business, marry well, or do well at his studies. He spent his teens drinking, whoring, and learning aristocratic swordsmanship, and now yearns to do something with those skills—something unpleasant. Handsome, well-dressed, and remarkably free of manners, Walter has been boasting about his exploits in the taverns of the Merchant District, and word is starting to trickle out that the wasted youth of the aristocracy may be up to their old pastimes again.

Vikki Tarjay

Vikki Tarjay (*female human apprentice*) is the only daughter of one of Freeport's richest textiles merchants. Bored by both fabric and money, Vikki turned to crime to entertain herself. In her teens she associated with other bored daughters of the aristocracy, who would dress as men and go into the poorer districts in search of adventure; she cared little for that, but found it a useful way to scope out places to rob later. Now

in her mid-twenties, Vikki is tired of petty crime and play-acting—she wants something meatier to fend off the boredom of wealth and privilege. She thinks she may have found it with the Rakeshames, who are more aggressive and predatory than her old friends. Vikki is a skilled burglar and a social chameleon, able to adapt herself to any environment, and uses her skills to gather information for Mendor Maeorgan's schemes.

Adventure Hooks

The Rakeshames are a pack of thugs with pretensions of criminal power, but they're rich thugs. They're careful not to cause too much of a ruckus in the Merchant District, instead going out into the poorer districts to beat, rob, terrorize, and sometimes even kill those weaker than themselves. Their excesses are getting worse, and inevitably, they hurt someone dear to the characters. But any investigation hits a stone wall of wealth and influence; the lords of the Merchant Guilds may not approve of their sons' activities, but they won't allow them to be punished by the lower classes. Can the characters prove the Rakeshames are responsible for crimes against the poor—and if they can, will anyone care?

The temple under Manor Maeorgan is an abandoned site pledged to the Unspeakable One—abandoned, but not forgotten. The cult is far from gone in Freeport, and they want to regain access to their places of power and mystical secrets. When cultists decide to reclaim the temple and its Jaundiced Altar, they tear through the sewers of the Warehouse District in search of the secret entrance, causing havoc. And when they actually find their way in, it's all-out war between the cultists and the Rakeshames, each desperate to take control of the Unspeakable One's power. The characters are bound to be caught in the middle.

9. The Jewelers' and Gemcutters' Guild

"Politics! Don't talk to me about politics! Can't you just leave me to work on this filigree for another hour? Oh, fine, fine. Time to hobble to the Old City and see what the Sea Lord wants this time."

—Dirwin "Nimblefingers" Arnig

Not all the jewelry in Freeport was plundered from ships by freebooters bearing dubious "Letters of Marque." Freeport has its own jewel-and metal-craft industry, adept at turning out glittering creations to rival anything on the Continent. There aren't many jewelers or gemcutters in Freeport, but they are among the wealthiest people in the city. Their guildhouse is located in the Merchant District, and is where many of them do their actual work and store the vast bulk of their raw metals and jewels.

History

The guild was founded over fifty years ago by the jewelers of the city, who until that time had simply been part of the Guild of Craftsmen. With far greater security concerns than their erstwhile fellows—carpenters didn't tend to get robbed twice each week by every pirate in Scurvytown—the jewelers decided to form their own separate guild, and to base themselves far from the dangerous parts of Freeport. The Merchant District was happy to extend its hospitality to the gemcutters. The guild established itself, elected Dirwin "Nimblefingers" Arnig as their guildmaster (a position he has retained ever since), hired a lot of guards, and got back to work. Now their guild is one of the wealthiest groups in Freeport, although it doesn't tend to do much with that fortune; the gemcutters prefer to work and invest, rather than get involved in politics or social agendas.

Description

Somewhat out of place in the fine streets of the Merchant District, the Jewelers' Guildhouse is a low, boxy building with little ornamentation. There are few doors and windows, and those that exist are heavily barred. A high wall with iron spikes at the top circles the building, patrolled by guards day and night; a single gate allows access.

Unlike the luxury of the Merchants' Guildhouse, the jewelers' headquarters is all business. The bulk of the guildhouse's interior is taken up by a large, common workshop in which the guild members can work. In the center of the workshop, a massive vault holds a fortune in both raw materials and finished goods. The vault is triple-locked and features a security system that floods the whole workshop in poisonous gas if triggered. The place is also under the constant protection of a dozen well-trained guards. Apart from the workshop and vault, the guildhouse also holds a dining room and kitchen, some offices and storage rooms, and quarters where a few members can sleep if they wish (Dirwin Arnig is a permanent resident). Most guild members spend only a day or two here each week. They prefer to be in their shops whenever possible, selling their goods and making money.

Key Figures

Dirwin "Nimblefingers" Arnig is the most important character found at the Jewelers' and Gemcutters' Guild.

Dirwin "Nimblefingers" Arnig

Dirwin Arnig (*male gnome journeyman*) is small even for one of his race, a tiny wizened creature that seems to be all wrinkles and eyes. Arnig's eyes see a lot, though, whether through a jeweler's loupe or in the halls of the Captains' Council. He is a stickler for guidelines, tradition, and protocol, and has a deserved reputation for painstaking honesty and honor. Arnig spends almost every day at the guildhouse, polishing and cutting gems, eschewing such fripperies as running a store or having a social life; the only things that pry him from his work are the unwelcome responsibilities of a Councilor. The last few years have been harsh and tumultuous ones, and Arnig would like nothing better than to retire from the Council and devote his sunset years to mastering the minutiae of gemcutting.

Adventure Seeds

For a team of thieves, the guildhouse is one of the juiciest targets in the entire city. The two dominant crime lords in Freeport, Finn and Mister Wednesday both take payments to make sure their followers don't succumb to the temptation of accepting the place's silent challenge. Still, the temptation is powerful, and foreign thieves are always passing through Freeport. Characters may wish to attempt a break-in and to hell with the consequences—or find themselves enlisted by the lords of the underworld to prevent another group of thieves making an assault on the guildhouse.

New Social Season Opens at Salon du Masque

~The Shipping News

If something *is* stolen, Arnig immediately hires a team to get it back, quietly if possible. He doesn't want it to get out that his vaunted security can be breached. Otherwise, this is sure to only be the first of many such attacks. Still, word travels fast in Freeport, and anyone searching for successful thieves may find they have rivals—other thieves who want to rob their fellows, or at least learn how they penetrated the guildhouse's defenses.

10. Salon du Masque

"Welcome friends, make yourselves at home. Relax, and do as you like. There are no rules here."

—The Countess

The Salon du Masque has been on the cutting edge of high society life in the Merchant District. Founded by a mysterious countess from an even more mysterious land, it has enjoyed great success in this posh quarter for its elegance, permissiveness, and, above all, discretion. While many clamor for the chance to sample its delights and set aside their own prohibitions, the Salon is exclusive and entry is granted only to those who can pay the steep fee required.

History

As alluring as it is mysterious, the Salon du Masque opened for business about seven years ago. The Salon promised a place for the elite people of the Merchant District to unwind, relax, and indulge whatever vices they might have. Since the Salon demands a great deal of gold for entry, only the most powerful Freeporters could have a hope of getting inside, but those that have spoken of their time here vow every lord spent was worth it.

Description

The Salon is a large manor house situated on Wave Avenue. Dark curtains hang in every window, adding to the mysterious atmosphere that leads many to speculate about just what exactly goes on inside. On the three nights of the week the place is open for business, two masked guards stand out front, their chests naked and glistening with scented oil, collecting the astounding fees required to spend just a single evening within the Salon. Their masks, depicting snarling beasts, as along with the cruel scimitars that hang from red sashes cinched around their waists are usually enough to deter the unwelcome from trying to force their way inside.

The Salon's interior is the pinnacle of elegances, with a manicured garden, numerous balconies, and dozens of exquisitely furnished rooms each offering varying degrees of privacy. A staff of men and women, naked but for the smiling masks adorning their faces, attend the guests, seeing to their every whim, but able to fade into the background should they be so required.

To gain entry into the Salon, a person must arrive already masked, and give a small fortune to the guards in the front of the building.

Key Figures

The following characters can generally be found at the Salon du Masque.

Countess d'Amberville

The Salon's founder is the Countess. She claims to come from a distant and equally shrouded land, but rarely speaks of it. Rumors swirl about her. Some claim she is in exile from her homeland, while others say she fled the madness of her family. It has even been whispered she was a Sacred Virgin, but a masked man seduced her, leading to her being cast out from her order. According to this tale, she requires her guests to wear masks to honor the memory of her masked paramour, who was slain by the vengeful warriors of her church. The Countess (*female human master*) neither confirms nor denies the truth of these stories, using the secrecy of her past to enhance the allure of her establishment.

Presiding over the Salon, the Countess is renowned for her quick wit, seductive eyes, and impeccable sense of style. She floats from room to room, charming her guests and ensuring her clientele are satisfied with the conversation as well as the fine liquors her servants offer. As she makes her rounds, she's privy to many rumors, and she sometimes catches wind of things she shouldn't. Luckily for her patrons, the Countess is as discrete as she is appealing.

In truth, the Countess is a problem-solver. She can arrange for the right bribes, learn when the right shipment is to arrive in the Docks, and even arrange for inconvenient people to disappear. In the latter case, utmost discretion is required and the Countess determines the timing and method. The guests believe that the Countess hires others to deal with their enemies, but in actuality, it is the Countess who attends to these matters herself, for she is one of the city's most skilled killers.

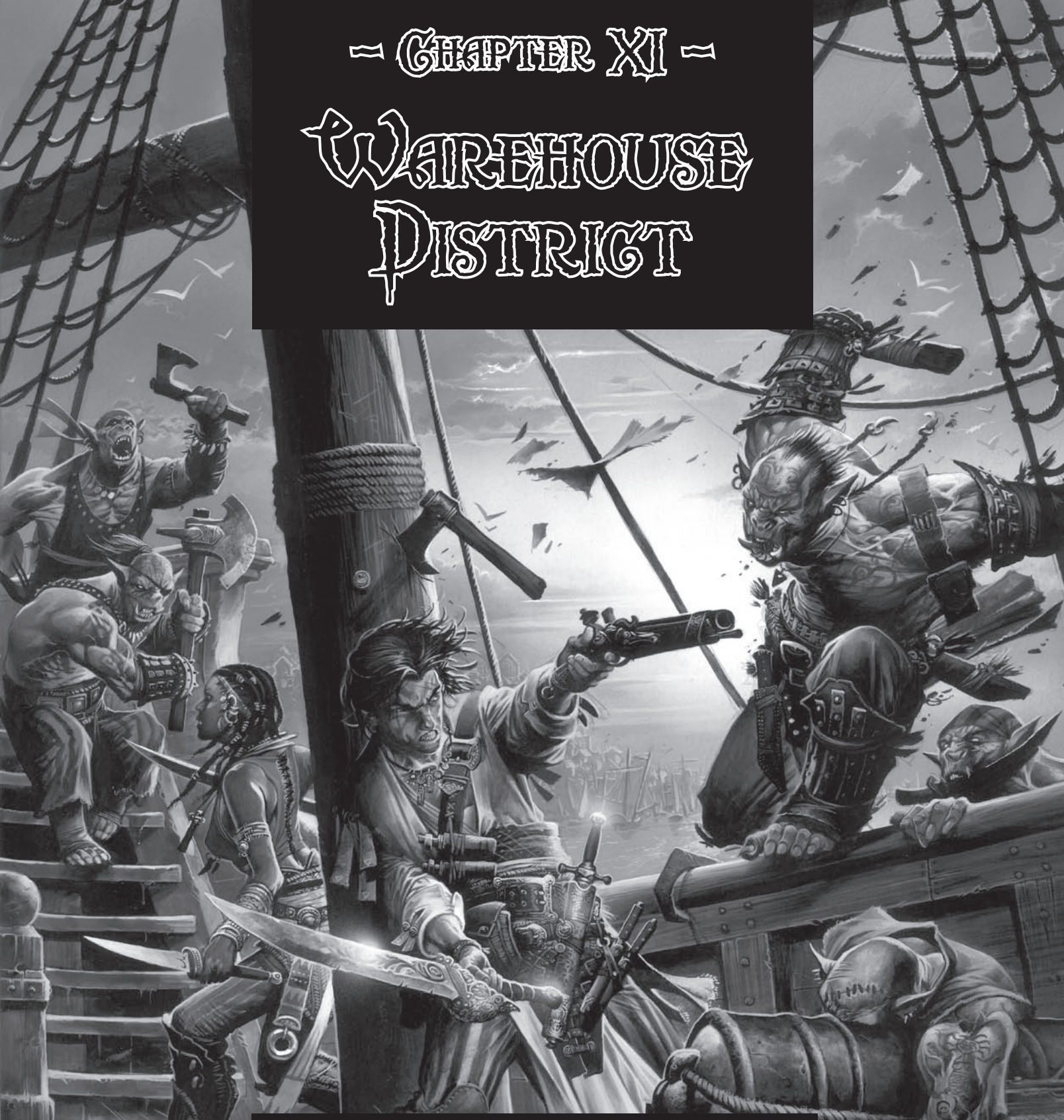
Adventure Seeds

No one in Freeport has seen Countess d'Amberville's face. She is only seen at the Salon and only when wearing one of her many masks. One night, the son of a wealthy merchant pulls offer her mask on a dare. By the next morning, he's dead. Is this the work of the Countess, angry that her face was exposed, or is the rake's death just an unhappy coincidence?

One of the Countess's apprentices gets fed up that she never gets to kill anyone. She finds a job as a freelance assassin and proceeds to botch it badly, getting caught by the Watch in the process. The Countess approaches the PCs, charm in full force, and says she would be ever so grateful if they would spring her apprentice from the Tombs before she goes on trial. The girl is impetuous, the Countess explains, and may say things that could cause a great deal of embarrassment to some important people. Those people, she asserts, are willing to pay handsomely for this job—a lie of course, but the Countess does not want the PCs to realize it is her own secrets she's protecting.

Chapter XI

Warehouse District



"You know why I like this district, Cricket? What you see is what you get. No pretensions, no masks, just buildings full of goods. Some find that boring. Personally, I find it comforting. And I'll find it even more comforting when we crack all those buildings open and take what's inside."

—*Mister Wednesday*



The Docks may serve as the primary point of entry into Freeport, but that district is only one important component of the city's trading economy. The Warehouse District plays an equally vital role in the commerce (and piracy) that keeps money pumping through Freeport. All that cargo and booty has to go somewhere before it's shipped out again or sold in town. That somewhere is the Warehouse District, which covers the western shore of Freeport.

There are a few private docking facilities in the district (still controlled by the Harbormaster, of course), along with some offices, taverns, and other facilities, but unsurprisingly warehouses and storage facilities dominate this area. Most structures in the district are large storage houses, used to contain the huge amounts of cargo and purloined materials that enter the port. The standard warehouse is older and constructed of sturdy timbers. The threat of fire is very real in this district—dozens of warehouses have been destroyed by fire over the last twenty years, and the city's firefighters worked overtime trying to protect the warehouses during the Great Green Fire. When new warehouses are built (or old ones rebuilt), they must be made from stone, thanks to a mandate from the Captains' Council, in order to reduce the risks from fire.

The Warehouse District has few permanent residents—the exceptions usually live in the rooming houses or inns scattered around the area—but the streets are hardly empty. During the daytime, carts and porters from the Docks scurry back and forth, retrieving and stowing cargo for their employers. It isn't easy to oversee this tangled mass of people, and more than one cargo load ends up making an unscheduled detour, during which it is lightened a bit by Freeport's criminal elements. At night the District is much quieter, but there's still some activity, much of it illegal.

There is also a hidden face to the Warehouse District—it's the home base for one of Freeport's major criminal organizations. Mister Wednesday controls half the crime in the city, and although he lives in the Old City, his organization—the Canting Crew—operates from the Warehouse District. The Canting Crew specializes in skimming the cream from the cargo that flows in and out of the District—not too much, but enough to keep it worthwhile—as well as smuggling, theft, information broking, confidence tricks, and other nonviolent crimes. Not that Wednesday shies from violence; the war for control of Freeport's underworld is a dangerous one, and the Canting Crew won't hesitate to draw their weapons when the forces of the Syndicate come calling.

Shipment Disappears Off Docks—Longshoremen Baffled

~The Shipping News

Locations of Interest

The following locations can be found in the Warehouse District.

1. The Vault

"Yes, Mister Roth, I'm aware you rented that space personally from me last week. I'm still not going to give you access without the key. And you're not the first client to threaten me—but keep it up and I might be the last person threatened by you."

—Samarka Foliet

In the middle of the Warehouse District, sitting alone with no other buildings alongside, is a large stone warehouse that boasts better security and locks than anywhere else in Freeport outside the Sea Lord's Palace. This is the Vault, the safest place in town to store just about anything, assuming you have the money to keep up your payments. Traders and merchants—not to mention pirates and thieves—store their most valuable merchandise here for safekeeping.

History

The Vault is one of the oldest buildings in the Warehouse District; it was built in the time of the first Sea Lord, when Freeport was even more lawless and thief-plagued than it is today. Financed by a consortium of merchants and traders, the Vault was built to be impregnable by the standards of the day. Two centuries later, the building has withstood every intrusion attempt—including a cannon barrage by one particularly determined group of pirates a few decades back.

Vault rates are calculated on a monthly basis and based on the size of the storage unit; the smallest units are well within the means of Freeport's middle classes. The fee gets the renter a personal unit inside the massive building, to which only he and the management possess a key. At the Vault, having the key to a unit is considered to imply ownership of the unit; no questions are asked as long as the proper fees are paid. Renters are advised to keep a tight grip on their key. The only items forbidden to be stored in the Vault are obviously dangerous devices, such as explosives or demonic relics; anything else is permitted. Magically locked and warded units are also available at ten times the standard price. Samarka Joliet, the owner, casts and maintains the spells protecting these units. Arrangements to access a magically locked unit must be made a day in advance, so Joliet can be on hand personally to bypass the lock.

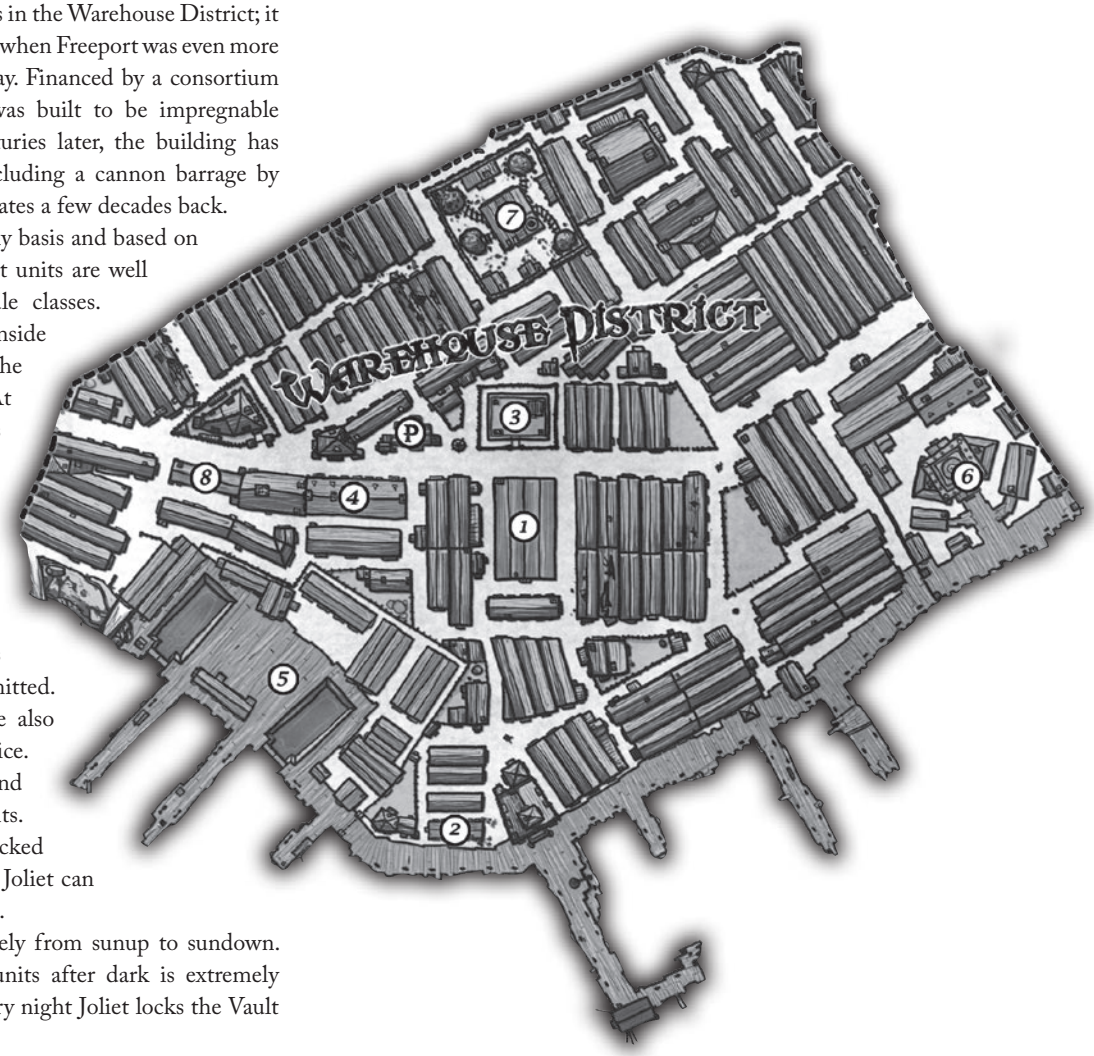
All storage units can be accessed freely from sunup to sundown. Getting access to the Vault's storage units after dark is extremely difficult, not to mention dangerous. Every night Joliet locks the Vault down and protects it with a variety of spells and wards that can keep out, trap, or even kill intruders. The Vault also employs three hulking half-orc brothers as security guards. Barca, Sim, and Lug Gomark aren't very bright, but they have a distinct talent for intimidating people—and for hurting people when intimidation fails to do the job.

Rental payments are due on the first day of every month. Standard Vault policy is to hold a client's belongings for one month following delinquency; the nature of sea travel and trade makes it inevitable that some clients have difficulties getting back to Freeport in a timely fashion. As long as the account is brought up to date, Joliet is willing to be generous. However, if even a single extra day passes, a delinquent client's goods end up at the Municipal Auction House and the Vault collects a share of the public auction price.

Description

The Vault is a sprawling two-story stone building that covers a full quarter of a city block, and is distinguished by the fact it has no windows on its exterior. The only external door is made from heavy stone reinforced with iron, and bears a number of extremely good locks.

The interior of the building is a maze of corridors lined with vaults, ranging from tiny coffin-sized units up to rooms large enough to hold an entire mansion's worth of belongings. All the walls are constructed of sturdy stone, ranging in thickness from one foot for interior walls to a rumored three feet for exterior ones. Some have joked the place could withstand an assault almost as well as the walls of the Old City.



Warehouse District Overview

This largely non-residential district is where sailors, traders, and merchants store their goods for safekeeping.

Buildings

Many storage houses of varying sizes, either built from wood or from brick and stone, plus occasional offices and taverns.

People

A teeming mass of merchants, traders, laborers, longshoremen, messengers, functionaries, watchmen, and petty thieves.

Roads

The main streets and those leading to the largest warehouses are well-paved and maintained, but others are packed earth and gravel, rutted and pitted by constant traffic.

Descriptive Elements

The district is teeming with people by day but almost empty at night. The observatory tower of the Pilot's Guild, the tallest building in the city, looms overhead. Children from the orphanage are constantly underfoot and spying on adults for the Canting Crew.

Key Figures

The following characters can generally be found at the Vault

Samarka Joliet

The albino wizard Samarka Joliet (*male elf journeyman*) has run this place for as long as anyone remembers—perhaps even back to the time of the first Sea Lord. Joliet, who wears his long white hair in a single braid down his back, has connections in all parts of the city. He doesn't flaunt them, and likes to maintain a very low profile. The Harbormaster and Joliet know each other well, for instance, and have occasionally been seen together in the darker corners of Scurvytown.

Adventure Hooks

Benbo Brandydale, a valet at the Last Resort in the Merchant District, stole jewelry from one of the hotel's wealthy and powerful guests, and then pawned it for funds to cover his gambling debts. He's out of debt now, but needs to get the jewelry back before his theft is discovered. Benbo knows the pawnbroker stores his newly acquired stock in the Vault for a short time, and he's willing to pay dearly to retrieve the items. Breaking into the Vault won't be easy, though—and it gets even harder when the guest discovers the theft and sends their own agents to track down the goods.

Just what are the contents of the chest Captain Lydon keeps in the Vault? Only he and Mister Wednesday know, and neither is telling. The contents are less important than the fact that the payment on the storage space is overdue, and if it's not paid by tomorrow night the chest goes to the Auction House. Lydon needs his agents to make that payment; Mister Wednesday and the Canting Crew want it delayed and the chest withdrawn from the Vault. It's a race against time and a game played across the city, as opposing forces pull out all stops to make—or break—the payment deadline.

2. The Block and Tackle

"Hey! Either put the halfling down and finish your drink, or hurry up and throw him through the window! Make up your mind already—there's other drinkers waiting to be served!"

—*Gizella*

It takes a lot of muscle power to ensure all the cargo that passes through the district makes it where it needs to go, and it takes a lot of rotgut ale to fuel that muscle. One of the most popular purveyors of low-grade firewater is the Block and Tackle. This fetid watering hole and eatery is a favorite haunt of the longshoremen that work the docks and warehouses of Freeport. It's also a focus for much of the Canting Crew's criminal activity—in fact, the Crew are the secret owners of the Block and Tackle.

History

G'narl Longtooth, a thug turned longshoreman turned entrepreneur, and his partner Gizella founded the Block and Tackle ten years ago. G'narl supplied the muscle, Gizella the brains, and between the two of them, they purchases a ramshackle building near the waterfront of the Warehouse District and opened a tavern. The Block and Tackle quickly became a hangout for G'narl's former colleagues, the longshoremen.

Although the tavern was popular and had a decent turnover, Gizella wanted more, and convinced G'narl to fall in with her schemes. A few years ago the two of them entered in a smuggling operation with Mendor Maeorgan and the Joy Boys, bringing drugs into the city and supplying the gang (who then used what they wanted and sold the rest). Getting involved with the Joy Boys was Gizella's first mistake, and skimming the take was her second, but it was G'narl who paid for her errors. He wound up floating facedown in the harbor once Maeorgan got wise, and the Joy Boys took a bigger slice of the pie and started "helping" Gizella run the Block and Tackle.

The increased presence of slumming aristocrats led to a drop in the tavern's local popularity—and the rising ire of Mister Wednesday, who controlled the crime in the Warehouse District and didn't care for the Joy Boys trying to grab a slice. Business at the Block and Tackle was at an all-time low when the Great Green Fire occurred, at which point the Canting Crew executed seven of the Joy Boys and blamed their deaths on the fire. The gang disbanded, the Canting Crew moved to consolidate their gains, and Gizella was informed that she had new business partners.

In the years since the Great Green Fire, the Block and Tackle has regained many of its former patrons; the Canting Crew are thieves, but they're *local* thieves, and no one minds too much about them being there. If anything, they kick extra work to those longshoremen prepared to unload small boats in the dark with no questions asked. Business is good, the beer is more or less drinkable, the Watch get regular payments for leaving well enough alone, and if Gizella ever mourns her old boyfriend, well, she keeps it to herself.

Description

Literacy rates being low among longshoremen, the Block and Tackle advertises itself with… a block and tackle, hung over the doors of a two-story wooden building that once saw service as a warehouse. The wide doors are flanked by long windows with wooden shutters rather than glass. Locals can often be found drinking and sitting around on benches or stools in front of the tavern. A sharp-eyed observer might realize that some of these patrons do very little drinking, and spend much more of their time watching passers-by and having whispered conversations with their fellows.

Inside, the tavern is grimy, close, and poorly lit, smelling of cheap booze and bad food. And that's pretty much the way the patrons like it. Drink prices are discounted for Longshoreman's Union members, and most nights the place is crowded with them. It's a rowdy joint, and woe to anyone who says the wrong thing in front of this crowd. Fights are common and expected, and everyone takes them with good cheer as long as the only weapons involved are fists and feet.

The top half of the Block and Tackle contains Gizella's quarters, Autumn Divers' office, and a number of private rooms for assignations, deals, and storage of stolen goods. Windows provide convenient access to nearby rooftops or the alleyway behind the tavern. The cellar contains a kitchen and storage area, and a secret passage leading to the sewers is hidden behind a crate of turnips. No one ever checks the turnips.

Key Figures

The following characters can generally be found at the Block and Tackle.

Gizella

Gizella (*female human apprentice*) is the public face of the Block and Tackle's ownership, but while her name may be on the deed, everyone (including Gizella) knows who *really* runs the show. A wiser woman would accept her own mistakes put her in this situation, but while Gizella has a certain savvy intellect, wisdom isn't her forte. She could have been rich if things hadn't gone wrong, and what happened to G'narl certainly wasn't *her* fault. She's still looking for her one big chance, and figures it'll come when she finds a way to scam the Canting Crew or work her way into the organization. She hasn't thought of a scheme yet, but she's working on it.

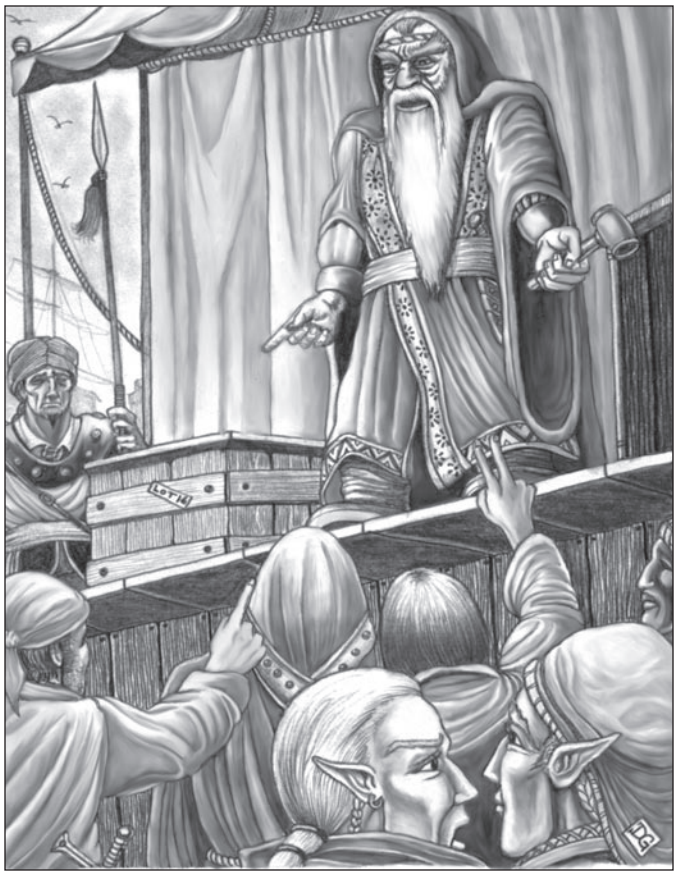
Autumn Diver

Autumn Diver (*female human apprentice*) is the eighteen-year-old barmaid and kitchen-hand at the Block and Tackle—and Mister Wednesday's handpicked overseer at the tavern. She organizes the various teams and thieves that move through the tavern, listens for information and rumors, keeps two sets of accounting books, and has no illusions about Gizella's reliability or trustworthiness. This young up-and-comer is destined for great things if she can keep the tavern running—and fight her bad habit of becoming infatuated with every tall, handsome stranger who comes in for a pint.

Adventure Hooks

Gizella has a plan—not a good plan, but a plan. A patron at the Block and Tackle told her about a shipment of expensive silk coming through the Docks. She passed the information on to the Canting Crew, who are planning to steal half the shipment. Once the silk is stowed at the tavern, Gizella wants a team of her own allies to come up through the secret passage from the sewers. They'll replace the silk with cheap fabric, then sell the real thing and give her the profits, leaving Autumn's crew looking like bunglers and increasing Gizella's prestige with Mister Wednesday. It's a simple plan; what could *possibly* go wrong?

Mendor Maeorgan is not the kind of person who forgives a slight, small or large—and Mister Wednesday's murder of the Joy Boys was *anything* but small. After years of lying low, Maeorgan is back with a new gang, the Rakeshames, and he wants revenge—starting with



Law and Order

The Watch patrol the streets of the Warehouse District during the day, although they don't get called to action very often. There's plenty of crime in the district, but it's circumspect crime and the Canting Crew do their best not to bother the Watch or cause trouble during daylight hours.

The more active guardians of the district are the private watchmen and agents hired by merchants and landlords to patrol the warehouses. The smallest, cheapest warehouses usually don't have their own guards; instead, a group of owners hire a guard or team of guards to patrol a block or particular set of buildings. Larger warehouses boast their own guards, usually at least two patrolling in pairs. At night, a few patrols roam the streets rather than staying inside the warehouses, protecting the investments of their wealthy bosses.

payback on the barmaid who ripped him off. Drunk, loud, and out of control, the Rakeshames descend on the Block and Tackle looking for a fight, and the longshoremen are happy to oblige. But while the tavern brawl provides a distraction, Maeorgan is poised to turn a simple fight into a supernaturally potent massacre.

3. Municipal Auction House

"Hands off the merchandise, ye sticky-fingered varlet! Don't talk to me about 'curses,' I don't want to hear it! Now sit down before I have ye thrown out for disrupting the bidding!"

—Crask Tolberg

Many goods pass through Freeport and not all of them end up with their proper owners. When property is captured from thieves, confiscated from prisoners, or remains unclaimed for too long in places like the Vault, it's remanded to the custody of the Municipal Auction House. Citizens and traders can also put goods up for auction, if they can't find a private buyer.

Warehouses in the District

Most of the many warehouses in the Warehouse District aren't very interesting. Their *contents* may be interesting (especially if they're worth robbing), but the buildings themselves—not so much. Rather than any specific warehouse, the following details could describe almost any warehouse; variations in size, shape, layout, or security are common.

A typical warehouse belongs to a merchant family, trader, or sea captain. It is a two-story building of stone and wood. It comprises two large open rooms, stacked on top of one another, with a large pulley-driven lift connecting the two. There's a set of fifteen-feet-tall double cargo doors at one end of the building, with a heavy, man-sized door to the left of the cargo entry. Another man-sized door faces an alley at the other end of the building. The owner's crest is painted on the front of the building, and during the daylight hours, the place is a bustling hub of activity as crates of goods are moved about.

Nighttime brings some peace and quiet, even for the guards. Saying the two watchmen actually *patrol* the warehouse is pretty charitable. If a walk or two around each floor of the place every few hours is a patrol, then it might qualify. Most of the time they stay in a corner of the building near a stove or fire, playing cards or dice, talking, or dozing until their shift ends.

When the warehouse is closed, the double doors are securely barred and bolted from the inside, while the smaller doors each bear one or two strong locks. A skylight in the roof and windows on each level illuminate the warehouse during the day, but these are either too narrow to allow entry, or are covered by bars. Hopefully the owner isn't too impressed with these security measures, though, because like most warehouses there is a chink in the armor. The Warehouse District boasts some of the most extensive sewerage tunnels in Freeport, and wily thieves can use them to gain entrance to some warehouses—either through the building's privy (if any), or by digging a tunnel up from below.

History

In a town as mercantile (and mercenary) as Freeport, some kind of system had to be developed to convert excess booty into cold hard cash. Rather than mess around with marketplaces and the like, the second Sea Lord founded the Municipal Auction House as a way of clearing his coffers of unnecessary goods while making a profit. Decades later, the Auction House has become a pivotal part of Freeport's economic turnaround; it may not generate enormous profits, but it keeps goods circulating and generating wealth rather than languishing in a warehouse or in yet another chest with yet another sixteen dead men sitting on it.

Auctions are held once a month and have much the air of a flea market or estate sale. Representatives from the merchant houses are always in attendance, as are the general populace. In a remarkable fit of evenhandedness, everyone is given equal access to the auction, no matter their stature or influence. The auctioneer, the man in charge of the whole operation, is appointed by and answerable only to the Sea Lord herself.

Everything at the auctions is sold "as is," and crates and packages not clearly labeled are sold as "grab bag" items. No peeking inside ahead of time! The list of odd items that have been purchased in these mystery lots ranges from enchanted swords to dead bodies to giant stone eggs to, well, pretty much anything else.

Description

The Auction House squats in the center of the Warehouse District, a low bunker-like building surrounded by a twenty-foot wall topped with spikes. It's not a prison, though it looks like one. Guards are visible outside at auction time, while they keep a lower profile the rest of the month.

The interior of the Auction House is almost as austere and simple as the outside. The main room houses chairs and tables lined up in front of the auctioneer's dais and display stage. A second room is used to store the items and lots coming up for auction. When items are held at the Vault, they are normally transferred to the Auction House as soon as their owners miss two payment dates in a row.

Security at the Auction House is tight. Six members of the Watch are stationed here around the clock, while the Wizards' Guild can be alerted to trouble via an amulet carried by the highest-ranking officer on each shift. The wizards are notoriously cranky though, so the Watch tries to deal with any problems on their own.

Key Figures

The following characters can generally be found at the Municipal Auction House.

Crask Tolberg

Crask Tolberg (*male dwarf apprentice*) is the current auctioneer and is as tightfisted and officious a dwarf as ever walked the Serpent's Teeth. While he is incorruptible, the wizened old red-headed dwarf is also extremely unpleasant, foul tempered, and parsimonious to a fault. Not that these are necessarily *negative* traits in his position. Having

spent years in the role of auctioneer, Tolberg is very good at his job—and very, very lonely. He's not susceptible to offers of money or power, but for love….

Adventure Hooks

Despite the efforts of the guards, a valuable lot is stolen from the Auction House. The guardsmen are not eager to face punishment, so the theft is not reported. Instead, they start sniffing about for independent operators to find the lot and return it before its loss is detected. And if they can't manage that, they might just need to find some local thieves to do the searching for them, or to take the fall for the theft.

One of the items currently up for auction is a small gold statue recently retrieved from the reef. This depiction of a bizarre creature—part squid, part shark, part demon, part giant eye—is the Pelagic Effigy, an ancient relic with unknown supernatural powers, including the ability to free an evil demigod named Lotan. Bidders after the Effigy include members of the Wizards' Guild, the Brotherhood of the Yellow Sign, the Sea Lord, High Priest Egil, Masson Francisco, some pirates enchanted by Lotan, and several other important personages. What kind of skullduggery will the bidders undertake to defeat their rivals? Will the Effigy even make it to auction before being stolen by the Syndicate, the Canting Crew, pirates, or sea devil raiders? And what will the eventual owner finally *do* with it?

4. The Office of Public Records

"What's that? You wanna look at the deeds to the old Verlaine place? Aye, well, I'm sure I could find them if'n I wanted to, but I can't see why I should bother helpin' the likes of you...."

—Old Reed

The pirates who originally founded Freeport would flip over in their watery graves if they knew the amount of paperwork that the municipal functioning of their little settlement now generates. All the shipping manifests, tax documents, city planning maps, deeds of ownership, building permits, and court records have to go someplace if there is any hope of keeping track of things. The designated resting place for all such papers is the Office of Public Records, located on Sandbar Street in the heart of the Warehouse District.

History

When Freeport was founded, no one gave much thought to things like record keeping, receipts, deeds, or indeed much besides collecting booty and stabbing enemies. It wasn't until Captain Drac turned Freeport into a true city-state—until there was government—that the city had a need to track things like that. After several years of details going missing, inconvenient fires, and dozens (if not hundreds) of forgery attempts, the Sea Lord declared one central office would hereafter track and control all records.

Initially, the Office was housed in the Sea Lord's Palace and controlled directly by the Captains' Council, but the merchants and traders of the city protested—they never directly accused the Council of tampering with records for their own ends, but the implication was certainly there (as was the tampering). Similarly, suggestions to make the record-keeping a private concern, or house the files in the



Merchant District, were shot down by the Council. In the end the creation of the Office in the Warehouse District was a compromise, and no one expected it to last—but more than a century later it's still there—as are many of the original documents stored there, now lost under decades of dust and disinterest.

Description

The Office of Public Works operates out of an old two-story storehouse. It's sturdy enough, but not in the best condition; occasionally the Council contemplates moving the Office into more modern premises, but frankly no one cares enough. A sign beside the front door declares the building's purpose. During the day, merchants, functionaries, sailors, and others come and go to the Office, looking to deposit paperwork or view old records.

Anyone expecting the interior of the Office to boast well-organized shelves stacked with carefully filed and categorized piles of papers hasn't been in Freeport very long. A wide variety of rickety shelving and boxes, no two alike (most salvaged from old ships or unwanted furnishings), are crammed with papers and documents. No visitor can hope to make sense of the filing "system," and may find a century-old manifest lodged in a old beer keg alongside a map of the sewers under the Freeport Institute and the catering bill from last week's meeting of the Captains' Council. The lighting in the building isn't great, so visitors often need to bring a torch or lantern as they explore; fortunately, the building and its contents are protected from fire by enchantments supplied by the Wizards' Guild. Still, one should be careful—even a small fire could inflict untold damage on the smooth running of the city.

Key Figures

The following characters can generally be found at the Office of Public Records

Old Reed

The only person who can make sense of the files is the cantankerous caretaker of the office, a craggy ex-ship's cook named Old Reed (*male human apprentice*). He seems to have an unerring sense of where things are in the massive collection of paper. Reed has been caretaker of the Office for several decades now, and spends most of his days searching through files to settle disputes or gather information. It seems like a thankless job, but in truth, Reed enjoys it; he's well paid, quite comfortable, and frankly he was never cut out for the life of a ship's cook. That doesn't stop him grousing about his work to anyone who'll listen, though, and anyone who actually listens to his complaints may find him very cooperative. Reed lives in one corner of the Office, which boasts a hammock, a kitchen, and privy.

Adventure Hooks

Old Reed's health is failing. The Council has deemed it time to replace Reed, but he's not partial to the idea of losing his cushy job. Any Johnny-come-lately is going to have to work very hard to make friends with Reed in the hopes of learning the filing system. And Old Reed's not above sending his "helpers" on errands to dangerous parts of town—or arranging for accidents to happen once they arrive….

To some members of the Liberty Movement, the Office of Public Records is a symbol of everything wrong about Freeport—an elevation of order over freedom, a grotesque embrace of the stifling control pirates rebel against in the first place. They want the Office gone, and if that throws Freeport's law and trade into anarchy, so much the better. Destroying the Office will take more than a simple fire, though, and in their search for explosives or magical assistance, the Liberty pirates have let slip their plans. Now it's a battle between the anarchists of Leeward and the agents of the Captains' Council, and anyone caught in the middle is in big trouble.

5. Freland Shipyard

"I'm telling you, my ships are the best and fastest ever made in the Serpent's Teeth. You want to haggle, go to Libertyville! Wait! Wait, come back! Alright, damn you, let's talk...."

—Silas Freland

Other than the warehouses and storage buildings, the biggest industry in the Warehouse District is shipbuilding. Occupying a large chunk of the shoreline near the border of the Merchant District, Freland Shipping employs almost a hundred workmen in its twin dry docks and other smaller workshops.

History

Silas Freland is the proprietor of the shipyard, and has dominated the boat-building trade in town for decades. The only other shipyard in Freeport went out of business thirty years ago, after a fire consumed three ships under construction in a single night. The owner of the shipyard, a southerner named T'giri, had neglected to renew his fire insurance, and Silas picked up the assets of the charred shipyard for a song. T'giri was ruined, and disappeared soon afterward; most people assumed the despondent man threw himself into Freeport Harbor and drowned. While rumors persisted that the fires were deliberately set, no one could prove anything—and given Silas' known ties to the crime lord Finn, no one really *tried* to prove anything.

For decades the Freland Shipyard enjoyed a shipbuilding monopoly in town, and for all Silas' shadiness, he's never taken advantage of this to cut corners. The shipyard turns out about five large sailing ships a year and every single one is snapped up by someone almost as soon as it is out of dry-dock. The shipyard also turns out a variety of smaller craft, from rowboats to small fishing vessels. The Freland Shipyard makes good ships and captains from all over the region came to Freeport to buy them—and pay up to fifty percent more than the usual market price for such craft.



Or, at least, they *did*. The Freland Shipyard no longer has a stranglehold on the local market, and Silas has to actually *compete* for the first time in decades. T'Giri, Freland's rival of old, is back in the Serpent's Teeth—and he has set up a rival shipyard over in Libertyville. The new shipyard is smaller than Freland's, but T'Giri is an even better shipwright than Silas, and he sells his ships for a much lower price than Freland's inflated rates. Over the last two years, demand for Freland's ships has dropped sharply. Silas is scrambling to bring custom back, but it may be too little, too late. He's had to lay off some of his staff due to the dip in the market, and the remaining workers won't stand for a drop in wages. Freland's coffers are emptying fast, and if something doesn't go Silas' way soon, the shipyard could end up out of business sooner rather than later.

Description

The Freland Shipyard takes up a wide section of the waterfront. Piers lead up to two dry docks, each containing ships under construction. Small storage sheds, warehouses, offices, and other outbuildings are spaced around the docks. A wooden fence with two large doors surrounds the whole compound; the fence is sturdy, but a skilled thief could easily get over it.

Inside the fence, dockworkers, carpenters, and ship-builders work by day assembling large and small ships. There are fewer workers than there used to be, and the remaining staff have to work a little more for the same pay; it's common to hear them grumbling to each over lunch. At night, four watchmen patrol the grounds, keeping an eye on the wall and the waterline for intruders.

Key Figures

The following characters can generally be found at the Freland Shipyard.

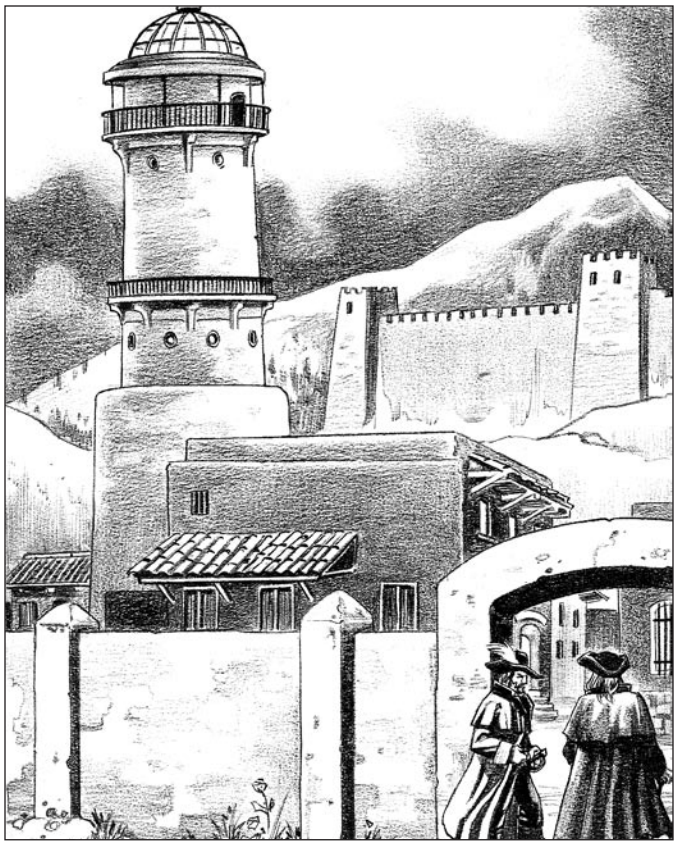
Silas Freland

Silas Freland (*male human journeyman*) isn't accustomed to being the low-status member in a business deal, and he *doesn't* like it. The seventy-year-old patriarch of the Freland family has had his own way for thirty years, ever since T'Giri's unfortunate "accident," and damnit, the southerner should have had the good grace to drown himself like everyone thought. Silas is on the losing end of competition now, and he's not coping with it—or prepared to accept it. The Freland Shipyard will control the market again, no matter what he has to do to make it happen.

Adventure Hooks

Silas Freland wants the Libertyville shipyard shut down, and he doesn't care what kind of collateral damage occurs in the process. The word goes out through Freeport's underworld that Freland will pay for results, and there are a lot of takers—including members of the Brotherhood of the Yellow Sign. Can Libertyville be saved from an attack by well-armed and financed cultists? And what other motives might the cult have for wanting Leeward cleansed of pirates?

Finn, leader of the Syndicate, is an ally of Silas Freland, and to keep the Shipyard going Finn is throwing some money and manpower into the waterfront. Mister Wednesday doesn't like Finn having that kind of influence in the Warehouse District, and he's not about to let it happen easily. Fights between Syndicate and Canting Crew members erupt around the Shipyard, while both crime lords try to wrest the lion's share of the business away from Silas. Freland may need outside help to protect him from his "ally" and his enemy alike—or to set the two of them at each other's throat so that they ignore him.



6. Freeport Pilots' Guild

"Arr, the sea is like a woman, you know. Deep, mysterious, capricious, and full of eels. Hmm? Aye, well, perhaps it's not like a woman in all respects, I'll grant you that."

—Captain Lars Manreel

The sand bars and reefs off the coast of Freeport are treacherous and ever changing. Captains that are away from Freeport for any significant length of time can never be sure if the clear channel that they embarked from remains the same when they return. Approaching the port can be a slow and deliberate affair, sometimes taking an entire day from the sighting of the city to final docking. Enter the Pilots' Guild, which monitors and charts the ever-changing sea approaches to Freeport's harbor, and sells that information from its guildhouse in the Warehouse District.

History

The Pilots' Guild was established more than a hundred years ago to counteract the increasing dangers of the shifting sea topography. A fleet of ten small ships constantly sails around the city, checking for shifted reefs and sandbars, and greeting any ship that approaches the city. The Pilots' Guild maintains a private pier in the Warehouse District for its survey and patrol vessels. For a relatively small fee, a guild navigator will come onboard and pilot a customer's ship quickly and safely into the docks of Freeport. The guild also offers current charts of the waters around the Serpent's Teeth for sale—but

only on shore. These precious charts are quite expensive and rarely remain accurate for more than six months.

The Pilots' Guild doesn't take any offense to those refusing their services—they don't need to. The treacherous barrier reef surrounding the Serpent's Teeth ensures business is always brisk. Sailors making Freeport a regular port of call know better than to refuse the "reasonably priced" services of the Pilots' Guild. The best they can expect without it is a slow approach to shore. The worst is a big hole in their ship's hull.

Some wonder why the Captains' Council and the Sea Lord allow the Pilots' Guild to operate what is essentially an elaborate shakedown operation. The answer lies within the tall tower of the guild's compound. The Pilots' Guild maintains an observatory, providing the best data on tides and weather that one can get in Freeport. This information is posted and disseminated throughout the city on a daily basis.

Description

The walled compound of the Pilots' Guild is one of the few distinctive places in the sea of blocky buildings that make up the Warehouse District. The facility is easily identified by the large observatory tower jutting into Freeport's skyline. It is the tallest free-standing structure in the city, dwarfed only by the walls of the Old City on the hill above.

Inside the compound's low stone wall, located around the observatory tower, are a number of other buildings. These include offices, living quarters, workshops, and meeting places. While the Pilots' Guild is hardly as luxurious as the Merchants' Guild House, many captains find it a very pleasant place to come for a drink or eight in the evening. Outside the observatory tower is a large board, on which tide and weather information is chalked several times per day.

Key Figures

The following characters can generally be found at the Freeport Pilots' Guild.

Captain Lars Manreel

The current head of the Pilot's Guild is Captain Lars Manreel (*male human journeyman*), a former privateer brought low by a nasty and venomous leg wound that went gangrenous. His left leg had to be amputated from the hip down. Captain Manreel will not speak of whatever it was that took his leg. Manreel has made the best of his disability, using his experience, knowledge, and solid instincts to rise to the head of the Pilot's Guild. Manreel could easily have a seat on the Captains' Council if he wanted it, but he has a great love of the seas—and no love at all for politics.

Adventure Hooks

Captain Manreel has been in control of the guild for a long time—too long, his rivals say. A number of other captains are campaigning for his seat, and point to an increase in the number of mistakes being made in charts as proof that he's no longer leading well. Manreel thinks the charts are being tampered with—but by whom? Is the sabotage being caused by one of his rivals, or an outside agency? Who else benefits from ships sinking—pirates, sea devils, the Lobstermen? Or is Manreel pinning the blame for his own mistakes (or own agenda) on others?

The guild's observatory is the tallest place in the city, with unparalleled views of Freeport. That kind of eye in the sky is an appealing prize to some of the city's less law-abiding citizens and they want to take control of it. When a number of guildhouse staff take ill or suffer accidents, their replacements all seem keen to work in the tower—and to get rid of any witnesses to their work. Are they members of the Syndicate? The Canting Crew? The Brotherhood of the Yellow Sign? And just what infernal device are they setting up at the top of the tower?

7. Crocker's Brick and Mortar

"Nah, Crocker ain't here today. What can I do for you? You need something stuck together, taken apart, or... disposed of?"

—Beige Edward

Located on the border of the Warehouse and Merchant Districts, Crocker's Brick and Mortar is one of Freeport's most advanced industrial facilities. Advanced steam-and-clockwork equipment is used to crush rocks and stone—and, occasionally, to dispose of unwanted items such as cursed relics and inconvenient bodies for the Canting Crew.

History

A stonemason named Crocker founded this masonry factory and stonework business nearly twenty years ago. At first it was a conventional operation, where workers used sledgehammers and picks to break apart rocks. Crocker found it hard to keep good workers; most able-bodied men preferred to work the Docks or warehouses rather than take up such backbreaking labor. Looking for a way to meet demand with fewer workers, Crocker hit upon the idea of using machinery for the crushing. Such inventions were in their infancy (and are still a work in progress), but the savants of the Wizards' and Craftsmen's Guilds had made a number of devices that could be useful.

Over several years, Crocker was able to install more and more inventions in his factory—steam-powered hammers, clockwork sorting beds, alchemical boilers, and more. The guilds used his factory as a test bed for ideas, keeping the machines that worked and wincing at the explosive failures. The crowning achievement for the factory was the Rock Crusher, a millhouse poised over a massive pit, filled with machinery that could crush large stones into powder. With this at the center of the operation, Crocker was able to finally meet the demand for masonry in the city—especially the constant need for stone to make the Freeport Lighthouse.

But success in Freeport has its own dangers—stand out too much and you become a target. Mister Wednesday decided the masonry factory would be a useful asset for the Canting Crew, and made the stonemason an offer he couldn't refuse. When Crocker *did* refuse, well, that was a mistake. The mason has been "on holiday" for a long time now, and documents appointing Crew members as management were conveniently located in the Office of Public Records. Now the Canting Crew run all Crocker's Brick and Mortar as a convenient source of income—and a convenient place to put their enemies.

Description

A high stone wall with one large gate surrounds the masonry factory; the top of the millhouse can be seen from the street outside.

Clouds of steam and smoke often emerge from within the compound (to the constant annoyance of the neighbors). Inside the wall, the two-story millhouse dominates the area, while several other workshops are scattered around it. Carts run on rail lines from the millhouse to piles containing bricks or rocks of various sizes.

The millhouse's bottom level has no floor; the carts spill rocks down the mouth of a pit into a massive hopper. When the operator in the control booth above the pit activates the machinery, huge teeth and gears grind together beneath the hopper, which slowly rotates to drop its load into the gears. Doors and hatches in the hopper and beneath the gears lead to more rail lines, allowing workers to haul away the crushed stone. Excess rubble and detritus is sluiced away into the sewers. The gears of the mill can chew apart solid stone; unsurprisingly, they have little problems crushing human beings as well. A few workers have died or suffered serious accidents in the mill, but significantly more people have been fed deliberately into the gears (whether alive or dead) by Canting Crew agents. It's a terrific way of getting rid of evidence, snooping adventurers, or anyone who gets on the wrong side of Mister Wednesday.

There is a way out of the hopper if anyone is trapped inside; an access hatch in the side leads to a tunnel and out into the sewers. Few people know about this hatch, and it's not easily discovered from inside the hopper. The sewer access point is reasonably close to the secret door leading to the cellars of Manor Maeorgan. Neither the Canting Crew nor the Rakeshames know of the other gang's secret passageways; the first group to discover the other's secret will have a definite advantage in their ongoing conflict.

Key Figures

The following characters can generally be found at Crocker's Brick and Mortar.

Beige Edward

Beige Edward (*male human apprentice*) is a member of the Canting Crew and the manager of Crocker's Brick and Mortar. Crocker is always inconveniently absent these days, but fortunately he (apparently) signed control over to Edward before vanishing. An old hand at con games, petty theft, and counterfeiting, Beige Edward is detached, calm, and always on the lookout. He's very loyal to Mister Wednesday, but will play it cool if asked about his employer, or even cooperate with the Crew's enemies to lure them into the masonry factory. The very dangerous masonry factory….

Adventure Hooks

Anyone who gets on the wrong side of the Canting Crew—or who gets on the wrong side of someone prepared to pay the Canting Crew—might wind up in the masonry hopper. They could be brought in kicking and screaming, dumped unconscious onto the bricks, or lured into a deadly trap. Escaping the hopper when in operation is possible, but requires luck and skill—as does getting out of the factory afterwards.

The complex machines in the millhouse and factory require a lot of maintenance and upkeep—expensive upkeep. When the guilds performing the maintenance ask for more money, the Canting Crew decides to cut a few corners. Bad idea. The consequences of machinery going haywire might not stop at explosions and flying metal; some of the machines have a kind of magical life to them, and without guildsmen to keep them in check, they may escape into the city and go on a rampage.

8. Freeport Orphanage

"Wassn' wunna oorlot, allabud b'lizzert."

—Mumbles

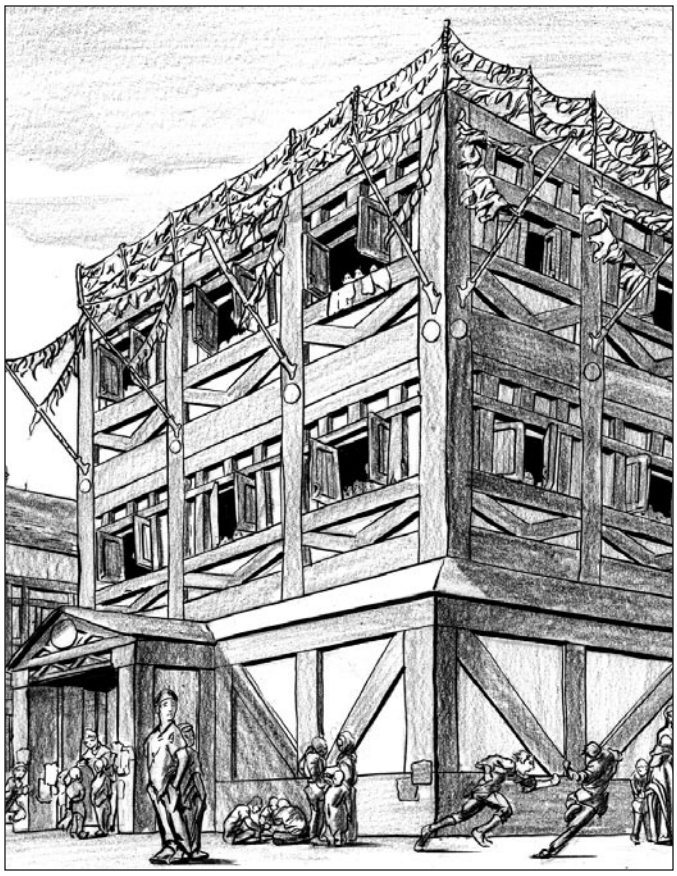
"What Father Morris means, sir, is that all the children were in the dormitory last night. Whatever your witness thinks she saw, well, it certainly wasn't one of our charges. Honest."

—Cricket

This ramshackle building used to be a cheap hostel for sailors, longshoremen, and itinerants. But after the Succession Riots, a wealthy philanthropist bought the building and converted into a home for the orphans of Freeport. Here young children have a roof over their heads, a hammock to sleep in, regular meals, and a chance to learn a trade—specifically, the criminal trade. The Freeport Orphanage is a Canting Crew operation and their prime training and recruiting grounds for young members.

History

Originally this building was known as the Hammocks, a hostel run by an ex-sailor named Tyler. It didn't have individual rooms or even beds; instead, tenants slept in hammocks strung throughout every level of the building. While inexpensive, the Hammocks was generally popular only with sailors, who were more comfortable than landlubbers with the notion of sleeping in a sack thirty feet above the floor. In the wake of the



Orphanage to Reform Young Pickpockets

~The Shipping News

Succession Crisis, Tyler found that he simply couldn't afford to run the place any longer and gratefully sold it to an unknown buyer.

That buyer was Mister Wednesday, who decided to turn the building into an orphanage for two reasons. First was his genuine concern for the parentless children of Freeport, one of the few weaknesses in the crime lord's emotional armor. The second was the desire to mold a new generation of Canting Crew agents, loyal to himself and skilled in every aspect of thievery—a roguish army to challenge the entrenched strength of Finn and the Syndicate.

With little fanfare, the new Freeport Orphanage opened its doors a few years ago, taking in children that the Star of the Sea could not afford to look after any longer. The Orphanage survives (in theory) on donations and on the work the orphans do; in truth, Wednesday keeps it running, and all the staff are members of the Canting Crew. While the secrets of the Orphanage could be learned by anyone prepared to do some record checking and investigation, the blunt truth is that very few people in Freeport care about who's looking after unwanted children—an attitude Wednesday (slightly sadly) counts upon.

Description

The Freeport Orphanage is a typical (if slightly rundown) warehouse from the outside. The streets and alleyways around the building are constantly full of children using them as a playground, running with messages, or practicing their roguish skills. Strings of laundry line the roof, coincidentally hiding anyone on the rooftops from the view of the neighbors.

Almost the entire interior of the Orphanage is one massive open room, with thick timbers running from floor to roof. Strung between these pillars are a series of hammocks, reaching all the way up to the ceiling. Sets of pegs in the pillars form a rough ladder on each one reaching up into the rafters. Ropes also dangle from the ceiling at various points, and planks in the rafters allow easy movement for those with a good sense of balance. Visitors to the Orphanage may be shocked by the sleeping arrangement, but the managers solemnly explain they simply haven't got the money for proper bedding. Children who aren't old or strong enough to climb into hammocks sleep on pallets on the floor, which is also where meals are served; those adults living in the Orphanage either sleep in hammocks or in one of the building's small rooms.

In the hammock warrens of the Orphanage, children are taught important skills—climbing, hiding, stealth, observation, the ability to lie with a straight face, basic combat skills, and more. More than anything else, the orphans are taught to respect thievery as a profession and way of life—and taught loyalty to the Canting Crew and Mister Wednesday. Not every child is trained by the Crew; some are unwilling or unsuited to the thieving life. These children are usually fostered out as soon as they're old enough, as Crew agents pull strings to find them jobs on ships leaving the island. Only in the most dire of circumstances would the Crew eliminate one of the orphans, troublemaker or not; they're criminals, not monsters.

Key Figures

The following characters can generally be found at the Freeport Orphanage.

Mumbles

Mumbles (*male human journeyman*) is the manager of the Freeport Orphanage, where he is referred to as "Father Morris" when outsiders are around. This enigmatic character is actually a priest, although no one really knows which god he worships. But his prayers seem as effective as those of any other priest, and he's doggedly loyal to the Canting Crew, which is good enough for Mister Wednesday. Mumbles is dour and truculent, speaking only in a mumble. He communicates mostly with nods, grunts, and significant eye movements, and seems to be wearily depressed with life in general.

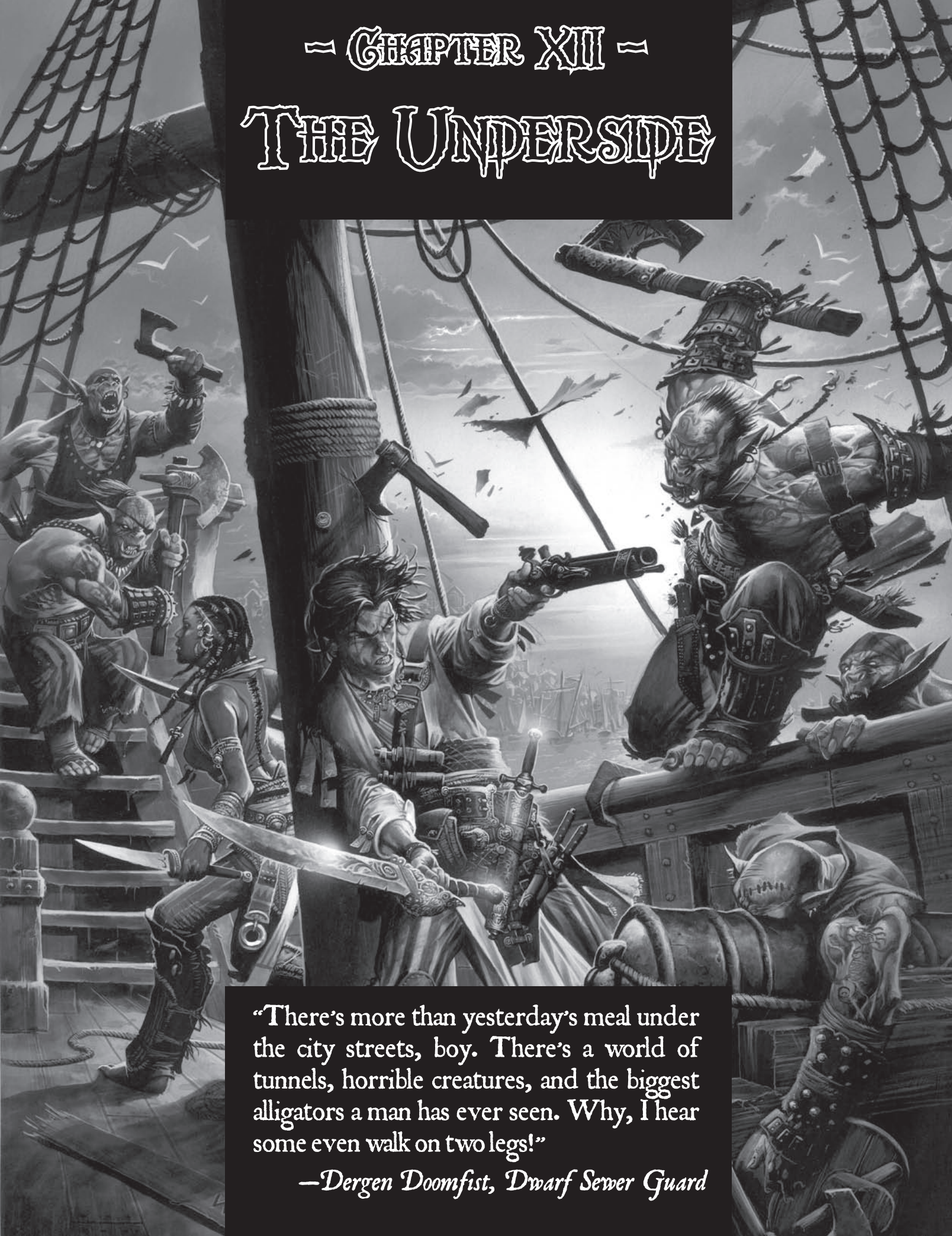
Cricket

Cricket (*male human apprentice*) is Mumble's assistant in the running of the Orphanage, and one of Mister Wednesday's most trusted thieves. Recruited from the streets at an early age, Cricket worked as Wednesday's personal messenger, and then graduated through the ranks of the Canting Crew. Cheerful and friendly, Cricket was always a bit soft-hearted for the criminal life, which is why Wednesday decided to toughen him up; when the Canting Crew murdered seven of the Joy Boys during the Great Green Fire, Wednesday ordered Cricket to light the fire that killed the aristocrats. The horror of that act still haunts Cricket, and there are nights the lad wakes up crying. Whether his crimes have cemented his loyalty to Wednesday, or will be the thing that drives him from the Crew, has yet to be seen.

Adventure Hooks

The rogues-in-training of the Orphanage roam the Warehouse District, either spying and gathering information or breaking into warehouses. Anyone who catches an orphan in the act will have to work hard to keep hold of them; the children are skilled at evading capture and hiding. And if indignant adventurers do manage to track a young pickpocket back to the Orphanage—what then? Can they prove that this bastion of shabby philanthropy is a nest of thieves? Will their consciences let them turn children out into the street or over to the law?

There are darker powers in Freeport than thieves and smugglers. There are things with unholy appetites, and some of them prey on innocence. Something is hunting the children of Freeport, and they are vanishing from the streets. Mumbles knows something about the supernatural, and believes his charges are in danger, but the mundane skills of the Canting Crew aren't enough to save them. He needs new allies to fight the unseen menace and save the souls of the orphans—allies that can follow the trail of evil through the city and into the wealthy mansions of the Merchant District….



~ Chapter XII ~

The Underside

"There's more than yesterday's meal under the city streets, boy. There's a world of tunnels, horrible creatures, and the biggest alligators a man has ever seen. Why, I hear some even walk on two legs!"

—Dergen Doomfist, Dwarf Sewer Guard



There's more to Freeport than the various patchwork districts that make up the city. Just under the noses of the throngs is Freeport's Underside, a complex labyrinth that's made up of the city's crumbling sewers, lost cellars, sunken buildings, and the foul dank tunnels and caverns created by the convulsions that rippled through the continent as it sank beneath the waves. Only the most wretched and desperate people live here, side-by-side with the appalling horrors disgorged in the deepest chambers, forgotten by even the eldest people in the Serpent's Teeth.

The City of Sewers

As in most major cities, Freeport's sewer system is an ongoing public works project. The original Sea Lord Drac initiated the first sewer system in Freeport. It's said he stepped one time too many in a pile of human dung and blew up at the architect he had hired to help design what is now the Old City. He insisted the man tear up the streets and put in a sewer system to handle the waste the new city would generate.

The architect quickly realized building an underground system of sewers under every street in Freeport was impossible, from both financial and engineering standpoints. Instead, the architect compromised: He built the sewer under all the buildings the Sea Lord was most likely to visit. Anyone else along the route—or with enough money to bribe the workers or the architect to extend the sewers in his house's direction—was simply lucky.

Public Privies

To make this rather elitist situation a bit more palatable to the people of the city, public dumping spots were also created. Citizens could empty their chamber pots directly into the sewer system instead of tossing the contents into the street. Technically, it's illegal to dump such waste in the streets, but it still happens often enough, especially in areas into which the sewers don't stretch—like almost anywhere in Drac's End. Enforcement of the law occurs sporadically, when a Watchman or some other petty bureaucrat wants to hassle someone, or when someone important happens to be offended by the smell or the mess. Since most of Freeport's upper crust rarely traverse the filthier parts of town, this last bit is not often a concern.

The common people are not stupid, however, and many are willing to make the rather odious trek to the privies just to keep the incidence of disease down. Freeporters long ago made the waste-disease connection,

Banished to the Sewer Guard: A Squalid Story

~The Shipping News

at least on a common knowledge level, if not a scientific one. When you have first hand experience with so much filth for so long, you learn by trial and error, if nothing else.

The Lay Under the Land

The sewers began in the Old City, where they run from the Sea Lord's Palace to the Courts to several other important locales. From there they wind through the Docks and branch out into the rest of the city. Water and the things it carries run downward, and so do the sewers of Freeport. The slant isn't all that steep, just enough to let the laws of gravity and hydraulics do their work. The end spots of the sewers are the highest, running down to the nearest junctions.

The original architect and all those who followed him and added on to his work were clever enough to place storm grates where rainwater could wash the street waste into the sewer system. This means most of city gets cleaned out properly by a good, solid rain, which happens often enough during the Spring.

The Merchant District is the highest area, and Scurvytown is the lowest. There is only one outlet for the sewers, under one of the docks in Scurvytown, where the filth simply spills out of a large pipe and into the sea. This lends a rank air to the place, but the transients and scum that make up the population there aren't likely to complain—and even were they to do so, the Captains' Council would hardly listen.

Getting In and Around

Getting into the sewers is easy enough in most parts of the city. You just have to be willing to crawl down through one of the public privies or, better yet, pry up one of the manhole covers leading into the system. These are heavy, metal hatches, and anyone prying them up in broad daylight who is not obviously a member of the city maintenance team or Sewer Guard, is likely to get some strange looks. If the Watch happens to spot such activity, the would-be explorer needs to cough up some quick explanation or face a beating, arrest, or both.

Wisely, the wealthiest districts keep locks on the sewer entrances. There is no public access to the sewers beneath the Merchant District, the Old City, and the Warehouse District. Each of these entrances has a stout lock and should one be found breached or missing, the Sewer Watch is quick to root out intruders. What's more, the spots where the sewer crosses into the Merchant District are actually barred by iron grates cemented into place, more-or-less preventing passage into the upscale district by subterranean means.

It should be noted it's just about impossible for a person to use the sewers to get into anyone's house. The chutes are simply too small for anyone larger than a well-fed rat to move up them easily, even if they're able to get a grip on the waste-slicked walls. Still, people keep the lids of their chutes closed and even locked. There are all sorts of creatures wandering around in the sewers, after all, and it wouldn't do to be nipped in the ass while sitting for a spell.

To get around the Underside, one should just follow the effluvia. The upper regions of the Underside are a veritable labyrinth of pipes and tubes that usually run along the streets above. The main lines are often circular tunnels measuring about eight feet across and with a wide trench, about two feet deep, set in the floor. For most of the year, rainwater and filth wash through the trench, carrying an unsettling mix of solids and liquids out to bless the sea. A person of a man's size can walk upright along either side of the trench, but there's not space enough for two people to walk side-by-side.

During the rainy season, the Underside is best avoided, for the waters rise far above the trench, often rising as high as three to six feet. During these storms, not even the Sewer Guard brave the tunnels, for they know that the current is strong enough to carry a fool all the way out into the ocean. They also know nasty things gather around the outflow pipe waiting for fresh morsels to feast upon.

The sewer tunnels beneath the Old City are hewn out of solid rock. Many areas of more recent construction boast strong walls that are resistant to tunneling. Most of the rest of the sewer tunnels, especially toward the Docks, are made from combinations of stone and brick smoothed over with a layer of waterproof mortar.

The Sewer Guard

For years, no one took much of an interest in what went on below the city. So long as whatever haunted the sewers stayed put, no one cared. This attitude underwent a profound change when rumors of serpent

The Underside Overview

Along with Freeport's decrepit sewer system, the Underside also includes innumerable corridors and passages riddling the whole of A'Val.

Buildings

While there are no real buildings, one can find sunken basements and the bottom floors of old buildings, on which stand the buildings of the city above. Caverns and moist galleries are home to many of the Underside's worst monsters.

People

Few ordinary people call the Underside home. The misfits, the mad, the sick, and the dead (and the undead) claim it. These are Freeport's forgotten, the mutated cast-offs, the scum not fit for even Bloodsalt. As well, there's no shortage of horrific creatures that prey on the vagabonds of the Underside.

Roads

Most of the passages large enough to accommodate a person are the bricked sewer tunnels that carry effluvia out to the sea. Breaches in the walls connect to natural caverns or lost rooms, far from the pathways wending down into the depths of the earth.

Descriptive Elements

This is a rancid place, filled with strange smells and disgusting indefinable lumps. Heaps of excrement and pools of piss mingle with rainwater, detritus, and the occasional corpse. The Underside is infested with vermin, from seas of huge rats to armies of roaches, the largest having the size of a man's hand.

people, cult activity, criminal enterprises, and slavery began to swirl about the city. When the matter of the Brotherhood of the Yellow Sign came to the attention of the Captains' Council, they created a branch of the Sea Lord's Guard to put a stop to the subversive activity. Of course, few of the Guard had any interest in volunteering for this unpleasant and extremely dangerous duty, so for the most part it fell to their worst elements. You can only imagine their relief when the Sewer Guard went with the Watch when the Sea Lord militarized the Guard.

An assignment to the Sewer Guard is punishment, a fate consigned to those watchmen who are too ambitious in their duty or too corrupt to walk the streets. Most watchmen would rather walk Scurvytown than to face the odious assault of the city's sewers to say nothings of the things that live there. As such, the Sewer Guard is an odd mix of characters, savage brutes who kicked in the teeth of the wrong man and idealistic fools who made enemies in their overzealous pursuit of the law.

The members of the Sewer Guard, violent natures aside, are tough. They have to be since they never know what new danger they'll find on patrol, whether they're rooting out a band of smugglers or fighting some abomination conjured up from their very worst nightmares. The Sewer Guard are also distinctive. Aside from their smell, they all wear gray uniforms and scarves around their faces to stave off the worst of the stench. Each of them carries a lamp at the end of a five-foot-long pole, which they can place in holes burrowed into the walks in the main tunnels.

Captain Tanko Sondek

Tanko Sondek (*male human journeyman*) has had a colorful life, on both sides of the law. His mother was a member of one of Freeport's most notorious gangs, and when he came of age, he followed in her steps. Sondek had little luck as a gang-member. His mother wound up lost in one of the Hulks after the gang leader betrayed her. Sondek himself ended up in the Tombs to await sentencing after a failed attempt to strong-arm a well-protected merchant. Sondek's tale might have ended there, but Commissioner Williams saw something in him and offered a place in the Sea Lord's Guard. Seeing a chance for redemption, Sondek accepted and worked hard to prove the Commissioner had made the right choice.

Prove himself he did. He rose swiftly through the ranks, becoming a sergeant in the Docks precinct where he worked as a detective. Through his efforts, he rounded up a number of ruthless killers, including Arden Windbrook—an assassin who had murdered several important citizens. He bought into the Commissioner's methods for cleaning up the city, making himself a number of enemies in the underworld and among the city's leaders, but so long as he was in good with Williams, he was more or less untouchable.

Then someone killed Commissioner Williams and with his death went Sondek's protection. While he was overzealous in his pursuit of the criminal elements of the city, Sondek had his uses. Rather than discretely rub him out, the Sea Lord named him Captain of the Sewer Watch, which effectively pulled him from the streets and put him in a place where he could do the most good for the new regime.

Sondek is not altogether happy about his new position. He knows he's in the sewers because of his allegiance to Commissioner Williams and that his mentor's style of justice has little place in this new Sea Lord's city. But he's making the best of his situation, working hard to transform the motley band of cutthroats into a competent fighting force and maybe one day, he'll be able to bring law back to Freeport's streets.

The Dwellers Below

One can't mention the Underside without at least hinting at the things that live below the sewers. Freeport wasn't the first city build here and it certainly won't be the last. Those familiar with the geography of the Underside know there are places one should never venture. Sometimes they might sketch a quick symbol on the wall to ward off others, others there's only a corpse to suggest the danger of an area. The Underside of Freeport is riddled with all sorts of tunnels and passageways, many of which link up with the city sewers by means of concealed doors of varying quality. All sorts of creatures—mostly common vermin—inhabit these dark and secret places, but there are deadlier sorts of beasts here too. Stories abound of serpent people, shuddering abominations, clouds of filth that speak like men, one-legged mutated elephant people, and even whispers of sinister rat-men.

Snakes in the Basement

Serpent people are by far the most numerous intelligent creatures dwelling below Freeport. In fact, there are literally hundreds of them in the deep tunnels. These creatures are the descendants of the great Valossan Empire, having fled underground to escape the destruction that befell their civilization. But the last two thousand years have not been kind to the children of Valossa. Since their homeland was destroyed, the descendants of the survivors of that cataclysm have split off into two distinct groups: the civilized serpent people and the degenerates.

Civilization in Exile

The few serpent people who escaped the apocalyptic fall of Valossa with their sanity intact fled for other lands, far from their ancient homes. Knowing the peoples they had one rivaled or subjugated would take advantage of their reduced status, these travelers hid themselves away—underground, usually, but also in deep swamps and other places inhospitable to most humanoid races. These Valossans were able to lick their wounds, safe from reprisals by their former slaves.

These serpent people clung to the vestiges of their society and maintained their worship of Yig, the Snake God, as well. Despite the betrayal of Yig by some of their people—the original Brotherhood of the Yellow Sign from Valossa—these serpent people were eventually able to work their way back into their god's good graces, and his unblinking gaze settled upon them once more.

Even with their god's favor, they hads lost much, and it took centuries for them to regain the confidence and numbers to emerge once more. New civilizations rose from the ashes of this once mighty people, discovering the world was a far different place. While they quietly hid, the world forgot about the Valossa and the serpent people.

But the civilized serpent people had not forgotten about their long-lost brethren. As the various tiny pockets of civilized serpent people began to make contact with each other and knit back together in a widely scattered net, they began to talk of going back to Valossa and possibly reclaiming what was left of their ancient homeland.

To that end, they sent out emissaries to the Serpent's Teeth to explore the area and discover what might be left of the serpent people's heritage. They were not pleased with what they found.



Slithering Backward

The emissaries found kin under A'Val, but did not receive a warm welcome. Living deep under the earth in filthy holes were degenerate serpent people, descendents of those driven mad by the horror of the Unspeakable One. These savages attacked the emissaries, who barely escaped with their lives. As they fled, they managed to capture a single prisoner. They carefully studied him, learning what had happened to their long lost kin.

The crazed survivors had been stranded on the Serpent's Teeth. Humanoid warriors sent to discover just what had happened to the once-great seat of the Empire forced these wretched serpent folk deep underground. The shattered survivors developed an almost insane fear of the surface dwellers, and hid themselves away for centuries.

The inbreeding this encouraged did not do the serpent people any good and they degenerated further into monstrous creatures more like serpents and less like people. By the time Freeport was founded, the serpent people of the Serpent's Teeth had lost everything of the culture and history, living almost like animals beneath the island's surface.

The newly arrived pirates weren't aware of the history of the island and did their best to exterminate the degenerate serpent people wherever and whenever they found them. This drove the creatures even further underground, where they stayed, waiting for their chance to emerge once again.

As Freeport grew and as the Freeporters dug sewers beneath it, the serpent people watched. When safe, they extended their own tunnels to the city's stinking pipes, concealing their presence with secret doors often covered by the slime and the muck that most surface dwellers found repugnant.

The Serpent People of Freeport

Today, the degenerate serpent people living in Freeport are thriving. In fact, some of them have been able to make contact with the warm-bloods and even found a horrible kinship in the Brotherhood of the Yellow Sign. These degenerates somehow recall the Yellow Sign from their history, but they've forgotten what harm it wreaked upon their ancestors or they're simply beyond caring. Even though the degenerates aren't quite capable of worshipping the Unspeakable One properly, their human and civilized serpent people allies carry on in their behalf. It was this conspiracy that led to Milton Drac becoming the Sea Lord, almost bankrupting the city with the Lighthouse Project, and nearly plunging the city into madness with his insane desire to bridge the planes and bring the Unspeakable One into this world.

In the last decade, the civilized serpent people have filtered into the city and into the Underside, where they work to rehabilitate their lost cousins. Whether out of compassion for their deranged kin or out of fear of angering Yig once more, the serpent people commit incredible resources to bringing back these savages and restoring them. Unfortunately, they have enjoyed only marginal success, for not everyone is agreed they can—or should—be restored. There are also the lingering elements of the Brotherhood who have survived despite their nearly catastrophic setbacks. These cultists work directly against the priests of Yig, organizing the degenerates against the noble efforts of their kin. And of course, there's the Sewer Guard, who doesn't distinguish between the types of serpent people and exterminate any they encounter These factors have made even the few small groups of reformed degenerates a great victory for the serpent people, but it underscores the magnitude of the task they face.

Things in the Sewers

There are few notable or known locations in the sewers. The patrols of the Sewer Guard make it hard for larger operations and locations to thrive in the tunnels for long. What locations do exist are isolated, well-hidden, or buried so deep within the earth they are practically unknown to the common Freeporter. What follows are some brief descriptions of places purported to exist beneath the streets of the city. Whether they exist or not in your City of Adventure is up to you.

The Black Mark

Although there are a variety of places one might go to find contraband, drugs, and other illegal goods, the nexus of activity for Freeport's smugglers centers on a place called the Black Mark. Rumored to sit somewhere beneath Scurvytown, it's said that some of the most forbidden and dangerous materials to enter the city pass through this short stretch of tunnels. Since the Sewer Guard is always on the look out for such activity, the Black Mark rarely stays in the same place for long.

Captain Dimetrios

The Black Mark's current location is a well-guarded secret; it wouldn't do for the harbormaster and the Sewer Guard to turn up what must be a lucrative operation. Still, if you know the right people to ask, it has a way of finding you. One such person is Captain Dimetrios (*male human journeyman*). A notorious smuggler and scoundrel, he's something of a hero to the poor folks of the Docks, giving back a portion of his earnings to help the widows and orphans cared for by the Star of the Sea. Some speculate the reason the harbormaster hasn't put him in irons is that Dimetrios never seems to have any money: he says he spends it all on women and wine. In reality, Dimetrios is one of the principle organizers of the Black Mark and he takes a hefty fee for managing the lucrative underground trade. He is always looking for new, trustworthy people to help move his merchandise, and nothing earns his trust quicker than a good bribe.

The Dregs

No matter where you go in Freeport, you're bound to encounter someone begging for alms. Freeport is a rough city that takes people in and leaves them worse off than before they arrived. Its streets are full of broken dreams. Those suffering from disease, maiming injuries, and even curses find their only recourse is to beg for a few coins to put a bit of food and wine in their bellies. Beggars are just part of the scenery. They may be annoying and persistent, but be sure to show your respect. Some are united and they don't take too kindly to anyone roughing up one of their friends.

The Dregs were born shortly after Commissioner Xander Williams came into power. The commissioner had a plan to clean up the city and remove the undesirable elements. What many didn't realize about this virtuous man was that he extended his definition of undesirables to the beggars. Xander didn't distinguish these folks from the common thieves and his brutes rounded them up in numbers, dumping them in the Tombs or the Hulks.

This did not sit well with Freeport's underclass and so the beggars retreated to the Underside. There they related to one another the tactics used by the new commissioner and the losses they, as a class, had endured. A few prominent and successful beggars, including a halfling priest named Rat and Emperor Oswald, the King of Beggars, decided the only solution for their people was to organize and stick together. Not all agreed; some believed it was better to go it alone rather than risk sparking the Guard's wrath, but most went along with the plan.

It's not clear what happened, since the Sea Lord's Guard covered



up the conflict, paying off families to keep their silence. Rumor has it that a dozen guardsmen vanished, only to reappear outside of the Fortress of Justice, one piece at a time. The Commissioner backed off from persecuting the city's begging class and refocused his efforts on real criminals.

Some suspect the Dregs, as they've come to be called, as being the ones responsible for Williams' murder. This sits just fine with them for it keeps them safe. Really, though, the Dregs had nothing to do with it. Once Williams left them alone they were content to go about their business. The Dregs even help the watchmen sometimes, giving them tips and rumors, but it's well-known that they do the same for the crooks.

The Temple of Yig

The recovered Temple of Yig is the seat of power for K'Stallo and his allies in their efforts to recover their degenerate kin. Despite the destruction that accompanied the fall of the Valossan Empire, the temple survived by Yig's will alone. The serpent people that reclaimed it have driven out the last of the accursed spirits that haunted it. Now the site serves once more as one of Yig's greatest holy houses.

History

In the final days of the Valossan Empire, Yig brooded. As the Unspeakable One grew mighty with the adoration of the misled and mad serpent people, Yig's power waned. The destruction of his chosen people was at hand, but before they would be cast low, Yig invested his remaining strength into one of his last temples to preserve it from the devastation that would follow. Although Yig showed mercy on the site, he had little left for the treacherous priests that filled its halls. He blamed them for the rise of the Unspeakable One, pointing to their unwillingness to cut out the cancer that ultimately led to their fall. He cursed his last priests, transforming them into immortal shades, bound to haunt the temple and contemplate their failures for all time. Over the centuries that followed, the temple withstood earthquakes, storms, and even the icy currents of the depths. The lost priests walked its corridors, flitting through the darkness, lamenting their fates, driven mad by their isolation.

The fate of the temple suddenly changed when a group of adventurers discovered the entrance at the back end of Black Dog's Caves (see **Chapter Fourteen: The Serpent's Teeth**). Breaching the ancient entrance and fouling the dreadful trap that safeguarded it, the heroes purged the temple of the undead host filling it. It wasn't long before K'Stallo and his allies entered the temple, exploring its strange architecture and defeating those few accursed inhabitants that had survived. Through rigorous prayers and inexplicable rituals, the priests reclaimed it for their god, ushering in a new era of prosperity for the priests of Yig.

Description

Although Black Dog's Caves and the old entrance lay outside of the city, the bowels of the temple hold a pair of magically locked double doors leading into the cave system that riddles A'Val and connects to the sewers of the Underside. This passage allows the serpent people to move in and out of Freeport unseen and without drawing attention to the secret temple. These doors retain something of the magic that protects them, but they open easily for anyone in the service of Yig.

The temple itself consists of six levels, forming a fanglike cone with the uppermost level being a small chamber and the bottommost being a large multi-room complex. Everything here has unusual architecture, hailing back to the time of this alien race. As such, it is unsettling, filling mortals with unease as they navigate its many rooms. The walls, floor, and ceiling are all carved with whorls and strange shapes that distract the eye and turn the stomach. Furthermore, seawater puddles on the floor, giving the place a decidedly briny smell.

T'lother

T'lother (*male serpent person journeyman*) came to Freeport to aid in recovering the degenerate serpent people. T'lother is a member of the Sskethvai faction, a sect that regarded Yig as the destroyer god. They believe it is their duty to spread out and conquer all races and religions in his name. T'lother is a capable priest, and his power and connection with Yig far exceed those of K'Stallo. Though he has been slow to exert his influence over the operation, citing K'Stallo's great experience in interacting with humans, he grows weary with the sluggish success and the degenerates' resistance to their overtures. T'lother believes the degenerates' reluctance stems from their continued service and loyalty to the Unspeakable One. Rather than tolerate more power to Yig's ancient enemy, T'lother would see these servants purged. He secretly plots a more ambitious approach that would enslave the Freeporters and used then as foot soldiers to destroy the remaining enclaves of degenerate serpent people.

To a non-serpent person, T'lother looks like all of the others, being a tall hybrid of man and snake. He has emerald scales and bright golden eyes. When he assumes a human appearance, he prefers to don the disguise of Bertralla Duskany, a beautiful merchant woman from the Continent, famed for her golden eyes and seductive appearance.

The Temple of Unspeakable One

"Speak not of the Yellow Sign! Its mere mention is enough to draw the Unspeakable One's baleful eye. To witness it is madness and to touch it... it's best not to mention what happens when you touch it."

—Brother Karl, Street Preacher

As anyone who lived through the Succession Crisis can attest there are sinister agencies at work in the city, groups that seem to exist only to tear down the trappings of civilization and plunge the city into chaos, mayhem, and madness. Perhaps the most famous of these wicked organizations is the Brotherhood of the Yellow Sign, a widespread cult doing the bidding of the Unspeakable One. Although considered extinct by most folks, the Brotherhood is a cancer and it gnaws upon the city, eroding its will and spreading the disease of insanity throughout its citizens.

History

It's not entirely clear when the Brotherhood of the Yellow Sign established itself. It is certain the Brotherhood (and the Unspeakable One) existed long before Freeport, for their malevolent influence brought the Valossan Empire low. One might think such a catastrophe would be enough to purge the world of the Unspeakable One's foul touch, but in truth, it only takes a look at his horrible sign to corrupt



The Yellow Sign

The most insidious device used by the cult of the Unspeakable One is the symbol by which they know their inexplicable master: the Yellow Sign. A strange glyph, it shines with awful light, seeming to move even when inscribed in stone. While mundane etchings of this symbol do exist, those infused with the awful presence of the King in Yellow can induse a cascading madness in those who behold it, finding themselves sliding into the depths of madness with no hope of escape. To make matters worse, the affliction functions similarly to a disease, infecting any who come into contact with one touched by the Unspeakable One's curse. For this reason, the Sign is destroyed wherever it is encountered.

the souls of the weak willed. In all likelihood, it was the survival of one of these symbols through the centuries that ultimately led to the revival of this terrifying god's cult.

From its uncertain origins onward, the Brotherhood wormed its way into Freeport, corrupting countless individuals of varying stations and occupations to make ready for some grand event that would restore the Unspeakable One to this plane of existence. Their plans came to fruition when they found Milton Drac. The cult urged Drac to construct a grand lighthouse so they could shine the Yellow Sign across Freeport. This would drive the populace mad, creating the energy needed for the King in Yellow, as he is sometimes known, to take form and cross the gulf of the stars to visit its awful presence in this world. They failed and scattered, broken and hunted, driven into the bowels of the city.

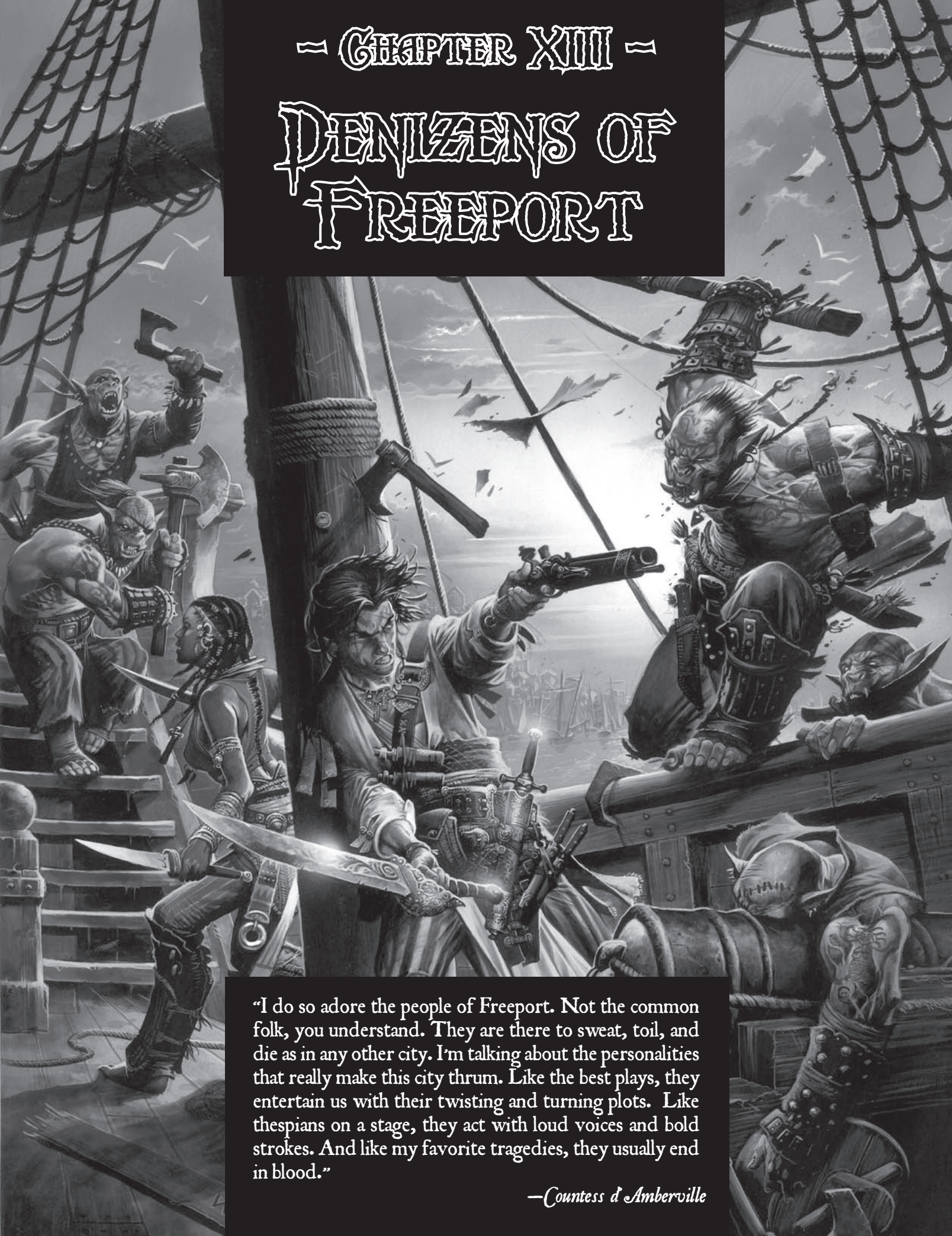
Over the years that followed, the Brotherhood resurfaced with mixed success. Although they nearly brought the Unspeakable One through in a hidden temple below the Underside, with each new effort they were further reduced. With the appearance of the new Sea Lord, the Brotherhood has been silent, and those who remain vigilant against them find this silence unsettling, perhaps presaging some disastrous event that will bring ruin to city and truly bring madness to Freeport.

Description

There is no single Temple of the Unspeakable One. There are shrines and altars scattered to his malfeasance throughout the Underside. Sometimes these places are nothing more than the Yellow Sign inscribed on a brick, while at other times they are far more exotic, having multiple rooms, an altar for blood sacrifices, and even pews for the cultists to assemble and listen to the doom-laced words of the cult's high priest.

Key Figures

No one admits to being a member of the Brotherhood; doing so means certain death. Still, there's reason to believe the Brotherhood is alive and well and that anyone, anywhere, might be a member. In Freeport's darkest corners, there are whispers of a new leader, a new figurehead who intends to lead the cult back to power. Whether this is true, none can say.



Chapter XIII

Denizens of Freeport

"I do so adore the people of Freeport. Not the common folk, you understand. They are there to sweat, toil, and die as in any other city. I'm talking about the personalities that really make this city thrum. Like the best plays, they entertain us with their twisting and turning plots. Like thespians on a stage, they act with loud voices and bold strokes. And like my favorite tragedies, they usually end in blood."

—Countess d'Amberville

In addition to the characters found in the locations described in the preceding chapters, Freeport is home to many more individuals who work, fight, plot, and live in Freeport. This section highlights some of the most important people in the city not keyed to any particular place.

Asha Sante

Secret Vigilante

"Abandoned? Yes. Alone? Yes. Defeated? Never."

Asha Sante (*female human journeyman*) wages a private war against Freeport's worst criminals, to rein in the scum that wash up on the city's shores with each new ship that comes to port. She does this alone. Her comrades are dead or missing, scattered after her secret group collapsed with the death and disappearance of her sponsors. She continues alone, working behind the scenes to fight the wickedness threatening to doom all who call this city home.

Background

Her path was set years ago, the very moment she walked into the Temple of the Justice God miles away on the Continent. She felt the calling and had visions of her future, fighting the fight against the perpetrators of evil, battling to ensure the world survived against the hideous crimes of the wicked. She studied hard but chafed at her inability to go out and take the fight to evil, until she could take more and escaped the cloister, saw the world, and did the Justice God's work.



Her explorations took her to Freeport. Of all the ports she had visited, none had come close to the violence, corruption, and brimming evil she found here. Appalled by Milton Drac's blatant villainy and the people's inability or disinterest in recognizing it, she set out to change Freeport for the better. It didn't work. She wound up in irons, languishing in the Tombs, where she awaited trial for killing a member of Sea Lord's Guard. Before she was to be strung up in front of the Fortress of Justice, Milton Drac's evil plot was revealed and thwarted, and suddenly the murder of a crooked guardsman wasn't such a terrible thing.

A few days later, Elise Grossette, then an influential member of the Captains' Council, and Xander Williams, Commissioner of the Sea Lord's Guard, visited her in her cell and made her an offer. The pair planned to create a secret division of the Sea Lord's Guard whose sole purpose would be to root out the "monstrous tide of perversion" that threatened to drown the city. If she agreed, it would fall to her and her team to locate and destroy hidden cults serving terrible powers, including mad gods, dark deities, and even archdevils and demon princes. Asha saw this as her chance and accepted the offer.

Asha's group consisted of herself and two other followers of the God of Justice. They worked in secret, patrolling the streets out from their warded headquarters looking for any sign of cultist activity. The chalked up a few successes, exposed a few minor groups, but received no accolades for their service. No one knew who they were or what they did, though there were whispers, always whispers.

Asha's group came to an abrupt end two years after the new Sea Lord came to power. With Elise Grossette out of the picture and Xander Williams murdered in the streets, no one was left who knew about Asha. She and her group were ambushing a hidden group of cultists who worshipped some awful formless god and the Watch had chosen this same time to hit the same group. Thinking Asha and her cohorts were league with the cultists, the Watch attacked and butchered everyone they found.

Asha escaped, terribly wounded, and fled into the sewers, alone, forgotten, and injured. When she tried to return to her headquarters, she found it was under investigation by members of the Watch. They found paraphernalia, forbidden tomes, and other accoutrements recovered from the cult Asha and her allies had studied. She couldn't go back. If she did, they'd kill her, but she wouldn't give up. When she recovered, she hit the streets again, vowing to fight in the memory of her former employers.

Appearance

Tall and gaunt, with short black hair and a wicked scar that runs along her jaw line, Asha cuts a frightening figure. She wears a sleeved shirt of mail that hangs to her knees, and the icon of her god around her neck. She has a much-used longsword and keeps a pistol tucked in her belt. She knows she's made plenty of enemies, so she wears a heavy black cloak with the hood pulled up to conceal her face.

Personality

Dedicated best describes Asha. She has little left to show for her work except for the satisfaction of having personally killed a score of cultists. She honors the memories of her fallen comrades, keeping some of their personal effects—a ring and a small pendant that she recovered from their old headquarters—in a pouch around her neck. When frustrated or melancholy, she touches the pouch to give her strength.

Secrets, Goals, and Plans

Recent activities in Freeport along with the lackadaisical Watch leads Asha to believe there are more opportunities than ever for new groups to infiltrate the city. She's aware of the cult of Yig operating just outside of the city and suspects foul play in the Temple of the War God, along with several other possible groups that are in need of killing. She also realizes she's just one woman, and though she's committed to her task, the job seems impossible.

Ultimately, she wants to re-establish her ties to the Captains' Council, but has thus far had little luck. It seems the current batch of crooks is just as corrupt as the ones during Drac's time. So, she needs another sponsor. She needs allies, recruits, and firepower if she's going to succeed, and she's not about to resume a life of adventure to fund some vigilante movement in a city that doesn't want it despite how badly it needs it.

She does have one ally, though: Egil, High Priest of the God of Knowledge in Freeport. They have a strained relationship given the schism plaguing his temple. He has not the time or the resources to properly deal with her, and to make matters worse, Asha suspects he's hiding something from her. She's growing suspicious and spends some of her time watching the temple for clues about what's really going on there.

Adventure Seeds

Apparently, Asha wasn't the only survivor in the attack on the cult a couple of years back. Through her few remaining contacts she has learned that a new face has emerged in the Watch—a familiar face, that of her former colleague Oscar Ionesco. He now goes by the name Trent Riley, but it was he. She went to see for herself and her doubts fled. She watched for a time, learning he was a sergeant in the Docks precinct and that he was on the take, working for Mister Wednesday. She suspected that wasn't all, and after a few weeks of following him, she found he met with other suspected cultists in an old inn huddled away in a side street in the Old City. She'd kill him, but he's too highly placed: Doing so would bring reprisals. She can't reveal what she knows because no one would believe her. What she needs is help, and fast.

Captain Jacob Lydon

Captains Council Member

"In my years at sea, I found three things to be more important than anything else. A good drink warms your soul. A good fight warms your heart. And a good whore warms your body. A man who gets all three regularly is the luckiest of 'em all."

Captain Lydon (*male human master*) may be one of the best known members of the Captains' Council, but he won his fame with his exploits on *The Gambit,* the pirate ship he captained for some twenty years. A reckless freebooter, he sailed all the seas of the world, following up any lead for treasure no matter how mysterious or dangerous. Sometimes these ventures paid off; most times, they didn't. But in every case, he always came home to Freeport with a new bloodcurdling tale of the high seas with which to regale his audience.

Background

Lydon came into this world on the deck of a storm-tossed slave ship. His mother, a captive of some wicked elven slaver, a brutal pirate named Allethra Sharpe, and was left on the deck to die when she refused the advances of the first mate. Very pregnant, she held on for dear life and pushed out her son into the world despite the lashing rain and wind that threatened to toss her and her squalling babe into the depths. He and his mother escaped the slavers, stealing a boat a few years later, and were eventually picked up by another pirate named Sly Johnson. The old rogue took the woman as his wife and made the ship a home for the young man.

Lydon spent most of his youth on the ship, but eventually signed on as the cabin boy for another crew. He changed ships several times over the next decade until he became second mate on *The Gambit*, an old sloop that had seen its fair share of action. Several years later, Lydon took command from the retiring captain, hired a new crew from Freeport and spent the next two decades exploring every corner of the world.

Eventually, as is the case for most sailors, Lydon grew weary of the dangers of the seas and wanted to settle down. Unable to think of a better place, he chose Freeport—it matched his disposition, after all. There he tried to start a shipping business, but his incorrigible gambling and an endless series of bad decisions left him destitute. Desperate, he flailed about looking for a way out of his debts. And then it hit him. Politics. You don't ever see poor politicians. So it was then that Lydon started angling for a seat on the Captains' Council.

For the next couple of years, he had a few close brushes with power. The Sea Lord Drac had intended on installing him to be a puppet on the council, but with Drac's sudden and bloody end, Lydon's chances went up in smoke. Naturally, he viewed this as a minor setback, and instead turned to the people. He organized several outrageous Swagfest parties, made rounds to all the drinking holes where he'd shake hands and swap lies. He'd even kiss a baby if there was a woman crazy enough to let him. Eventually his popularity paid off, and he won a seat on the council around the same time as when Maeorgan became the Sea Lord. With the salary he earns from his work, he's been able to pay down his debts, but to his dismay has discovered there is such a thing as a poor politician: him.

Appearance

Lydon is a tall fat man, with a mouthful of brown rotting teeth, squinty eyes, and patchy hair on his head. His chin is always covered with stubble and he reeks of cheap rum. He tries to keep up his appearance to fit his station and sometimes buys expensive clothes from the Street of Dreams, but no matter how much coin he spends, he almost always comes off looking shabby, as if he just washed up on the shore.

Personality

Loud, boisterous, crass, and every bit the pirate he always was, Lydon is a colorful character with simple tastes and grand ambitions. He spends his money on drinking, smoking, and loose women. When he bothers to go to the council meetings, he's usually drunk.

Secrets, Goals, and Plans

Captain Lydon plays the fool well, and for the most part, it's a cover for a desperate man. The coin he earns for being on the Council has



made some headway into paying down his debts, but it's not been fast enough and his creditors pressuring on him to cough up what he owes. Not all want money, though, and some—specifically Mister Wednesday and Finn—are willing to take information as compensation. Lydon hates it, but he likes being able to walk, so he grudgingly feeds information about the Council's doings to the crime lords.

Of course, the underworld isn't the only source of Lydon's woes. During one of his many exploits, Lydon fathered a son in the port city of Silverus. He left the lad in the care of his whore mother, but had always sent money to make sure they had food, shelter, and a decent, if hard, life. Three years ago, a masked man with a Continental accent paid him a visit. He told Lydon he and his organization were now caring for the boy. They would continue to make sure the boy was healthy so long as Lydon spied for them. Lydon refused, not believing the agent, and threw the man out. Three weeks later, the head of the boy's mother arrived. Lydon had no choice; he has been a spy ever since.

Adventure Seeds

Mister Wednesday, Finn, or both find out that Lydon has been giving their rival the same information. One of these crime lord pressures Lydon to push the council into stepping up security in the other's district. Lydon hesitates and when he does, his favorite courtesan winds up very dead. Lydon gives in and forces the issue, spending the dregs of his political clout. Naturally, this comes to the attention of the mysterious agent, who is not at all happy about this new development and sends Lydon one of the boy's hands to wrestle him back under control. Desperate, Lydon discretely looks for tough mercenaries to help him get his boy back.

Draegar Redblade

Hobgoblin Commander

"The strong rule. The weak serve. Even the humans understand this—but they think gold is enough to make you strong. They will learn their error at our hands."

Draegar Redblade (*male hobgoblin journeyman*) is the leader of Freeport's hobgoblin community and the nonhuman labor gangs of Bloodsalt. Redblade has worked his way through the ranks of the city's criminal gangs to take control of a district, but his plans don't stop there; his ultimate goal is make Freeport the capital of a hobgoblin empire, with himself as supreme ruler.

Background

Draegar grew to maturity in the Redblade clan, a martial tribe of hobgoblins on the Continent. Skilled in combat and tactics, Draegar rose to prominence in the clan and was marked to become the tribe's blademaster. He, however, had other ideas. He had no interest in continuing the long and ultimately pointless struggle against the local elves for control of a single forest; he wanted more.

Eight years ago, Draegar came to Freeport looking for work as a mercenary, and found himself a place in a Scurvytown gang. He moved through the ranks of the district's underworld, slowly gaining a reputation—and slowly bringing his clan brothers over from the Continent. The hobgoblins worked as guards and private muscle throughout Freeport, but their loyalty was only to Draegar himself.

When the Captains' Council began recruiting orc and hobgoblin labor from the Continent to work on the Reclamation Project, Draegar saw his opportunity. Knowing human troops would be unable or unwilling to police the savage races effectively, he offered the council the services of himself and his followers. The Redblade Militia became the law in Bloodsalt, and Draegar its warlord in all but name; he answers to the Captains' Council, but as long as the Project continues and no one important complains about his Militia, he can do as he wishes.

Most of Freeport's gangsters would be happy with that, but not Draegar Redblade. Bloodsalt is just the beginning.

Appearance

Draegar is a bit short for a hobgoblin, standing just under six feet in height. What he lacks in height he makes up for in muscle, with a solid, athletic frame. His skin is dark red and he has a thick mane of red-brown hair. He carries his ancestral sword at all times, a potent blade rumored to inflict deep, bleeding wounds. When prepared for combat he wears chainmail and a shield.

Personality

Draegar is careful and calculating, in both day-to-day life and in combat, never letting his anger take control. Preferring slow, carefully planned responses to hasty actions, Draegar is remarkably patient and even-tempered (especially for a goblinoid) and is willing to make many sacrifices in order to secure an eventual victory. His weakness is his belief in the superiority of hobgoblins over all other species, and he may underestimate "lesser" races, especially halflings or goblins.

Secrets, Goals, and Plans

Draegar's ultimate goal is to transform Freeport into a naval outpost for the hobgoblin race, and use the city as the rallying point for an alliance of hobgoblin clans, setting the stage for a new era of goblinoid power. (He would, of course, be the supreme clan warlord in this scenario.) Far from stupid, Draegar realizes this is a long-term goal, but it can't be *too* long-term; he wants to be young enough to enjoy his power once he obtains it.

Knowing he doesn't have enough troops and followers to seize Freeport by force, Draegar looks for ways to tip the odds in his favor. Ideally, this would involve driving away or eliminating much of Freeport's population, especially the pirates and armed watchmen, so his hobgoblins could attack and enslave those remaining. He's not capable of organizing such a situation himself (not yet), so Draegar is open to alliances with other groups, possibly those with magical abilities but lacking in martial strength.

In the short term, Draegar focuses on consolidating his power over Bloodsalt and its inhabitants. The orcs of the south side are a constant annoyance (and ancient rivals of his clan), and he'd like to either wipe them out or bring them completely under his control. His main obstacle is his need to answer to the Captains' Council, who would remove him from authority if he acted too openly against his enemies.

Adventure Seeds

Motions are before the Captains' Council to ban or restrict orcs from visiting Freeport. It's a policy applauded by the traders and sailors who've been attacked by orc pirates, but the financial backing for the move is coming from Draegar's coffers; he wants to reduce the strength of the orcs, then finally take control of them. When Torya Irontooth (see **Bloodsalt**) mobilizes political resistance, she becomes a target—and a symbol of the "uppity orc problem." Helping her and her community is a lesson in politics Freeport style—rough, dirty, and bloody.

Draegar wants to eliminate most of Freeport's population. So do the Brotherhood of the Yellow Sign and the sea devils that worship Lotan. It's a surprisingly subtle alliance—a battle fought at Freeport's dining table. The hobgoblin militia moves to take over the farms of A'Val, poisoning food with the help of Naylor Whitelick, while the sea devils attack fishermen. As disease and famine afflict Freeport, the city's defenders will have to fight in the tunnels of A'Val, the depths of the sea, and the streets of Bloodsalt to save their fellow citizens.

Enoch Holliver

Commissioner of the Freeport Watch

"On the battlefield, you can see your foes. In Freeport, your enemies could be anywhere."

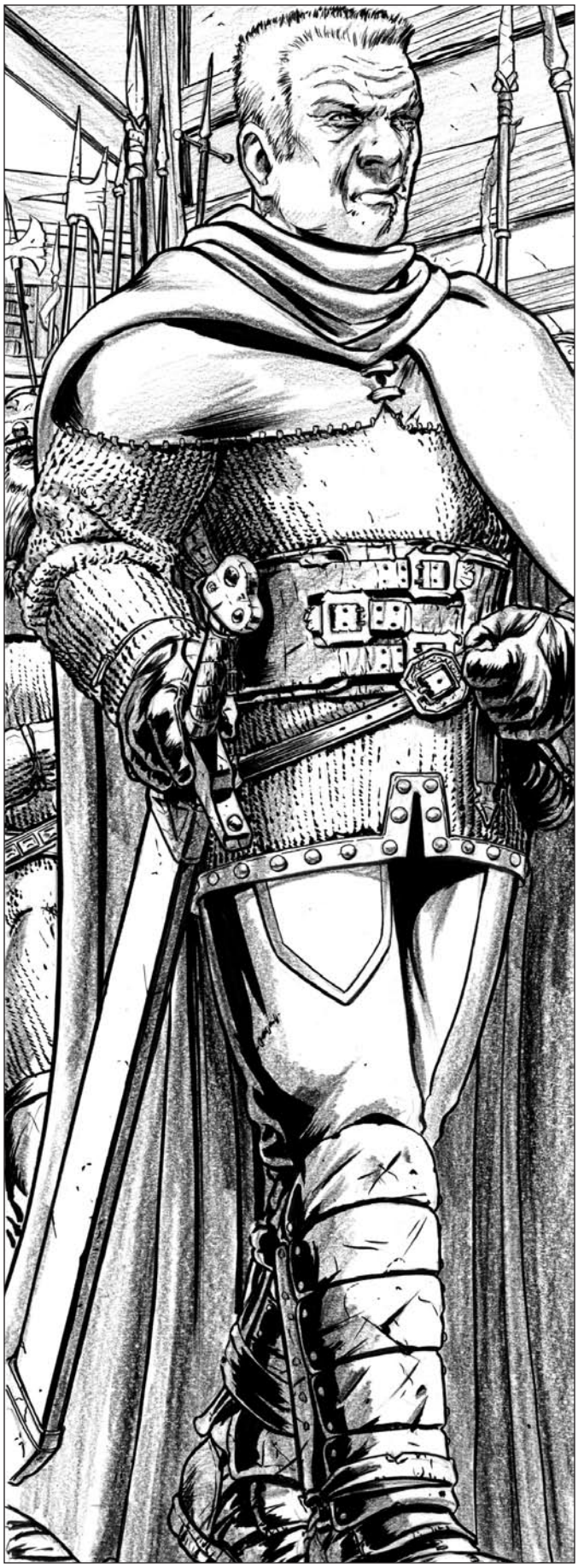
Enoch Holliver (*male human journeyman*) is a member of the Captains' Council and the Commissioner of the Freeport Watch. As the captain of the Viridian Company of mercenaries, he had a storied career on the Continent before retiring to Freeport.

Background

Enoch Holliver is a Freeport native, but he spent most of his adult life elsewhere. When he was fifteen, he stowed away on a ship and made his way to the Continent. There he joined the Warg Company, a mercenary unit of some renown, under an assumed name. As Solomon Froste the young Freeporter became a seasoned mercenary. By the age of eighteen, he was leading his own warband. At twenty, he was a captain. He gained a reputation as a ruthless and effective commander, and "Froste's Raiders" became rightly feared on the battlefield.

A few years later Holliver and his band were riding by a halfling village in a disputed border region. Arrows from the village killed two of his men, so Froste's Raiders charged into town and demanded that the halflings give up the snipers. The mayor refused and slingstones and more arrows pelted the mercenaries. The raiders burned the village to the ground and slew every halfling over the age of twelve. The Weeping Willows Massacre, as the incident was soon called, made Froste's Raiders notorious. Bounties were offered for its members and a huge price was put on Solomon Froste's head.





Jander Baldewyn, commander of the Warg Company, suggested a solution. He would send Holliver to another part of the Continent to raise a new mercenary company. Only the two of them would know the source of the funding and the identity of the new captain. It amused Enoch Holliver to take back his given name to hide his identity, so this he did and then founded the Viridian Company. He led this new mercenary unit for seven successful years and no one ever had any idea the famed Enoch Holliver was the notorious butcher of Weeping Willows.

During Freeport's succession crisis, Enoch Holliver returned home. He intended to retire and live comfortably on the gold he had earned on the Continent. In that period of instability, however, Holliver found the support of a military man of his reputation was very much desirable to the rival political factions of Freeport. Marilise Maeorgan aggressively pursued Holliver and told him to name his price. He asked for a seat on the Captains' Council and the command of the Sea Lord's Guard. She proposed the Sea Lord's Guard/Freeport Watch split and offered him command of the latter. He took the deal. Within a year of his return to the city where he had been born with nothing, Enoch Holliver became one of its most respected citizens.

Appearance

Enoch Holliver is an imposing figure. He tops six feet and keeps his brown hair cut short in military style. He wears an unadorned uniform of the Freeport Watch and always carries a sword and dagger. Although approaching forty years of age he remains in impressive physical condition.

Personality

Holliver appears to be a gruff and straightforward military man who always speaks his mind. This is a cultivated personality developed during his years as a mercenary captain. He found his employers liked to deal with simple men with uncomplicated motives. In fact, Holliver is a more skilled politician than he lets on. He is cold and calculating and has a keen knack for self-preservation. When he moves against his enemies, they rarely see it coming.

Secrets, Goals, and Plans

What no one in Freeport knows is Holliver retains his ties to the Warg Company and Jander Baldewyn remains his friend and ally. He is behind the establishment of the Warg Company in Freeport and he has recruited heavily from company veterans. Now there are many ex-mercenaries in both the Freeport Watch and the Sea Lord's Guard. Should Marilise Maeorgan ever turn against him, it is likely Holliver could seize power with the backing of the military. He wants to spend at least another year infiltrating men into Freeport before making serious plans to become the next Sea Lord, however. At the moment, Marilise Maeorgan thinks of him as a loyal soldier. That's just what Enoch Holliver wants.

Adventure Hooks

A survivor of the Weeping Willows Massacre, now grown up, recognizes Holliver on a trip to Freeport. He attempts to blackmail Holliver, demanding an outrageous sum for his silence. A former mercenary secretly working for Holliver hires the PCs to go to the Continent to take care of the blackmailer, claiming he's a notorious assassin. If the PCs investigate before taking out the "assassin," they discover they are pawns in someone else's game. Can they trace it back to Holliver and uncover his dark secret?

Finn

Eastern District Grime Lord

"Only a fool resorts to the blade when cunning will do the job. While the thugs kill each other, I'll be in the shadows taking my cut."

Finn (*male halfling master*) is the crime lord who rules the Eastern District. Despite his small stature, he is one of the most feared denizens of Freeport. His operation, known as the Syndicate, is the real law in the Eastern District, and Finn's influence stretches out across the city.

Background

When Finn was younger, he had the good humor and devil-may-care attitude common to his people. Though a rogue to be sure, Finn joined an adventuring band and distinguished himself repeatedly over the course of several years. Indeed, half a world away from Freeport, Finn is still known as a hero. Such heroism, however, had its price. Finn watched his best friends die in the defense of a small outpost called Lonely Shore, during which he had nearly every bone in his body broken when a demon threw him through a wall. He survived thanks to the timely application of healing magic, but while he recovered physically, no spell could regenerate his spirit after that day.

Twenty-five years ago, Finn came to Freeport. He felt he had given enough to the world, and it was time for him to take care of himself. At that time, a crime wave was crippling the Eastern District. Sensing opportunity, he used the loot from his adventuring days to take over the Halfling Benevolent Association and build up a group of followers. He then went toe-to-toe with the gangs of thieves terrorizing the Eastern District. His gang bloodied them to such a degree they all left the district and never returned.

Since then Finn has been the unchallenged leader of the Eastern District. He has seen Sea Lords come and go, and has always managed to survive and expand, no matter Freeport's difficulties. Over time his stranglehold over the Eastern District has become nigh unbreakable. Nothing happens in his territory without his knowledge; he has agents and informers in every other district in town as well. A quiet challenge to Finn's status has been brewing in the Warehouse District, in the form of Mister Wednesday, but open conflict between the two crime lords is not yet upon Freeport.

Appearance

Finn is well into middle age, but he has avoided developing the paunch so common to his people. He remains thin and lithe and his reflexes are lightning-quick. He maintains an enormous, ever-changing wardrobe, ranging from near rags to the height of garishness. He rarely wears the same outfit twice, as this makes him harder to pick out from a distance. He also maintains several disguises, allowing him to go incognito around the city and pick up the word on the street. His nondescript brown hair and eyes help him blend in.

Personality

When people meet Finn for the first time, they are often surprised to find out what an agreeable fellow he is. He smiles frequently and always has a jest ready. His sarcasm and quick wit are indeed legendary in the Syndicate. Beneath this likeable exterior, however, lurks an utter ruthlessness that has surprised many opponents over the years. For Finn, though, it rarely gets personal. He does what he must to keep his business on top. Personal vendettas are never good for the Syndicate.

Secrets, Goals, and Plans

As far as Finn is concerned, his darkest secret is that he was altruistic when he was a young adventurer. He never discusses that part of his life because he doesn't want anyone in Freeport getting the idea that deep down he's a soft touch. These days what's important to Finn are maintaining his hold over the Eastern District and expanding the power of the Syndicate.

It has become clear to Finn that something will have to be done about Mister Wednesday. He does not want to engage in all-out war and he believes Mister Wednesday doesn't either. Such things are bad for business. Nor will Finn let such an upstart challenge him. The conflict bubbles below the surface and it won't be long before it boils over.

Adventure Hooks

A Syndicate runner traveling through the sewers falls through a hole and ends up in an ancient tunnel. Finn wants to know where it goes but he doesn't want to endanger his own people on such an expedition. They haven't been trained for exploring tunnel complexes beneath the city. A discrete group of adventurers is thus required to scout out this find, so Finn can decide if this is something he can turn to his advantage. If the adventurers lead a horde of degenerate serpent people into the middle of the Eastern District, Finn will be most displeased.

K'Stallo

High Priest of Yig

"It is our duty to bring forth our lost brothers from the abyss of savagery and restore them to the culture they lost. I take this responsibility seriously and nothing and no one will deter me from my objective."

K'Stallo (*male serpent person journeyman*) was one of the first civilized serpent people to return to the Serpent's Teeth to recover his kind's lost and degenerate kin. Although his civilization was shattered in the great catastrophe, he and others like him have retained much of their learning and talents for magic. Using these invaluable tools, K'Stallo intends to restore his lost kin to greatness.

Background

In the aftermath of the great catastrophe that destroyed the serpent people's civilization and sank their continent beneath the waves, the survivors either fled to other lands or buried themselves deep beneath the ground. Those who fled tried to preserve what they had lost, in the faint hope of one day rebuilding. The rest hid from the world, either degenerating into brutish monsters or withdrawing to contemplate the meaning of their tragedy.

K'Stallo was one of those who clung to the old ways, who remained loyal to Yig but lacked the lore and teaching of their ancient cult. Memories faded, and belief in their god waned. He and his fellows

dwelled in a small, isolated mountain village, far from any roads or cities. They were content with their seclusion, unmindful of what had happened in their time hidden away from the world. And then Lucius discovered them. This wandering human possessed by something else spoke to them of the wider world and what had become of the other survivors. Lucius's tales intrigued K'Stallo, leading him to believe there was a chance something else might have survived on these distant islands. K'Stallo followed Lucius to Freeport. When he arrived, he assumed the guise of an attendant. He watched, studied, and learned, working with Lucius to uncover what they could about the fate of his civilization.

One night, he happened along Thuron, the high priest of the God of Knowledge, dead in his chambers. K'Stallo, unsure of what to do, assumed the high priests' likeness and took his place as head of the temple. His greater status granted him access to the forbidden tomes and most treasured scrolls. This allowed him to recover incredible lore about his people and the cult of Yig. His obsession with his studies made him blind to the growing danger of the Brotherhood of the Yellow Sign that had also infested the temple of the Knowledge God.

He realized his foolish error after the attack by the Brotherhood on the temple. He knew he had to intervene in the matters plaguing the city. He revealed his true nature to Egil and his friends, offering his assistance in defeating the foul Brotherhood. In the end, the Brotherhood was stopped, their foul plots thwarted. K'Stallo continued posing as Thuron for a time, but once he exhausted the temple of information about his people, he handed over the title of high priest to his friend Egil. K'Stallo could then be free to devote all of his time to recovering his lost kin.



Appearance

K'Stallo has worn many masks in the years he's called Freeport home. Like other civilized serpent people, K'Stallo can assume the likeness of humanoid races, letting him pose as a high priest, a dealer of ancient artifacts, an explorer, and even a wizard during his time in the city. In his true form, he is slightly taller than is an ordinary human but more slender. He has the head of a golden-eyed snake. Green scales cover his body, down to his clawed hands and feet. Unlike his uncivilized brethren, he wears robes, often the vestments of Yig, being ochre robes trimmed with emerald green.

Personality

K'Stallo is committed to his work. Learned and studious, he is the pinnacle of refinement, versed in numerous languages and the histories of dozens of cultures. While somewhat detached from humanity, he has a fondness for them and occasionally offers his services to those he trusts.

Secrets, Goals, and Plans

With K'Stallo's early successes, more serpent people have come to Freeport to ensure work continues. K'Stallo welcomes these individuals, believing any assistance can only help his cause. Of late, there has been some growing division in his ranks. The problem rests with an important schism in his faith. Many members of the cult of Yig see their god as a destroyer, a being that demands his followers subjugate all other races and rule them with an iron fist. K'Stallo is a member of the Hitthkai, a faction that sees Yig as the father of wisdom and the soul of Valossan culture. K'Stallo sees education as the solution, filling their empty minds with the wisdom of Yig. Unfortunately, his rivals have grown weary with the slow pace, blaming the humans in the city for being the obstacles to achieving their true purpose. If the serpent people could conquer them, they could use them as slaves to excavate more Valossan ruins and recover their peoples' artifacts and relics at a much faster rate.

Thus far, K'Stallo's great wisdom and experience in dealing with humans has kept these voices at bay, but even he admits the progress has been frustrating. He fears his influence may be waning and hotter heads may soon prevail. If they do, K'Stallo knows war will surely follow.

Adventure Seeds

K'Stallo is an expert on the Brotherhood of the Yellow Sign. One evening, after emerging from the Temple of Yig (see **Chapter Twelve: Underside**), he sees a strange sign in the heavens. A constellation of stars shines eerily from above, casting a sickly yellow light onto all the land. Each night thereafter, the stars grow brighter and seem to move, forming a pattern. K'Stallo suspects that when arranged, they will form the Sign and plunge Freeport and possibly the world into madness. He rushes to meet with Egil, and they begin searching for the Brotherhood cult, enlisting any heroes with the courage to follow.

After yet another failure to produce results, T'lother takes command over the civilized serpent people. He commands K'Stallo to step aside so that the serpent people can begin their campaign to enslave the city. K'Stallo has no choice; he will not betray his people, but before his fellows can act, he slips away to warn his friends to flee the city before it is too late.

Marilise Maeorgan

Sea Lord of Freeport

"Tell the prince I'll be happy to consider his offer once he faces me blade to blade. If he wins, he may court me. If I win, I can take his life. I eagerly await his answer."

Marilise Maeorgan (*female human journeyman*) has been the city's Sea Lord for the past four years. Her family has a long history in Freeport but she is the first Maeorgan to become its ruler. To the surprise of just about everyone, Marilise's reign has not been a disaster.

Background

Marilise had the good fortune to be born into one of Freeport's most powerful families. Her father Marshal was a powerful merchant and she and her brothers were groomed for positions amongst the city's elite. Even before the untimely death of Marshal's wife, he ruled the family without question. Marshal had a plan for his children, even if they didn't realize it when they were young. The eldest boy, Armin, was to enter politics and take a seat on the Captains' Council. The middle child, Melkior, was to take over the family business. The youngest, Marilise, was to be used in a political marriage to increase the prominence and power of the Maeorgan family.

What Marshal did not figure into his plans was his own blood. As a strong and willful man he bred strong and willful children. This served Armin well, as he did indeed become a member of the Captains' Council. Melkior, however, was never content to live in his brother's shadow. He resented Armin's position and considered it rightly his. Milton Drac saw the bitterness in young Melkior and filled his ears with poison. A few months before Milton became Sea Lord, Melkior murdered his elder brother. This allowed him to take Armin's seat on the Captains' Council. He became Milton Drac's right hand man, eventually joining the Brotherhood of the Yellow Sign.

Marilise meanwhile was developing into a teenaged hellion. Her father wanted her to learn the rules of etiquette; she learned swordsmanship instead. Her father wanted her to master the tea ceremony; she caroused in low-class bars. After the third time she stowed away on a ship and had to be dragged back to Freeport, Marshal realized he wouldn't be able to marry her off to anyone. If she wanted to leave Freeport and get into fights, Marshal knew just the place to send her: a Continental military academy run by the clergy of the God of War. Four years in that environment taught the girl about discipline, though it did not entirely quell her rebellious streak.

When she was twenty-two, Marilise returned to Freeport. Her father took her as his assistant and began to teach her about the family business and politics in Freeport. Melkior meanwhile descended into madness with Milton Drac. Shortly before Drac's fall, Melkior took his sister to one of the Brotherhood of the Yellows Sign's secret meetings. He sought to impress her but Marilise recoiled in horror. She realized Melkior had killed Armin, even if her father refused to believe it. Marilise could not bring herself to tell her father the truth about her brother. Fate spared her that duty at least, for it was only a few months later that Melkior and Milton Drac were killed and the mad scheme of the Brotherhood of the Yellow Sign stopped.



During the Succession Crisis Marilise took over her brother's seat on the Captains' Council. The factions squabbled endlessly and months passed. At first, she supported Arias Soderheim, but she soon discovered he was a snake. When Soderheim's plan to become Sea Lord blew up in his face, Marilise seized the opportunity to put forward her own bid. This she did of her own volition and without her father's help. If she was going to become Sea Lord, she would do it herself, on her own terms. At the age of twenty-nine she became Sea Lord, only the second woman to do so in the city's history.

Appearance

At six feet tall, Marilise is a tall and statuesque woman. She has long, curly black hair, full lips, and piercing grey eyes. Since she understands that the people of Freeport want a strong and tough leader, she spurns ostentation and dons the garb of a sea captain. She wears a magical longsword named Reaverbane wherever she goes, and has shown Freeporters that she knows how to use it on several occasions. This blade was forged long ago to fight the city's pirates but was taken as a battle trophy by one of Freeport's captains. Marilise took the sword on becoming Sea Lord, considering it a suitable symbol of the city's resilience.

Personality

Marilise is a no nonsense Sea Lord. In the end, she always does what she wants, but she has learned the value of taking council and playing politics before doing so. She affects a larger than life personality because she believes that is what being a good Sea Lord requires. She is smart enough to realize, however, she still has much to learn about the art of leadership.

Sea Lord Slays Two in Nighttime Ambush

~The Shipping News

Although she rarely shows it (that wouldn't be smart politics), she distrusts religion deeply. This has its roots in her time at the military academy, but it is the fate of Melkior that made it bloom. She has seen what religion does to people and she wants no part of it.

Secrets, Goals, and Plans

Marilise wants to be remembered as the greatest Sea Lord since the original Captain Drac. She plans to do this by giving the city decades of prosperity under her rule. She believes Freeport works best when it is free to engage in ruthless capitalism. When distracted by wars, succession crises, or insane cultists, the city suffers. Marilise strives to provide the stability that will let privateers, merchants, and sea captains prosper. This will keep money flowing through the city. While that means there will be increased corruption, this will only grease the wheels of commerce. And if Marilise, her family, and her allies benefit most from that corruption, that just means they are the best players of the game.

The Sea Lord's biggest secret is that she never plans to marry. As soon as she ascended, the marriage offers poured in. Continental nations thought they could take Freeport with one cunningly arranged union. Marilise will have none of it. She took the Sea Lordship and it will remain hers alone. She dallies with whatever men and women strike her fancy, but marriage is not for her.

Adventure Hooks

Marilise discovers that Cadiccen, High Priest of the God of War, is secretly a cultist of Abaddon. Rather than have the Sea Lord's Guard deal with the problem, she calls in a famed witch hunter of the God of Retribution to do the job. She hopes this witch hunter will not only root out the cult, but also cause strife in the Temple District. If the various temples are at each others' throats, that will reduce the power of Freeport's religious community and open the door for her to change the nature of the Temple District.

Marilise decides to sponsor a grand tournament to bring more wealth into Freeport and raise the city's prestige on the Continent. A tourney field is prepared northwest of the Cluster, and knights and warriors from many nations attend. What will happen when codes of chivalry clash with the pirate traditions of Freeport?

Masson Francisco

Speaker of Libertyville

"The complacent Captains that rule Freeport are no better than me, and I am no better than them... save in skill! For they cannot steal my freedom, but I can—and will—steal everything that matters to them."

Masson Francisco (*male human journeyman*) is the leader of the anarchist settlement of Libertyville, although he prefers the term "speaker." Masson claims descent from the original Captain Francisco, co-founder of Freeport. His avowed intention is to bring down the Captains' Council, replace Freeport's law with the old Pirate's Code, and make it into the true corsair's haven it was meant to be—and he has several crews of buccaneers ready to help him out.

Background

Masson grew up the son of a nobleman's servant, and learned to resent the strictures and expectations of "civilized" society. Rules and laws, taxes and rents, peasants and nobles… all were designed to channel power to those who deserved it least. Rejecting his place in the pecking order, he stole money from his mother's employer and ran off to the city. Masson learned about history, politics, and philosophy; he also learned about Freeport, piracy, and the old buccaneer's code. In the story of Captain Francisco he saw a dream of freedom; in the acts of Captain Drac he saw betrayal and cowardice. He sold his books, stole a pistol, and went to sea, determined to find liberty.

After years of fighting, stealing, and the pirate's life, Masson Francisco became the captain of his own ship, *Liberty's Lady,* and crystallized his ideas. In his eyes, freedom and responsibility were the same thing. A man (or woman) should live as he pleased, as long as he was prepared to live with the consequences of his actions. His message, delivered in plain language, attracted many of his fellow corsairs; soon his single ship swelled to a small fleet, to a *movement*. Francisco looked for a place to create the "pirate utopia" of his dreams. He found it in Libertyville, Freeport's failing cast-off, and the crews of the newly named Liberty Movement made it their own.

As speaker for Libertyville, Francisco is the closest thing the settlement has to a leader, but even he has no power to command his fellows—and that's just the way he wants it. He leads by example, not by decree, whether raiding passing ships, luring business from Freeport, or settling disputes between pirates. Masson knows the eyes of Freeport are upon him, and that the leaders of the city desperately want him to fail; if Libertyville succeeded, it would mean everything they held precious was hollow and meaningless. And Masson will do anything to prove that true.

Appearance

Masson Francisco is a fit, moderately attractive man with long blond hair and a neatly trimmed moustache and goatee. He dresses in the mismatched finery and cobbled-together regalia of a pirate captain; his clothes are cleaner on formal occasions, but no less eye-catching. He almost always goes armed with a cutlass and a brace of pistols in his belt.

Personality

Driven, passionate, and erudite, Masson Francisco could have been a scholar. Instead, he's embraced a life of theft, battle, and plunder without regret. Francisco is a true believer, an ideologue who holds the Pirate's Code to be a greater work than any book of law or social

contract. "Personal responsibility" is more than a phrase to him—it's his god. Despite his fervor, he's no wide-eyed ranter; whether drinking with the bilge-rats of Libertyville or discussing philosophy at the Freeport Institute, he's personable, friendly, and always willing to listen.

Secrets, Goals, and Plans

Masson desires nothing less than worldwide revolution, the scrapping of the rule of law and its replacement with liberty and personal responsibility. He also realizes, if this *does* happen, it won't be in his lifetime—but if he can start a revolution in Freeport, he can die a happy man. Exactly how that revolution will come about, well, he's still working on that.

His primary focus right now is on establishing Libertyville as a viable alternative port to Freeport, and in doing so show a city can operate without laws or social rules, and that pirates can live as they please and not bend their knee to a Sea Lord or tax collector. When he comes to Freeport he does so to be seen and heard, to spread the word of social change and thrill the daughters of the Merchants' Guild; he's becoming the bogeyman of the landed gentry and upper classes, and that's exactly what he wants.

Masson's only secret is that he is *not* a true heir of the original Captain Francisco; he took the surname when he went to sea years ago. His ancestry shouldn't matter or be as important as his ideology, and it isn't to some of his followers—but if others found out, they might feel betrayed, abandon his cause, or even turn on him.

Adventure Seeds

Not every pirate in the Serpent's Teeth wants to obey the code or live up to notions of personal responsibility; some of them like Freeport just the way it is. A coalition of pirates, sponsored by the Captains' Council, pits itself against Libertyville, and a buccaneer's war breaks out across the islands. It's every sea dog for himself, unless Francisco's allies can learn about the coalition's secret war chest—then it's every sea dog in a race to steal it first!

When he learns a wealthy Freeport merchant has been trading in slaves, Francisco decides to make a bold statement; he marches straight up to the man's dinner table at Maurice's and shoots him in cold blood. He's arrested and put on trial for murder, but refuses to defend himself—he won't recognize the court's authority to prosecute! Slavery is illegal in Freeport, so if someone else can assemble evidence of the merchant's crimes, Francisco will go free—but the enemies of the Libertyville Movement aren't about to let that happen. Can Masson's allies save him from the hangman's noose—and does he want them to try?

Mendor Maeorgan

Corrupted Nobleman

"I will be more than Sea Lord of Freeport; I will be its King! And if I have to reduce the city to bloody ashes in order to rule it, that's acceptable. That's desirable."

Mendor Maeorgan (*male human journeyman*) is known throughout the Merchant District as the Sea Lord's dissolute cousin, a wealthy rake who cares for little but money, women, and rowdy parties. That's an image Maeorgan has worked to cultivate while hiding his secret activities. At various times he has been a gang leader, an aspiring crime



The Jaundiced Altar

This loathsome artifact is a block of obsidian and marble, shot through with veins the color of human fat and rotting meat. The Yellow Sign, symbol of the Unspeakable One, is carved—or possibly *gnawed*—into its surface. The Altar is perpetually slick with a film of poisonous grease; almost anyone exposed to it is slowly transformed into a servant of the Unspeakable One.

The Jaundiced Altar was originally kept under heavy guard by the Brotherhood of the Yellow Sign; they moved it to the shrine under Manor Maeorgan in the tumult following Milton Drac's death. The priests who hid it there have all died in the intervening years and the remaining cultists in Freeport have lost track of the stone—and they desperately want it back.

lord, and a frightened recluse. Now, after discovering a forbidden artifact, he has become something far more dangerous.

Background

Completely unacquainted with ethics or responsibility, Mendor Maeorgan grew up believing power and wealth were his by right. He originally wanted a seat on the Captains' Council, but his cousin Marilise claimed that; when he couldn't just buy a seat, he decided to take power wherever he could find it. Mendor became leader of the Joy Boys and focused the gang's energy into crime, with the aim of taking over Freeport's underworld.

Freeport's underworld wasn't interested. Mister Wednesday, the crime lord of the Warehouse District, decided to nip his rival's career in the bud. During the Great Green Fire, Wednesday's men murdered seven members of the Joy Boys, and made it very clear to Maeorgan that, Sea Lord's cousin or not, he would be taking a long walk off a short pier if he stayed in the game. For the first time in his life, Maeorgan was stymied—and utterly terrified. The Joy Boys disbanded and Mendor went into hiding for more than two years.

Rattling around his manor, bored and frightened, Maeorgan discovered the secret door that led to a lost shrine to the Unspeakable One, buried in the sewers beneath the streets of the Merchant District. In that forgotten room, he uncovered the Jaundiced Altar and became infected by its toxic substance. That should have been the end for Mendor, but somehow he held the Primal God's presence back, through sheer willpower, to claim that power for himself.

Mendor Maeorgan emerged from that cellar changed, his body and mind adapting to channel—to *steal*—the power of the Unspeakable One. He recruited a new gang, the Rakeshames, who are far more violent and dangerous than the Joy Boys ever were. The gang parties in Manor Maeorgan, while Mendor spends most nights in the hidden shrine. A sick yellow fire burns inside him, and he dreams of unleashing that flame upon Freeport. He may soon have the power to make his dream a reality.

Appearance

Mendor Maeorgan is a wiry man in his late twenties. He was always considered quite handsome, but nowadays his feral, intense expression and yellow-hazel eyes are both disturbing and unnaturally compelling. He wears expensive, well-tailored clothing, but sometimes neglects to change it for days on end, leaving his finery tattered and dirty. His clothing hides the scales, sores, and pox marks slowly covering his body. These signs of corruption are why Mendor always wears gloves.

Personality

Mendor Maeorgan is insane, but he's very good at controlling his insanity. He hungers for destruction and violence, and sees other beings as tools or victims, but he can hide that and appear every inch the charming aristocrat when he wishes. It's only when the witnesses stroll away, impressed by the charisma of the Sea Lord's devilish cousin, that the mask slips and the madness crawls back into his face.

Secrets, Goals, and Plans

Mendor Maeorgan's greatest secret is that the ichor of the Unspeakable One pumps in his veins. He possesses a number of supernatural abilities, including exceptional strength and resilience, the ability to mesmerize weak-willed people with his gaze and voice, and senses that extend to reading minds and seeing into dreams. As his transformation progresses, he may gain greater and more terrible powers.

His other weapon is his gang, the Rakeshames. They're not a secret group—everyone in the Merchant District knows about them—but no one realizes they're more than a pack of bored, irresponsible aristocrats. Most of them have been brainwashed into unquestioning loyalty to Maeorgan, and a few have been mutated by the Jaundiced Altar's power.

Maeorgan has stolen a measure of unholy power for his own ends. As it happens, those ends are rather similar to those of the Unspeakable One—chaos, violence, and destruction for its own sake. Mendor wants to be the King of Freeport, but he wants it to burn first; he hungers to rule a city of atrocity, and to hear the screams of anyone who would dare keep him from his birthright. And more than anything else, he wants revenge on those who have stood in his way.

Adventure Seeds

Several aristocratic families are butchered in their sleep, leaving the Merchant District terrified. Investigators piece together a conspiracy involving the Canting Crew and the gangs of Scurvytown. The Captains' Council call out the Sea Lord's Guard and the streets of Freeport erupt in battles between the servants of the wealthy and the armed thieves of the poor district. This is just what Mendor Maeorgan wanted; the murders are actually being carried out by brainwashed Rakeshames, who butcher their families before killing themselves. But can anyone prove that and capture Maeorgan before the battle between haves and have-nots turns into bloody civil revolt?

If starting at the bottom doesn't work, then Maeorgan will start at the top—by killing off his cousin and the rest of the Captains' Council. And what better place to do so than at his gala ball to celebrate the founding of the Freeport Lighthouse, held within the Lighthouse itself? Every noble, dignitary, and powerbroker in the city will be there, and Maeorgan means to kill them all by unleashing the power of the Unspeakable One. That's something the Brotherhood of the Yellow Sign actually oppose—they need that power, and they don't want their plans upset. To stop Mendor, the city's defenders may have to ally with the Brotherhood!

Mister Wednesday

Crime Boss

"Crime's not a sacred mission or a life, boys—it's a job. Like any job, you should be professional in your dealings. You should try to cultivate a good reputation. And you should respect your competitors—and then destroy them. Which brings us to tonight's raid...."

From his fortified home in the Old City, Mister Wednesday (*male human master*) rules the Warehouse District's shadows and nighttime streets. The leader of the Canting Crew, Wednesday is one of Freeport's two lords of the underworld, along with Finn of the Syndicate. That's one crime lord too many, as far as Wednesday's concerned.

Background

Wednesday's past before arriving in Freeport ten years ago is a mystery. He joined a gang, became known as an up-and-coming crook but he didn't stand out from the other gangsters of the city. Then he fell in love, got married, and decided he couldn't support a family as a gangster, but he *could* do so as a crime boss. Wednesday quit his gang and built his own criminal organization, the Canting Crew.

The Canting Crew has been the most successful group to work the Warehouse District, and they dip their fingers into some other districts as well. Wednesday focused his group on nonviolent crimes like smuggling and burglary, staying away from the Syndicate's interests. He recruited thieves new to Freeport, immigrants and travelers, rather than risk hiring Syndicate spies or buying into old feuds. He also made use of Freeport's many orphans as informants; a few years ago, he even opened the Freeport Orphanage as a secret training school.

For years, Mister Wednesday and Finn have worked opposite ends of the city, and have come to dominate the vast bulk of Freeport's criminal activities. When Syndicate and Canting Crew operations have butted heads, Wednesday has always been ready to compromise and negotiate. He didn't do this out of fear or respect; he did it to size up the opposition. And as far as Wednesday's concerned, the opposition has been found wanting.

The word is out on the street in every district, whispered in the corridors of power and the back rooms of taverns. War has come to Freeport, war between Finn and Wednesday, war between the Syndicate and the Crew. And anyone who doesn't pick a side is going to get caught in the crossfire.

Appearance

Wednesday is handsome, fit, and muscled, but has a prematurely lined visage. His eyes, harder and blacker than obsidian, hint at his true nature. He usually wears a wry grin, particularly if he's about to do something terminal. His clothes are finely tailored but not showy.

Personality

Wednesday seems like a nice guy; friendly to all, effusive with his cronies, smitten with his wife, and known for concentrating on nonviolent crimes—which gives many people the impression he's a crook with a heart of gold. Under the facade is as dangerous a gangster



as has ever walked Freeport's streets. He has no compunctions about killing anyone who threatens him or his plans.

Secrets, Goals, and Plans

Mister Wednesday wants nothing less than total control over the Freeport underworld, every single operation and heist; if a mugger lifts a wallet in a Scurvytown alleyway at dusk, he wants a cut on his desk by dawn. It's a big goal, but he's never been one to aim low.

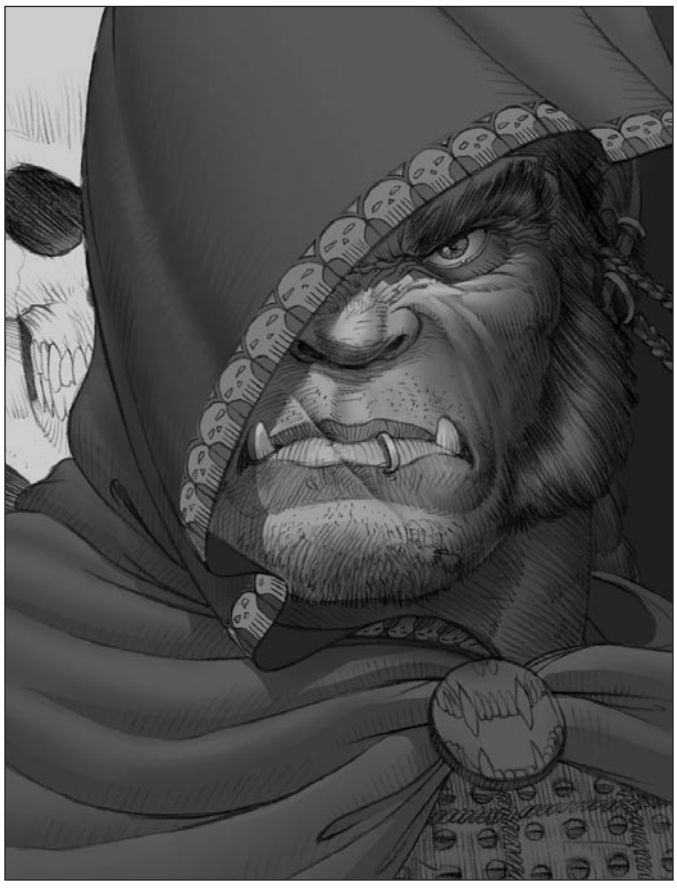
Many of his lieutenants are surprised that the elimination of Finn isn't Wednesday's first priority. But he knows a direct attack on his enemy won't achieve much yet; even if it succeeded, someone else in the Syndicate would fill the void. Better to exhaust Finn's coffers and patience first, to weaken the Syndicate to the point where it can't recover, and then kill Finn. (No one mentions the unthinkable—that if Finn came under personal attack, he might target Wednesday's family in revenge. Were that to happen, all bets would be off.)

Wednesday is currently focused on solidifying his contacts within the Sea Lord's Guard, the Watch, the Merchant District, and even the Captains' Council. Everyone in Freeport accepts the city must have an underworld; Wednesday wants to convince the powers-that-be that the Crew is the better of two necessary evils. Part of this involves bringing Finn's operations to official attention, especially the more violent or despicable crimes; the other part involves paying bribes and making gifts to the powerbrokers of the Old City.

Adventure Seeds

Any unaffiliated criminal in Freeport, whether new in town or just too small-scale to matter, is finding it impossible to stay on the sidelines any more. You have to *prove* your loyalties, and Wednesday wants his new recruits to go the extra mile—to turn around and join the Syndicate, acting as spies in the Eastern District gang. The risks are high, but so are the rewards and the infiltrators will be big names once the dust settles. Assuming the right side wins….

Fire sweeps through the Warehouse District, damaging the Freeport Orphanage; only the hard work of locals (including Canting Crew members) prevents any deaths. Word gets out quickly that it's the Syndicate's doing, and no one wants an orphan-killing bastard like *that* in town. But the truth is that Wednesday arranged the fire himself, while making certain no one would be hurt, in order to frame Finn. When the characters learn the truth, who will they support? And how will they protect themselves from the reprisals of the other crime lord?



Prendag the High Death

Leader of the Bleeding Fist Cult

"In this world, there is only death. The sooner you accept this, the sooner you will enter the higher mysteries of the Bleeding Fist."

One of the more dangerous cults to rise in recent years is the Bleeding Fist. Commanded by its High Death, Prendag (*male half-orc master*), its members have insinuated themselves throughout the city from the lowliest street toughs to advisors to (and maybe even members of) the Captains' Council. Prendag promises the Blood Culling is upon them, and when the time is a right, a grand slaughter will spread through the city ensuring the Bleeding Fist and their vile god are the most powerful forces in the city.

Background

Prendag had no illusions about the opportunities afforded to one of his kind. The brutality of his cruel orc father and the sudden, bloody death of his human mother meant he was left to his own devices if he would survive in this city. So when he could lift a knife, he killed his father, cutting off his manhood and watching him bleed to death in a torrent of blood. He fled the scene, taking to the streets, and eventually fell in with a small cult of the Murder God, where he proved himself with his unflinching business-like approach to butchery. It wasn't long before he took control of the group, gaining the freedom to recruit a couple of gangs to swell his ranks.

Prendag eventually became the leader of a small group of disaffected youths, provoking them to more and more audacious acts of violence. Throughout their time under his control, he has seeded their minds with the precepts of his cult. Gradually the gang members swore service to the God of Murder, doubling Prendag's influence in Scurvytown.

For a time, the half-orc was a significant player in this district. With his willingness to murder the competition coupled with the fanatics that served him, there was a real fear he would step forward as one of the principle crime lords in the city. Before he had the chance, Xander Williams cracked down on his outfit, scattering his followers and driving them under the city. There they stewed and plotted, waiting for their chance to get revenge.

That chance presented itself during the uprising that resulted after the Captains' Council revoked the Law of Succession. Posing as

members of the largest gangs of the city, Prendag's men ambushed Xander Williams, butchered him in the streets, and then pulled back to watch as the Sea Lord's Guard murdered and scattered the rival gangs blamed for the Commissioner's death.

Appearance

Big, ugly, and surrounded by a dreadful aura that strikes fear in those who oppose him and emboldens those who aid him, he is a terrifying figure to be sure. He has long brown hair, which he keeps braided and hanging down the middle of his back. His notched and scarred ears bear gold rings and another loop hangs in his bottom lip. His body is a piece of macabre art. Tattoos cover every inch of skin, depicting terrifying acts of violence and murder.

Personality

Unlike most half-orcs, Prendag has ice for blood. He's always in control of himself and every situation. His is as cautious as he's intelligent, equipped with a calculating cruelty than enables him to do whatever he must to succeed. Beneath his cold facade is a wellspring of hate, which he sometimes looses to maintain his mastery over the murderous impulses. When he does, it's always against foreigners so none of his victims will be missed.

Secrets, Goals, and Plans

With Williams' death, Prendag has spent the last five years working to expand his organization. Rather than recruiting thugs and toughs, he looks for people who have the ability within them to murder, finer instruments to serve the will of the murderous god. Prendag extends his protection to any who have killed in the heat of the moment, inviting them into the fold of his cult. His minions clean up the mess, erase any sign of wrongdoing, and dispose of the body (or bodies) in places where none will ever find them. This tactic has expanded the half-orc's presence in unexpected quarters, including the Merchant District and among several officials who are associated with or members of the Watch and the Sea Lord's Guard.

While these isolated cells and contacts are useful, Prendag needs better penetration into the city's upper crust. In particular, he's found one woman who might serve his purposes well. Lexi, a well-known courtesan in the Serenity House, is unlike any other woman that works there. She puts on a pleasant face, but she's dead inside—dead like him. Prendag has used her services a few times, and in the quiet that follows, he murmurs to her, instructing her about the dark path of his wicked master. Lexi has resisted his efforts so far, but Prendag sees the effect he is having and is sure she will soon be his.

Above all, Prendag works to bring about the Blood Culling, the grand slaughter to propel his temple to become the greatest in the city. His will is not enough. He needs to expand his ranks, attract an army of followers that will hasten the inevitable end. Pirates, gangs, and bravos are not enough. Prendag needs muscle. He needs Daegar Redblade. He hasn't approached the hobgoblin yet, knowing his disdain for orcs, but he knows this warlord is the tool he needs. He is currently looking for leverage. When he finds it, the hobgoblin will be his.

Adventure Seeds

A rash of murders erupts all over the city, so many even the Watch is stirred to act. No one sees a pattern: The victims are male and female, young and old, of the whole spectrum of cultures and races. At first, it was a dozen victims, but each day, more turn up. The city watch pressgangs able-bodied men—including the PCs—to patrol the streets to catch the culprits. One night, as the characters move to investigate a scream coming from a darkened alley, they catch sight of a red-eyed half-orc choking the life out of a streetwalker. He drops the woman when he notices the characters and flees into the night. It's too late for the woman, but the characters now have a face to identify.

Prendag finally approaches Draegar and makes him an offer he can't refuse. Over the next few months, Prendag and his minions go on a killing spree, butchering watchmen, freeing prisoners from the Hulks and the Tombs, and even murdering a few members of the Captains' Council. As order deteriorates, Draegar steps forward and offers to fill the diminished ranks of the Watch with his own hobgoblin militia. The Sea Lord has no choice and accepts his offer, putting Draegar in arms' reach of the Sea Lord's throne.

Red Alice

Assassin for Hire

"For a price, I'd do just about anything."

Slipping through the shadows of Freeport's streets is a cold-blooded killer, a ruthless assassin whose presence has led to booming business for personal protection. Red Alice (*female half-elf journeyman*) is a scourge, ruthlessly hunted by the Watch. To make certain of her capture, the Sea Lord herself placed a large bounty on Red Alice's head, enough to keep any would be hero comfortable for the rest of his or her days.

Background

Red Alice was not always a killer. Like many women in Freeport, she struggled to find her place in the city. She had no desire to wed a sailor who would just wind up dead, or lost at sea, or worse, come home diseased from an ill-advised jaunt through some brothel in a far-flung port. Since she had no interest in being pinched waiting tables in the Rusty Hook or a similar dive, she tried her hand at acting instead. Her career began as a street performer, joining a small and unsuccessful troupe that worked the Old City. Eventually, Rick Burbage, the director of the Freeport Opera House, discovered her. Impressed by her good looks and natural talent, he offered her a place in his theatre. She accepted, thrilled by her good fortune.

It was hard work and the critics were ruthless, but Alice persevered, working to make a name for herself in the city. Each production brought her more acclaim and soon she was the darling of the theatre. Young men from all over the Merchant District professed their love for her, begging for her hand in marriage or at least a kiss. The Serenity House even hired a woman who looked like Alice for those customers crushed by Alice's refusals. The young actress had a promising career and it seemed nothing was unattainable for her.

But as is often the case in Freeport, fate has a tendency to interfere with the best-laid plans. While traveling home to her apartment on the edge of Drac's End, a man—a noble by the stink of his cologne—snatched her off the street and assaulted her in an alley. Her screams went unnoticed by the passers-by and when he was finished, he left her bruised, bloodied, and ashamed. There in that cold, filthy alley, Alice transformed. She never returned to the Opera House and vanished

from Freeport's high society. She was believed dead after a half-hearted search and the theatre went on without her—the show *must* go on.

Alice fled to the Temple of the War God, where she begged the priests to teach her to fight. She was a natural, fueled by her deep and abiding hatred for men. She exceeded all expectations, becoming one of the finest fighters the temple produced. After defeating her instructor in hand-to-hand combat, she crept into his cell and murdered him. She fled into the night, a living weapon, blooded and ready to get her revenge.

Appearance

Although no one really knows what Red Alice looks like, offering up conflicting reports ranging from short and hideous to tall, slender, and beautiful, every story about this killer shares one thing: long luxurious auburn hair. A skilled actress, she can mask her appearance behind a number of disguises, confounding those who witness her brutal crimes. In truth, she's a slim half-elf with a fine figure and pretty features. A light dusting of freckles covers her cheeks and she has bright green eyes.

Personality

Alice hates men, and with good reason. That terrifying night left her changed, scouring away all of her idealism and leaving a detached murderer behind. It's not that she's evil, but rather, she has lost any sense of value for life. Killing is just like anything else. It's a job that needs doing and she's damn good at it. Alice can hide her ruthless efficiency behind a number of masks, being pleasant, even sweet. When facing her prey, there's no mercy in those cold green eyes.

Secrets, Goals, and Plans

Alice is the consummate professional. Despite the bounty on her head, she continues to sell her special services to those who need someone killed. Killing is just another job and one that pays exceptionally well. She's also not choosy about her employers, working for Finn one day, Mister Wednesday another, and a vengeful wife on the third. It doesn't matter, so long as she gets paid.

One nagging thing that haunts Alice is that she has not yet found the man who hurt her. She haunts the Merchant District, watching the faces that go by, but she's never found him. Sure, there have been several, many, accidents. She sees a fellow who has the man's nose, eyes, bearing, or even voice and she follows him to his home and kills him and everyone in the house. When she's done, she takes a good long look at her target, only to realize he was not who she thought he was.

Red Alice would do just about anything to find the man. She's given his description to Finn, Mister Wednesday, and other clients, but to no avail. She refuses to give up, even if it means killing everyone in Freeport. She'll have her revenge, and nothing will stand in her way.

Adventure Seeds

The body of a red-haired man is found hanging from the doors to the Hall of Justice. He's mutilated, his manhood torn free and stuffed in his mouth. A bloody red "A" drawn on his forehead and "rapist" carved into his chest. The victim was a fresh-faced recruit, well regarded by everyone in his unit. This sparks a witch hunt as the other men in his unit go out at night to find this Red Alice and kill her. After a few red-haired women are found dead in the gutters, their families mob the Sea Lord's Guard and the Watch, throwing stones and chasing them off. The Captains' Council wants to quash the riots, but to do so they must publicly deal with Red Alice.

A wealthy merchant starts recruiting bodyguards to protect his son. He doesn't explain why, but word has it the young man barely escaped murder a week ago and is not terrified to go out of the house. Hired guards stand to receive incredible pay, so much that the merchant is having to turn mercenaries away. Is this the man behind Red Alice's assault?

Tarmon

High Wizard of the Wizard's Guild

"That snake thinks he can fool me because he sees nothing but a senile old trickster. He does not realize I could summon a nightmare creature from the nameless depths to flay the skin off his body and feed it to him piece by piece."

Tarmon (*male human master*) is the founder and High Wizard of Freeport's Wizards' Guild. He's also a member of the Captains' Council, making him the first wizard to ever serve in this role. He has enormous magical power and that has helped him build up political power as well. The High Wizard is easily one of the most influential men in Freeport.

Background

Many of Freeport's success stories revolved around immigrants who came to the city and made good. Tarmon was born in Freeport and the city is in his blood. He never knew who his father was and his mother died of a pox when he was but five years old. Left to make his own way on the streets, the young orphan did what was necessary to survive. He was aided by great mental acuity and a knack for figuring things out. By watching carnival spellcasters, he was able to figure out how to start small fires. This brought him to the attention of Tibalt Ten-Fingers, a wizard from the Continent. Tibalt took the boy as an apprentice and trained him the art of magic.

Tibalt was not a kindly master. He worked his apprentices hard and treated them worse than slaves. He drills were effective, though, and Tarmon blossomed into a gifted young wizard. He left Tibalt as soon as he could and traveled extensively on the Continent and beyond. When he finally returned to the city of his birth, he was worldly and experienced. It did not take long for the Esoteric Order of Starry Wisdom to recruit him into its ranks.

Tarmon was not bloodthirsty by nature, but was willing to participate in the order's secret rituals if it meant the favor of the Crawling Chaos and further sorcerous power. When the leadership decided to strike out to find the fabled Azoth Stone, Tarmon stayed behind. This was to prove a most fortuitous decision. The leaders never returned and Tarmon was able to take over what was left of the order. From there he founded the Wizards' Guild.

During the reign of Milton Drac, Tarmon tried to stay out of politics. He was an advisor to the Captains' Council but he did not take sides in its machinations. When the truth of Drac's madness was revealed, Tarmon realized he had made a mistake. The city had come perilously close to utter ruination and he had done nothing. So it was, with Liam Blackhammer's help, he put himself forward to become a member of the Captains' Council. He wanted to make sure that from now on there would only be one secret cult master amongst the leadership of Freeport: himself.

Appearance

Tarmon is tall with brown hair and eyes. He favors long flowing red robes bound by a golden belt. He walks with the aid of a gnarled, old, wooded staff, but this is largely for show. His magic keeps him vigorous despite his advanced age but he feigns a bit of frailty to more easily manipulate those around him.

Personality

Very few people really know Tarmon. He appears to be a kindly and knowledgeable old wizard. His magic has aided the city greatly in the past, such as during the Great Green Fire, so Freeporters tend to think well of him. For most of his adulthood, however, he has led the double life of a cultist. He leads the Esoteric Order of Starry Wisdom and he knows that this secret would cost him his life. So he plays the archetypal wizard, but beneath the facade is a chillingly cold intelligence.

Secrets, Goals, and Plans

The stated goal of the Esoteric Order of Starry Wisdom is the recovery of the Azoth Stone. Tarmon outwardly pursues this goal within the order, but privately has begun to wonder if the artifact even exists. He has begun to think the Azoth Stone is nothing more than a metaphor for the sorcerous knowledge of the serpent people. He has thus become much more interested in ancient Valossa and has been collecting as many texts and artifacts as he can find. He has even begun researching a ritual that could raise certain sections of Valossa from the bottom of the sea. That would make it much easier to find the answers he seeks, though such a spell would likely have catastrophic consequences for the surrounding area.

On a political level, Tarmon has quietly put his weight behind Marilise Maeorgan. He has also used his magical skills to help keep her safe; unbeknownst to the Sea Lord, he has unraveled several plots against her. He does not do this because he likes the Sea Lord. He feels, however, that she is best for the city right now. Marilise Maeorgan is a lot of things, but she isn't a warmonger, she isn't power mad, and she isn't crazy. Her reign thus creates just the sort environment Tarmon and the Esoteric Order of Starry Wisdom need to prosper.

Adventure Hooks

A strike team from the church of the God of Justice shows up in Freeport. They recently captured a Continental member of the Esoteric Order of Starry Wisdom, who revealed the existence of a branch of the order in Freeport, and they've come to the city to find it. Tarmon will not suffer their like to sniff around his city, so decides that turnabout is fair play. He enacts a plan to frame them as vile cultists. He just needs a group of dupes to discover all the evidence he planted and take justice into their own hands. He puts likely do-gooders on the case with magical dream-sendings and then sits back to let the situation resolve itself.

Tarmon disappears and no one in the city knows where he's gone. Thorgrim, Lord Defender of the Wizards' Guild, suspects foul play. How long will the Captains' Council and the Wizards' Guild wait before declaring him dead and replacing him? And what happens when one very angry and very powerful wizard returns to Freeport looking to even the score with those who nearly killed him?

Other Characters

The following entries provide a selection of other characters who call Freeport home. These are in addition to those described in the various shop locations described elsewhere in this sourcebook.

Alcindar

A tailor by trade, Alcindar (*male dwarf journeyman*) supplements his income by eavesdropping on his clients' discussions about business deals, trade agreements, and lucrative investments. He either invests his money or sells the information to other clients for a high price. Given that he tailors nearly every member on the Captains' Council, Alcindar is also privy to just about every political development in the city.

Aleksander Tovac

Although the city watch and the Sea Lord's Guard before them were loath to admit it, Aleksander Tovac (*male human journeyman*) is the best detective in the city. With a keen mind, sharp eyes, and infallible skills of perception, he has personally solved dozens of crimes, ranging from simple thefts to horrible murders. During Xander Williams' time, Tovac was a detective in the Guard, but the shake-up after Williams' death found Tovac suddenly out of a job. He now takes private cases and occasionally snoops into police business to remind them he's still the best.

Alfhild

An irregular visitor to Freeport, Alfhild (*female human master*) is a bloodthirsty warrior maiden from the frozen lands in the far north.



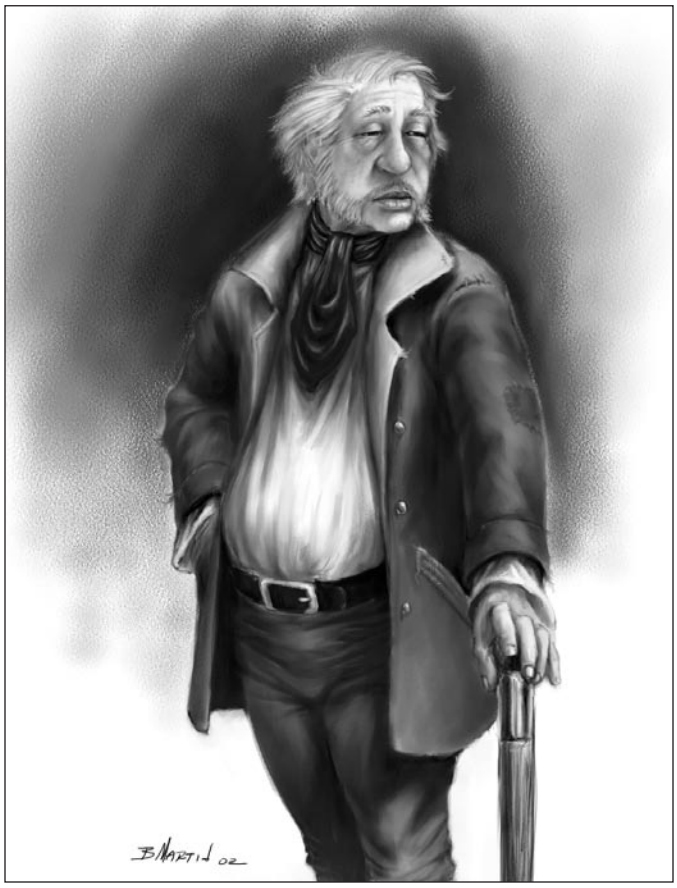
She comes to Freeport because she finds the surly lot here amusing. She comes to the city less and less now as Ragnar, who now fights as the champion of the One Ring, has come to the city to win her hand and make an honest woman of her.

Aporgus Beedle

For some folks, there is no hope. A sullen youth with a mean streak and nasty temper, Aporcus Beedle's (*male human apprentice*) godmother was Delinda Knorrbertal, who took on the young man as her apprentice out of kindness. He had little talent for magic and less interest—he wanted an easy path to fortunes without having to do the work. He began poisoning his mentor, lacing her food with a potent drug in the hopes she would eventually succumb. Before his plan bore fruit, though, her familiar caught him in the act and revealed everything to Delinda. She promptly kicked him out and threatened to report him to the Guard if he came around again, but out of unwarranted kindness, she gave the young man a pouch of gold. For the next couple of years, Aporcus squandered his money, fell in with a gang, got raped, and nearly bled to death after being stabbed for his shoes. Despite all this, he's still a despicable wretch. Currently, he preys on visitors, haunting the alleys of the Docks and slicing up folks for a few pieces of silver.

Arena Quen

Lacking the funds or desire to erect an actual temple, Sister Arena Quen (*female human apprentice*) maintains a shrine outside of the city, deep in the heart of the jungle, where she and a handful of other priests serve the Nature God. Quen comes to the city, pushing a cart full of dirt, grass, and dung. She sings hymns to the God of Nature, extols the virtues of proper respect for the natural order, and whenever she sees someone being wasteful or dropping rubbish to the city streets, she picks up a clod from her cart and expertly flings it at the offender. For her troubles, Quen has earned no shortage of cuts, scrapes, and death threats.



Celeste D'Arran

Celeste D'Arran (*female human master*) was never satisfied with the "good life." She had everything she could want and more. Daughter of a wealthy merchant who owned a fleet of ships that carried goods throughout the region, she had the best education and all the comforts money could buy. Yet, such excess never sat well with her. She wanted to see the world, to visit strange lands, meet people, and experience all the things she had heard in the stories her parents and friends told her. To this end, her parents arranged for her a job in the Office of Dredging. While dangerous—she was a spy after all—so long as she maintained her cover, she would see and do all she could ever want. For years, she entertained the notion of giving up this exciting life and settling down into a family, but a few months turned into a few years, and her opportunities for the quiet life she gave up are well behind her. Now, she's committed to her career and holds a key position in her organization and some suspect she's the heir apparent to Marcus Roberts should he ever step down.

Falthar

Falthar (*male human master*) is one of the most learned men in Freeport. It is said angelic blood runs in the veins of his family, though this is not something he likes to talk about. For many years, he ran Falthar's Curios, a shop in the Merchant District that specialized in exotic goods. Falthar was an expert at researching the history and properties of unique items, especially those that were enchanted. Tragedy struck the loremaster during the barbarian invasion of Freeport four years ago. The shop was sacked and torched and Falthar's young assistant Nell was dragged back to the barbarian ships, never to be seen again. Since then Falthar has been footloose. If he's not doing research at the Temple of the God of the Knowledge or the Freeport Institute, he's traveling to distant ports. His services are available to those in the know when he's in Freeport, but that is less and less the case. No one is sure what Falthar seeks across the sea.

Captain Garth Varellion

Captain of the *Christina,* Garth Varellion (*male human journeyman*) had designs on the Sea Lord's seat, as he could see no better candidate. Far too shallow and self-absorbed to do much of anything except take care of himself, he had few supporters. Add to this his old ties to the Drac family, his claim to be the next Sea Lord met with jeers of derision and laughter. Varellion has withdrawn ever since, simmering with hate and plotting to improve his tarnished image.

Harcourt Horkel

It's a wonder Harcourt Horkel (*male human master*) hasn't wound up floating in the harbor. A swindler and two-bit crook, he drifts from tavern to tavern, cheating on cards, selling bottles of colored water to orcs, and generally ripping off anyone who even shows the slightest sign of believing his tripe. Of late, Harcourt has spent a fair bit of coin—none of which was honestly earned—renovating his carnival ship. A couple times a year, he sets sail, hitting distant ports and swindling the locals and then slipping off before anyone's the wiser. Harcourt tried this once in Freeport, but the Watch cracked down on him before too many people lost their savings.

Captain Hector Torian

About seven years ago, the pirate captain of the *Sea Ghost* retired from the sea to seek a new life as a politician. Having sailed the seas for over thirty years, Hector Torian (*male human journeyman*) learned to take life less seriously and is a fun-loving, generous man, traits uncommon for the notoriously criminal Captains' Council. Torian supported Milton Drac to the end, despite the cost and excess that went into the Lighthouse, because he felt that he owed his career to the Sea Lord. With Drac's madness revealed, Hector remained true to the family despite the flaws in the man, and voted against repealing the Law of Succession as he worked to find an heir. To say he was disappointed when the Council proceeded anyway is an understatement. Despite the presence of Marilise, he clings to the hope that a viable heir will appear one day.

Admiral Hrothy

An expatriate from the Continent, Admiral Hrothy (*male human journeyman*) serves his country as a spy. He claims he was beached by his country and so he decided to retire in Freeport. He proudly admits to having sunk a number of Freeport's ships in his time, but he hopes folk don't hold it against him. His noble birth, good looks, and unimpeachable manners make him a popular figure with most of Freeport's upper crust, and he's often seen at parties, regaling guests with his fabulous stories of daring battles against the scum of the seas.

Janis Hawthorne

A perceptive person can make a good living in Freeport. Those who pay attention, such as Janis Hawthorne (*female half-elf apprentice*), can make a few extra coins selling what they've seen and heard. Janis is one of the more reliable gossips in the city and many of Calame's reporters come to her for a lead, while the occasional mercenary might be found chatting with her about potential jobs. Of course, Janis is quick to remind anyone who thinks otherwise, that she's a simply a fruit-seller trying to make a living like everyone else.

Kyrga Stonefoot

A former messenger in her dwarven homeland, Kyrga Stonefoot (*female dwarf apprentice*) was run out after she let slip a jest that nearly started a war. She found herself in Freeport, and despised the place immediately. Still it was the best she could hope for, so she looked for a way to market her skills. Since she was a dwarf, few people would hire her to do what she did in her former home, so she turned to pulling a rickshaw to make ends meet. It turned out she was good at the job, being fluent in seven languages and faster than one might think thanks to a pair of enchanted boots. After many years of this, her employer went out of business. Kyrga had enough influence to start her own endeavor: The Stonefoot Rickshaw Company. Competition remains fierce, but her rivals have begun to see her and her people as a serious threat to their own livelihood.

Laria Syrtis

Having inherited the *Sunrunner,* a sleek elven warship, from her father, an elf pirate named Arel Syrtis, Laria Syrtis (*female half-elf master*) has made a name for herself on the seas of the Serpent's Teeth. Of the captains who work for the Admiralty, Laria is by far the most



notorious privateer, lending her ship to help defend Freeport and to prey on Continental merchant vessels. She's had to work hard to live up to her father's reputation after his untimely death, but she's won over her crew and is one of the more popular rogues to blow into the Docks.

Liam Blackhammer

Liam Blackhammer (*male human journeyman*) has been a member of the Captains' Council for almost twenty years. He joined the council to represent the poor and destitute, and rose as something of a champion of the people. Stubborn as a mule, this veteran inspires little affection among the council, but his years of experience gives his words more weight than they might otherwise warrant.

Captain Marcus Roberts

A popular member of the Captains' Council, Marcus Roberts (*male human journeyman*) is very much the face of Freeport to the world. As captain of the *Black Dragon,* he was a notorious rogue and famous privateer who managed to escape certain death time and again. Having served on the council for almost seventeen years, he is considered a fixture by most Freeporters. He may be in his mid-fifties, but he acts as if he's in his twenties, laying on the charm whenever he encounters a young woman. The life of every party, he's flamboyant, entertaining, blessed with a quick wit and sharp tongue that makes him popular wherever he goes. Despite his often-licentious behavior, he is honorable and takes his position very seriously.

Marcus Roberts also manages an extensive spy network throughout the city and the Continent. His local agents allow him to monitor the activities of his peers while also monitoring the criminal elements. His agents on the Continent keep Roberts informed of developments there

and engage in intrigue with the agents of other powers. Marcus himself frequently plays the part of ambassador, visiting the courts and officials of other lands while watching for plots against his beloved city.

Nathan Grymes

A relatively new member to the Captains' Council, Nathan Grymes (*male human journeyman*) is a successful merchant who won his seat through the weight of his considerable fortunes. Although he now must consider all of Freeport in his decisions, it's quite clear he favors the Merchant District in that he places their interests first in all things. Rumor has it that he secretly runs an extensive smuggling ring on the Continent. He demurs when asked directly about his illicit connections, but there are whispers of drugs, strange substances, and dangerous relics from foreign lands. His enemies even go so far as to say that he has connections in Mazin, though none would dare speak such accusations openly.

Patamon

Recently returned after a long period away that resulted from a misunderstanding about a theft, Patamon (*male human journeyman*) is as flamboyant as ever. Smiling, dashing, and every bit the swashbuckler of legend, he uses his innate magical talents to aid him in his larcenous activities. He believes, and rightly so, he has a few enemies left in the city, so he rarely stays in one place for long.

Rudimar Harrow

Rudimar Harrow (*male human journeyman*), a sickly young man with dark hair and haunted eyes, claims to have been raised from death following a terrible outbreak of plague in a distant city. He came to Freeport to reveal the secrets of the afterlife to mortals and warn them to honor the Warden of Souls properly lest the newly dead find themselves lost in Limbo. Many think Harrow is mad, and perhaps he is, but when he's in the throes of a sermon, he speaks with an almost otherworldly power, filling the hearts and minds of listeners with frightening visions of horrific Hell.

Captain Scarbelly

A brutal orc pirate known for his sharp and nasty axe, Captain Scarbelly (male orc journeyman) is a regular sight in Scurvytown. He captains the *Bloody Vengeance,* an aptly named vessel that matches his crude temperament and hostile attitude.

Tench Presgott

Tench Prescott (*male human journeyman*) gained the Privateer's Seat after Peg-Leg Peligro vacated it. Prescott is a popular buccaneer and has many friends among the more influential and successful privateers. When not attending city business, he spends most of his time in the House of Serenity squandering his fortunes or in the Docks swilling run and swapping lies with his fellow captains.

Thulmir Quent

For those looking for a spot of adventure, they need look no further than Thulmir Quent (*male human journeyman*). A broker of sorts, he hires mercenaries and sell-swords on behalf of those needing a bit of muscle. In exchange for his services, he takes a modest cut of the pay. He and his agents work the Docks, always looking for some fresh-faced youth with a brand new sword.

Admiral Thurlow Rankin

The man in charge of the Admiralty for the past twenty-five years has been Thurlow Rankin (*male human journeyman*). He is a professional's professional. He strives to serve Freeport and always carries out his orders to the letter. Sea Lords come and go, he feels, so it's best to respect the office and not the man. His stance has made the Admiralty a strangely apolitical place. His captains follow his lead, concentrating on the job and leaving the infighting to the Captains' Council.

Timothy

Timothy's (*male human apprentice*) story is common for young men in Freeport. Children of prostitutes, forbidden trysts, and the like are often abandoned. Many find their lives cut short, sold for flesh in one of the nasty butcher shops of Bloodsalt, or sold as slaves for even nastier and uglier fates. A few, those with wit and a bit of skill, make it. Tim owes his life to Dunbar, who recognized in him his talent for nicking purses and for this gives him three square meals a day, a roof over his head, and a few coppers to rub together. Tim serves as a messenger for the Syndicate.

Xavier Gordon

Xavier Gordon (*male human journeyman*), the captain of the *Bloody Sea*, entered Freeport's politics by way of the Privateer's Seat. During his stint, he was an avid supporter of Lady Elise Grossette. The upheaval around the Lighthouse scandal inflamed his passion for the city and he tried to convince the council to extend his term so he could put his support behind Lady Grossette. Before the debate could be resolved, Grossette vanished, Marilise ascended, and it was past time for Xavier to step down. However, because of his long service to the city, when he offered to fill one of the vacant seats, the council accepted him, making him a member for life.

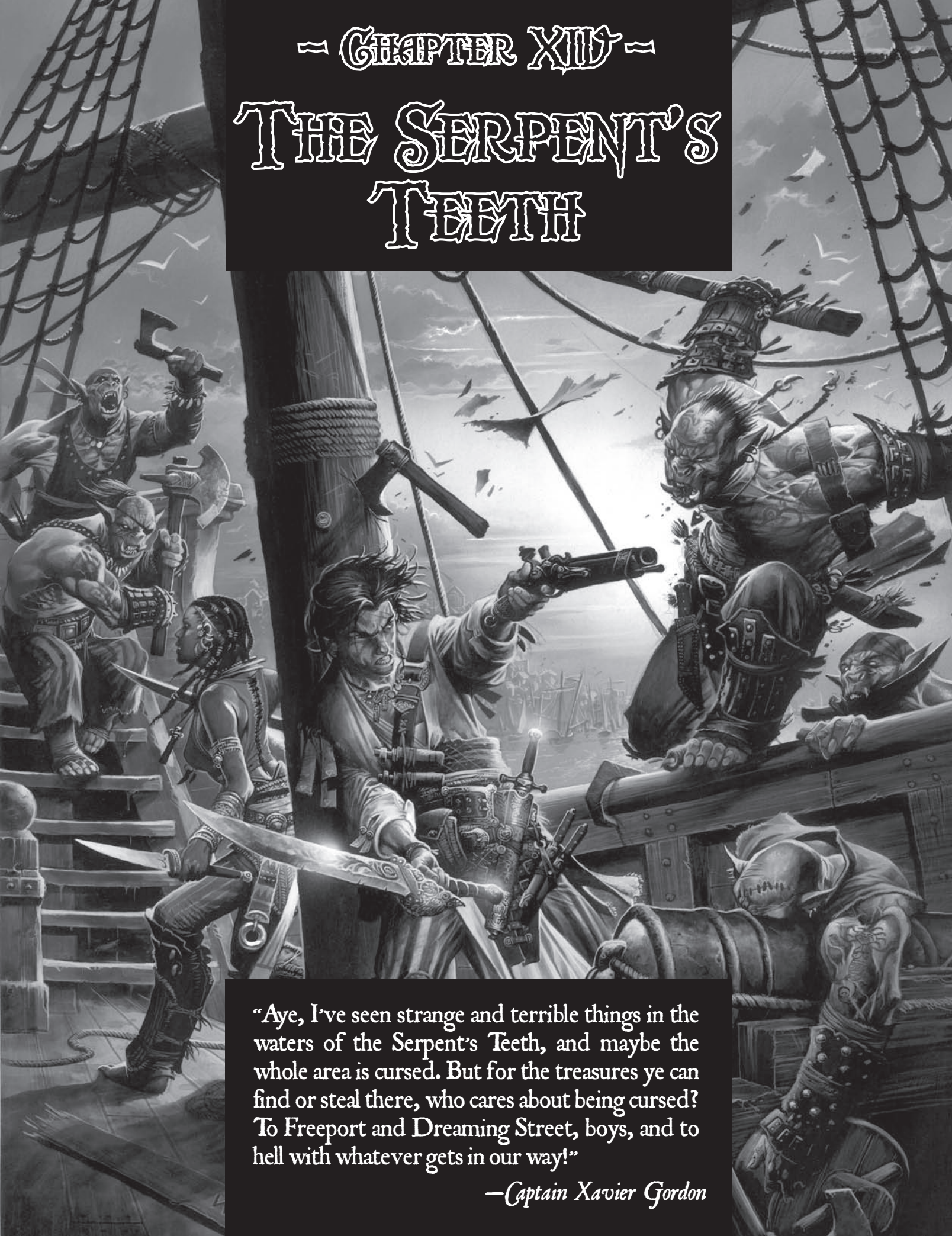
Xort

An odd fellow to say the least, Xort (*male unknown journeyman*) is short and bandy-legged, his head shaved bald and covered in swirling tattoos. More witch than wizard, more wizard than priest, Xort warns any who will listen not to trust the Wizards' Guild of Freeport, for, he claims, they hide a foul purpose, having abandoned the true path of the God of Magic. Most ignore the little man, and even those who drop a few coins in the donation box have grown weary of his rantings.

Zach

Zach's (*male human apprentice*) story is similar to many stories told about children born in Freeport. Abandoned as a baby, left on the doorstep of a simple washerwoman, he grew up poor, hungry, and lacking in clothes. As a child, he ran the streets along with a group of children about his age, and took odd jobs for the various folks in his neighborhood. He sometimes acted as a messenger, an errand boy, or even a guide through his poverty-stricken district all for whatever few coins people would pay him.

Last year, Zach's foster mother died from pneumonia, leaving him alone once more. Although he was grief-stricken, he promised he wouldn't let his mother down and set out to earn a living. He now works near the Docks, selling his services as a guide. He's done well for himself, having left the days of running around in a tabard long behind. He still has a long way to go to rub elbows with the pros, but he knows he's getting there.

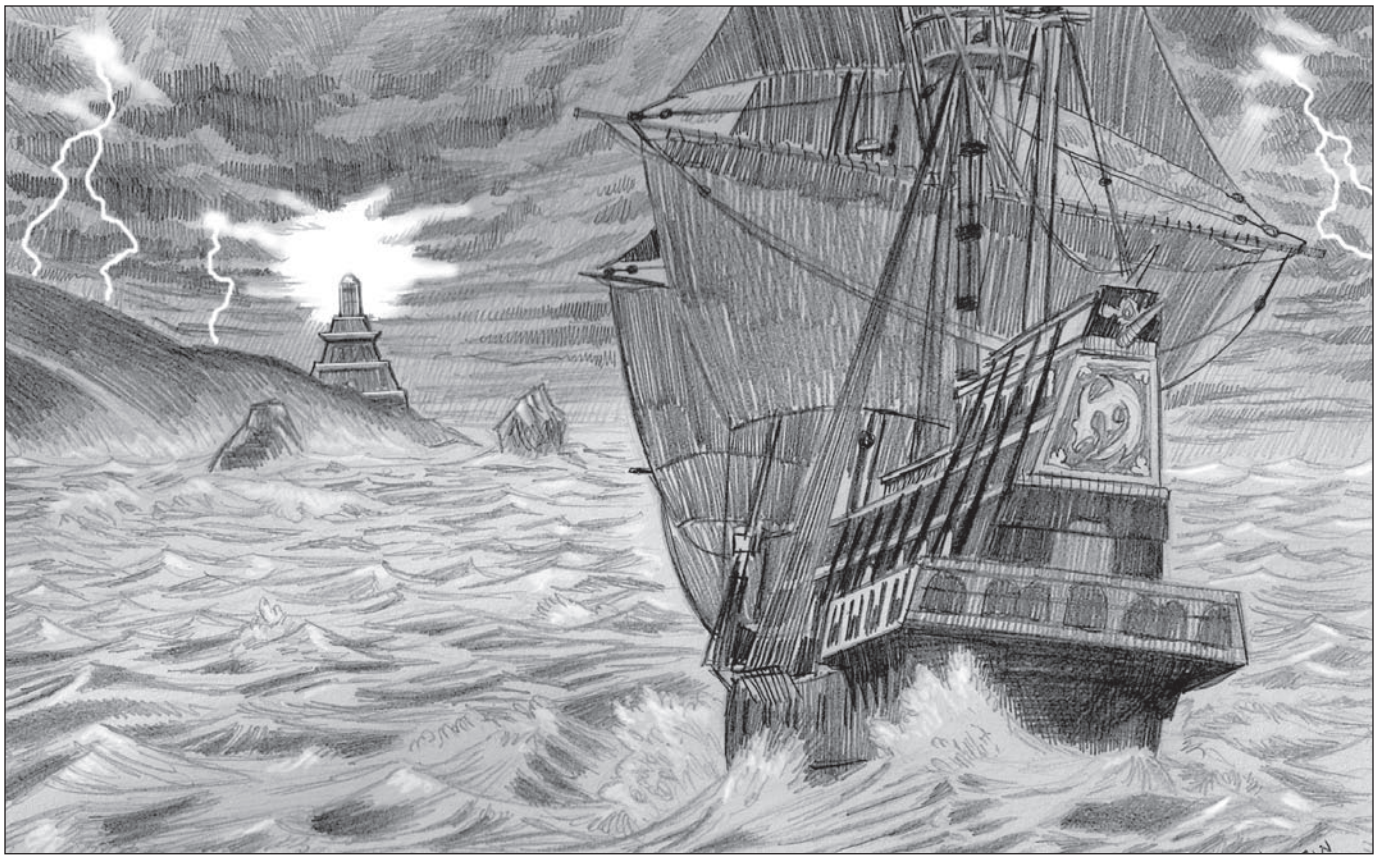


Chapter XIV

The Serpent's Teeth

"Aye, I've seen strange and terrible things in the waters of the Serpent's Teeth, and maybe the whole area is cursed. But for the treasures ye can find or steal there, who cares about being cursed? To Freeport and Dreaming Street, boys, and to hell with whatever gets in our way!"

—Captain Xavier Gordon



Freeport does not exist in a vacuum. Life (and death) in the Freebooter's City is defined in large part by its location. Perched on the shattered remains of Valossa, the citizens of Freeport contend not only with each other for survival, but with the natural (and unnatural) hazards of life on the tips of the Serpent's Teeth. While Freeport is the only city in the Serpent's Teeth, it shares the islands with a variety of smaller towns and outposts, and the pirates and traders that sail the sea. And in the jungles and caves of the islands, beneath the waves, and in the ruins of the serpent empire, there are legends, treasures, and horrors beyond human understanding, waiting to be discovered—or unleashed.

Geography

The Serpent's Teeth are a small group of four islands located some distance off the coast of the Continent. The largest of these is known as A'Val, which—roughly translated from the ancient serpent person tongue—means "Home." Few humans know the origin of the island's name, but the ancient name still lives on. The city of Freeport sits huddled around a natural harbor on the southwestern end of the island.

The island directly to the west is known as Windward, while the one to the east is Leeward. These are both so named due to their relative location to A'Val. The smallest island lays to the south, and it's known as T'Wik ("little one"), although more and more of the locals refer to it now as "Lighthouse Island."

Legend has it that the islands are actually the teeth of the Lost Serpent God. According to the myth, the Serpent God was killed during the Battle of the Old Gods that brought the last world to an end and gave this new one a fresh start. Its dismembered corpse was hurled across the newly made sea, its flesh creating new lands upon which the people would live. In the Battle, the Serpent God's fangs had been knocked loose, and all four of them (two upper and two lower) fell in a clump not far from the rest of the Old God's body, so large that they stuck straight out of the sea. Today, these form the Serpent's Teeth. Few people actually *believe* this legend, of course; it's just a convenient explanation for the region's name and geography.

A second, more obscure tale has it that the Serpent God is not dead but only sleeping. There will come a day at the twilight of the world in which the Serpent God will answer the clarion call to battle and meet with his mortal enemies once again. The loser of that battle shall have his corpse form the basis of the lands of the next world. This never-ending cycle of birth and rebirth is said to have gone on since the

Fighting for Freeport: A Privateer Speaks

~The Shipping News

beginning of time. It will continue until the end of time. Only scholars, priests, and mystics generally know this legend, and most think the apocalyptic prophecy is no more than fiction. Among the priests in the city, only a handful believe they can predict when this doom will befall the world; few listen to them, and fewer still believe them.

The serpent people know that both halves of the legend are bunk—at least the select few of them with the sanity to recall the truth about Valossa's downfall. The Serpent's Teeth are really just the remnants of the magnificent land of their ancestors, a realm now buried beneath the silt of the surrounding seabed. As for sleeping gods waiting to rise from the depths and walk the world once more, well….

Myth aside, the Serpent's Teeth are basically the remnants of the volcanic rocks that once made up the much larger island of Valossa. The bits that still stand above the waves are the hardest kind of rock, mixed in with soft topsoil mostly composed of sand. The shores of the islands are generally wide and sandy beaches, although there are notable exceptions. The northern side of A'Val is composed of rocky cliffs that tumble straight into the sea. Also, Freeport Harbor has been built up enough over the years that the beach has been obliterated by the docks that hang out far into the waters. The interiors of the islands are largely undeveloped jungle, although some islands have more jungle than others.

The region of the Serpent's Teeth is just over five miles across from the westernmost point of Windward to the easternmost side of Leeward. Similarly, it's about five miles from the northernmost tip of A'Val to the southernmost bit of Windward, which juts out just a bit lower than the lowest part of T'Wik. The barrier reef stands roughly a mile off the coasts of the islands.

The Weather

The climate of the Serpent's Teeth area is semi-tropical, with cool, pleasant winters and warm, somewhat humid summers; nights are always slightly cooler, although the warm trade winds blowing through the region keep things balmy.

The real troubles for the area come not from the heat or the cold, but the rain. As in most tropical areas, there is no real equivalent of the traditional four seasons. Instead, there are two: the dry season and the hurricane season.

The dry season begins during what would be the middle of fall/autumn and extends into what would be the middle of spring. During the dry season, there are still rains, but they tend to be gentle and easy. The weather is a bit cooler during this period, relatively speaking, but it's still pleasant.

Stormy Weather

The weather may be pleasant for a good part of the year, but the rest of the time sure makes up for it. Hurricane season lasts the other half of the year. During a standard hurricane season, up to ten major storms might lash the region. The chance of any single hurricane actually tearing through Freeport itself, much less the Serpent's Teeth is fairly small, but it happens from time to time.

The old-timers around the place always talk about how one storm or another ripped through so many years past. Twenty years back, Freeport got hit hard enough that the streets of Scurvytown were under three feet of water for more than a week, and waves smashed a good portion of the piers on the waterfront to waterlogged kindling. However, no storm has ever irreparably damaged Freeport. It's certainly a looming possibility every storm season—one that the sailors moving in and out of town are very conscious of—but so far the residents of the Serpent's Teeth have been lucky.

Superstitious people claim the God of Storms does not wish to awaken the slumbering Serpent God. It's more likely, though, the area has simply been fortunate thus far. Every hurricane season finds the places of worship in the Temple District packed with citizens and sailors praying Freeport's luck holds out.

The Sea

The sea around the Serpent's Teeth is generally calm, with an occasional bit of rough surf. The barrier reef that surrounds a good portion of the area, with the notable exception of the western coast of Windward and the area leading into Freeport's harbor, provides a measure of protection from the wildness of the open sea.

The reef actually grew up around the rubble left over from the destruction of Valossa over two thousand years ago. Underneath the living coral, there may still be bits and pieces of that ancient civilization just waiting to be discovered by some brave (and water-breathing) adventurers.

The main barrier reef itself may be static, but a shifting network of sandbars and smaller reefs also exists around the shores of the islands, making navigation problematic for inexperienced sailors. The currents swirling around the Serpent's Teeth keep these submerged hazards moving like the snakes so venerated in ancient Valossa. The problem is bad enough around A'Val that a society of professional navigators does a brisk business in Freeport keeping ships from running aground. But sometimes their maps are inaccurate, a captain uses an out-of-date chart, or a stubborn sailor refuses to pay for information. Ships are occasionally wrecked on a reef or becalmed on a sandbar, and then the sailors of Freeport scramble to their ships—not to rescue their stranded fellows, but to take their pick of the salvage before the sea claims the rest.

What Lurks Below

While all sailors believe in sea monsters (and many have encountered such creatures), everyone acknowledges that the seas around the Serpent's Teeth are largely free of huge monsters like kraken or giant sea serpents. This is one of the reasons for the place's popularity over the centuries. For some reason, monstrous sea beasts give the place a wide berth, preferring to stick to deeper waters.

There are many theories about this. Perhaps over the years the creatures have learned that the ships entering Freeport are not to be trifled with. A number of historic battles between ships and monsters occurred within a day's sail of Freeport. In nearly every documented case, the creatures were killed or severely mauled, discouraging future attacks. Others argue these creatures remember the might of the serpent people or they sense the old power that still lies beneath the waves. So they stay away from the Serpent's Teeth, lest they awaken that sleeping might. Both these theories assume a certain intelligence on the part of these monsters, which not everyone accepts (or likes to think about). More mundanely, the coral reef itself presents a significant obstacle to any large creatures (one reason why there are few whales found in the region). They could manage to get through the reef by following a ship in, but risk being trapped in shallow waters, easy prey for hunters.


The Serpent's Teeth
Vallos Ocean
Coral Reef
A'Val
Windward
Leeward
T'wik
To the Continent
N
NE
E
SE
S
SW
W
NW
Island Key
1 - Freeport
2 - Black Dog's Games
3 - Gabbage Grack
4 - The Crematorium
5 - The Hulks
6 - Mount A'Val
7 - Libertyville
8 - Felix's Ruin
9 - Milton's Folly
3 - Gabbage Grack
To Mount A'Val
To the Grack
To the Cutting Fields
To Freeport
Beach
7 - Libertyville
To the West of Leeward
To the North of Leeward
To the South of Leeward
Beach
Settlement Key
Gabbage Grack
1 - Ford
2 - Warehouse
3 - General Store
4 - Inn
Libertyville
5 - Wallaces'
6 - Inn
7 - General Store
8 - Guard Tower
9 - T'giri's Shipyard
10 - Libertyville Harbour
11 - Fleagle's Weapon Shop
12 - Francisco's



However, while the bigger monsters tend to leave the Serpent's Teeth alone, the region has no lack of dangerous sea life. There are sharks aplenty in these waters, a constant danger to small fishing boats and sailors who fall overboard. There are several varieties of poisonous fish, large and small, that can be found in the reef or along the beaches of the smaller islands (although they're much rarer around Freeport). And yes, there are exotic beasts and monsters; they might be less common than everyday creatures, but only a fool would deny they exist. Sea serpents, giant octopi, hideous remnants from the era of the serpent people, demonic creatures trapped within ruined sunken cities… Any explorer who ventures into the depths of the sea is almost certain to run into some kind of unnatural horror waiting for her.

The Shark Men of the Black Depths

Some of the denizens of the deeps are more than rumor and more than just mindless beasts. Until recently, an undersea village of merfolk—human-like beings with fish-tails instead of legs—existed just inside the barrier reef, southeast of Leeward. The merfolk were no threat to Freeport (although there were always tales of sailors drowning after falling in love with some beautiful mermaid); in fact, they had a presence at the Seaside Market, a half-submerged stall under the docks where they would trade in choice fish and minor treasures scavenged from the deep.

The enemy of the merfolk were a tribe of shark men (sometimes called "sea devils")—savage aquatic monsters with a human shape, scaly bodies, and terrible, rending teeth. The shark men have a base about a mile northwest of Windward, and used to war with the merfolk for control of hunting and fishing areas. They would occasionally prey on ships, riding large sharks and wielding tridents, but were rarely a match for the guns and swords of a trading vessel. A large shark men raiding party went on a rampage during the Succession Crisis five years ago, but were eventually vanquished by Freeport's defenders. Since that time, the sea devils have been quiet, with only a few sightings and occasional attacks on fishermen.

While no one misses the presence of the shark men, some Market regulars still speak with fondness of the merfolk, and wonder what happened to them; no one has seen any sign of them for over two years. Most people in Freeport assume that their aquatic neighbors have withdrawn into the depths, content to fight each other and leaving the surface folk to themselves.

Unfortunately for Freeport, that is not the case.

The destruction of the shark men raiders five years ago cost the creatures dearly; the tribe lost many of its finest warriors and riding sharks. Weakened and in disarray, they lost territory to the merfolk, who saw an opportunity to eliminate their hated enemy. While pirates and traders plied the surface of the sea, the depths erupted in unseen warfare—a war the shark men lost. The sea devils retreated into the deepest parts of the sea, while the merfolk returned, triumphant, to their village.

But that was not the end. In the depths of the reef, the shark men found shelter—and power. Imprisoned within the ruins of an ancient serpent person city was a blasphemous demigod named Lotan that had been enslaved by the sorcerers of ancient Valossa. Lotan remains trapped within magical wards and buried under millennia of rubble, but it remains powerful. It reached out to communicate with the shark men, promising them supernatural power in return for worship. The shark men became the demigod's devoted followers, slowly regaining their strength and salvaging terrible weapons from the ruins.

Ship Found Adrift–Crews Fate a Mystery

–The Shipping News

Two years ago, the shark men attacked the village of the merfolk, bolstered by Lotan's power, and wiped it out. The few survivors fled the Serpent's Teeth, or were enslaved by the sea devils. Now the shark men concentrate on rebuilding their base, consolidating their power, and working to free Lotan from its eternal prison. They wait for the day their god rises from the depths to feast upon the unworthy, the day their shark-rider armada will fall upon the complacent surface dwellers in Freeport.

Black Dog's Caves

Black Dog the pirate was the scourge of the seas around Freeport over fifty years ago, who hid his fortune in a secret cave network within Mount A'Val. Treasure hunters have searched for the caves over the years, but they are difficult to find, and only a few adventurers have ever discovered them. Fewer still have returned, for Black Dog laid traps for the unwary—and those traps are the *least* of the hideout's dangers. For the pirate built his lair on a much older foundation, a sunken temple complex belonging to the serpent people.

Two large stones jut from the water at Mount A'Val's westernmost side. At low tide, the sea draws back to reveal a cave large enough to admit a small boat; from the cave mouth a low tunnel full of turbulent seawater plunges into the mountain, leading to a large cave and a hidden lake. Multiple tunnels lead off from the cave; some lead to nothing but dead ends and dangerous traps, but one leads to Black Dog's treasure vault. Another leads to a boarded-off cave, a great wall of jade, and a stone door guarded by ancient magic. Behind this door lies the sunken temple of Yig, a great spiral of jade descending into the bowels of the earth, filled with traps, treasures, and undead guardians.

Several years ago, adventurers penetrated the caves in search of the Jade Serpent, an ancient artifact that could help foil the mad plans of Milton Drac and the Cult of the Unspeakable One. Those adventurers entered the temple, found the Jade Serpent, and made off with many treasures, but they left many others behind in the twisting caves.

Shortly after the Great Green Fire, a group of slave traders discovered the caves and used them as a prison for their human cargo. The traders were attacked by Libertyville's Freedom Militia last year and wiped out to a man, their prisoners freed. The slavers didn't discover the sunken temple, but they did leave treasures in the upper caves. Anyone looking to scavenge those treasures, or brave the depths of the sunken temple, just needs to find the caves—perhaps by finding the freed slaves, some of whom now operate as pirates out of Libertyville.

Fortunately, the magical wards imprisoning Lotan are powerful, almost impossible to break. The sea devils have managed to weaken them slightly, allowing Lotan to lend them its power, and to occasionally influence the minds of sailors that pass near its prison. But it cannot be freed without the use of the Pelagic Effigy, a mystical statue created by the serpent people that binds Lotan in its cell. The Effigy was hidden away centuries before Valossa fell.

The bad news for Freeport is that the Pelagic Effigy was recently found in the reef by the Lobstermen, and is currently held at the Auction House. Whether it will get to auction before being stolen by shark men raiders (or perhaps a sailor enthralled by Lotan's evil power) remains to be seen.

A'Val

The largest of the four islands of the Serpent's Teeth, A'Val is roughly shaped like a figure eight. The place is about four miles across from north to south. It's about two miles across at its widest point and barely a single mile at its narrowest. The most prominent feature of A'Val is far and away the city of Freeport, which is described in extensive detail in the preceding chapters. But while the City of Pirates dominates the island, it is by no means the only feature of A'Val—and over the last few years, the immediate vicinity of Freeport has gone through some significant (and dangerous) changes.

The southern half of the island is like a giant sandbar partially covered by a wide swath of jungle. In contrast, the northern section is actually the top of an undersea mountain stabbing out of the water and high into the sky. The elevation at the top of this mountain—known as Mount A'Val—is just over 3,000 feet, making for a steep climb up from the shore.

Much of the northern half of A'Val doesn't actually have a shore. The sides of the mountain are like cliffs here, tumbling almost straight down into the water. Boats can anchor themselves off the point, but there is no place to land a ship of any size. Even rowboats are hard-pressed to find a hospitable place to moor (although determined pirates often find some little cranny or niche in which to stow their treasures). Since the Great Green Fire destroyed much of the jungle, access to the northern half of A'Val has become easier, and the farming village of Cabbage Crack even has a small stretch of beach and a jetty for boat access.

Jungle Troubles

In the centuries after the fall of Valossa, A'Val became covered with thick jungle, a haven for apes, snakes, and every variety of tropical beast. When humans settled the island and built Freeport they left this wild, more from lack of ambition than from any sense of preserving the habitat. Apart from a clear-cut region around the edges of the city, the jungle—and the rest of the island—was left

more or less alone, with only occasional hunting expeditions into the wilder parts.

Then came Gregor Fennwick and the Green Flame.

The Great Green Fire of Freeport

Three years ago, Gregor Fennwick stepped off a ship, expecting to be immediately welcomed to the inner circle of Freeport's Wizards' Guild. Sure, he was only twenty-five, but he had talent and confidence and a really good wardrobe, and by damn that should have been enough. But no—the old fuddy-duddies of the Wizards' Guild actually wanted some kind of *proof* of his magical puissance. So, what, he was supposed to cool his heels in the outer circle with every two-bit seer and cantrip jockey on the island, doing tricks for the masses while the old fogies hogged access to the libraries of arcane lore? No way.

A demonstration was in order; something Tarmon and his cronies simply couldn't ignore. Gregor cleared away a ritual space at the eastern foot of Mount A'Val and began his great work, a complex spell to summon an incandescent angel that would fly above the city, purify the souls of onlookers, and trumpet Gregor's name to the heavens. Or at least, that was the plan. Unfortunately, the "angel" Gregor summoned was Tuulazcha, Burning Duke of the Emerald Hells. And it wasn't in the mood for purifying souls.

The initial explosion tore a canyon into the base of Mount A'Val, and from it poured green fire; fire that tore through the jungle, that burned on solid rock, that occasionally spouted limbs and screaming faces. Green fire that would not go out—and that slowly burned through the jungles of A'Val toward Freeport.

Nowadays they refer to it as the Great Green Fire, and the week-long battle to put out the flames is the stuff of local legend. Flames jumped across the gap between the city and the burning jungle to ravage Scurvytown and Drac's End. Many citizens died in the Great Green Fire, and some of Drac's End's more ramshackle buildings and tenements were wiped from the map. No matter how many fires the city's defenders stamped out, more sprang up in their place, blowing into Freeport on ash-heavy winds. In the end, Tarmon and the Wizards' Guild put the fire out by raising a great storm to sweep A'Val for two days, then sending an expedition to the foot of Mount A'Val to make sure whatever caused the fire was gone for good.

(And also to clean out the remains of Gregor Fennwick and his equipment. The *last* thing the guild needed was evidence that wizards were involved in the disaster, guild-affiliated or not.)

In the wake of the Great Green Fire, A'Val was a far different island. More than half the jungle had been burned away, leaving the eastern half of the island and the lower slopes of Mount A'Val bare. Worse than bare—covered in a thick, lifeless ash, half a foot deep in places, in which no plants would grow. Few inhabitants of the city had realized how much they needed the jungle until it was gone—it was not only a source of food and meat, but it sheltered Freeport from storms and winds. With no jungle the city had to rely even more on food imported from the other islands and the Continent, and southerly storms lashed the poorest parts of the city, bringing choking ashfalls. And the Green Flame is not entirely gone. Ever since that week, there have been sightings of *burnlings*—floating balls of green fire the size of a man's head, elemental creatures that exist only to set things (and people) alight. Burnlings are mostly confined to the eastern half of A'Val and the edge of Freeport, but some have



Legends of Freeport: Ships of the Night

There are pirates aplenty roaming the seas around the Serpent's Teeth—some decent, some roguish, some black-hearted as they come. Still, for all their infamy, the buccaneers of Freeport are but mortal men and women. There are stories of other ships; of supernatural frigates piloted by demons and manned by ghosts, of monsters that fly the black flag and prey upon the sea lanes. Most dismiss them as fancy, tales told to scare the cabin boy late at night.

Perhaps they are. Perhaps they aren't. Somewhere in Freeport, a sailor will swear blind he has encountered one of the following legendary horrors, and none can be sure that he is lying.

Kothar the Accursed



Captain Kothar was a vicious, arrogant pirate, active over a hundred years ago, who cared nothing for the pirate code. He and his men murdered a rival crew, claimed their ship, the *Winds of Hell,* as their own, and attempted to hide their misdeeds. When their crime was uncovered, the Sea Lord of the day sentenced them all to death; Kothar and his men were trapped in the *Winds of Hell,* which was then soaked in fuel and set alight.

But Kothar's rage was a fire stronger than death, stronger than the flames that destroyed his ship. The *Winds of Hell* returned as a burning ship of ghosts, fiery specters that existed only to destroy the living. It sails the deep seas outside the barrier reef, propelled by unholy winds even in a dead calm, a flaming sloop of blackened timbers and damned souls. Captain Kothar hunts the night, driven to punish those who put him to the flames a century ago—the pirates of Freeport and anyone who sails under the city's colors. Or anyone else, for that matter; innocence is no defense against Kothar's hate, and his spectral crew attacks any ship that crosses the *Winds of Hell's* path.

Porcelina and the Marionette Men

The tragic story of Selina Armand is one that awakens both horror and sympathy in the audience. She was a swashbuckling privateer of Freeport's early years, and while many of her comrades desired her, Selina had eyes only for Robert Chiffley, a quiet maker of dolls, toys, and puppets. Their love was strong and should have lasted forever, until Selina was afflicted with an incurable wasting disease. Desperate to save his lover's life, Chiffley struck a bargain with some demonic power; he built a life-sized mannequin of porcelain and brass, and performed a rite to transfer her soul into the doll and transform it into flesh and blood. But the demon tricked Chiffley, and while Selina's mind awoke in its new home, the doll remained artificial, an animated puppet without life or sensation.

Horrified by her new form, Selina destroyed Chiffley's workshop with inhuman strength and killed her lover before fleeing into the night. But the story does not end there. The stress of her new existence quickly drove Selina mad; she blocked out the memory of killing Chiffley and believes every man she meets to be her lover, returned at last to her embrace. When she realizes the truth, she flies into a rage and kills her victims—who are reanimated by the infernal force within her as macabre, stiff-limbed servants. Decades later, the delusional Selina—now called Porcelina by storytellers—still operates as a pirate, still denying the horror of her existence. Her ship, *Robert's Regret*, is crewed by her unliving marionette men, blank china masks hiding their unworthy faces, while Porcelina searches for her one true love.

Cuttleblack, Horror From Beyond

Bad as Kothar and Porcelina might be (if real), at least they were once human; at least their sins can be *understood*. The monster they call Cuttleblack was never human, and its urges are beyond mortal comprehension. Those who say they have seen this creature describe it as a horror beyond reason, a rubber-fleshed monstrosity in the shape of a man, with twisted limbs, taloned hands, and squid-like tentacles that erupt from its body to latch upon victims. It possesses terrible supernatural mental powers, captains a rotting hulk crewed by eyeless freaks and degenerate toad-men… and it hungers for human brains.



Cuttleblack's origin remains a mystery; some suggest it may be an outcast from some monstrous hidden race, but that's no more than blind conjecture. As for what the creature wants, what drives it to pilot its black ship through the Serpent's Teeth—well, that's guesswork too, but most people assume it's *looking for something,* some sunken city or blasphemous treasure from ancient days. But it also seeks food, in the form of living brains and captured human sailors, the luckiest of whom die beneath the blows of its misshapen crew. In the end, Cuttleblack's motives are no more certain than its existence. But the rumor that it can take the shape of a deformed human in a black cloak, that it occasionally haunts the taverns of Freeport, seeking to buy slaves and forbidden arcane lore? Now that can't *possibly* be true….

appeared in the heart of the city, seemingly born from ashfalls or emerging from the sewers.

The Reclamation Project

In the wake of the Great Green Fire, the Wizard's Guild (and magic in general) became markedly unpopular in Freeport. It was bad enough when wizards were getting up to tricks in their enclave, summoning monsters that ran amok in the Docks or planting clocktowers in the middle of the bay, but now their shenanigans had endangered the city *and* taken food off tavern tables. While the guild had covered up Fennwick's involvement in the Great Green Fire, and the Sea Lord's investigation cleared the guild of any wrongdoing, it didn't take a genius to work out green flames and wild elementals weren't *natural*. Faced with growing hostility, Tarmon put the best minds of the Wizards' Guild to work on finding something that would turn around public opinion; something to undo the damage Fennwick had wrought. What they came up with was the Knorberrtal Program.

Delinda Knorberrtal was a skilled alchemist and member of the guild; she died in the Great Green Fire, leaving behind a wealth of alchemical formulae and substances. Tarmon and the guild think-tank went through her notes, did many experiments, and discovered a method of turning the dead ash covering A'Val into fertile soil. In fact, ash treated by this alchemical process became exceptionally fertile, far more so than it had been in the past!

The Knorberrtal Program was the key to reclaiming the blasted lands of A'Val and winning back public approval, but it wasn't going to be an easy process. The Program wasn't simply a potion that could be poured onto the ash; it was a complex process of applying multiple alchemical compounds at different times over weeks and months, something that required labor and specialized equipment. While it might restore the jungle, that wasn't going to be enough to justify the expense—or make the citizens markedly happier with the guild. Tarmon presented his findings to the Captains' Council and asked for their input, and the keen mind of Sea Lord Maeorgan saw a way to put the Program to good use.

Two years ago the Sea Lord announced the Reclamation Project—an attempt not only to clear away the ash blanketing the island, but to turn the eastern half of A'Val into farmland that would in turn feed the hungry citizens of Freeport. Funds were raised largely by selling or renting parcels of land, which would then be put through the Knorberrtal Program; the council also raised taxes on imported food to raise funds, which also made the prospect of home-grown supplies that much more appealing. The public grumbled for a while, but no one could argue with the results, and suddenly the guild's star was ascendant again.

But the Reclamation Project hit an immediate snag—the need for workers to actually apply the chemicals to the soil. It was backbreaking and dangerous work, using heavy equipment and involving numerous toxic substances, and the pay was little compensation for the risk of injury or death. The council hired some laborers from Drac's End, but it wasn't enough—they needed stronger, tougher workers, and lots of them. They needed the savage races of the world, the orcs and hobgoblins, and far more than the handful living in Scurvytown. Fortunately for Freeport, the wars on the Continent were going badly for the savage races; the civilized nations had smashed many of the hobgoblin and orc tribes, leaving them landless and penniless. Working with recruiters on the Continent, the council imported hundreds of hobgoblins, orcs, half-orcs, and other humanoids to A'Val and put them to work.

A'Val Today

The island is still recovering from the ravages of the Green Flame, but the Reclamation Project is paying off. Dozens of small farms have sprung up along the east side of the island, producing enough food to make a significant difference in Freeport's import levels. Workers still spray chemicals on the ash and soil of the island, and the Wizard's Guild continues to experiment with new compounds and equipment. The savage humanoids proved too unruly and aggressive even for Scurvytown, and have created their own district on Freeport's Eastern rim—Bloodsalt, a dangerous and unstable place where few humans dare to venture.

But while the Reclamation Project has made an impact, A'Val remains a dangerous and blighted area. Ash still blankets large parts of the island, and burnlings continue to plague Freeport and the farms. And there are worse things than burnlings in the remaining jungle, now densely populated with beasts and predators that fled the destruction of the eastern jungles. In the past, Southern A'Val was regularly cleared of dangerous creatures during a triennial event known as the Great Hunt. The Captains' Council placed a bounty on the head of any such beast found within this area and brought into town, preferably dead. The hunter who bagged the most prey wins the Hunter's Cup, a great trophy that travels from winner to winner every three years. The Great Green Fire put an end to the Great Hunt, and for three years, the surviving beasts have grown in number. A number of merchants and hunters plan to restart the competition this year, but they may find the jungle a more dangerous place than it ever was in the past.

The rest of the island has its own secrets. The entire place is riddled with labyrinthine tunnels that the serpent people have carved out of the rock over the years since the fall of Valossa. There are also some naturally occurring caves on the coast that various pirates have used as hideouts and treasure troves. Many of these smaller caves possess tunnels that lead further down into the bowels of A'Val, into lost serpentine ruins and redoubts. On more than one occasion, pirates scouting out a potential hiding place for booty have discovered greater treasures than they could have imagined—and horrors beyond understanding guarding those treasures.

Cabbage Crack

"Ooh, we got some luvverly cabbages comin' in at the moment, cap'n. Red as blood, they are, and bigger than an orc's head. Taste a bit funny at first, but ye'll get used to that. How's about you and yer crew take a few, on the house?"

—Naylor Whitelick

Farming may not be the most exciting lifestyle, but it has its dangers, especially on A'Val. Pirates, burnlings, jungle predators, hobgoblin thugs…. It pays to band together with your fellows and build a bit of a community. The farming village of Cabbage Crack sprang up near

the foot of Mount A'Val shortly after the Reclamation Project began, growing as fertile land was restored by the Project's laborers. Today it boasts dozens of inhabitants working many small farms and herds of livestock. Thanks to the exceptional fertility of the treated soil, the farms produce more than twice the normal yield of crops, enough to feed hundreds of Freeport's citizens.

Cabbage Crack takes its name from two sources—the most common crop grown on the farms, and the canyon in the side of Mount A'Val, a few hundred yards from the village, created by Gregor Fennwick three years ago. The crack (it has no formal name) boasts many small caves and hiding places, and more than a few pirates and smugglers have stowed goods there.

Cabbage Crack isn't much to look at—some houses, a general store, an inn and a few warehouses, clumped around a stream that cascades down the crack and into the sea. Farms and fences play out from the village, with a wide dirt road leading south to Freeport. The road sees a lot of traffic; wagons leave the village every day, loaded with vegetables to be sold at the Market, while work crews come in from Bloodsalt to work the soil around the edges of the farms. A small beach allows access to the sea, and the farmers are happy to trade directly with passing ships (they get to keep more of the profits that way).

Key Figures

The following characters can generally be found at Cabbage Crack.

Ilda Torenn

Ilda Torenn (*female dwarf apprentice*) and her family were the first to take up the Council's offer of land at the launch of the Reclamation Project. They have the largest farm on the island, and Ilda is Cabbage Crack's unofficial leader. No one elected her; she just assumed she was in charge, and everyone else fell in line. Ilda is bossy and stubborn, but she's also generous and hard-working, doing whatever she can to make her farm and community a success. That can be as little as overseeing people's finances and negotiating with merchants, or it can mean marshalling "her people" to fight pirates or burnlings. She is a sturdy, middle-aged dwarf with little time for city manners or time-wasters, and anyone trying to do business in Cabbage Crack or explore the depths of the canyon will have to get past her first.



Naylor Whitelick

Naylor Whitelick (*male human journeyman*) is a fairly recent addition to Cabbage Crack, a farmer with family back in Freeport. He's an ugly old bugger, true, and he could talk the leg off a mule, but his neighbors think he's harmless. That's because they don't realize old Naylor is a member of the Brotherhood of the Yellow Sign. Not just a member, but a moderately powerful priest to boot—and one who still plots to infect the world with his master's gift of madness. Whitelick has scavenged a number of alchemical supplies from the Reclamation Project workers, and conducts his own experiments in the depths of the canyon. Those experiments have led to the unusual size and flavor of his cabbages—and the nasty side effects that might be visited upon those who eat them….

Adventure Hooks

As the largest source of fresh food in the Serpent's Teeth, Cabbage Crack plays an important role in Freeport. There's a lot of money to be made from vegetables and chickens, and a lot of Freeport's less savory types want some of that money. When hobgoblin thugs demanded tribute from the farmers, Ilde Torenn sent them packing. Now they're coming back with axes, torches, and some nasty alchemical supplies, and someone has to stop them before they wipe Cabbage Crack off the map.

One wizard descending into violent madness is a terrible thing; five going mad in one night is a disaster. A dinner at the Wizards' Guild erupts in fire and horror, and someone has to stop the crazed sorcerers from destroying the city. The culprit is a hallucinogenic poison in the soup served at the banquet—soup made from red cabbages. What is Naylor Whitelick up to and what creature lurks in the depths of the canyon to defend him?

The Crematorium

Burial plots are hard to come by in Freeport, land being at such a premium. Only the very rich can afford the cost of a grave on dry land and a funeral. All the other bodies that turn up in Freeport have to go somewhere, and that somewhere is almost always the Crematorium. Perched on a rocky atoll about half a mile to the west of the city, the Crematorium's purpose is simple: make sure the dead of Freeport are disposed of in an effective and sanitary manner. Actual burning of corpses is done only once a day and the furnaces can handle up to twenty corpses at a time.

The Crematorium has a permanent staff of fifteen men that rotate between duty on the rocky island and a depot located onshore on the piers of Scurvytown. A boat from the Crematorium visits Scurvytown every day at noon to pick up the newly dead and fuel for the furnaces. Most residents of the city avoid the Crematorium workers, and the

entry of one of them into any bar in town usually ratchets the jocularity level down a few notches.

For the most part, the grim dedication of the Crematorium staff keeps the dead of Freeport out of sight and out of mind. The winds still occasionally shift badly, though, sending the faint smell of burning flesh wafting from the furnaces through the streets of Scurvytown.

In addition to the Crematorium itself and the living quarters for the workers, the island also houses a small temple to the God of Death, tended by a single priest name Golmon. He ensures the proper transition of the once-living into the realm of the dead—and ensures that none of those corpses that make it out to the Crematorium get back up to trouble the living.

The Hulks

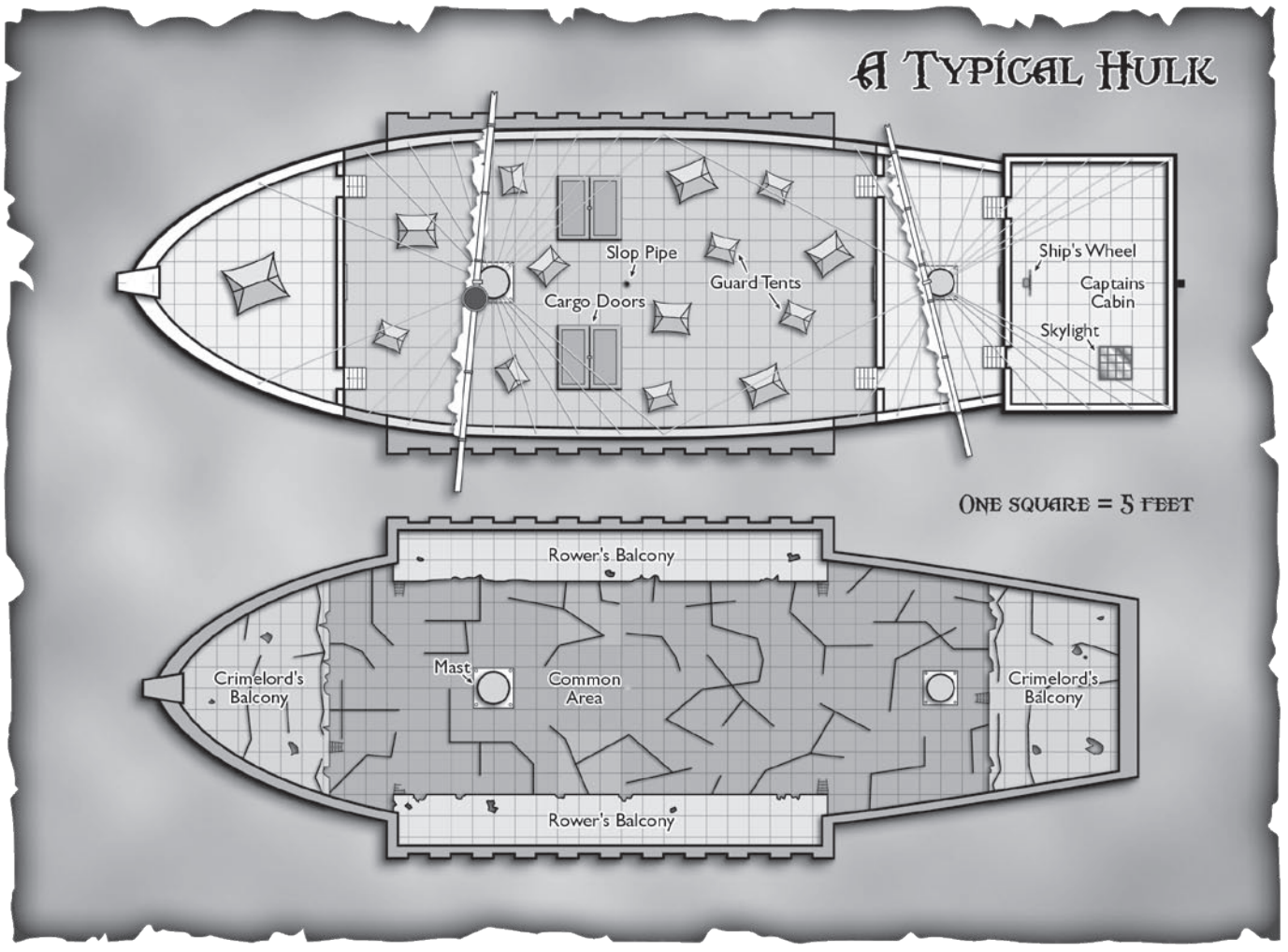
With all the back alleys, basements, and side streets in Freeport, the casual wanderer might forget a simple fact: The city is an island, and space is at a premium. That's why even the wealthiest merchants and politicians make do with townhouses instead of castles; that's why the average citizen ends up living in a two-room flat above a tailor shop or groghouse. And that's why the city's worst criminals end up in the Hulks.

Essentially huge, decommissioned freighters, the Hulks sit just outside Freeport's harbor, ballasted with the vilest collection of reprobates, recidivists, and deviants Freeport can muster. While the city jail is formidable, there just isn't enough room to house all these blackguards.

When the crime is bad enough—when blades are bloodied, when deadly magic gets used, when a house that's a little too fancy gets broken into—the offender ends up manacled hand and foot and must row his own launch out to the floating prisons. Watching over him is a stern guardsman, who's immune to bribes and indisposed to speech—except to tell the prisoner, as he's hauled up on deck, to get a good look. He won't be seeing the sun for a while.

Indeed, the life of the Hulks is concentrated in its holds—a teeming cockroach-hive of rapine and larceny. Fresh fish sleep on the floor; older, tougher cons take the moldering hammocks that cobweb the crossbeams. If you weren't a ruthless criminal when you went into the hoosegow, you'll become one fast—or end up in a terrible state. There are never enough supplies to go around, and the guards aren't exactly aggressive about making sure everyone gets his fair share. If you're not willing to fight or steal, you'll never get a bowl for the chow line, or a decent spot on the floor, or a chunk of the eel somebody fished out of the bilge. And if you do assert yourself, you don't want to let your guard down, not for a moment: Show some toughness and somebody will want to bust you down to size real soon.

It's a vile life, and that's exactly how it was meant to be. During the late Commissioner Williams' tenure, he used the Hulks to their



utmost, seeing in them a great defense against rampant lawlessness. Who in their right mind would want to go on the kind of crime spree that would get them sent out there?

Use of the Hulks has slowed since his demise, and now only the most vicious judges send convicted men here. Rumor on the streets claim that the Watch Commissioner makes his enemies disappear by send them here too, though no one has been willing to confirm this. Regardless, most who enter these horrid prisons never, ever leave.

The guards take a laissez-faire approach to policing. They mainly stay above decks in quasi-permanent shantytowns; at mealtime, they pour a cauldron of slop down a central shaft for the prisoners to grab at. Occasionally, just to remind the inmates who's in charge, they'll send down a heavily armed squadron to do a random bed check or consult with snitches. Otherwise, the incarcerated are on their own—to go unwashed, to catch and spread disease, to be snapped at by vermin, to prey on each other or be preyed upon, to forget even the most cursory morals of the world they've left.

New power structures emerge and topple seemingly by the hour as inmates arrive, get killed off—or, in rare cases, are removed after new evidence surfaces that clears their names. Whoever can claw his way to the top of the dung heap and stay there is in charge (and indeed several incarcerated crime bosses have set up small fiefs in the rotting hellholes of the Hulks). A small victory, to be sure.

Leeward

The island of Leeward is the second largest of the four. It's three miles from north to south and about a mile and a half wide at its broadest point. There are a number of small settlements, hamlets, and dwellings scattered along the coast, and even a few within the jungle; most are self-sufficient farmers and fishermen who trade their excess food to passing ships. The interior of the island is largely unexplored, and the thick jungle is home to a variety of dangerous beasts that dwell within lost temples and serpentine ruins.

Leeward has been the location of several ports, competitors to Freeport that have been put up in the Serpent's Teeth over the years. These have each been placed on the southeastern coast of the island, nestled into the natural harbor created by the curve of the land there. These rival ports never managed to last for more than a year or two at a time, for a variety of reasons.

Until now.

Libertyville

> "It doesn't matter what you or I thought this place was going to be, Petra. All that matters is what Libertyville turned out to be. You can destroy them, but you can't control them. Can't control us."
>
> —*Buster Wallace*

The first rival port was named Libertyville, and was founded by Jacque Francisco—son of the Sea Lord that the first Drac betrayed—nearly two hundred years ago. The entire place was mysteriously burned to the ground within six months of its founding, and the younger Francisco disappeared in the conflagration. His body was never found, and the perpetrators of the arson were never caught. It seems clear Drac himself was behind the destruction of what was then known as Libertyville, but since he pretty much had Freeport under his thumb at the time, there was no one to investigate the incident or to avenge the young Francisco's death.

In later years, others tried to found their own ports on the ashes of Libertyville, but each and every such settlement failed. Some of them met with the same fate as the original. Others were destroyed by sea monsters, wiped out by pirates, torn apart by internal bickering, or simply failed to attract enough settlers to survive. Libertyville became a sad joke, a dead-end, proof that Drac was right to sell out Francisco centuries ago. Few ventured over to Leeward, except perhaps to hunt or to get some distance—but not too much—between themselves and Freeport.

Funded by Freeport

Five years ago, in the turmoil caused by the death of Milton Drac and the Succession Crisis, some of Freeport's merchants started to think that it might be *useful* for Freeport to have a commercial rival in the area. Petra Fricke, leader of the Guild of Craftsmen and critic of the Captains' Council, was one of them. A staunch defender of the people of Freeport, Fricke was disgusted with the way the council had been manipulated by Milton Drac for over a decade, and how it was damaging the city through its political infighting over who would be named Sea Lord.

Fricke decided that the only way to really break the stranglehold the corrupt council had over the city was to start up a separate operation on Leeward—to rebuild Libertyville as a rival port facility. Faced with a meaningful commercial rival, the council would have to focus on improving life in Freeport, to keep traders coming back to do business and to retain skilled laborers. She was idealistic to an extent, but her hopes were pragmatic—even if the new Libertyville failed in the end, the competition would cause enough uproar in Freeport to ease the costs of doing business there, improving profits within her guild.

In the months before the Succession Crisis, Fricke gained the support of the Guild of Craftsmen and several wealthy backers, drawn into the project by the promise of a good return from their investment. Plans were drawn up for a small town while members of the Guild of Craftsmen spent time out on Leeward, cleaning up the island and preparing the site for the new buildings to come.

One of Fricke's most important allies was Buster Wallace. Like his father before him, Wallace was a wealthy merchant with a small fleet of ships that shuttled goods between Freeport and the Continent. But while his father, Captain Brock Wallace, had been happy to immerse himself in political struggles, Buster preferred to focus on business and keep out of power games. After Milton Drac murdered Brock Wallace, Buster was favored to inherit his father's seat on the Captains' Council. Rather than taking his place, Buster decided it was better to quit while he was ahead. Buster decided to relocate his business and interests to Libertyville, and to put his influence and fortune into making Fricke's plan come true.

In the chaos following the Succession Crisis, Wallace and Fricke unveiled Libertyville—a small, independent port offering competitive services to Freeport, and with far less dangerous surrounds. The response from other traders was… adequate. Not fantastic, but adequate. Supported in large part by the activity of Wallace's own

T'Giri Returned–New Shipyard Causes Concern in Freeport

~The Shipping News

ships, Libertyville looked like it could develop into a small but viable port.

But the Great Green Fire of Freeport changed everything. Suddenly, Freeport had a greater demand for imports from the Continent, for food and supplies destroyed by the fire; suddenly the trading ships could demand higher prices and better services in Freeport and expect to receive them. Traffic to Libertyville dried up, and most of its inhabitants relocated to Freeport or the Continent. Soon only Buster and a few diehards were left in the deserted town, and Wallace was about to admit defeat and return to Freeport, facing possible financial ruin.

Then a small fleet of pirate ships dropped anchor in Libertyville's bay—not to buy supplies, but to lay claim to the town as their pirate utopia. And just as they had been two centuries earlier, they were led by Captain Francisco.

The Liberty Movement

Whether Masson Francisco is truly a descendant of the original Captain Francisco is still uncertain. What *is* certain is that he's a capable and charismatic pirate with an ideology all his own—an ideology of freedom, personal responsibility, and rejection of the social order of aristocracy and commoners found in Freeport and throughout the known world. Dozens of pirates have flocked to his banner, and to his dream of founding a "pirate utopia," a place where pirates (and others) may live as they choose by their own code, owing no obedience to another and holding no one as their superior. Where else could he found that utopia than Libertyville—a town that symbolizes the battle between liberty and expediency, a town betrayed by the first Captain Drac and his decision to turn his back on the old Pirate's Code?

When Francisco and his pirates stormed Libertyville, they gave Wallace and the other inhabitants a choice—fight (and probably die), depart for Freeport leaving their valuables behind, or join the ranks of the *Liberty Movement*. Part social experiment, part freebooter army, the Movement is Francisco's name for his dream of freedom; they fly a white flag, symbolizing not surrender but a blank canvas, and their motto is "For Life and Liberty!" While many of Libertyville's old guard fled for Freeport, many others (including Buster Wallace) stayed behind, intrigued by Francisco's charisma and his radical notions of freedom and responsibility. The pirates held a week-long party to celebrate the capture of Libertyville, but when the party stopped the clean-up began—and Libertyville, the real port of pirates, was here to stay.

Two years after Francisco took power, Libertyville remains under pirate control, holding to the principles of the Liberty Movement. It takes in only a small proportion of Freeport's trade, but it only needs a small proportion to stay viable. Should the pirates of Libertyville need more money, food, or goods, they simply take to the seas and steal what they want. The coming of T'Giri's shipyard has massively increased the town's popularity with traders and sailors, as does its refusal to levy taxes or restrictions upon the goods bought and sold there. And while the wealthy merchants of Freeport fume about their ships being raided by the Liberty Movement, the city's navy isn't large enough to match the pirate forces. Unless the maritime powers of the Continent decide Libertyville is a threat, the pirate utopia is here to stay.

Libertyville Now

Day to day life in Libertyville really isn't that different from life in Freeport, at least on the surface. It's a small town of a few dozen houses, shops, and inns, with ships docking and trading in the bay with Buster Wallace and other local merchants. The streets aren't *that* clean, but they aren't stinking heaps of ordure either; the nights can be rowdy, but they aren't carnivals of depravity and murder. The majority of the port's inhabitants are pirates, and they're hardly pictures of civic pride or restraint—but still, here in their haven, they more or less behave themselves. Visitors to Libertyville often ask how the town's ruler (Captain Francisco, they assume) keeps the pirates under control. When told that Libertyville has no ruler, no laws, and no control whatsoever, most become extremely confused (and more than a little worried about their safety).



Freedom's Militia

"If you truly love freedom, you cannot keep it to yourself. It must be shared with all who desire it."

The pirates of Libertyville are not merely self-centered anarchists, as some in Freeport label them. They believe wholeheartedly in freedom and liberty, and they extend the protection of their code to anyone in need. In particular, to slaves.

Slavery is illegal in Freeport, but slave traders do operate in other parts of the world, and they sometimes transport their human cargo through the Serpent's Teeth. Sometimes they even dock at Freeport, slaves locked below-decks while their captors sashay around the town. Occasionally slavers have even maintained bases within the Serpent's Teeth, imprisoning their captives in caves or in the jungle depths. The authorities in Freeport may turn a blind eye to this human traffic out of corruption, fear, or simple lack of resources, but the pirates of Libertyville will not.

Freedom's Militia is not an organized body or group; it's simply the name given to pirates raiding slavers or rescuing the unjustly imprisoned. Militia missions tend to happen spontaneously; a pirate learns of slaver activity, puts the word out to her fellows, and a group is armed and recruited on the spot. As always, the pirates hold to the code when determining who will lead a Militia raid, who will join, and how any booty will be divided, with the proviso that rescued slaves also get a share in any proceeds from their rescue. Flying a red flag and armed to the teeth, Freedom's Militia swoops down on slavers and offers no mercy, fighting to the death in the service of liberty. After any such raid, the pirates return to Libertyville, divide the loot, and offer the freed slaves the chance to join their number. If a slave agrees, he's a pirate and an equal; if he refuses, he's no longer given special treatment, and may be robbed before he can get off the island.

Libertyville is, quite simply, a community without laws or rulers. Any pirate may do as she pleases, ungoverned by a king or Captains' Council. And yet, Libertyville is not a chaotic morass of violence and theft; it can be a wild town, but it's little worse than the docks of Freeport. The key is that, while the pirates are not bound by laws, they remain responsible for their own actions, and they *know* it. They know if you steal from a comrade and are discovered, that pirate may seek personal justice, while other pirates may ostracize you for cheating a shipmate. If you murder another pirate, your victim's friends will come looking for revenge—if he has any. If you don't clean up after yourself, you have to live in your own filth, or take responsibility for paying (or forcing) someone else to clean up for you.

Freedom does not mean chaos, at least not in Libertyville; it means you captain your own destiny in a world where others do the same, and you choose the consequences that befall you. The only rule in Libertyville is the Pirate's Code, and even adherence to *that* is voluntary—but a pirate who doesn't hold to the Code won't stay welcome in Libertyville for long. No one is considered superior or inferior to anyone else, and you are judged by your actions rather than your position. The tradesmen, shopkeepers, and laborers of Libertyville chose those roles, and the pirates of the port have no power to demand service from them. A pirate may decide to steal from a trader or bully a local into cooking and cleaning for him; he does so knowing that the trader may pay other pirates to have him beaten, or that his "servant" will not be punished by the law should she cut his throat in his sleep.

When the pirates of Libertyville take to the seas, they vote on who will captain their crew or take on positions of responsibility. In theory, any pirate might captain a crew for a raid, or be elected first mate, quartermaster, chief gunner, and so on. In practice, the pirate who owns a ship almost always acts as Captain aboard that ship; should he be passed over, it's a bad sign for his competence or ability to inspire a crew. Similarly, a first mate or gunner who's *good* at her job will almost always continue to be elected to that role, should she wish it, because experience and skill counts for so much. While at sea, the captain's word is law, every pirate has a job to do, and refusal to obey is counted as mutiny. That's because life at sea is far more dangerous than life on shore; a pirate who doesn't pull his weight may doom the entire crew to a watery grave or the hangman's noose. The reason the captain gets a larger share of treasure is because of the extra responsibility she bears, the role of keeping everything working until the crew can reach shore and control their own lives once more.

Freeport and Libertyville are not political or commercial rivals, but *ideological* rivals; the conflict between the two ports is not about power or money, but about the right way to live. Most of Freeport's citizens don't find Libertyville's ideology that appealing; they like feeling better than those below them on the social hierarchy, they like the protection of laws and regulations, and they don't fancy having to defend their property and lives from any pirate who takes a fancy to their belongings. But some denizens of Freeport find the idea of being their own master, of taking full responsibility for their life and liberty, very appealing indeed. Libertyville is growing slowly, but it *is* growing, despite all the trade sanctions and intrigues the Captains' Council can array against it.

Every time Libertyville grows, Freeport shrinks a little. Sooner or later, the powers that be in the city will brook no more theft of influence from the Liberty Movement. And come that day, ideological conflict may turn into open warfare.

Key Figures

The following characters can generally be found at Libertyville.

Buster Wallace

Buster Wallace (*male human apprentice*) never expected the Libertyville Project to turn out like this—but damnation, he's actually glad that it has. The young merchant always lacked his father's pretensions of superiority; Buster might have been born wealthy, but he never thought that made him better than anyone else. The Liberty Movement places him as a social equal to his employees, contacts, and crew—an equal with more money, sure, but no better right to

earn that money than his fellows. That attitude suits Buster down to the ground, and it makes Libertyville a far more pleasant place to his eyes than the corrupt streets of Freeport with all the squabbling for control and power. At least you know where you stand with pirates; at least here you can be free.

But for all that he's embraced the ideology of the Liberty Movement, Buster faces a certain hostility from his "brethren." He's a merchant, not a pirate; most of Libertyville's inhabitants are accustomed to thinking of people like Buster as *targets*, not allies, and old perceptions die hard. He's had to protect his property from his neighbors more than once, and even fought one duel for the right to retain his ship (he won, but only just). While he and Masson Francisco have become friends, Francisco won't openly favor Buster unless he absolutely has to, lest he destabilize the Movement by taking sides. Buster accepts this, but it's cold comfort; he's on the lookout for allies among the pirates and newcomers to Libertyville, allies who can protect his interests in return for financial and political aid.

Petra Wallace

Once believed to be a contestant for the Captains' Council, Petra Fricke (*female human journeyman*), leader of the Guild of Craftsmen, saw gaining a seat as the surest means to do good for Freeport. Her idealism and eagerness ultimately made her an unattractive candidate and she was rejected. Petra wasn't happy about having her dreams dashed, but she's not let it ruin her either. Instead, she worked to support the fledgling community Libertyville, funneling funds out of the city to encourage growth there and aid her lover, Buster Wallace. After she was caught, she was accused of treason and faced hanging. She skipped town and has made a new life for herself as Buster's wife.

"Evil Eye" Fleagle

Before the Succession Crisis, "Evil Eye" Fleagle (*male human apprentice*) was a well-known figure in Scurvytown, a weapons dealer and local eccentric. Everyone laughed at his political tracts and street-corner rantings, and the rumor that the cellar of his shop was stocked with alchemical explosives. Well, they stopped laughing when his Emporium went up in a greasy explosion during the Succession Riots, showering the slums with broken blades. Most people assumed Fleagle had perished in either an alchemical accident or a very final act of political protest. What it was, in fact, was a way of covering his tracks. Fleagle had had enough of Freeport's corruption and the council's political machine; he got out while the going was good.

Five years later, Fleagle is back in the Serpent's Teeth, now a member of the Liberty Movement. He's still a weapons merchant, not a pirate, but he holds to the spirit of the pirate code and the ideals of the Movement. His small shop in Libertyville is crammed with inexpensive swords, axes, knives, guns, crossbows, and every other kind of weapon a buccaneer could want. Outsiders might be able to buy from him, if he likes their looks—and if they can back up those looks with some political acumen. Fleagle is a fervent supporter of Freedom's Militia, and will outfit any ship or group on Militia business for no cost (although he expects the weapons back afterwards). And in the barrels behind his shop, he keeps his supply of alchemical explosives, waiting for the day he can launch them into the Sea Lord's Palace and bring the walls of corruption down.

T'Giri

T'Giri (*male human journeyman*) is a weather-beaten man in his sixties who hails from the southern ends of the world. Although aging, his mind is sharp and his hands are strong, and he knows the art of shipbuilding better than anyone else in the Serpent's Teeth. Thirty years ago, T'Giri owned a shipyard in Freeport, a rival to that of Silas Freland, but when his shipyard burned down under very dubious circumstances, he left Freeport for better climes. Five years ago, he returned to Freeport under a false name, bent on revenge and determined to destroy Freland. Working in the shipyard, T'Giri had been planning to murder Freland, but when Masson Francisco claimed Libertyville as a pirate utopia, he had a better idea. T'Giri came over to the pirate enclave and offered his services as a shipwright, to make ships at far less than Freland's appalling prices, supplying both pirates and free sailors.

Although the Libertyville shipyard is small, the ships T'Giri builds are of exceptional quality and in high demand, while captains across the Teeth are turning their backs on Freland. When he's not working on a new ship T'Giri likes to trade tall stories with his Libertyville comrades, reminisce about his decades at sea, and listen carefully for the sound of Silas Freland screaming in poverty and rage across the waters.

Adventure Hooks

The sheer existence of Libertyville is a slap in the face to the Captains' Council, a negation of everything Drac created in Freeport. Shutting the rival port down is a priority for the Council, and for many of the merchants of Freeport—not to mention Petra Fricke's backers, who helped create Libertyville only to have control wrested from their hands. The Captains' Council can't act openly against Libertyville without alienating many sailors and traders who use both ports, though, so espionage and intrigue are the order of the day. What the enemies of Libertyville really needs are agents that can infiltrate the Liberty Movement, find out its plans, and destabilize the social order in Libertyville, setting crews against each other. It's a well-paid role, but a dangerous one: what if the pirates discover what the spies are up to before the agents succeed in upsetting the fragile peace of the island? And what if the spies find they sympathize more with the ideology of the Movement than with that of their wealthy, vengeful masters?

Merchants and pirates are not the only entities interested in the existence of Libertyville. Law and Chaos, freedom and responsibility, social hierarchies, and lines of control—these are the concerns of both gods and mortals. Some see the conflict between Libertyville and Freeport as a divine conflict and there are prophecies to prove it. Is there a divine agency at work behind Francisco and the Liberty Movement, or are religious forces trying to co-opt human ideology? When a priest of the God of Travelers sets up a chapel in Libertyville, it sparks a religious conflict unseen by most mortals, a war of hidden powers and deadly prayers. And when the mystical tensions around the port become stronger, they awaken forces sleeping in the jungles of Leeward. The old gods of Valossa have their own agenda and if they become involved in the struggle for Libertyville's continued existence, can the Cult of the Unspeakable One be far behind?

Windward

The third-largest island of the Serpent's Teeth, Windward is only slightly smaller than Leeward. It is three miles long from north to south, and roughly a mile across.

Of all the islands, Windward is far and away the wildest. Much of this has to do with the gap in the barrier reef that provides the island no protection against the roaring surf that comes rolling in off the ocean. The western shore of the island features high cliffs that are interminably battered by the sea. Some say the island will eventually give up the ghost and slide back under the sea, leaving A'Val defenseless against the waves.

The jungles that cover Windward are thick and dangerous, and several ruins from the empire of the serpent people remain undiscovered beneath the canopy. These ruins contain many treasures and valuables—but they also crawl with degenerate serpent people. Cursed by the power of the Unspeakable One, these serpent people have regressed even further than their kin have, turning into savage, flesh-eating ghouls that sometimes launch attacks on human settlements.

The east coast of Windward, in stark contrast to the west, is actually made up of wide sandy beaches. This is a favorite spot for picnickers and tourists—or even sailors on leave—to come and enjoy the beaming sun and gentle waves. Being upcurrent from Freeport means that the place is almost entirely pristine too. A number of small outposts and homes can be found here, micro-villages of fishermen, sailors, and farmers that look after themselves and trade with Freeport for supplies. At the moment, many of these locals work as servants to Andrea Blax, receiving scant payment but keeping their skins intact.



Felix's Ruin

"This is my place now, friend, and I decide who stays and who goes. And unless you want to bunk down with the ghouls tonight, you'd better show me some respect."

—Andrea Blax

Once a resort popular with the wealthy and the adventurous, this ramshackle manor house now plays host to one of the most notorious pirates of Freeport. Andrea Blax has claimed the abandoned hotel—and the entire island of Windward—as her personal domain, from which she preys on the shipping lanes around Freeport.

History

Several years ago, an enterprising man named Felix Oliver set up a resort on one of the best stretches of east-coast beach. It featured an inn and a tavern, a fence to keep out the dangers of the jungle, and even netting to stop sharks (and shark men). Unfortunately, Felix's security wasn't enough to stop the most dangerous predator—pirates. During the Succession Crisis, cutthroats sacked Felix's and used it as their hideout when they kidnapped Elise Grossette of the Captains' Council. Grossette was rescued and the pirates punished, but only after the pirates had murdered Felix and his staff.

The ruined resort was left unclaimed for several years, becoming infested with snakes, ghouls, and fungus. Then last year, Andrea Blax—who was finding herself increasingly unwelcome in Freeport—decided to claim the hotel as her own. Her pirate crew swept the building clean of ghouls, rebuilt the stockade wall, and informed the satellite hamlets that the resort—in fact, the whole island—was under new management. Felix's Ruin (as it's now called) is now Blax's well-protected sanctum, and one she is prepared to share with other pirates for a price. She even allows civilians to holiday on "her island," although for some reason few holidaymakers seem interested in her hospitality.

Description

In its prime, Felix's was a well-appointed and sturdy resort, two stories tall, with painted wooden walls and a shingled roof. The predations of pirates and ghouls have left it in a terrible state, with peeling paint and holes in the walls and roof. Broken windows are patched with planks (if at all), the porch is covered with clutter and rubbish, and a stinking pile of food and garbage draws flies and gulls at the back. The stretch of beach on which the hotel sits is surrounded by a ten-foot stockade, holding back the jungle; a small dock allows access for boats, while Blax's ship (the *Queen Bitch*) is anchored further out.

Inside the ruin of the hotel, the décor is even less appealing—Blax's crewmen have little patience for table manners or tidying up. A spacious dining room is ankle-deep in empty bottles and dirty plates, while pirates sleep off their excesses in filthy ground floor rooms. The top floor is Blax's private domain, and is much tidier; she "employs" the locals to keep it clean, and keeps several rooms empty for important guests such as other pirate captains. Terrified locals also maintain a kitchen on the ground floor, while a vault in the cellar holds Blax's loot.

Key Figures

The following characters can generally be found at Felix's Ruin.

Andrea Blax

In the wake of Milton Drac's death, Andrea Blax (*female human journeyman*) saw an opportunity to seize power in Freeport, more power than she could amass as captain of a single ship. She made a claim on the vacant throne of the Sea Lord, presenting herself as a descendent of the original Captain Drac. This was a complete lie; Blax bribed a clerk at the Office of Public Records to forge the documents "proving" her noble lineage. The forgeries might have been discovered eventually, but in the end, it didn't matter: the Captains' Council repealed the law of succession, triggering the Succession Crisis, and Blax was left out in the cold.

She didn't like that, not one bit. Blax bears a grudge against the council, the Sea Lord, and indeed all of Freeport. She has no interest with the anarchist movement in Libertyville; what she wants is to be in charge, just as she had planned before the crisis. Her claim over Felix's and Windward is backed up by nothing but force of arms, but she will fight to the death to keep it. It may only be a single island, but here she is Queen of the Pirates, and that's all that matters. Extending her hospitality to other pirates helps cement that authority—and hopefully provides her with allies should she ever decide to make a move against Freeport.

Adventure Hooks

The seas around Windward are home to the growing forces of the shark men and they're not happy with humans living so close to their base. They launch an attack on the innocent hamlets and thorps of the island, and the survivors retreat to Felix's Ruin. Blax is a harsh ruler, but these people are under her protection—and if the shark men keep up the assault, Felix's Ruin might be next. She needs allies to take on the sea devils, and she's prepared to pay for aid if she must.

It's Andrea Blax's birthday, and she's throwing the party to end all parties. Pirates converge on Felix's Ruin to drink, fight, and party, while Andrea conspires with her fellow captains to launch a massive raid on Freeport. The Captains' Council needs someone to infiltrate the party and learn what Blax and company are planning. Getting in will be hard enough, and escaping will be even harder—especially once a horde of ghouls break through the stockade and swarm into the resort to feast on the living.

T'Wik

The island known as T'Wik—"the little one"—is by far the smallest of the four islands. It's only a mile long north to south, and no more than half that east to west at its widest point.

For generations, ever since Freeport was founded, T'Wik has stood as the gateway of the city. Almost all of the traffic into Freeport passes right by T'Wik, which is only about a half a mile south of the city, directly across from the harbor.

T'Wik has been the site of a number of signal lights for ships trying to navigate into Freeport harbor. The first of these was merely a bonfire raised on the tiny island's highest point; in later years, small shelters were built for the fire, then a crude lighthouse.

Milton's Folly

When Milton Drac become Sea Lord, he embarked on one of the most ambitious projects the world had ever seen—the erection of a massive, two-hundred-foot tall lighthouse on the very spot where the original bonfires were lit, purportedly to honor the original Sea Lord Drac. Construction of the lighthouse took ten years and staggering amounts of money, and the project became known as "Milton's Folly." But the lighthouse was more than a grand gesture; it was part of a plan to spread madness throughout the world, all in the name of the Unspeakable One. That plot was foiled and Milton Drac killed, but his legacy remains, towering over the scrap of land more and more people refer to simply as "Lighthouse Island."

Despite being the location of a plot to destroy all civilization, T'Wik is perhaps the safest place in the Serpent's Teeth. The jungle here is light, and was cleared of all dangerous creatures during the building of the lighthouse. The magical artifacts that were once stored within the lighthouse have been taken away, and the Captains' Council maintains a small force of watchmen for security. Visitors could sleep under the stars on T'Wik and fear nothing more dangerous than boredom (and perhaps being dazzled by the lighthouse's lamps).

The Freeport Lighthouse

"A pleasure to show you around, milady... hmm? No, there's nothing interesting behind that door. No, I didn't hear anything. You must be imagining things."

—Roscoe Thornbrae

Two hundred feet tall, this marvel of engineering lights the way into Freeport Harbor for ships all around the world. It's the only interesting thing on T'Wik, but it makes up for that by being *very* interesting—especially if you want to sneak into Freeport without alerting the authorities.

History

After the fall of Milton Drac, the Captains' Council took great pains to eliminate any threat posed by the lighthouse. The interior of the building was cleared of all magical or religious paraphernalia, and several sections were rebuilt to remove any eldritch influence they

"Ghost of Milton Drac" Said to Haunt Lighthouse!

~ The Shipping News



might have retained. What was left was a gigantic tower, a system of lamps and mirrors, and more storage space than anyone knew what to do with.

To operate, the lighthouse needed a keeper—several keepers, thanks to its size. The council considered multiple applicants, but in the end hired the Thornbrae family to maintain the lighthouse and work the lamps. This family of halflings was respectable, hard-working, and passed every security check—more than anything else, the Captains' Council didn't want to hire a bunch of cultists, or any kind of religious extremists, to look after the lighthouse.

And they didn't. They hired a family of smugglers instead.

The six members of the Thornbrae family don't actually do any smuggling *themselves*, no. They're too busy keeping the lighthouse in shape; it's a big job, and they're small people. Instead, they work with smugglers, thieves, and anyone else in the know who wants to sneak things into (or out of) Freeport without inspection or detection. Money changes hands, timetables are arranged, and the parties concerned sail around the back of T'Wik in absolute darkness while the lamps are pointed elsewhere. Stolen goods can be kept in one of the lighthouse's many empty storage rooms, and the lighthouse's guards know when to look the other way in exchange for a little gold. It's a smooth operation, no one gets hurt, and the Thornbraes get enough extra cash to make up for the boredom and eyestrain that is the life of a lighthouse keeper.

Description

The Freeport Lighthouse is one of the wonders of the world, visible from every island in the Serpent's Teeth. It is a square building with gradually sloping stone walls, one hundred and forty-five feet wide at its base and forty five feet wide at its summit. Open archways in the sides of the building begin twenty feet off the ground and continue up to the second floor. At this point, a sloped, stone ledge juts out to prevent anyone from climbing on the outside to the levels above. A six-sided glass enclosure at the top blazes with light every night. A small, separate building houses the lighthouse's guards.

Surprisingly, the lighthouse has only four floors. The ground floor is one large space, with thick stone columns stretching fifty feet to support the weight of the building above. The second and third floors have been modified to become storerooms and bedrooms for the Thornbrae clan. The forth floor is a vast tower a hundred feet high, with a staircase winding up along the walls. At the top are the great lamps, mirrors, and lens that are used to light up the Freeport night. Originally, the lighthouse used a magical crystal to produce light, but that was destroyed when Milton Drac's plans were foiled.

Key Figures

The following characters can generally be found at the Freeport Lighthouse.

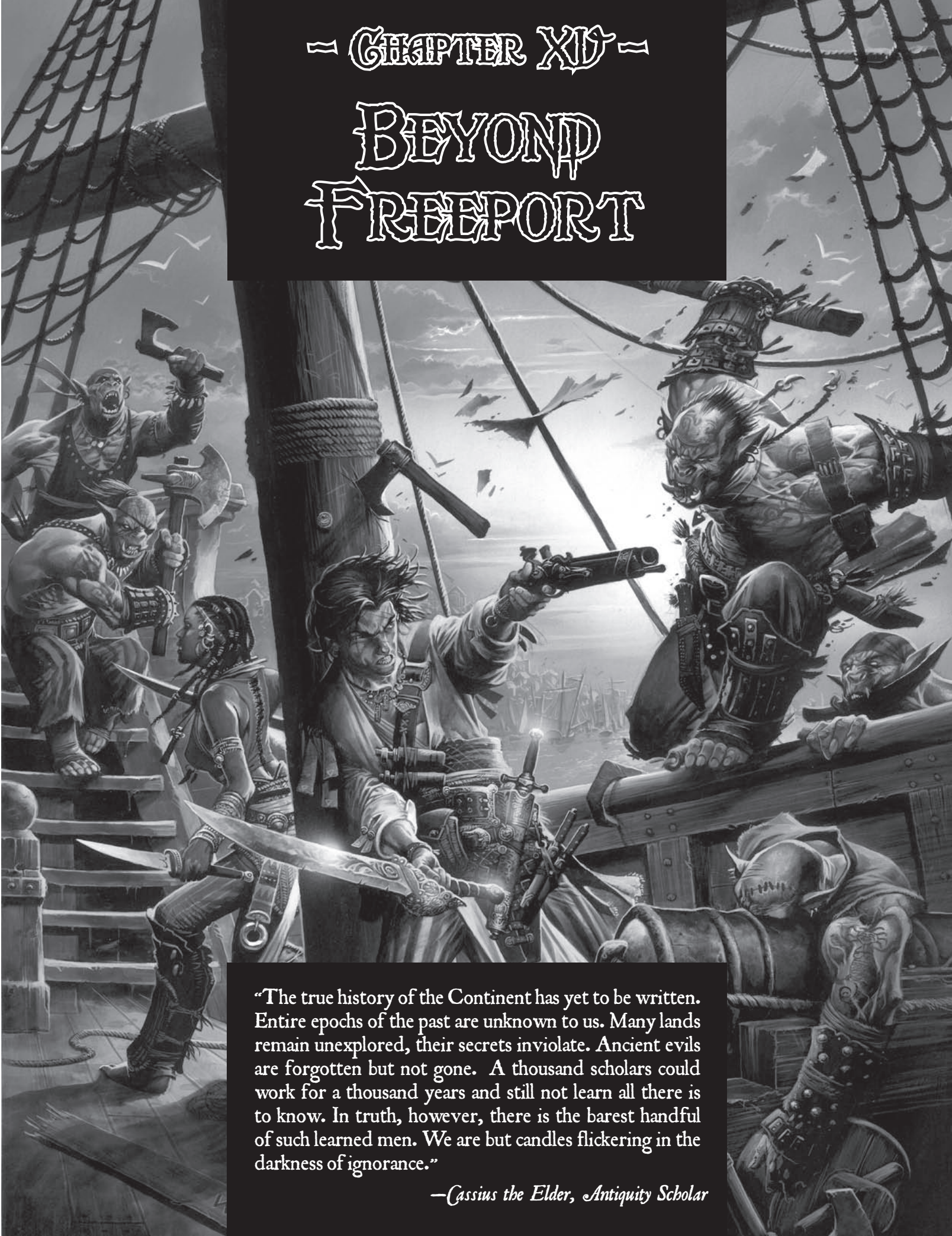
Roscoe Thornbrae

Roscoe Thornbrae (*male halfling apprentice*) thought this was going to be the scam of a lifetime. A ten-year contract to look after some lamps, with the chance to clean up on Freeport's smuggling trade? Too good to be true! Five years later, he's bored, he's tired, his eyes hurt all the time, and he can't describe just how sick he is of the smell of lamp oil. This was supposed to be easy, but it turned out to be *work*—work that keeps him and his five nephews constantly busy with the lighthouse's operations. The smuggling side of things is working fine, yes—but he never has time to spend any of his ill-gotten gains, because he's always polishing lenses or lugging barrels of oil up a hundred feet of stairs. It's just not *fair*.

Adventure Hooks

Visiting dignitaries always want to take a tour of the lighthouse, and the Thornbraes know how to put on a good show. But this tour is happening on very short notice, and there's a pile of contraband liquor and stolen jewels filling up the middle floors of the lighthouse. The Captains' Council needs someone to escort the visitors on their tour; the Thornbraes need help hiding their booty from prying eyes; and the lighthouse guards have been replaced with assassins hunting the foreigners. Oh, and the lamp just ran out of oil.

Roscoe can't take this anymore; he needs a holiday and he's taking one. The Captains' Council has hired a replacement, and she seems to fit right in. Unfortunately, she's a cultist of the Unspeakable One, and she wants to finish the job Milton Drac started. Roscoe returns to find his nephews in a trance, the doors to the lamp room locked, and monsters roaming the lower floors. He needs help, and if he doesn't get it, Freeport's in *big* trouble.



Chapter XV

Beyond Freeport

"The true history of the Continent has yet to be written. Entire epochs of the past are unknown to us. Many lands remain unexplored, their secrets inviolate. Ancient evils are forgotten but not gone. A thousand scholars could work for a thousand years and still not learn all there is to know. In truth, however, there is the barest handful of such learned men. We are but candles flickering in the darkness of ignorance."

—Cassius the Elder, Antiquity Scholar



The Pirate's Guide to Freeport is written so the city can be easily dropped into just about any fantasy world. The book keeps the number of assumptions to a minimum, so Game Masters will have an easy time adapting Freeport to their chosen campaign setting. It is, however, entirely possible to use the City of Adventure as the center of a unique fantasy setting, and that's what **Beyond Freeport** is all about. This chapter presents additional details about the World of Freeport, blowing out the city's background into a full campaign setting. It contains a complete cosmology, an overview of the World of Freeport, and a detailed look at "the Continent." To be clear, everything in this chapter is optional and can be used or discarded as the Game Master sees fit.

In the Beginning...

To understand the unique nature of the World of Freeport, it is necessary to go back to the very beginning, to the time before time. In pre-history the universe was nothing but a cosmic soup of possibility. Moving through this miasma were strange beings without form or name. No one knows their origins or how they achieved sentience, but somehow it was they who unconsciously guided creation. Amongst these Primal Gods was the great serpent later known as Yig. This being used his will and his essence to create an island in the soup and claim it for its own. Others of the Primal Gods did the same and in this way the universe was formed.

For the first time Yig took physical form. He imposed his will on his island, naming it Valossa and creating mountains, rivers, hills, and plains, as well as creatures to populate them. Still, Yig was not satisfied. He then created the serpent people, gave them intelligence, and taught them the secrets of sorcery. They thanked Yig with worship and undying loyalty. Yig experienced unbridled adulation and found it to his liking. It didn't take long for him to begin wanting more than Valossa could provide.

Soon Yig sent coils of cosmic power out into creation and pulled new realities around his island. Those Primal Gods that could resist the powerful Yig did so; the others were consumed or imprisoned and their lands amalgamated. The serpent people conquered these realities one by one, adding them to their god's domain. This went on for time uncounted, yet no amount of conquest could satisfy Yig. Always he lusted for more: more power, more lands, more servants.

So the Lands of Yig grew and always the serpent people were Yig's champions. The Valossan Empire stretched across many lands, and new wars were planned for those beyond. It was at this time a new cult appeared amongst the serpent people—the Brotherhood of the Yellow Sign. The rulers of the serpent people paid the cult little mind. It was insignificant, they thought, and beneath the notice of the chosen of Yig. They had faced the powers of many gods in their conquests, and did not fear this upstart cult.

The Brotherhood of the Yellow Sign was different from the other foes the serpent people had faced. For one thing, it was an enemy within, a secret cult that could not be defeated in open battle. Also, the cult drew its power from the worship of another Primal God, a being known as the Unspeakable One. This dread entity had been trapped in a cosmic prison in the early days of the universe, but the Brotherhood managed to summon him with a display of incredible magical power. The Unspeakable One manifested in the midst of Valossa, the center of Yig's domain and power. Madness and destruction overtook the

Valossan Empire. Most of Yig's island fell into the sea, entombing the god's physical form and sending him into a torpor that has lasted for two millennia. The majority of the surviving serpent people were driven insane before the sorcerous energies waned and the Unspeakable One was pulled back into his prison. The Lands of Yig were shattered, their origin and their creator forgotten.

The World of Freeport

Today's World of Freeport is built on the ruins of the Lands of Yig. The Serpent's Teeth are all that remains of the island of Valossa. The city of Freeport is located almost precisely at the center of Yig's former domain and, unknown to the surface world, the god himself slumbers deep beneath the ocean. Although Yig has not stirred since the manifestation of the Unspeakable One, his dream-sendings still affect the mortal world. Freeport in particular is influenced by Yig's dreams. They stoke the lusts of the mortal races, making them desire power, money, and even blood. It is perhaps no surprise that a city of pirates sprang up at the heart of Yig's empire.

The world's origin gives it an unusual character. It is not a traditional globe rotating in the depths of space; it a pastiche of lands pulled in around Valossa by coils of cosmic power. It is therefore easiest to understand the world as a central point, the Serpent's Teeth, surrounded by a seemingly endless ocean dotted with lands great and small. The further away from the Serpent's Teeth one sails, the more difficult it is to navigate. The lands closest to the center—most notably the Continent—are the core of the World of Freeport and are thus easily accessible. Getting to more distant lands is treacherous and ships always run the danger of sailing into the mists and getting forever lost. Sailors tell endless stories of the perilous seas, ships that reappear after decades in the queer fog, and lands inhabited by strange creatures and ferocious monsters unlike anything on the Continent. There is only one reason there is contact and trade between distant parts of the World of Freeport: the mystic navigators. These cryptic adepts have come to understand something of the nature of the former Lands of Yig, and they have mastered the technique of navigating between them. Ships without mystic navigators may be able to get to where they are going using charts alone, but the likelihood of this becomes smaller and smaller the farther away from the Serpent's Teeth they travel.

Since the World of Freeport is an amalgamation of pre-existing lands, time is hard to reconcile. Lands like the Continent were conquered so long ago and so completely that there is little memory of the time before. Others, though, had thousands of years of recorded history before the serpent people showed up. The most distant lands were pulled into the Lands of Yig, but were spared from the serpent people's legions by the fall of Valossa. A good example of this is Hamunaptra, a land far from Freeport that never so much as saw a serpent person, and whose original culture is thus entirely intact (for more information, see the *Egyptian Adventures: Hamunaptra* boxed set, also by Green Ronin Publishing).

Out of This World

Although the World of Freeport is vast and many of its lands remain unknown, the former Lands of Yig are but one part of the larger universe. These lands represent only those pulled in around Valossa. Beyond there are other worlds and planes of existence. Some are cold tombs that have known no life for millennia, others host or imprison alien Primal Gods like the Unspeakable One, and yet others are dominated by creatures unknown in the World of Freeport. Scholars have many theories about these legendary worlds, but little is truly known of them. It is said some powerful wizards and priests can travel beyond the World of Freeport. If true, it seems few of them come back.

What is known of these other worlds is often conflated with myth and mysticism. Most religions in the World of Freeport have some concept of Hell, for example. And beyond the former Lands of Yig there is a fiery plane home to a race of diabolic creatures that live to inflict pain and suffering. To religious people this must be Hell, and its agents demons or devils. Scholars are less sure. Perhaps the King of Hell is another Primal God like Yig, or maybe he's something else entirely. By and large, though, these debates are left to the academics. For the common people of the World of Freeport, Hell is Hell and if you see a devil, run. That's all you need to know.

The Continent

The rest of this chapter is a detailed overview of the Continent, as this is the land closest to Freeport and most bound up in its history. There are references to other parts of the World of Freeport, but these are deliberately vague. In part, this is to instill a sense in the players that sailing beyond known waters is dangerous. On a more practical level, this allows GMs to add other lands to the world as they see fit.

Genesis

When the serpent people first invaded the Continent, it was a land of giants. Since they outsized their opponents to such a degree, the giants thought they had nothing to fear from the puny snakes. They were quite wrong. The sorcery of the serpent people was potent and the giants lost battle after battle. Most of the survivors were eventually driven to the northern mountains and hemmed in by powerful warding spells. The serpent people kept this region wild and used it as a testing ground of sorts. Powerful serpent people warriors and wizards entered the mountains to prove themselves in combat against the giants. The magic of the serpent people kept the giants from leaving the warded area, so it became a virtual prison for the former lords of the land.

Over many millennia, the serpent people brought slaves of various races to the Continent to serve them. It is said that some, like the lizardfolk, were even bred by them, but the truth of such statements is unknown. What is certain, however, is that by the time of Valossa's fall, large numbers of humans, elves, dwarves, gnomes, and halflings were on the Continent. So too were savage humanoids like orcs, goblins, kobolds, bugbears, and hobgoblins. The serpent people's methods of control were so efficient that it took only a small number of them to maintain Valossa's yoke over the peoples of the Continent.

Everything changed when the Unspeakable One manifested in the heart of the serpent people's empire and sent Valossa to the bottom of the sea. This event is detailed in **Chapter One: A History of Freeport.**

The Anarchy

The years after the summoning of the Unspeakable One were dark ones for the Continent. It began with the sinking of Valossa, a disaster of epic proportions that caused tidal waves and massive flooding in which countless thousands perished. Some land masses drew closer together, others spread apart. The forces unleashed were so powerful that they created a mystical vortex that played havoc on the World of Freeport. Some distant lands were pulled into the world during this cataclysmic event. Some races never before seen by the serpent people appeared in the former Lands of Yig, while other entire civilizations were wiped out instantly.

The Valossan Empire crumbled overnight and there was nothing to fill the void. The former slave races found themselves suddenly without masters. It didn't take long for factions to form and blood to flow. The next 750 years saw little but conflict and devastation. Warlords and petty kingdoms rose and fell, grand alliances were made and broken, and borders were established and then smashed. Records for this era are patchy at best and it is for good reason that it is known as the Anarchy.

The Empire of Ashes

It was at this time that the necromancer Rajko the Ghūl arrived on the stage of history. His origins are mysterious. Nothing is known of him before the day he appeared in the court of Duke Hamur. The name and location of Hamur's dukedom are lost to history, but what is remembered is Rajko's offer. He said he could give the duke powerful armies unlike anything seen before. Hamur, ambitious and anxious to one-up his rivals, agreed. That night a great spell flowed out from the palace and the dead walked. The buried clawed their way up out of the graveyards, the drowned rose from the lakes, and silently they stumbled back to their homes to embrace their families and take them into the land of death. When the dawn came, the Duke had his armies—legions of undead created from the slaughter of his own people. Furious at the betrayal, the Duke attacked Rajko himself—to no avail. Before that day ended, the Duke joined his own armies as another mindless soldier.



With his new legions, Rajko the Ghūl struck out at neighboring lands. As soldiers went, his undead were poor ones: uncreative, inflexible, and slow. But they did not flee from battle and for every man they killed a new creature joined their ranks. The conquered lands were harvested for more bodies to mindlessly serve. The undead armies had no concerns for casualties, food, disease, or comforts.

Rajko the Ghūl had other powers, too, powers that made the wise wonder if he was the avatar of some dark god. In the wake of his armies came a blackness that clung to the land and swallowed the sun. The cold eyes of the stars looked down day and night. Plants weakened and grew pallid, light strangled into ghastly forms. The most sinister night creatures stalked the land, freed from the fear of sunlight. Cults of murder and death found comfort in the gloom. Rajko welcomed these creatures and cultists as agents he could use to carry out tasks his undead minions could not. His land grew to swallow the northern lands of the Continent and became known as the Empire of Ashes.

But conquest was only a means, not the necromancer's goal. He conquered merely for unlimited access to raw materials and freedom to pursue his ultimate goal, not earthly power. Rajko the Ghūl was creating an artifact, a ziggurat of flesh, blood, and bone that would focus magic of world-spanning power. Its exact purpose unknown but deeply feared, it slowly rose at the center of his black empire, damp and rotting, constructed by those he conquered and built with the raw materials of their own kin. For 150 years, the ziggurat grew until its horrid form cast a shadow as long as a mountain.

Before Rajko the Ghūl's purpose could be realized, however, the great elven hero Thodomer Windgrass slew him. His body was cut into pieces, which were cast into the flames. Then his scorched bones were ground to dust and scattered in the deep oceans. All pieces of his handiwork—his incomplete ziggurat, his laboratories, his experiments, his spellbooks, his notes, and his legions—were destroyed.

The Wars of the Necro-Kings

With the fall of this necromantic monster came a time of troubles and naked ambition, as the surrounding lands rushed in to seize the spoils. A number of pretenders, known collectively as the Necro-Kings, attempted to claim the mantle of the mighty Ghūl. Some said they were his apprentice (he trained none), some his heir (he sired none). At least one, the moderately successful Molocai I, claimed he was the undead general of Rajko the Ghūl's armies, a pretense he maintained for several years before he was unmasked.

But the Necro-Kings were weak and petty, mere mortals compared to the Ghūl's unholy might. None knew the secrets to raise the Rajko's vast legions. Furthermore, the lands they fought over were dead, barren wastelands. Although the darkness had receded with the necromancer's death, what was left was a blighted landscape. Crops

did not grow, trees were twisted in death agonies, livestock—where it could be found—was barren or gave birth to monstrosities.

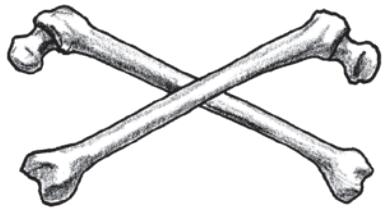
It was a time of constant warfare as the Necro-Kings fought each other for supremacy. The barren land was ravaged further as elves, dwarves, and uncorrupted humans united under the name the Starfall Alliance, and marched to wipe these scourges from the land. One by one, the Necro-Kings fell, victim to their own experiments, treachery from their fellow Necro-Kings, or the vengeance of the Starfall Alliance, until the land was at last cleansed of the undead yoke.

The Continental Nations

At this point, the nations of the Continent as they are known today began to take shape. Following are write-ups of the various nations and regions, and through them the history of the Continent from the fall of the Necro-Kings to today is explained. At the end of this chapter, there is a consolidated timeline of these events. This is history in broad strokes, which leaves plenty of room to make the setting your own.

Bone Lands

Formal Name: *None*
Symbol: *Crossbones (informal)*
Ruler: *None*
Important Cities: *Port Krom*
Important Landmarks: *Vinro's Necropolis, Crimson Falls, Giant's Reach*
Allies: *None*
Enemies: *Druzhdin, Hexworth, Rolland, Vorizar*



The Bone Lands is a catchall term for the northern part of the Continent, most of which was dominated by the Empire of Ashes. Today the area is overrun with nomadic tribes of savage humanoids and other strange and monstrous creatures. Raiding into Hexworth, Vorizar, and Rolland is constant, though larger incursions have always been beaten back.

The hobgoblin tribes are the best organized and most powerful and they may yet strike south in numbers not seen in centuries.

History

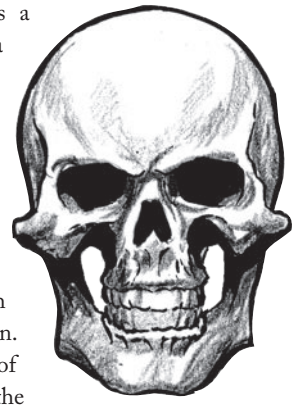
The Bone Lands were originally given the name because the fall of the Empire of Ashes and the destruction of the Necro-Kings had littered the region with smashed skeletons of all races. It is equally appropriate to think of this part of the Continent as the boneyard of past empires. There are ruins scattered across the landscape that date back to the time when giants dominated the Continent, not to mention those of Valossa, the Empire of Ashes, and the lands of the Necro-Kings. This naturally makes the whole area a magnet to adventurers and treasure hunters. Many brave the ruins, but few return. This merely throws some fresh bones on top of the pile.

Since the time of Rajko the Ghūl, this region has been barren. This is why the victors of the Starfall Alliance never extended their borders further north. Instead, these wastelands became the home of tribes of orcs, goblins, hobgoblins, and monstrous humanoids that embodied the forms of man and beasts. Some human tribes roamed the Bone Lands as well. All of these groups lived nomadically by necessity, going to where food could be found. Raiding became a way of life, as did eating the dead. In a land where little grows, food was whatever could be choked down, even if it was goblin meat.

The mountains at the northern border of the Continent have remained remote. Sheer cliffs drop into the sea, so ships cannot dock there. And it is just as well, as these mountains are the last refuge of the giants that used to rule this land. They were hemmed in by magical wards millennia ago, and they are trapped here still. They live a primitive existence, fighting with other strange monsters of the mountains and telling tales of their bygone glories.

Druzhdin

Formal Name: *None*
Symbol: *A grinning skull.*
Ruler: *The Dark Apostle*
Important Cities: *Obelek (capital)*
Important Landmarks: *Cairns of the Troll Kings, Wyrm's Bones*
Allies: *None*
Enemies: *Everyone*



Druzhdin isn't so much a land as a people. They were nomads for nearly a millennium but 200 years ago, they began a migration that ended with the conquest of Wyrm's End, an island off the north coast of the Continent. Now the Druzhdin are skilled sailors and dreaded raiders. Their society worships the God of Death above all, and many Druzhdin mortify the flesh on their faces as a sign of this dedication. They believe killing appeases the God of Death and forestalls his coming for the killers. Due to this doctrine and their deadly raids, the Druzhdin have few friends on the Continent.

History

The ancestors of the Druzhdin were human mercenaries in the service of the Necro-Kings. They fled north, scattered and disorganized, ahead of the victorious Starfall Alliance. Those who survived coalesced into three tribes. They became nomads in the Bone Lands, always wandering and always fighting against the savage humanoids of the region. This continued for countless generations. Century after century slipped by and though leaders rose and fell, the Druzhdin lived as their forefathers had.

Then one day everything changed. A man appeared among the Druzhdin as if from nowhere. He was tall and dark, and his words enthralled the barbarian tribes. He was the Dark Apostle, and he had been sent to lead the Druzhdin out of the Bone Lands to a land of

their own. Once before they had served the God of Death, he said, and if they would do so again, they would be rewarded. Death is the herald of change, after all, and they would need the god's help to escape from the Bone Lands.

The three tribes of the Druzhdin often squabbled among themselves, but no one raised a voice against the Dark Apostle. They packed up their camps and followed their new leader east. The journey took years, as the Druzhdin fought their way past tribes of orcs, goblins, monstrous men, and hobgoblins. At last, they reached the ocean's shore and they despaired when the Dark Apostle told them that their land was across the sea. What did the Druzhdin know of the sea? The Dark Apostle smiled and said that he could teach them the crafts of the sea, and so he did.

A year later the Druzhdin had a fleet. It did not need to sail far, just across the straight to the island of Wyrm's End. The Dark Apostle had promised Druzhdin the island, but they would have to fight for it. Although named for an enormous and ancient set of dragon bones, Wyrm's End was in fact overrun with trolls. Aided by the Dark Apostle's magic, the Druzhdin fought a pitiless war against the trolls and seized the island yard by bloody yard, each corpse a prayer to the God of Death.

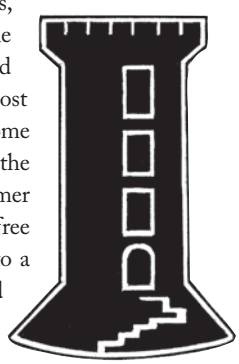
After conquering Wyrm's End, the Druzhdin developed into a true seafaring nation. In many ways, they simply adapted their nomadic lifestyle to sea. Their ships are constantly on the move, raiding up and down the Coasts of the Continent. Their raids are quick and violent and before superior forces can react, they are in the wind. Four years ago they made the mistake of going to war with Rolland, and then compounded that mistake by trying to capture Freeport. Since suffering defeats with grievous losses in both conflicts, they have returned to their old raiding ways.

The Dark Apostle left them once Wyrm's End was theirs, saying that he would return one day. Most of the Druzhdin thought him long dead, but just a year ago the Dark Apostle did in fact return. This has galvanized the Druzhdin after their recent defeats and Continental nations are watching developments warily. Some say this new Dark Apostle is just an imposter, others that he was always a devil and this proves it. A few learned men have an altogether more frightening theory: the Dark Apostle is none other than the Crawling Chaos.

Hexworth

Formal Name: *Empire of Hexworth*
Symbol: *A black tower on a red field*
Ruler: *Empress Mariota I, the Glory of Hexworth*
Important Cities: *Gullwater, Redcastle, Queensport (capital)*
Important Landmarks: *Church of the Avenging Angel, Greatbridge, Wight's Hill*
Allies: *Kizmir, Rolland, Vorizar*
Enemies: *Bone Lands, Iovan, Tagmata*

The Empire of Hexworth dominates the western Continent and for centuries it has been an active and expansionistic power. Hexworth was once one of many small human kingdoms in the region, but over time it subsumed or conquered them all to create a true empire. Empress Mariota I, the Glory of Hexworth, rules over the largest territory on the Continent. The Empire itself is made up of a bewildering array of provinces, principalities, marches, dukedoms, and free cities. Nearly all the power is in the hands of the noble class, whose families feud and scheme as they intermarry. Although most areas are firmly under imperial authority, some perennial trouble spots have never accepted the Empire's yoke. These regions always simmer with rebellion and periodically attempt to free themselves. While these uprisings have led to a rich library of romantic songs about doomed heroics, Hexworth has always stamped them out in the end, after great loss of life.



History

After the defeat of the Necro-Kings, King Chaldris I of Hexworth was the preeminent human monarch. The western region of the Continent did not unify as the elven lands did, however. There remained many petty kingdoms, each with its own traditions and way of life. In an attempt to bring some unity to the human lands, Chaldris hosted the Council of Harmony, a synod of prominent temples. At the urgings of the council, King Chaldris I issued the first Necromantic Censure, a sweeping set of laws and edicts to outlaw the practice of necromancy from Hexworth. The practice and teaching of necromancy was prohibited. Possession of animated dead was forbidden. Trading in mortal remains was subject to imprisonment. The purchase, sale, trade, and even possession of various magical and non-magical items of a necromantic nature (scrolls, books, wands, grave earth, salts, potions, etc.) were forbidden. Even undertakers had to tread carefully, lest they be accused and condemned as "necromancers."

The task of detecting and discovering necromancers, who were assumed to be hiding throughout the land in secret cults dating from the time of Rajko the Ghūl, was given to the Royal Arcane, the minister in charge of magical affairs. He in turn selected Seven High Inquisitors to root out the entrenched foe. Only the Royal Arcane, the Council of Harmony, or the king himself could challenge their powers of arrest and interrogation. The Merciful and Just Lord Judges of the Arcane—all Inquisitor-Mages—handed down the sentences for necromancy in the Magus Court.

The Council of Harmony and the king had hoped that the other human kingdoms would follow the lead of Hexworth. As the violence and mania in Hexworth spun out of control, this hope evaporated. Thousands of suspected necromancers—sages, madmen, hedge wizards, seers, the misunderstood, and innocents uncounted—were all dragged before the courts and summarily sentenced. Thousands died, their bodies burnt and their bones ground to dust. The other human kingdoms felt that the threat of necromancy had ended with the death of the last Necro-King, and they wanted no part of Hexworth's obsession.

This Inquisition lasted roughly 200 years. King after king not only reaffirmed the Necromantic Censure, but also strengthened and expanded it. Finally, King Hadris II issued the famous Decree of Hadris. The Inquisition, which for all its power had always been "temporary," became permanent. More than a few families, great and small, packed up and left Hexworth. They were fearful of being falsely condemned like so many before them. The exiles found homes other lands, for the most part taking care to vanish behind false names and false professions lest they invite more trouble. This was wise, as it proved, for Inquisitors made careful note of who departed and sent

The Yurtha Rift

Hexworth has never been able to extend its border to the southwest for one single reason: the Yurtha Rift. In the midst of a hilly and broken land, there is an enormous gash in the earth. According to legend, the God of War made the rift with a single swing of his mighty axe. Scholars say it was caused during the fall of Valossa, when the Continent was in danger of tearing itself apart. Whatever its origin, the size and scope of the Yurtha Rift captivate all who behold it. It is almost two hundred miles long and so deep the bottom cannot be seen from the top. Even without the rift's inhabitants, the armies of Hexworth would never have had a chance of crossing it. As explorers quickly discovered, however, the Yurtha Rift and the surrounding hills were teeming with hostile life.

The biggest threats are the ogres, huge humanoids who live in caves carved into the rift's walls. The ogre tribes are not alone, however. The rift is home to monstrous creatures of all sorts, from hags and basilisks to manticores and ettins. Legend holds that ancient dragons dwell in its depths, as well as other, darker abominations. None can truly say, for no expedition of the civilized nations has ever made it to the rift's bottom and returned to tell the tale. Creatures from the rift sometimes raid into neighboring territory, killing and plundering with great abandon. Such raids rarely involve more than a single tribe or family group, however, as the creatures of the rift spend most of their time fighting each other.

many a zealot to follow and dispatch the refugees, when they could locate them.

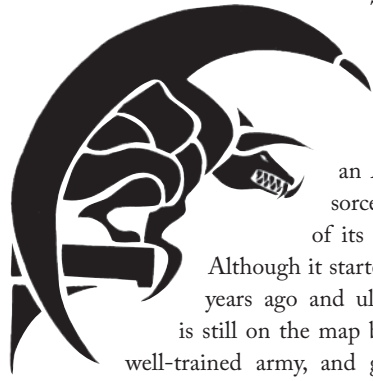
Five years after the Decree of Hadris, Hexworth was at last pronounced cleansed. King Hadris II, however, was not satisfied. Surely many vile necromancers had simply taken refuge in neighboring human kingdoms. Should a domineering figure like Rajko the Ghūl rise again, these rival kingdoms could prove a grave threat to Hexworth. King Hadris knew he had no choice. The petty human kingdoms must become part of his Hexworth, whether they liked it or not.

Today, the 300 years of conquest that followed are known as the Wars of Unity. Of course, the victorious men of Hexworth wrote the histories that made the subjugation of previously independent kingdoms seem like a hard but necessary choice. Some of these kingdoms joined Hexworth peacefully, in return for certain guarantees of their rights and customs. Others were simply conquered and integrated. When no more petty kingdoms remained, armies swept north to reclaim land formerly part of the Empire of Ashes. This was to act as a buffer zone between the core provinces of Hexworth and the monster-haunted Bone Lands further north. King Veldris IV ordered the construction of a series of border fortresses, to stretch from the mountains to the sea, to keep Hexworth safe. The so-called "Gates of Veldris" took a generation to complete, but they now form the northern boundary of Hexworth.

Some 500 years after the fall of the Necro-Kings, Hexworth was the colossus of the western Continent. Queen Marvis V decreed that Hexworth was no longer a kingdom but an empire. None dared to gainsay her and she became Empress Marvis I.

Iovan

Formal Name: *Autocracy of Iovan*
Symbol: *A gargoyle*
Ruler: *Autocrat Silivas Redmantle*
Important Cities: *Craski, Razma (capital), Vabin*
Important Landmarks: *Palace of the Conclave, Bluesky Eyrie*
Allies: *Kizmir*
Enemies: *Hexworth, Ivory Ports, Rolland, Vorizar*



The Autocracy of Iovan, home of the crag gnomes, is the most isolated nation on the Continent. A militaristic society ruled by an Arcane Conclave of powerful sorcerers, Iovan has alienated all of its neighbors over the centuries. Although it started the War of Crowns sixteen years ago and ultimately was defeated, Iovan is still on the map because of its difficult terrain, well-trained army, and gargoyle slave-soldiers. With the failure of its attempts at conquest, the crag gnomes have retreated into the shadows, there to try to win with sorcery and subterfuge what they could not on the battlefield.

History

While the Starfall Alliance fought against the Necro-Kings in the north, an entirely different struggle was raging in the south. In the Korbu Hills, communities of gnomes were constantly at odds with the kobold tribes. Both races claimed the hills as their own, mining them for metals and other resources.

The kobolds professed descent from the serpent people. Gnome scholars asserted they were just another servitor race, though the kobolds denied this, seeing themselves as the favored children of their progenitors. Whatever the truth, the two races escalated the violence as time went on, from raids and skirmishes to outright war. The Korbu Hills War was a long and brutal conflict and in the end it came down to magic. The gnomes mastered sorcery faster than the kobolds; this enabled the gnomish legions to finally push the kobolds out of the hills entirely. The remaining kobolds moved further south, into the dark forest of Nham. Here they spent centuries dreaming of revenge against the gnomes. It was not to be.

A mighty gnome sorcerer named Iovan magically enslaved the gargoyles of the Ironhome Mountains. He used his new pawns to take over the Korbu hills and proclaim the Autocracy of Iovan. Emboldened, he then embarked on an ambitious campaign of conquest. Armies of gnomes and gargoyles pushed south, taking more and more kobold land. For a time Iovan seemed unstoppable.

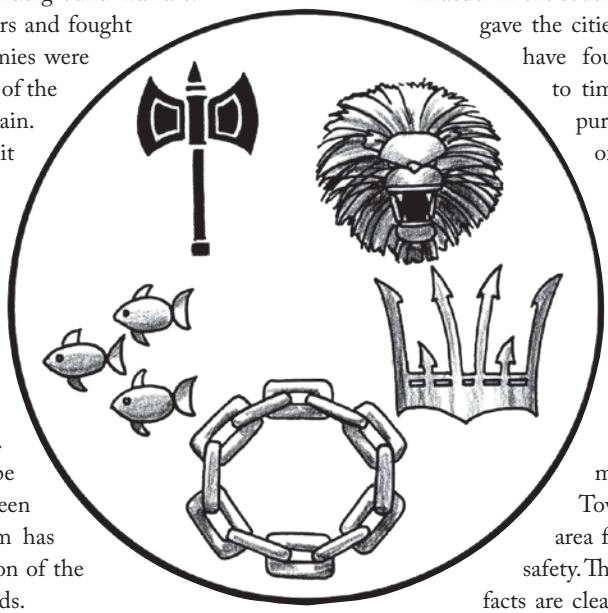

The Continent
Lemuric Ocean
Helltwind Sea
Ghost Sea
Glacier Bay
Deadman's Bay
The Bone Lands
Druzhdin
Obelek
Port Kroix
Orchard Bay
Viridian Ocean
Dragontree Sea
Redcastle
Horizar
Dragoumont
The Trollmoors
Rolland
Focard Bay
Port Elora
Queensport
Hextoorth
Stirosk
Ravenscourt
Jodan
Razmi
Tabin
Freeport
Blackmire Bay
Thalos Ocean
Tagmata
Qeynos
Nisene Bay
Giant's Bay
Kazmir
Grobb
Mirsar
Yottelick
The Broken Land
The Ivory Ports
Silperus
Grenetto
Pikebridge
Scallon Straits
Thalburg
Blackburn
To the Serpent's Teeth
To Kunark
Southern Sea
Major Landmarks
1- Miro's Necropolis
2- Wyrm's Bones
3- Crimson Falls
4- Cairns of the Troll Kings
5- Giant's Reach
6- Gates of Veldris
7- Greatbridge
8- Windgrass Grove
9- The Well of Despair
10- Bluesky Eyrie
11- Night's Hill
12- Shrine of the Hunter's Moon
13- Cairngross Hill
14- Ruins of Newtown
The Continent
Scallon Straits
The Wyvern Islands
Here Be Monsters!
The Thalos Ocean
The Serpent's Teeth
N
Key
Major Roadway -
Major Sea Route -
Major Passes
1- Silperfish Pass
2- Narrow Pass
3- Halfmoon Pass
4- Starfall Pass
miles
1000

Bleeding Edge and the World of Freeport

Green Ronin publishes the **Bleeding Edge** series of fantasy adventures and these are linked to the World of Freeport. The Bleeding Edge adventures are designed for the *d20 system*, though free *True20* conversations for them are available at true20.com. They are meant to be generic enough to use in any fantasy campaign setting, but when locations are required they use the World of Freeport. As of the time of this book's writing, all the **Bleeding Edge** adventures take place in the area in and around the Ivory Ports. *Bleeding Edge Special: Dark Wings Over Freeport* takes place in the City of Adventure itself , and other locations in the world may also be explored. The series begins with *Bleeding Edge #1: Mansion of Shadows,* by Robert J. Schwalb.

After decades of conquest, however, the Autocrat made a grave error. He turned his eyes north, to the lands of the Vorizar League. Always there had been peace and oaths of friendship between the gnomes and the dwarfs, but Iovan cast them aside and sent his legions into the mountains. This was his undoing. The dwarves had experience fighting gargoyles and they were masters of underground warfare. They cursed the gnomes as oathbreakers and fought with righteous fury. The Autocrat's armies were stopped in their tracks and at the Battle of the Glimmering Pools Iovan himself was slain. The gnomes retreated in confusion, and it seemed the Autocracy might fall.

The gnomes regrouped in the Korbu Hills, and a conclave of powerful sorcerers chose a new autocrat. The Dwarf-Gnome War was ended and new campaigns were mounted against the kobolds. Since then the Arcane Conclave has continued to rule Iovan, choosing a new autocrat when required. While the politics of the conclave can be vicious, and many an Autocrat has been assassinated over the years, the system has endured. So has the gnomes' domination of the gargoyles, and their hatred of the kobolds.



Ivory Ports

Formal Name: *None*

Symbol: *A black axe (Blackburn), a lion's head (Grenato), three golden fish (Pikebridge), a silver crown (Silverus), a chain with twelve links (Thalburg)*

Rulers: *Lord Protector Feargus Rorac (Blackburn), Patriarch Ivo Simoni (Grenato), Mayor Chester Ruggles, (Pikebridge), Prince Attis Galba (Silverus), Council of Guildmasters (Thalburg)*

Important Cities: *Blackburn, Grenato, Pikebridge, Silverus, Thalburg*

Important Landmarks: *Plaza of a Thousand Columns (Grenato), Twilight Colossus (Blackburn), College of the Antiquity Scholars (Silverus)*

Allies: *Rolland, Tagmata*

Enemies: *Druzhdin, Iovan, Kizmir*

The Ivory Ports are a loose coalition of five city-states in the Continent's southeast. While those in the north were dealing with the Empire of Ashes and Necro-Kings, the people of Ivory Ports looked outward. They explored the seas, set up trade routes with distant lands, and eventually founded colonies. They made contact with the lands of Khaeder in the south and first imported the commodity that gave the cities their name. Although the city-states have fought amongst themselves from time to time, they have grown their influence by pursing a mercantile path. While the ships of the Ivory Ports have suffered more than most at the hands of Freeport's pirates in the past, these days there is much trade between them and the City of Adventure.

History

The region now known as the Ivory Ports has long been a place of refuge. During the dark days of the Anarchy, men and women of all races came over the Towers, the mountain range that isolates the area from the rest of the Continent, seeking safety. The history of that era is obscure, but a few facts are clear. First, petty kingdoms, freeholds, and tribal groups rose and fell quickly in this region. Second, a diabolic threat from the Towers caused bloodshed on a massive scale for many years. Third, a desperate coalition managed to stop the threat but the peoples of this alliance fell out as soon as the threat had passed. Thus a dominant political entity never emerged here.

By the time of the Kingdom of Rolland's founding, all of the towns that would later become the Ivory Ports had developed from small holdings into larger settlements. Over time, each grew into a sizeable city and dominated the surrounding countryside. In this way the Ivory Ports became full-fledged city-states, each controlling a series of villages, towns, and fortresses, and eventually including overseas colonies.

The Ivory Ports currently consists of five city-states. There was a sixth, Newtown, but Kizmir sacked and destroyed it nearly fifty years ago. The remaining city-states are:

- *Blackburn:* This is the most militaristic of the Ivory Ports, because it is closest to Kizmir and must frequently deal with its raiders. A Lord Protector rules Blackburn, advised by a council of guildsmen.

- *Grenato:* The powerful Simoni family controls this city-state and has dominated its politics for the last two centuries. The Simonis are ruthless to their enemies, but they have poured money into public works and turned Grenato into the most beautiful of the Ivory Ports.
- *Pikebridge:* This city began as a small fishing village, and the harvest of the sea is still its most important business. Once every five years each citizen in good standing may vote on the next mayor.
- *Silverus:* The only city-state with a true aristocracy, Silverus was once a center of democracy. This rule was overthrown by the so-called "merchant princes," who fancied themselves true princes. Now a powerful group of families, led by a ruling prince, runs the city-state.
- *Thalburg:* A city noted for the quality of its wool and textiles, Thalburg is controlled by its craft guilds. It is the Council of Guildmasters that makes the laws and runs the city-state, always to the benefit of the guilds first and foremost.

Due to the history of the region, the Ivory Ports are easily the most diverse cities on the Continent. Humans, elves, halflings, gnomes, and dwarves of many cultures are found in all of the city-states. Indeed, halflings are found nowhere else on the Continent in such abundance, and their villages play a key role in keeping the cities fed.

Kizmir

Formal Name: *Sultanate of Kizmir*
Symbol: *A flame inside a golden ring*
Ruler: *Sultan Mourtos II, Master of the Azhar and Keeper of the Eternal Flame*
Important Cities: *Gratasi, Milsar (capital), Yuilluck*
Important Landmarks: *Temple of the Eternal Flame*
Allies: *Hexworth, Iovan*
Enemies: *Druzhdin, Ivory Ports, Rolland, Tagmata*



Kizmir is the youngest nation on the Continent, having been founded a little over a century ago. The people of Kizmir are the azhar, and for the most part, they look human. Their eyes, however, are a deep red and they claim the blood of efreets run in their veins. More than that, they say the foundation of Kizmir ended decades of wandering after the azhar left the fabled City of Brass. Whatever the truth of their origin, the azhar created a dynamic nation in Kizmir and changed the politics of the south forever.

History

The Sultanate of Kizmir was founded 102 years ago when the forces of Sultan Mustafa VI invaded the southern coast of the Continent. A massive fleet disgorged thousands of soldiers in a lightning assault. They quickly conquered the coastal plains, which were home to a disorganized group of fishing villages. The Sultan's forces then pushed inland to the forest of Nham, where they clashed with the kobolds. It didn't take long for word to filter north to the Autocracy of Iovan, which promptly launched a fresh campaign against the kobolds. Trapped between Kizmiran and Iovani forces, the kobolds were crushed.

The arrival of the azhar changed the political balance of power. In less than a decade, Kizmiri and Tagmatan ships were clashing in Giant's Bay. This naturally led to an alliance with Hexworth, which still harbored dreams of conquering Tagmata. The Ivory Ports, as the preeminent sea powers in the south, did not react well to the foundation of Kizmir. The competition was economic at first, but several wars did flare up. These have become known collectively as the Wars of the Southern Sea. Most led only to stalemate, but in the Second War of the Southern Sea some fifty years ago, Kizmir won a decisive victory, sacking and destroying the Ivory Port of Newtown.

Over the years, Kizmir has cleared huge tracts of the forest to build ships and cities, and now a string of strong ports hug the coast. They have had less success pacifying the interior. The remnants of the kobold tribes have waged a guerilla war against them for the past century. While this has never been a grave threat, it is a constant drain on the Sultanate.

Rolland

Formal Name: *The Ever-Vigilant Kingdom of Rolland*
Symbol: *An eagle soaring in front of a sun and a moon*
Ruler: *His Royal Highness Merovech II, Moon King of Rolland*
Important Cities: *Dragoumont (capital), Port Clovis, Ravencourt, Saverac*
Important Landmarks: *Cairncross Hill, Shrine of the Hunter's Moon, Windgrass Grove*
Allies: *Hexworth, Ivory Ports, Tagmata, Vorizar*
Enemies: *Bone Lands, Druzhdin, Iovan, Kizmir*



Rolland is one of the oldest and most respected nations of the Continent, and it is home to the majority of the region's elves. Over the centuries Rolland's society has become highly polarized. Although all its inhabitants are descended from the same tribes that fought Rajko the Ghūl, the kingdom now divides itself into three groups: high elves, wood elves, and sea elves. The high elves are the dominant group. They live in large cities full of tall towers and see themselves as carrying the torch of civilization. They prize both intellect and magical power, though increasing displays of opulence make it clear gold also has sway in Rolland's cities. Scattered across the kingdom are hundreds of rural villages, where wood elves farm, hunt, and fish in a manner almost identical to that of their ancestors. The high elves, of course, look down on the wood elves, even as they import foodstuffs from the countryside to their cities. Those that live along the coast, the sea elves, have developed their own culture and they are mistrusted by both high elves and wood elves. The sea elves live in ports great and small, and they look to the ocean for their needs. They are great travelers and born adventurers. They also control all the sea trade with other nations and the fleet that protects Rolland from outside threats.

The current monarch, the Moon King Merovech II, is clever enough, but he does not see how the internal divisions of Rolland's society make it weak. Perhaps because he grew up surrounded by magic, he is greatly interested in technological advances. A demonstration of firearms caught his imagination to such a degree that he immediately ordered five hundred of the weapons and created a new regiment for his army, the Royal Musketeers.

History

The hero Thodomer Windgrass had unified the various elf tribes under his banner during the wars, but keeping them that way proved challenging after the final defeat of the Necro-Kings. Many of the tribes wanted to retreat to the forest and take up the old ways once again. In the end, it was not the aging Thodomer Windgrass that completed the unification of the tribes, but his daughter Aregund. She was a devotee of the Goddess of the Sun who spoke passionately about the darkness that still touched the land. During the grim days of Rajko the Ghūl and the Necro-Kings, many lesser evils had been left to fester in foreboding moors, dank marshes, and twisted forests. Here orcs, goblins, lizardfolk, and other savage humanoids still dwelt, launching raids into elven lands. Rallying under Aregund's leadership, the elves now turned their martial and sorcerous might against these monsters and drove them from their lairs. Most were killed. Those remaining were driven north into the barren wastelands of the former Empire of Ashes, or south into the Carrion Swamp. The Ildis River was demarcated as the northern border of Rolland, the Veldor River the southern, and it so it has been ever since.

The campaigns begun by Aregund, known collectively as the Wars of Light, lasted over 200 years, but the hardest fighting took place in the first decade. After the Battle of Trollmoors, Aregund was proclaimed the Sun Queen. The Kingdom of Rolland dates its existence from her coronation. Many of her followers want to name the new kingdom Windgrass in honor of Aregund and her father, but she declined the honor. Neither king nor queen should ever think of the land as their property, Aregund asserted. Instead the kingdom was named after the mythical forest home of their ancestors.

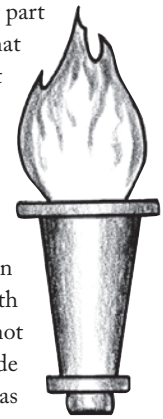
The Kingdom of Rolland finally knew peace after the end of the Wars of Light. They turned their wooded hill forts into gleaming castles and their cities grew larger and larger. The Sun Queens and Sun Kings led their people wisely and it seemed none could challenge them. When they looked outwards, Rolland's monarchs could see no true threats to the elves' well being. While they looked for hostile armies, a single beast almost brought Rolland low. His name Kanagar the Wolf Lord, and he was a werecreature of terrible power.

Kanagar came to the province of Driken. Deep in the forest he ambushed elves and turned them into werewolves like him. For seven long years he hunted until the forest was so full of his minions the elves shunned it. At first the Sun King, Dagobert I, paid the happenings of Driken little mind. This was a costly mistake, as the Wolf Lord struck out from the forest and attacked settlements across Driken. Within a year the entirety of the province was under Kanagar's control, and its cities echoed with howls of werewolves. Kanagar proclaimed, "The king rules under the sun, but I rule under the moon."

King Dagobert realized his error almost too late. By the time he had mobilized the army, werewolf raiders were striking in almost every province. Dagobert and his generals had to come up with new tactics and techniques to fight the werewolf armies. The so-called Moonlight War lasted for fifteen years and the elves of Rolland paid a dreadful price for their victory. At last, though, King Dabobert brought Kanagar's host to battle and won a crushing victory at the Battle of the Wolf's Head. It was said the elf wizard Beladore killed Kanagar, but his body was never found. Though individual werewolves were hunted for decades to come, the war was over. To commemorate his victory Dagobert took the title of Moon King. Since then reigning monarchs have alternated between the Sun and Moon title. Rolland's current monarch, Moon King Merovech II, was preceded by Sun Queen Melitt, for example.

Tagmata

Formal Name: *Holy Oligarchy of Shining Tagmata*
Symbol: *A burning torch shining out on a field of darkness*
Rulers: *High General Arete, High Priest Petros, and High Wizard Mavros*
Important Cities: *Ehiza, Kyos (capital), Larikon*
Important Landmarks: *Cathedral of St. Vasili, Tower of the Chalice*
Allies: *Ivory Ports, Rolland*
Enemies: *Druzhdin, Hexworth, Kizmir*



Tagmata is a seafaring country in the southwest part of the Continent. It is the one human nation that successfully defied the Empire of Hexworth, a fact that leads to border skirmishes with its northern neighbor to this day. Its naval power has helped keep it safe for centuries, though the rise of Kizmir has proved a great challenge to the Tagmatans. Run by an oligarchy representing the military, the church, and the mages, Tagmata is a deeply devout nation. The state religion is the Church of Astrape, a dualistic faith at odds with the paganism of other Continental nations. This does not stop pratical-minded Tagmatans from engaging in trade or alliances with non-believers, however. Tagmata has even hired Freeport's privateer fleet on a few occasions.

History

Most humans on the Continent are descended from the same stock and speak a common language. They make up the majority of the human population of Hexworth and other human enclaves. There were some smaller groups of humans with different origins, though many have been destroyed or assimilated into Hexworth over the centuries. Only one human culture succeeded in both maintaining its identity and defying the expansionism of the Empire of Hexworth. They are the people of Tagmata.

The Tagmatans have lived in the southwest of the Continent since the dark days of the Anarchy. With the sea surrounding their land on three sides, they only had one real border to defend. Since Tagmata was far to the south, Rajko the Ghūl never directly threatened it. Units of volunteers did go north to fight the Empire of Ashes, however, as well as the Necro-Kings. This was in keeping with their dualistic faith.

The origin of the Tagmatan religious faith is unknown, though it does seem to pre-date the fall of Valossa. The Tagmatans don't worship a god per se—more the ideal of the light. In their worldview there are servants of the light and servants of the darkness. If you aren't on

Continental Timeline

Pre-history	Serpent people invade the continent, the first of many conquests in the name of Yig. It is a land of giants. These colossi hubristically believe the tiny serpent people pose no threat, but they have not reckoned with the mighty sorcery of the servants of Yig. The giants are defeated and their castles thrown down. The few survivors are driven into the inhospitable mountains in the north and hemmed in with magical wards.
Year 1	The Brotherhood of the Yellow Sign summons the Unspeakable One in the heart of Valossa. The serpent people's empire is destroyed in a massive cataclysm. Most of Valossa sinks beneath the Ocean. Almost all the serpent people are driven mad.
Year 1 to Year 756	This is the period of history known as "the Anarchy." The former slave races of the serpent people try to survive in a devastated landscape. Very little recorded history survives from this period.
Year 756	The Ghūl appears in the court of Duke Hamur and begins his rise to power. Soon his necromantic legions are swallowing up huge swathes of territory. The Empire of Ashes is born.
Year 875 to Year 1000	The cities that would later become the Ivory Ports are founded.
Year 907	Thodomer Windgrass slays the Ghūl in single combat and vengeful armies destroy the necromancer's ziggurat and cast down his empire.
Year 907 to Year 981	The Wars of the Necro-Kings. In the end the Starfall Alliance of elves, dwarves, and humans defeats the Necro-Kings.
Year 920 to Year 963	The Korbu Hills War. The crag gnomes defeat the kobold tribes and drive them out of the hills and down into the Nham Forest.
Year 983	King Chaldris I of Hexworth hosts the Council of Harmony, a synod of prominent temples. At the council's urging, Chaldris issues the Necromantic Censure.
Year 983 to Year 1180	The Inquisition in Hexworth ruthlessly hunts down suspected necromancers. In the mania that ensues, many innocents are killed.
Year 985	Thodomer Windgrass dies as the elven tribes continue to squabble.
Year 990	Thodomer's daughter Aregund, a devotee of the Goddess of the Sun, rallies the elves once again under the Windgrass banner.
Year 990 to Year 1103	The Wars of Light, a series of campaigns in which the elves destroy or drive out various savage humanoids from their lands.
Year 1000	Aregund leads the elves to victory in the Battle of Trollmoors. Soon after the elven Kingdom of Rolland is founded and she is crowned as its first monarch. Aregund is known as the Sun Queen.
Year 1180	King Hadris II of Hexworth issues the Decree of Hadris. This makes the Inquisition a permanent body.
Year 1185	King Hadris II of Hexworth announces that the kingdom has been cleansed of necromancers once and for all. He then uses the fear of necromancers in nearby kingdoms to justify his wars of conquest.
Year 1185 to Year 1479	The Wars of Unity, in which Hexworth swallows up the surrounding petty human kingdoms.
Year 1200	The future city of Freeport is founded on the island of A'val.
Year 1215	The things from below attack the Vorizar League for the first time. The Long War begins.
Year 1232	The crag gnome sorcerer Iovan enslaves the gargoyles of the Ironhome Mountains. With this newfound might, he seizes power in the Korbu Hills.
Year 1233	The Autocracy of Iovan is proclaimed.
Year 1234 to Year 1258	The Conquests of Iovan.
Year 1259 to Year 1260	The Dwarf-Gnome War. The dwarves of the Vorizar League defeat Iovan's legions. Iovan himself is slain in the Battle of the Glimmering Pools.
Year 1260	The Arcane Conclave elects a new Autocrat of Iovan. New campaigns are unleashed in the south.
Year 1323	The werewolf Kanagar arrives in the Kingdom of Rolland. He begins infecting elves in the province of Driken.
Year 1330	The entirety of Driken falls under Kanagar's control in Rolland. Kanagar proclaims, "The king rules under the sun, but I rule under the moon."
Year 1330 to Year 1345	The Moonlight War. The Sun King Dagobert I ruthlessly hunts down all of Kanagar's minions and recaptures Driken. Kanagar is said to have been slain in the final battle, but his body was never found.
Year 1346	To commemorate his triumph, Dagobert proclaims himself the Moon King. Since this time monarchs of Rolland have alternated between Sun and Moon titles.
Year 1480	King Veldris IV orders the construction of the "Gates of Veldris," a series of border fortifications in the territory carved out of the Bone Lands.
Year 1499	The Gates of Veldris are completed, defining the northern border of Hexworth.
Year 1500	Queen Marvis V proclaims the Empire of Hexworth and becomes Empress Marvis I.
Year 1630	The Golden Age of Piracy begins.

Continental Timeline

Year 1800	Sea Lords Drac and Francisco of Freeport lead the Great Raid.
Year 1805	The Dark Apostle appears among the Druzhdin. They begin their great trek.
Year 1812	The Druzhdin invade Wyrm's End and engage in vicious battles with the trolls of the island.
Year 1817	The Druzhdin defeat the trolls and claim Wyrm's End for themselves. The Dark Apostle leaves shortly thereafter.
Year 1903	The azhar fleet arrives and founds the Sultanate of Kizmir.
Year 1914	The Long War ends.
Year 1922 to Year 1924	The First War of the Southern Sea.
Year 1950 to Year 1953	The Second War of the Southern Sea. At the end of the war, Kizmir sacks and destroys Newtown.
Year 1985	The Third War of the Southern Sea.
Year 1989 to Year1994	The War of Crowns.
Year 1995	Gnome inventor Kolter, an exile living in Freeport, creates the first fully functional firearm.
Year 1997	Kolter's first commercially available firearm goes on sale in Freeport.
Year 2001	Marilise Maeorgan becomes the Sea Lord of Freeport. Rolland defeats Druzhdin in a brief war. Druzhdin invades Freeport but is repulsed.
Year 2002	The Moon King Merovech sees a demonstration of Kolter's firearms. He immediately places an order for five hundred and begins recruiting a new regiment for his army, the Royal Musketeers.
Year 2005	Current Day.

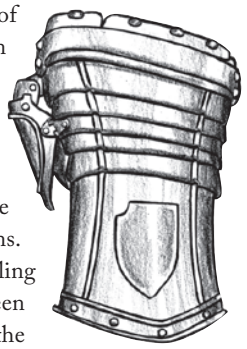
the side of light, you are de facto on the side of darkness. If you have been deceived into working against the light, you can be saved. If you have embraced the darkness, you are damned for all time. The church believes the light chooses exceptional mortals to be its champions. This has led to the development of a "pantheon" of saints quite similar to the pagan religions they revile (though it is not advisable to make this comparison to a Tagmatan).

In the early days of Tagmata there were kings, but this came to an end after a series of corrupt monarchs. A powerful group of generals, priests, and wizards came together and overthrew the last king. Since then Tagmata has been an oligarchy, ruled by a triumvirate consisting of the High General, High Priest, and High Wizard. While this does sometimes create fractious politics, the structure also makes it difficult for one person to dominate the country.

During Hexworth's Wars of Unity, Tagmata greatly expanded its army and navy. It also saw a population explosion, as refugees from Hexworth's conquests flooded south. Several petty kingdoms uprooted entirely and moved to Tagmata to escape the rapacious armies of Hexworth. Tagmata welcomed anyone willing to convert to their religion and become part of the Oligarchy. Thousands suddenly discovered a newfound love of Tagmatan religion. The faith of all Tagmatans was tested soon enough, when the war machine of Hexworth attacked Tagmata by land and sea. The land war was a bloody stalemate, but at sea Tagmata won a string of decisive victories. These in turn allowed the fleet to raid up and down the coast of Hexworth. The Empire, concerned that this show of defiance would embolden its conquered subjects, made a quick peace with Tagmata and ceased its southern expansion. Its northern campaign into the Bone Lands was seen as a face-saving measure, so the Wars of Unity could end with a victory instead of a defeat.

Vorizar

Formal Name: *The Vorizar League*
Symbol: *An upturned armored gauntlet*
Ruler: *The Ironhome Council*
Important Cities: *Demka, Starosk (capital), Troskun, Zakrovo*
Important Landmarks: *The Diamond Gallery, the Well of Despair, Halfmoon Pass*
Allies: *Hexworth, Rolland*
Enemies: *Bone Lands, Iovan.*



The Vorizar League is a coalition of dwarf cities, bound by history and common struggle. They fought in the Starfall Alliance and then in a secret war against the things from below. Long remote from Continental politics, Vorizar reemerged nearly a century ago and retook its place amongst the Continent's preeminent nations. Vorizar is in an enviable position, controlling the mountain passes that allow trade between the eastern and western halves of the Continent. They make the most of this and also sell their own masterfully crafted goods. The dwarves were surprised by the gnome invention of firearms, but have struck back by creating the much-larger and more destructive cannons. The breakthrough discovery was an alchemical compound. Powder barrels treated with this compound are prevented from blowing up when hit by fire. A

small number of ships now mount these cannons and their success has led to increased demand and skyrocketing prices.

History

Dwarves have lived in the Ironhome Mountains for as long as anyone can remember. Even during the worst years of the Anarchy, small dwarfholds managed to survive when all around them there was chaos. The threat of Rajko the Ghūl brought the Ironhome dwarves together into the Vorizar League, a coalition of cities and settlements. This league joined the Starfall Alliance in the fight against the Necro-Kings. When that war was won, the dwarves knew something of peace for the first time. Over the following two centuries, the dwarves expanded their cities massively and created roads both above and belowground to connect the league's settlements. Their control of the mountain passes brought them goods and revenue and they had strong trading partners in the elves and humans of the Starfall Alliance. Deep beneath the Ironhome Mountains, however, madness and terror bubbled towards the surface.

Unbeknownst to the dwarves of the Vorizar League, there used to be a serpent person fortress far beneath the mountains. It was there the chosen of Yig performed many hideous experiments and bred a series of servitor races. When Valossa fell, a cabal of serpent people sorcerers had been performing a breeding experiment. They were in the midst of a powerful ritual when the Unspeakable One manifested. Even this distant from Valossa, the Primal God's power was felt. The serpent people were driven mad—this insanity tainted their ritual. They had been trying to breed a servitor race with the adaptability of humans and the sturdiness of dwarves. Instead, they created a horrid half-breed race of demented killers. These abominations survived, as did other of the serpent people's experiments.

While the dwarves of the Ironhome Mountains built up the Vorizar League, the things from below moved ever upwards. Two hundred and thirty-four years after the defeat of the last Necro-King, a dwarf outpost was attacked from below and destroyed by forces unknown. Sporadic raids like this continued for the rest of the century, which caused the league to expand its army substantially. When Iovan's gnomes and gargoyles attacked from the south therefore, the Vorizar League was ready to fight and it defeated the oathbreakers in short order (see Iovan's entry for more on the Dwarf-Gnome War).



It was not long before the things from below returned. The dwarves repulsed them in one place but they would then attack in another. They would disappear for a year and then launch three attacks in a month. In what became known as the Long War, the Vorizar League spent nearly seven centuries fighting nameless horrors in the depths of the Ironhome Mountains. The High Guard kept the mountain passes safe and that kept trade flowing, but meanwhile the Deep Guard fought a merciless war away from the eyes of the Continental powers. The Vorizar League could have asked for help from its allies, but its leaders were too wary of Iovan taking advantage of the situation. So the dwarves fought on, alone and unheralded.

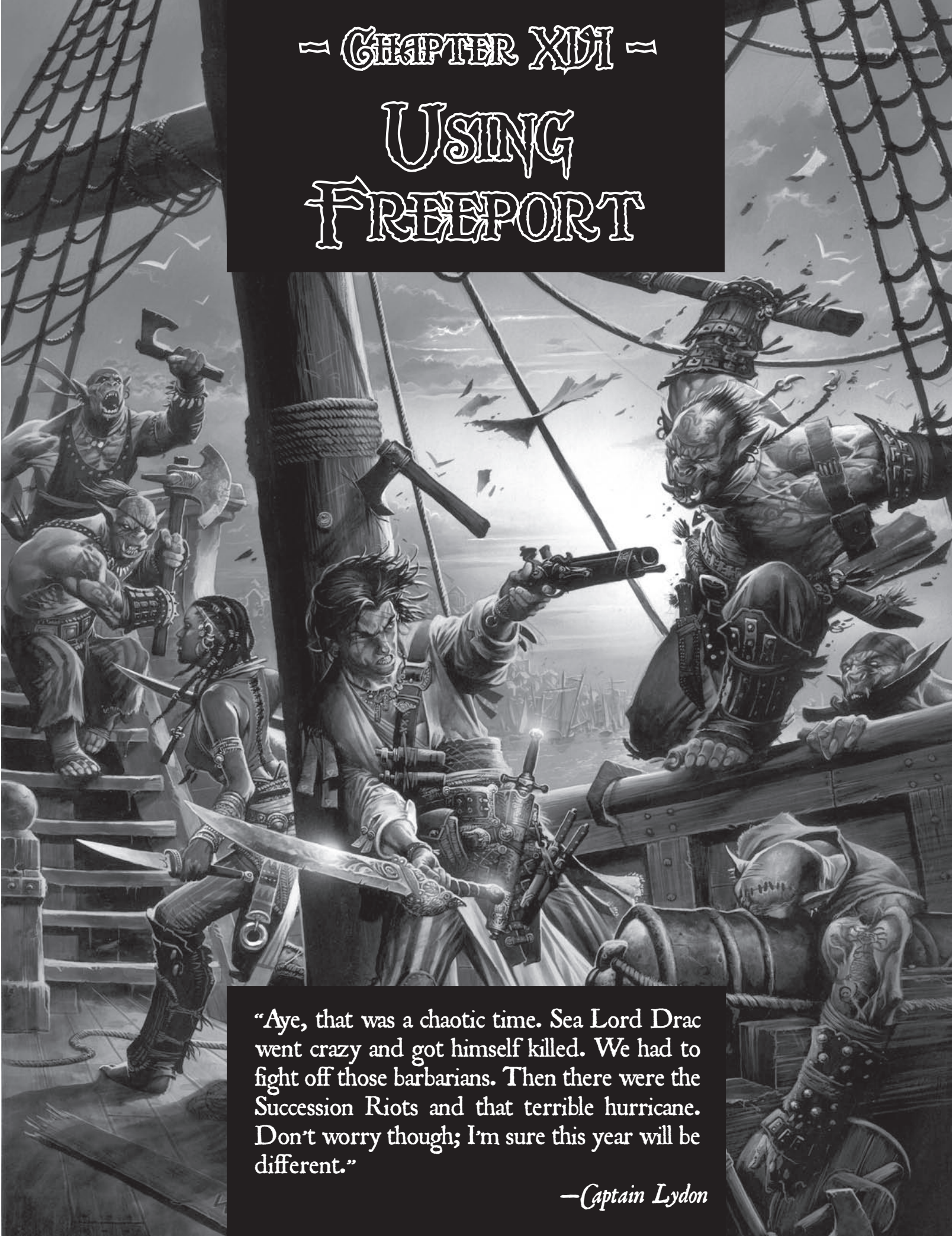
The price was high. Tens of thousands died, cities were destroyed, and always the Vorizar League seemed on the verge of ruin. In the end it was the development of two key weapons that brought the war to an end. First, the dwarves learned to use gunpowder to their advantage, not with the firearms that the gnomes would later invent but with grenadoes, bombs, and petards. Second, dwarf spellcasters developed new magical warding techniques. These allowed tunnels to the depths to be closed and then warded and this drastically reduced the ability of the things from below to continue their attacks.

Not quite a century ago the Vorizar League emerged from its long nightmare. Long remote from Continental politics, it began to engage with its neighbors once again. The dwarves pulled back from the brink, and since then they have thrived. Despite this success, not all is quiet in the depths. Deep beneath the Ironhome Mountains, unnamable things still gibber in the darkness.

Current Events

The last twenty years have been eventful for the Continent. While the region is certainly no stranger to conflict, the Continent saw the first general war since the time of Rajko the Ghūl. It started simply enough, with Autocracy of Iovan trying to seize some disputed territory from Hexworth. As the war escalated, more nations were sucked into the conflict. Some got involved due to long-standing alliances, while others saw an opportunity to pursue their own interests. In the end, every nation on the Continent took part and the conflict became known as the War of Crowns for this reason. It raged for five years and in the end the cost in lives and gold was enormous. For all that, there was little change in the political landscape. Some small amounts of territory changed hands and some heroes and villains were created, but overall the War of Crowns accomplished little.

Since the war's end nine years ago, all the nations have been trying to recover from its effects. Many towns and villages have been rebuilt and trade amongst allies has been robust. More gold has been sunk into armies and navies as well, and border skirmishes and raids are a frequent occurrence. Some believe the leaders of the Continent would never plunge it into another such war. Others think that it's only a matter of time before a spark hits the powder keg and war once again tears the land apart.



Chapter XVI

Using Freeport

"Aye, that was a chaotic time. Sea Lord Drac went crazy and got himself killed. We had to fight off those barbarians. Then there were the Succession Riots and that terrible hurricane. Don't worry though; I'm sure this year will be different."

—Captain Lydon

A "City of Adventure," and of pirates and mystery. A city full of thieves, serpent people, demons, cults, treasures, stores, ordinary folk, magic, secrets, dangers, and opportunities.

Now what do you *do* with it?

Freeport has been designed as a place you can use in multiple ways. It can be a base of operations for an entire campaign, a series of adventures, or just a single story. A place your characters can visit briefly, return to on multiple occasions, or never leave. It can be placed into an existing campaign setting, or be the basis on which you create a world of your own. There are so many possibilities it can be hard to narrow them down or decide just how to make use of the city.

This chapter is about helping you make the most of Freeport for your campaign, no matter how you decide to use it. Whether as an occasional port of call or as the nexus for stories of swashbuckling fantasy, these ideas are to help you develop Freeport *your* way, and make it a place your players will never forget.

Raise the Skull and Crossbones!

Placing Freeport within a fantasy campaign, whether brand-new or pre-existing, is a pretty easy process. There are several different ways of going about it; none are "right" or "wrong," but some involve a bit more work than others. On the other hand, the more work you put into it, the more you're likely to get out of it.

Every Freeport campaign is going to be different, and we're not about to tell you how to run your game. But there are a couple of core ideas that it's best to nail down well before you start using the City of Adventure, whether in a new or an existing fantasy campaign. Once you're clear on these, the rest should come together easily.

Placing the City

First things first—where is Freeport? On which sea lanes are the Serpent's Teeth located, and what nearby nations are plagued by pirates preying on their traders? The answer to this is going to depend very much on whether you want to develop an entirely new setting and world around Freeport, or incorporate the city and the islands into the geography of a pre-existing game world. Both approaches have their pros and cons, but in the end they both allow for fun gaming and easy use of Freeport.

Brave New World

The simplest option, in some ways, is to start from scratch—a brand-new campaign in a brand-new setting with Freeport in the center. Not *geographically* (unless that's what you want), but as the primary city and locale for the campaign. Start with Freeport and the Serpent's Teeth, then create a world around them in as much (or as little) detail as you like. **Chapter Fifteen** gives one example of a world that's designed to fit the city and its history, but there are myriad other ways you could flesh out the "implied" setting of Freeport to suit your own ends.

While this is a straightforward approach to using Freeport, it's not necessarily the easiest, because you may have to spend some time developing the details of the rest of the world. Some players and GMs are fine with hand-waving away everything outside the immediate environment as "over on the Continent," and if you don't travel there during the campaign, it isn't important. If that's the case, you probably haven't got much to do—you may not have to do *any* extra work, and just focus on bringing the city and the islands to life. Other gaming groups may need (or simply enjoy) more detail and background information, and in that case you'll need to spend some time fleshing out the nearby parts of the world. This kind of world creation is a lot of fun for some GMs (and some players, if your group likes to collaborate on such things). But if it's not your thing, yet you still want those external details, then you're probably better off inserting Freeport into an existing setting.

Uncharted Waters

Fortunately, placing Freeport within an established world (whether commercially developed or one you've invented yourself), is only marginally more complicated than developing a setting around the city. The Serpent's Teeth are designed to fit into almost any fantasy world—well, as long as that world has oceans and sailing ships. You just need to pick an appropriate region of your game world and state that Freeport and the surrounding islands have always been there. There are only a few assumptions to bear in mind when placing the islands, and even those can be tweaked if you prefer.

First, it is assumed that the islands are, in fact, islands. This doesn't necessarily *have* to be the case—Freeport could be stuck in a landlocked area—but it would make the city's piratical and seagoing flavor more than a bit strange. Another option is to have Freeport be a coastal city on the Continent, with the Serpent's Teeth as either nearby islands or simply neighboring regions.

Second, it is assumed that the islands are somewhere off the coast of a major continent, in a large body of saltwater, likely an ocean. Freeport could be put in a smaller sea, or even a large freshwater lake, with a minimum of trouble (although it might have an effect on the city's piratical and trading activities).

Third, it is assumed the weather is semi-tropical. Freeport could easily be placed in colder latitudes, but then you might have to close the port down for up to several months out of the year. Placing it closer to the equator would be a much simpler change, requiring some adjustments to weather, clothing, and customs.

Geography's not the only aspect of Freeport that can be integrated into an existing world, mind you. You may also wish to fine-tune the city's history, political affiliations, religions, and so on to fit your world. Again, this shouldn't be too hard, because those features have been designed so that they don't depend on a particular world. Want



Captain Drac to have been an outcast from a particular nation, or the Unspeakable One to be one aspect of an established archfiend? As easily said as done.

In the end, matching Freeport to any campaign world is a matter of how much detail you feel comfortable with for your game, and how much time you want to spend developing those details. Do as much work as you feel you need until you get to a point where the city feels as realistic as you wish, then move on. You can always flesh out more details and background during the course of the campaign if you think it's necessary.

Placing the Characters

You've worked out where Freeport sits in the world (and what that world is). The next thing to determine is what the PCs in your campaign are doing there. Have they been living there for years, or are they recent visitors? And is their appearance in the Docks the first event of a new campaign, or just the newest chapter in an existing story?

There's more information later in this chapter about what kind of characters are particularly suited to Freeport campaigns and why they might be in the city, but even before character creation the GM should think about what approach suits the game.

Old Hands

The easiest solution is to start a new, Freeport-focused campaign with characters that are natives or long-time residents of the Serpent's Teeth. This starts everyone off on the same page, and minimizes the need to flesh out the world outside the islands. Another advantage is that the characters have immediate ties to the NPCs and plot hooks within the city, which you can explore straight away if you wish. On the downside, you have to spend more time before the game getting everyone familiar with the details of Freeport.

New Blood

The second option is also easy, and that's to start a new campaign around characters who come to Freeport in the first session. There are many reasons they might come here, but once they step off the gangplank they're in the thick of the action. This can be even simpler than the first option, because you don't need to dump lots of information about Freeport in the players' laps before they start; they'll discover the city along with their characters. The drawback to this approach is that the characters don't have an immediate connection to NPCs and plot hooks; you may also need to flesh out the world outside the Serpent's Teeth more if your players want more background information for their characters.

Into the Serpent's Teeth

Both of the earlier approaches work if you're starting a new Freeport campaign. But what if your campaign has already started and you now want to incorporate Freeport into the existing setting and storylines? The easiest way to do this is to have the heroes somehow end up in Freeport in the course of their adventures. At first, they may think that the city is simply yet another stop on their latest tour of the world. But as they return to the place time and time again—whether for supplies, for healing, or because their investigations have somehow led them back to the island town—they should slowly come to see Freeport as the metaphorical and possibly geographical center of their lives. This is the approach that takes the most work, because you'll want to have a good reason for the characters to come to the city. You'll also want them to stay there for a while, no doubt, but that should happen naturally once they get involved in a plot hook or two.

Freebooters and Freeporters

Once you've worked out where Freeport sits and where the PCs come into the picture, the GM's side of things is just about done; now it's time for the players to make characters (unless they made them ages ago and are only just coming to Freeport now). But not all characters are equally suited to life in the big bad city, and you should give some guidance to your players when they start throwing around ideas.

The following concepts are eminently suitable for Freeport characters. Not only that, they're suitable for *groups* of characters, which gives you an instant hook for the campaign. If you want everyone to play a member of Freeport's criminal underworld, you still allow for a variety of concepts, but everyone has the potential for a common bond. This also works from the other direction; if all your players create pirates and sailors, you know what kind of game they want to play and you can plan your campaign accordingly. This isn't an exhaustive list, of course; there are many other character types that can survive the mean streets of Freeport. But if you or your players are looking for guidance, this is a good place to start.

Pirate

Freeport is a haven for all kinds of buccaneers—good or bad, dashing or bloodthirsty. Pirates can be fierce swordsmen, wily rogues, or even mysterious sea witches; the only requirement is a desire for gold, a good pair of sea legs, and access to a ship. A piratical group could be





the entire crew of a small ship, or the most notable members of a larger crew—ship's captain, first mate, quartermaster, master gunner, or even ship's cook. As a variation on this concept, the PCs might be privateers hunting renegades that have broken the laws of Freeport.

Adventurer

Call them explorers, freebooters, drifters, troubleshooters, trouble*makers,* or what you will—there's always a place for adventurous types in Freeport. Adventurers won't get many invitations to upper-class parties in the Merchant District, but no one's surprised to see them frequenting Dockside taverns and making deals in back rooms. Groups of adventurers are similarly common, although no guild or authority regulates them; if a group has a reputation and a wide variety of skills and abilities, work (and trouble) will find them somehow.

Mercenary

Freeport doesn't have a standing army or navy, but there's still plenty of need for professional soldiers and sell swords in the city. Merchants and crime lords alike might hire mercenaries as bodyguards or enforcers, while captains are always on the lookout for marines to protect their ships from pirates. A group of mercenaries could be a protection agency or freelance paramilitary unit, including members with specialist skills or even magical gifts; the Captains' Council would certainly be interested in such groups (both as hirelings and as potential trouble).

Scholar

With the temple of the God of Knowledge, the Wizards' Guild, and the Freeport Institute, there's a surprising amount for scholars to do in the city. Study in Freeport tends to be a full-contact occupation, and a historian or archeologist might also be a two-fisted adventurer or magical savant. A scholarly group might involve explorers and bookworms, along with bodyguards, servants, and other assistants, and their adventures could take them from the libraries of the Old City to the black labyrinths of buried Valossa in search of knowledge.

Thief

Freeport is a city with plenty of laws, and it doesn't lack for people willing to break those laws. From burglars to con artists to pickpockets, there's always work for criminals in the city. With that work comes inevitable involvement in the feud between Finn and Mister Wednesday, which makes for excellent adventure fodder. Criminal groups might all work for a crime lord, or could be an upstart gang trying to make their own niche in the underworld or pull it all together for one big score, visiting all the underworld dives in town in the process.

Trader

It might not be the most glamorous of professions, but there is plenty for a merchant, trader, or mercantile ship's captain to do in Freeport. Trader PCs still have endless chances to get into trouble, what with professional rivals, marauding pirates, thieves' guilds, and evil cults all wanting to make an impact on their bottom line. Mercantile groups could revolve around one or two traders, along with their assistants, bodyguards, and exotic contacts. More so than most PC groups, such parties can have adventures in the expensive drawing rooms of the Merchant District, the alleys of Drac's End, the high seas, and everywhere else profits are in danger.

Specialist

Whether you're a doctor, scribe, animal trainer, detective, alchemist, or engineer, if you've got a special skill to sell or exercise, you can do it in Freeport. There's bound to be someone who needs your special talents, for good or bad reasons, and you're bound to find excitement doing what you do best. A party might include experts within a single field, such as alchemists who specialize in different substances, and might want to establish a guild or business. Another option is for a specialist and her support crew of assistants, guardians, and advisors. Where such a group could go in their course of their adventures is anyone's guess.

Crusader

Freeport is a city crawling with hidden evils, and someone's got to put them to rest. Fearless vampire hunters, cold-hearted inquisitors, valiant paladins, wizards dedicated to stopping their mad brethren…. The possibilities are endless, and so are the dangers. Crusading groups can pit various abilities against a common foe, possibly allying with the Temple of Knowledge or another benevolent agency. A showdown with the Cult of the Unspeakable One is almost inevitable, even if the group is fighting a different foe.

Agent

There are dozens of factions and groups with an agenda in Freeport, from the Office of Dredging to the Liberty Movement to the kingdoms of the Continent, and all of them have operatives and agents doing their work in the city. Special agents make great PCs, because they can have almost any kind of skills or abilities; what matters more is their connection to the patron who gives them missions. A party of operatives working for the same master and receiving joint assignments makes for a compelling campaign model, and one that can go almost anywhere in the city, while characters can still get involved in personal adventures and plotlines.

Local Hero

Some people don't go looking for adventure, but it finds them anyway. A shopkeeper, laborer, dockworker, or citizen of Drac's End might seem an unlikely hero, but these are the men and women with the most to lose if their city, family, and livelihoods are in danger. A group of everyday heroes might be a group of friends, a Scurvytown family, a collection of young Institute students, or simply neighbors forced together by circumstances. Their adventures are unlikely to involve flashy magic and epic enemies (although they might), but it's a great way to explore day-to-day life in Freeport and see the city as a living, breathing place.

Life and Death in the City of Adventure

Once you have a Freeport-based campaign started (or have brought the action of an existing campaign to the city), the real challenge begins—bringing the city to life and getting the characters (and players) interested in what's going on there. We've presented plot hooks, NPCs, and situations galore in the earlier chapters, but the rest of it is up to you. As the GM, you need to make the city an interesting place for your players, and a place worth living in for your characters.

10 Reasons to Come to Freeport

Whether it's the first session of a new campaign or the latest adventure of experienced heroes, characters don't just magically appear in Freeport. Actually, they could do *exactly* that, if you wanted! But if you want something a bit less sudden, here are some ideas as to what brings this pack of adventurers to the City of Pirates.

1. A character gets a message from a relative living in Freeport, begging for their aid.
2. A powerful item the characters need is up for auction in the Warehouse District.
3. The rulers of a Continental nation hire them to escort a trade delegation to the city.
4. When their ship sinks in a storm, the characters are washed up on the shores of A'Val.
5. The heroes' arch-enemy flees to Freeport and starts assembling an army of pirates.
6. An ancient prophecy directs the heroes to Freeport to fight the Cult of the Unspeakable One.
7. A character's prize possession is stolen, and the thief escapes to Freeport.
8. The last copy of a much-needed book of lore is in the library of the Freeport Institute.
9. The characters are on the run from the law on the Continent and need a hiding place.
10. Fame, fortune, glory…. There's no better place to find such things.

This section of the *Pirate's Guide* is all about living in Freeport—not just having grand missions to save the world, but treating the city as headquarters and home for the PCs.

Any hero who frequents Freeport need not look far for adventures. The dark corners and sordid secrets of the City of Adventure provide a ready backdrop for drama and action of all kinds. What kind of plots you want to enmesh your heroes in really depends on who they are and what they want to do. It's pointless to try to wrap most barbarians into an adventure brimming with political intrigue. Similarly, most wizardly types aren't going to want to get mixed up in the battle rings down by the docks. It's up to you to tailor the Freeport experience to your players' tastes.

Fortunately, Freeport offers up different aspects of itself to those who look for them. Some heroes spend their entire lives in Freeport and never meet a member of the Captains' Council. Others might never enter a single hallowed place in the Temple District, or see the glittering stores of the Merchant District—and most of them would never know that they were missing a thing.

Not every adventure your heroes have must take place in or around Freeport—although there's certainly enough intrigue and danger there for most folks. But at the end of the latest mission, when the smoke has finally cleared and the heroes are ready to go home, Freeport should be the home they're going to.

Big Bad City

Above anything else, Freeport is a city of opportunities—financial, social, magical, or any other kind. This is a place where goods, information, and the fate of worlds might be bought and sold, and that makes it a terrific and practical home base for adventurers. It may not be a safe place to live, but it can be a *useful* place to live, and that's what many players want for their characters.

If the PCs have money, Freeport can be their collective oyster. Just about any desire can be met—for a price. As the original Captain Drac was known to say, "The business of Freeport is business." For heroes of less extravagant means, Freeport can still be their friend. There is always work of one sort or another to be had, and people with gold looking for brave and hardy souls to do them some service.

Whether they've got money, want money, or need help meeting their personal objectives, characters have a lot to gain from staying in Freeport. The following are just a few reasons why heroes (and villains) might settle down in the City of Adventure.

Exotic Goods

No matter how rare or unusual the item, you can (eventually) find it in Freeport. Expensive trade goods and fine artwork are sold in the Old City and the Merchant District. Tomes of lost lore can be bought from the Freeport Institute or the Temple of Knowledge. The Wizards' Guild trades in magical items and artifacts, alchemical secrets, and eldritch knowledge better forgotten. Weapons, tools, ships, clockwork wonders…. Whatever you're looking for, someone has it, and someone else also wants to buy it.

This is all due to the fact that Freeport is one of the most successful and well-used trading ports in the world. The old saying among Freeport merchants is, "If we don't have it now, check back next week to see if it's wandered through." In a pinch, just about anything can be had by special order, as long as the customer is willing to wait. The more obscure or rare the item wanted, the longer the delay.

Good Work If You Can Get It

Many of the city's rich and powerful are in constant need of faithful bodyguards, skilled consultants, specialist assistants, or fearless and foolhardy adventurers to carry out certain tasks for them, of both the legal and not-so-legal variety.

For PCs of a more sinister bent, there are certainly individuals worthy of a good fleecing scattered throughout Freeport. However, characters may learn that their intended victims are hardly powerless, and those who are firmly entrenched in Freeport society may have friends willing to come to their aid—or avenge crimes against them.

Remember the old admonition: "Don't make a mess in your own backyard." Characters that find Freeport to their liking could find it turning into an inhospitable place should they incur the wrath of powerful people in the town. By the same token, PCs who gain a reputation for fearlessness and efficiency in their hometown can find themselves called on (and well paid) time and time again.

Hub of the World

Captain Drac, who had a way with both words and a cutlass, liked to call Freeport "the Hub of the World." The idea was that everything else rotated around the city of which he was so proud—whether everything else knew it or not. Many adventurers can testify that Drac's words have proved true—important things happen in Freeport, and world-shaking sequences of events have a habit of starting (or ending) within the city.

One reason for this is that Freeport is a major nexus for travelers across the world, thanks to its central location and the number of ships that use it as a trading port. Many people come here just to go somewhere else, but in the few hours or days they remain in the city, well, it never takes long for things to get complicated. Another factor is the tendency of other nations, whether on the Continent or other islands, to send diplomats, spies, and agents to Freeport. Some use it as neutral ground when meeting with their allies and rivals; others see it as an enemy to be conquered, or want to stop rival nations from conquering it first. And, of course, there are the pirates—they just can't help bringing all sorts of troubles home with them.

In other words, if you want something interesting to happen in Freeport, it doesn't need to be justified or explained—this is a city where anything can happen. Sometimes good things, sometimes bad things, but always interesting things—and things the PCs can't help but get involved with.

This also means that, if your campaign isn't initially set in Freeport, or if the action leaves the city for an extended period, you've got an excellent excuse for bringing the game (and the PCs) to A'Val. All roads (and ships) lead to the Hub of the World—and once you spend some time in the thick of things, the idea of going somewhere less exciting (and dangerous) may lose its appeal.

Home, Sweet Home

At the end of the day, Freeport is not just a launching pad for adventures or a place to make some money. It's a place that characters of all stripes can call home, where they can enjoy themselves, live their lives, and relax for a while—at least until danger and excitement inevitably come calling.

If the PCs are going to settle down here, then it's worth doing a bit of homework about the city and really get it down so that you know it as well as any resident. That doesn't mean you have to figure out the birthday and favorite color of every prostitute plying her trade in the Docks. But it's good to think about some of the basics of life in the city and how the PCs might fit into it. With just a bit of effort you can breathe some real life into the information found in these pages, and transform Freeport from a base of operations into a true home.

A Place to Hang Your Hat

If the heroes are setting up shop in Freeport, one of the first things they're going to want to do is find a place to call home. Staying at an inn is always an option, but the costs of room, board, and beer quickly add up. Once they have some money saved up, many PCs are going to look toward either leasing a place from someone on a long-term basis or purchasing a home outright.

Finding a place to live in Freeport isn't all that difficult. It's a big city, so people are coming and going all the time. The easiest way to handle this is to ask the players what they're looking for in a home and where they'd like it to be. Then you can set the prices accordingly and come up with an appropriate place. As always, you get what you pay for. No matter what they might wish, characters are just not going to find a palatial mansion down in Scurvytown, nor are they going to find a broken-down shanty in the Merchant District.

Typical Freeport Dwellings





Characters trying to get the best value for money housing should probably look around the Eastern District or the better parts of Drac's End, such as the Cluster. These are also good places for business-minded characters to establish a shop or office in the Warehouse District. The Old City and the Merchant District are probably out of reach for all but the wealthiest characters, while living in Scurvytown or Bloodsalt is usually something people are forced into, rather than choosing. And for bohemian, rough-and-tumble PCs, there are plenty of places to live in the Docks—including on a ship tethered to a pier. A bunk below deck may not be enough for some, but for others, it's more than plenty.

Friends and Neighbors

Once a PC has found a place to stay, you're ready to start integrating her into the city. Introduce her slowly but surely to the people that live nearby, as well as to the people she's bound to run into. For instance, there might be a little old lady who lives on the upper floor of a shop around the corner, and the hero might have the chance to help her across a busy street. Or rob her shop while some other sap is helping her across the street.

Some neighbors are friendly and open. Others are tight-lipped and mysterious. Each offers his or her own kind of intrigue. What does that friendly soul want from the character? And what is that overly private person trying to hide?

The character is bound to meet all sorts of people as she goes about her business. Maybe she gets hassled or helped by the guards who patrol her part of town; maybe she gets to know the grocer from whom she buys her food. As you introduce these minor NPCs into the mix, be sure to take some quick notes on them. All you really need to know in most cases is the person's age, gender, and occupation. A few other quick personality notes can come in handy here, too. Then, when the character is out and about, you can reacquaint her with these people.

Once a character is feeling at home in Freeport, you can get her involved in countless adventures revolving around herself, her friends and her community. In a place like Freeport, there's always some kind of scheme going on, and a PC in the right place at the right time can help—or take advantage of things.

What if the hero stumbles upon her favorite grocer being shaken down for protection money? What if she discovers that the neighbor lady is in fact the mother of one of the men on the Captains' Council? What happens when the city digs a well just outside her favorite tavern and the workers accidentally uncover a passageway used by serpent people to move around the city? These plot hooks give characters a chance to get personally involved in events around Freeport, rather than just taking on missions for pay.

If you're lucky, the characters won't just sit around waiting for chances to look after their community; they'll go out *looking* for opportunities to make Freeport a better (or more interesting) place. An active PC who decides for herself to reunite her neighbor with her estranged son, or to chase out the local gangsters and their protection racket (perhaps only to replace them with her own operation) is great for a GM, because now the player is helping you create your adventures.

Over the Ocean Wave

No discussion of life in Freeport would be complete without touching on the single biggest thing in the Serpent's Teeth—the sea itself. Characters that come to Freeport from other parts of the world

Earth Tremors Shake City: "Not Us" Says Wizards Guild

~The Shipping News

will, of course, take at least one sea voyage on their way to the island, while natives of the city have grown up with ships and sailors as part of their lives. Even the most landlocked campaign is likely to touch on the sea at some point, and if the PCs are all pirates, sailors, and traders, life at sea is likely to be a major part of the campaign.

Life on the sea isn't for every character, but it offers a chance for all kinds of adventure. Not only can the ships take the heroes from Freeport to faraway lands full of potential engagements, but the journeys themselves can be crammed with drama. You don't have to look any further than *The Odyssey* for evidence of this.

You could fill an entire sourcebook with advice on running nautical campaigns. Rather than do that, here are some simple things to bear in mind for making the sea part of your campaign, and making the PCs' excursions outside the city memorable.

Arranging Passage

Many characters aren't going to have the finances (or desire) to purchase and maintain their own ship. If they want to leave or return to the island, they'll probably have to make an arrangement with a sea captain who's going that way. The costs for passage on a ship can vary greatly, depending on the accommodations and the amount of work the travelers are willing to help with.

If the PCs wish to hire a private luxury ship, complete with fine meals and flowing wine, the price can be huge. Their only duties on such a voyage would be to tell the captain where they'd like to go, to order their meals in time for the chef to acquire the necessary ingredients, and to enjoy the ride.

At the other end of the spectrum, characters might be able to work for their passage on a ship. Their duties depend entirely on the kind of ship they hire on with. On a private cruise ship like the one mentioned above, characters might act as bodyguards to take care of pirates or monsters from the deep. On other ships the PCs might simply work as deckhands, doing what's needed to keep the ship in shape and on course. In either case, their accommodations are likely to be spartan, and they're bound to get sick of the chef's fishy gruel—but the price is right. They may even be eligible for a share of the ship's profits if the journey goes right.

Many travelers will negotiate a happy compromise between these two extremes—paying their way, but minimizing the costs by helping out with chores and duties onboard. Passengers can also offer their services to sailors to offset the cost of travel—selling food, doing laundry, cutting hair, or even using magic to make life easier for the crew. And, of course, whether you're a deckhand or a privileged guest, "all hands on deck" in a crisis means *all* hands on deck; when it's life or death you're expected to pitch in, no matter how much you paid the captain beforehand.

A Ship of Your Own

Some characters will want their own ship, especially if they're pirates, sailors, or other seafarers. Sure, it's a lot of effort, but look what you get in return—freedom, adventure, wind in your sails, and salt in your hair! More importantly, there are many interesting adventures and scenarios you can run, just by focusing on the ongoing use and maintenance of a ship.

But make no mistake, owning and operating a ship is expensive. Small craft like rowboats or keelboats aren't much good for long ocean voyages; you need a sloop, schooner, or something even larger, and such ships aren't cheap. On the other hand, there's no law that says PCs have to pay for their ship—well, there probably is, but it's made to be broken. A wily captain could win her ship in a game of cards, inherit it from a relative, find it abandoned on the high seas, or just flat out steal it. In other words, if you want the PCs to have a ship, it's easy enough to find a way to give them one. If you want obtaining a ship to be a goal they work toward, then they can buy one the old-fashioned way once they save (or steal) the necessary funds.

The costs don't stop there, though. There is maintenance to think about—many longtime sea captains keep sailing for as long as they do just so that they can earn enough money to keep their larger ships in shape. Whether they do this through piracy or more legitimate means is up to them. And then there's the crew; any ship large enough to be useful is too large for a small group of PCs to operate alone. They'll need sailors of various types, from deckhands and riggers to marines and gunners, and those sailors will need to be paid. Running a ship is like running a business—yes, even if you're a pirate—and while some players like to explore the logistics, others may get bored with keeping track of finances.

A good compromise is for the PCs to operate a ship for an NPC patron. They could be the second-in-command of a pirate crew, with the captain as an NPC, or the captain and crew of a trading vessel owned by a merchant back in Freeport. This kind of approach puts PCs in charge (more or less) of their ship, while ignoring most of the financial and operational details.

Press-Ganged

Not everyone on a ship is there by choice. There's a longstanding tradition in pirate circles (and on some "legitimate" ships) to procure workers by kidnapping them.

Being press-ganged can be a life-altering experience even for seasoned characters. Imagine the powerful mage who falls victim to a drugged mug of ale, then awakens to find herself shackled to an oar below decks in a ship miles out to sea. Of course, the mage and her fellows are likely candidates to lead a mutiny on the ship, but it's certainly not going to be easy.

Workers are press-ganged in many different ways. Sometimes the perpetrators are the sailors who work the ship. Other times they're simply thugs who are paid a fee for each acceptable worker they "recruit" for the ship.

Cunning kidnappers might drug a target's drink or on rare occasions use magic to incapacitate or compel their subject. Some ship captains even use such means to keep their workers in line. Other kidnappers aren't so oblique in their methods; they prefer to take their victims by force. These press gangs don't like to give their

Four Things Every Freeport Campaign Needs

There are themes and elements that a successful Freeport campaign comes back to time after time—maybe not in *every* session or plotline, but in most of them. When you're planning and running your adventures, keep the following elements at the front of your mind and you won't go wrong.

Action

Freeport is the City of Adventure, not the City of Sitting Around. Whether characters want to save the day or just score some loot, they'll need to roll up their sleeves and get physical at some point. Combat is one obvious form of action, and the PCs are bound to get into both minor and epic battles, but that's not the only option. Chasing a thief through the markets, sailing a ship in an unnatural storm, exploring the jungles of Leeward in search of a missing ally, breaking into the Auction House to steal a dangerous relic…. The list goes on and on.

Intrigue

Everyone in Freeport wants something, and most of them want more than a hot meal and a cold drink. From political machinations to hidden cults, from gang wars to get-rich-quick schemes, there are plots and secrets galore in the city, and PCs are bound to get caught up in some of them. Not every adventure has to feature Byzantine schemes that are impossible to unwind—sometimes intrigue can be as simple as "helping this guy will annoy that guy" and going from there—but always keep a secret up your sleeve for the times you need a plot twist.

Horror

Twisted monsters lurk in the shadows, mad cultists worship inhuman gods, and evil powers wait for their chance to take control of the city. Horror can be pulpy and over-the-top (zombie pirates, ghost ships, big monsters) or subtle and devious (cultists in disguise, demonic influence, creeping madness)—it doesn't even have to be supernatural in nature (serial killers and bloody murders). Freeport can be a scary, dangerous place, and bringing the horror elements to the fore makes for a memorable campaign.

Humor

And to balance out the horror, it's nice to just have some *fun*. Freeport's not a comedy setting, but it doesn't always take itself completely seriously—sometimes you've just gotta laugh and go whistling past the graveyard. Tongue-in-check plot twists, groan-worthy puns, drunken escapades, and hair-brained schemes: sprinkle your campaign with these and your players will appreciate it. Don't go overboard with the jokes (unless everyone wants to), but a little comic relief goes a long way.

chosen targets a fighting chance, so they rely on things like superior numbers and ambushes (or both). This gives the targets a chance to actually fight back, but usually at some sort of disadvantage.

Waves of Danger

The sea conceals a whole other world, far from the prying eyes of air-breathers who can only dip into this mysterious place for a few scant minutes at a time. The waves can hide the kind of danger that strikes fear in even the bravest hearts.

Just how much the undersea world comes into play depends on you. If the sea is just a wide-open road for PCs to travel upon, that's fine. But it doesn't always have to be that easy. Besides the obvious hazards like terrible storms and leaky ships, there are all sorts of creatures lurking beneath the waves, ready to wreak havoc upon a passing ship.

Smart captains prepare for these eventualities by hiring crew able to take care of such problems, especially if the ship is headed for dangerous territories. But not everyone has the means to protect her ship so well on each and every voyage. Threats like sea devils, sea monsters, ghost pirates, brutal storms, or frenzied sharks are always a possibility, and even a ship crewed by hardened marines and defended by guns and magic can still fall prey to attack. In the Serpent's Teeth, being prepared for danger is far from a guarantee that you'll survive that danger; it just makes for a more exciting and spectacular battle scene when disaster finally hits.

Man Overboard!

While it seems counter intuitive, many sailors don't know how to swim, and the heroes may not be exceptions to that rule.

Unfortunately for poor swimmers, when a character gets dumped in the middle of the ocean, it's unlikely their ship is going to be able to pick them up. Sailing ships aren't the easiest beasts to maneuver, even under the best of circumstances. If the ship is engaged in battle, you can just about forget any thoughts of it coming back to rescue a dumped sailor (at least until the battle is over). Second, it's a big sea out there; if there are any waves at all, it can be difficult to spot a single person floating in the water. And if the incident happens at night or during a storm—likely times for people to fall overboard—potential rescuers are even less likely to spot the victim.

Mind you, none of these restrictions apply to the creatures who call the sea their home. If a PC goes overboard, her best chance for rescue might lie with an underwater native. The only question then is whether the "rescuer" is friendly or not—and in the Serpent's Teeth, the answer to that question is usually "not." More than one hapless swimmer has been gathered up by a shark or other ravenous beast—for lunch!

Fine-Tuning Freeport



So you've read through the previous chapters outlining Freeport in all its bloodstained glory, and thought, "It's all good, except for *this*." Maybe you're using a system where magic is very powerful, and Freeport doesn't have that level of arcane might. Or perhaps you find the horror elements a turn-off and would prefer something less dark and more swashbuckling. Perhaps you want to set Freeport in an alternate history version of the real world and so all those elves and orcs get in the way, but at the same time you want some airships and steam engines to go with the guns and cannons.

Freeport can't be all things to all people, of course. The city has a style all its own, and we wouldn't have it any other way. But it's also a very adaptable city at the same time, and there's a lot you can change, add, remove, or rethink to make it fit your campaign and rules system while still keeping the flavor of Freeport intact.

The following elements are all present in Freeport to a greater or lesser degree. Modifying these elements can help you fine-tune Freeport so it fits your vision and your game. These ideas are the tip of the iceberg, but should show the way for any other modifications you want to make.

Piracy and Crime

This might seem so obvious it's not worth discussing, but let's get it out in the open—there are pirates, thieves, and criminals aplenty in Freeport. But it's a city built by pirates, not run by them; it tolerates them if they behave themselves, but it's not a pirate haven. Similarly, Freeport's thieves can't just rob and plunder without fear of reprisal; the crime lords of the city act behind the scenes, and the intervention of the Watch is a constant danger. Freeport is pretty rough around the edges, but it's not lawless, and not everyone in town wears an eyepatch and has a parrot on his shoulder.

You can make Freeport even more law-abiding by reducing the presence of pirates in the Serpent's Teeth. The city becomes a seaport and trading center, a place pirates avoid lest they be arrested and hanged for their crimes. To cut back on other crime, strip away the power of the major crime lords or eliminate them entirely, leaving small groups of rogues who pull minor jobs and then hide out from the law. This kinder, gentler Freeport makes a good locale for more socially focused campaigns that emphasize mysteries, politics, and romance.

If you want an even wilder city, put the pirates in charge of Freeport—a lawless hive of scum and villainy, a blight on the shore! The Captains' Council now includes active pirates and corsairs who control the Docks and Scurvytown, places the private lawmen of the Merchant's Watch dare not tread. The council also has a seat for the head of the Thieves' Guild, which operates openly from its headquarters in the Eastern District, stealing from pirates and honest folk alike. This is a chaotic, crazy city, where the only law is your own blade and strength, a town where villains can rest in comfort, or where crusaders might come to clean out the corruption.

Magic

Magic in Freeport is present, but not overwhelming. The Wizards' Guild operates openly, everyone knows someone who's seen a spell being cast or a magic sword being drawn, and the tall tales of sailors are more than just superstition. But magic is also mysterious and outside

The Gods of Freeport

Throughout this book, we've used generic names for the various gods and many of the faiths represented in Freeport. This makes it easy to re-imagine them for your own campaign—decide what you want the gods to be, give them names (or not), and you're good to go.

If you want to integrate Freeport into an existing campaign or setting, you can just match the city's gods up with the established deities of the setting. Alternatively, you could establish them as different gods worshipped locally. Or mix and match—some are well-known gods, some are unknown outside the Serpent's Teeth. You can also easily combine gods together—for example, the God of the Sea and the God of Pirates might be the same being in your world, possibly worshipped in different ways by different sects. You can also take the sect route to merge the various gods into a smaller pantheon, or even a single god.

In addition to the gods of humanity, there are also Primal Gods like Yig and the Unspeakable One. These gods aren't generic—they're outsider deities, forgotten by the civilized world, and they should feel alien and unknown compared to the younger gods. But again, you can customize them if you want to match them to your setting; perhaps "the Unspeakable One" is just one name given to a legendary god of evil in your world.

the understanding of most citizens. You won't see peasants casually buying magic potions at the markets, and if someone casts a spell in public people either crowd around to watch or back cautiously away. Magic is an uncanny force, and most people prefer to leave it alone.

You can make magic less common in Freeport, but you probably can't remove it entirely; too much of the city's history and present state hinge on magical events, such as Milton Drac's plot and the Great Green Fire. But you can certainly make magic less powerful, confining it to the guild and their rivals, who supplement their weak spells with alchemy, sleight of hand, and hypnosis. Another option is to make magic useful but dangerous—something that erodes the sanity or soul of the user, that backfires or causes terrible side effects. The council fears the madmen of the Wizards' Guild and their demonic "assistants," but must deal with them (at arm's length) to protect the city from even greater dangers. This is a good option if you want a more horror-focused campaign.

If magic is more powerful and more widespread, you get a Freeport where the miraculous is almost commonplace. The streets are lit with lanterns that never go out, shopkeepers sell amulets and potions, wizards sell their services cheaply and heroes might all carry magical weapons and ride flying carpets. Magic never becomes *ordinary*, but in making it so accepted Freeport may be a city of wonders (perhaps exceptionally so in your world), a staging ground for high-powered adventures in exotic planes of existence or crusades against armies of supernatural evil.

Religion

Faith and religion don't dominate life in Freeport, but they play a significant part, from the charitable works of the Temple of Knowledge to the mad cults that worship the Unspeakable One in the cellars of Scurvytown. Still, religion is something many citizens can take or leave, a background element of life in the city. The one major assumption is that faith has a real effect—that priests and worshippers gain definite benefits and blessings from their gods, even if we don't spell out what those benefits are.

Downplaying religion could be as easy as saying that there is no benefit from worship, and that the gods are either imaginary or silent. But what about Yig and the Unspeakable One, who certainly had a real effect on the world? Perhaps even these myths are false—the serpent people thought their gods were real, but it was magic and politics that destroyed their empire. Another option is that the Primal Gods are real entities (gods, demons, or other powerful supernatural beings), while the new gods of humans are myths. The Brotherhood has the power of their dread patron, while their enemies rely on a hollow faith to protect them—again, a good option for horror-focused campaigns.

If you'd like faith to play a more central role in the game, one way is to remove the separation of church and state, making Freeport a city controlled by a particular religion. Perhaps the God of the Sea (or Pirates!) must approve the appointment of the Sea Lord, a high priest who rules the city in accordance with doctrine, while other churches are outlawed or squabble for power. Another option is to increase the power and the visibility of the Cult of the Unspeakable One; knowing the Primal Gods are out to get them, the citizens of Freeport beg their gods for protection, as holy warriors gird themselves for a new Inquisition against the forces of Evil.

Technology

Freeport has a few touches of anachronistic technology—not too many, but enough to add some piratical flavor. Pistols and muskets are expensive and not completely reliable, but wealthier pirates might carry one or two; they also outfit their ships with cannons, while anarchists plant bombs and explosives. More unusual still are the rare clockwork or steam-powered devices around the city, such as the alchemical factories and fertilization tools found in Bloodsalt; these rare creations make the city a little more unpredictable, while still keeping a fantasy feel.

If you don't want those elements, it's easy enough to replace them with more low-tech items. Pirates wield bows and crossbows, while their ships are armed with ballistae and catapults; the workers of Bloodsalt spread chemicals with buckets and barrels, poured from cauldrons and stills. You could even reduce the technology further, aiming for a Dark Ages feel with Viking longboats replacing pirate galleons, no sewers, unpaved streets, and no creature comforts. This makes for a grittier campaign, one where even wealthy merchants tread in mud and sleep on straw pallets.

Increasing the technology level is a little trickier; go too far and your campaign stops feeling like fantasy (unless that's what you want). One good option is not to advance the tech level, but expand it—include more anachronistic devices with a similar feel to the existing ones. Freeport could be a nexus for airships and balloon pirates, who drop alchemical bombs on ships that fire back with steam-powered harpoon guns. This campaign keeps the piratical, fantastic feel, but mixes it with freewheeling technology for a more colorful and over-the-top game.

Nonhuman Races

Members of several intelligent races live in Freeport—elves, dwarves, gnomes, and halflings, plus the orcs, goblins, and hobgoblins of Bloodsalt. But for all that, the city is dominated by humanity, and the nonhuman elements are a notable minority who are occasionally discriminated against. There are other, much less visible nonhumans in the city, such as the shape-changing serpent people; there might also be others hiding in the shadows, or masquerading as humans.

You can easily reduce or completely remove the nonhuman races from Freeport; just make everyone human. Use different nationalities, ethnic backgrounds, or tribal allegiances instead to create plots. Now Bloodsalt is populated by multiple tribes from the Continent, who distract themselves with ancient grudges instead of co-operating against the city dwellers. You could even make the serpent people remnants of a lost human civilization who despise their modern descendents. Or mix and match, keeping some races and not others; perhaps your Freeport contains only humans, serpent people, and the brutish dwarves of Bloodsalt.

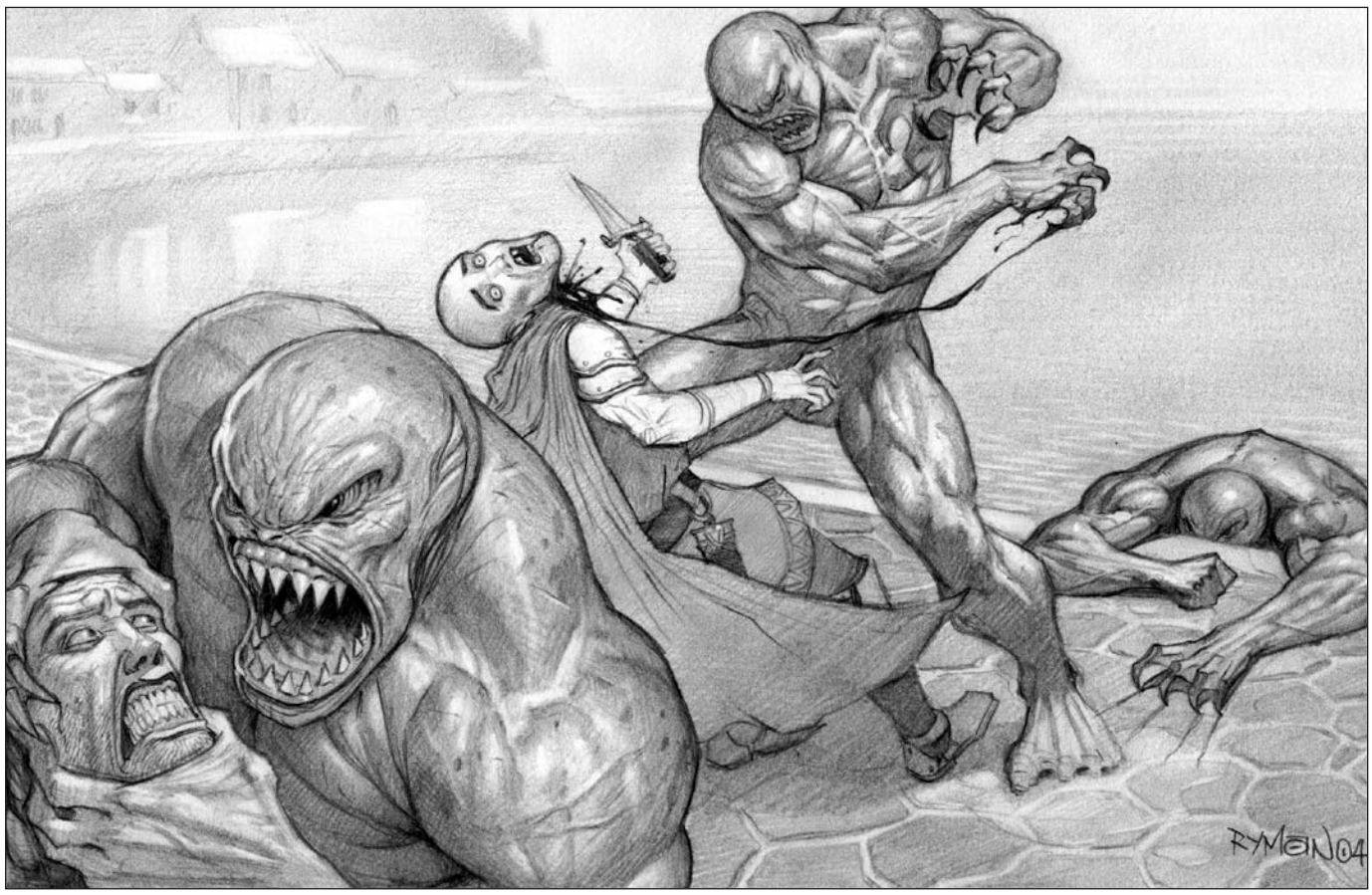
Want more races and beings on the streets? Just put them in! It's easy to include more races in isolation; Freeport is a cosmopolitan city, and if your setting includes other nonhuman species some of them are sure to be found in the taverns of the Docks. Taking away the human dominance of the city is also easy—just change some NPCs into elves, dwarves, lion-men, or whatever you like. The change in racial demographics only has to matter if you so wish; if you just want a more colorful, high-fantasy feel to the city, adding more races is one easy way to achieve that.

Monsters

Monstrous or supernatural creatures are a background element in Freeport; they're there, but you don't see them very often. There are sea devils and aquatic creatures in the ocean, strange beasts in the jungles of A'Val and the other islands, undead or still-living horrors of old Valossa in the ruins far below Freeport—but in the city streets themselves, monsters are uncommon. When they do appear, citizens react the way they would to any dangerous creature or event—by running to the nearest safe place and then bragging about their bravery in a tavern later that night.

You can pull monsters even further into the background, or remove them entirely if you wish, without changing much at all about Freeport. Maybe tall stories are exactly that, and there aren't any creatures in the world you couldn't see in a modern zoo or museum. But it's worth leaving yourself the option of including supernatural critters at some point, whether as demons summoned by wizards or lost abominations pulled from the reef. Used sparingly, such monsters add spice and excitement, especially in a horror-focused campaign.

Adding more monsters to Freeport isn't too difficult, but it's good to have reasons for why bizarre beasts are so common. Perhaps the Great Green Fire drove many creatures from the jungle into the city, where they now hide in tenements or sewers, emerging to drag off prey. A dragon may erect a home on Mount A'Val, sending out its twisted progeny to eliminate the troublesome humans—or perhaps the dragon is a worshipper of the Unspeakable One and summons demonic help! A monster-plagued Freeport is colorful, dangerous, and unpredictable, less sword-and-sorcery and more high-fantasy, especially if you add more magic to the mix.



Campaign Threads

You can run all sorts of different kinds of campaigns in Freeport, something for just about every style of play. Once you know what your players are looking for, you can settle on a style and then work with it. But everyone likes a change of pace once in a while, so it's good to change styles and see different faces of the city during your campaign. If you want to tone down the politics and crank up the action for a few sessions, it's easy enough to do so. And when it's all over, you can choose another path for your campaign.

To help with this, this section of the **Pirate's Guide** presents several "campaign threads" that you can use for your game, whether as-is or adapted to better fit your needs. Like the name implies, a thread isn't an entire campaign—it's one strand you can weave throughout other stories and plots, one ongoing element to keep bringing back to the table. Use one thread as the core of a campaign or as the background for your main plot—or interweave two or three threads into a complete campaign, moving between them as you like.

Each campaign thread consists of a basic plot and direction, with some advice on what kind of PCs might get involved. That's followed by six adventure ideas to flesh out and adapt. The first two adventures are for apprentice PCs, kicking off the thread's events. The middle adventures are for journeyman PCs, and the final two adventures provide a rousing climax for master-level characters.

Avast, Me Hearties!

A lost map, a treasure hoard, a race against rival cutthroats and well-armed privateers—it's an all-out chase for pirate gold! Mackey, former pirate and owner of the Black Gull, possesses part of a map leading to the legendary hidden hoard of Jacque Francisco—a map tattooed onto his back by a long-dead comrade. When Mackey dies and word of the map leaks out, every pirate in Freeport wants to get their hands on the treasure, no matter what it takes!

This thread is best for piratical PCs, or simply characters with access to a ship and a liking for gold, which is pretty much the same thing. With a little adaptation it could also fit privateers working for the Captains' Council. Less nautical groups might get involved by working for a pirate NPC, or perhaps a land-bound patron who hires a ship and crew for them.

- The PCs are at the Black Gull for a drink when a bar brawl turns bloody; Mackey is killed and his assistant Buster is knocked out. By the time Buster comes around, Mackey's body has been taken to the Crematorium, and Buster panics—the map will be destroyed! He blurts out the secret to a bar full of miscreants, and it's all hands on deck to get to the Crematorium first and claim Mackey's precious corpse before it goes up in smoke.

- Mackey's map has been saved, but not before Golmon at the Crematorium made a copy. He sells the information to every pirate in the city, but the map is incomplete and in code. It'll take legwork and cunning to make sense of it; it points the way to Black Dog's Caves, where further clues to the hoard can be found. Can the PCs get to the Caves first—and survive the dangers still lurking in the ruins of the buried Temple of Yig?

- Now that they have the complete map, the PCs know the treasure is buried on an island not far from the Serpent's Teeth—but getting there means running a gauntlet of rival pirates and ships. To survive, the PCs and their crew need to sail like they've never sailed before—or to ally with one of those rivals for protection.

- The PCs reach the island, but it's not there! It sank beneath the waves a century ago, and the treasure is at the bottom of the ocean. The heroes are stymied unless they can find a way to reach the seafloor. The Lobstermen have an experimental submersible vehicle that will do the job—and it was just stolen by a rival pirate crew, who hope to reach the treasure first.

- Whether they've claimed the submersible or found another way to reach the seafloor, the PCs are ready to dive to the Sunken Island. But the trip to the bottom of the reef will not be easy, for the sea devils of the Serpent's Teeth have occupied the area, and they *don't* like intruders.

- At long last, the PCs reach the sunken island, and find a buried treasure house still filled with breathable air. It's a miracle—but not a pleasant one. Francisco's lost hoard is protected by mundane and magical traps, and the treasure cache plays home to an evil spirit that the sea devils wish to free, a servant of their lord Lotan—and to finally gain their treasure, the PCs must defeat a monster beyond human imagining!

Fear and Loathing

The rivalry between Finn and Mister Wednesday has been slowly escalating for years. Now it has reached the boiling point, and the cold war in Freeport's underworld turns red hot. The battleground is Dreaming Street, Scurvytown's vice district. The prize is control over the prostitution and drug industries in the city. The weapons are swords, spells, treachery—and possibly the PCs.

This thread gets PCs involved with the seamy underbelly of Freeport, and is well suited for characters who are thieves or criminals working for one of the crime lords. It can also work well for shady characters that aren't affiliated with either Finn or Wednesday, but find themselves forced to pick a side in order to survive. It can even be tweaked for non-criminal characters, drawn against their will into a world of vice and corruption.

- There's a new player on Dreaming Street—Bully Hardaport of the Canting Crew, here to represent Mister Wednesday's interests. Hardaport is recruiting followers and allies from unaffiliated criminals on the Street, while working to take the lion's share of the drugs that come in through the Docks. The PCs might work with him to corner the market, or do their best to keep the newcomer out of their business.

- After some initial, quiet conflicts, the stakes are getting higher. Hardaport wants to secure the drug business, and that means bringing the Longshoremen's Union and the Docks under the Crew's wing. His allies are sent to amass blackmail information on the Harbormaster or to kidnap Emaya Passos, while Finn sends Hellhounds to cripple the Crew's operation at the Block and Tackle.

On Stranger Tides

Freeport is an exotic city full of mysteries and secrets, but it's still a more-or-less normal place for all that, a city more mundane than magical. However, that's something you can change for your campaign if you like. With some (admittedly major) tweaks, you can turn Freeport into a phantasmagorical, high-fantasy locale, a place not found on any everyday map or atlas. Here are three possible Freeports to base a campaign around; let your imagination guide you to other ideas!



Islands in the Sky

When the Serpent God Yig died, his bones were too holy to fall to earth, but instead float high above the ground. On these divine remains of the god humans have built the aerial city of Freeport, home to sky pirates and cloud reavers, who pilot their magical airships and prey upon the soaring traders of the Wind Nations.

The Plane of Pirates

The Unspeakable One destroyed the world, but Freeport survived, thrown into its own pocket dimension by reality shockwaves. Now it survives as a waystation for planar travelers and reality sailors, its docks jutting out into the Sea of Gates and Portals, and every freebooter of the Black Dimensions pays it a visit when reality raiding.

Sailing the Dream Sea

Freeport isn't a place, it's an *idea*—one that comes to life every night. Spun into existence from dreams and fancies, it's a city of ephemera and portents, built from bits of imagination. Sleepers from our world walk the streets, forsaking their mundane day lives for nocturnal adventure, until the alarm clock—or the Unspeakable Nightmare—jolts them awake.

- Once blood has been spilled, there's no going back, and the enforcers of the Canting Crew and the Syndicate begin openly targeting each other. During the chaos, Lady Jane and her allies try to take out Hardaport and Trask of the Syndicate; in retaliation, both Finn and Wednesday send assassins after the vicemasters of Dreaming Street.

- Lady Jane's forces invade the Mouth of Hell, evicting Pine and his employees, using the old church as a hiding place from her enemies. In desperation, Jane unleashes a demon that was bound into the church by the Inquisition. The demon rampages through the burning streets of Scurvytown while Syndicate and Crew agents attempt to infiltrate the casino.

- Now that black magic has arrived on the scene, all bets are off, and outside forces look to capitalize on the terror. Mendor Maeorgan and the Rakeshames launch an assault on Wednesday and Finn, and the violence in Scurvytown spills out into the surrounding districts. The Captains' Council intervenes—but one or more members are in the pocket of the crime lords, and their efforts only make things worse.

- As gang warfare erupts throughout Freeport, Finn and Wednesday agree to a meeting to hammer out a truce. They meet on the neutral ground of a prison Hulk, each backed up by a small team of guards. Will they betray each other? Will demons, corrupt guards, or mad cultists crash the party? Who will walk away from the rotting ship to take control of the city? The actions of the PCs will make all the difference, so they had best choose wisely.

Dredging up Secrets

Celeste d'Arran suspects a spy in the Office of Dredging's ranks, and she needs outside help to ferret out the traitor. After their skills draw her attention, Celeste hires the PCs to work as detectives, investigating crimes and mysteries throughout Freeport. If they perform well, she brings them into her confidence and sets them to find the spy—but the spy may be one step ahead of them.

This thread is all about solving mysteries—both the individual cases that crop up, and the larger mystery of finding the spy within the Office of Dredging. It's well suited to PCs that prefer thinking and talking over getting into fights (although there's action too). The adventure ideas in this thread are more about set-up than conclusion, and don't give specific villains; use the premises as starting points, then decide on which NPCs to use as the culprits.

- When a panther escapes from Fang & Claw and mauls Oskar Broadhammer, it looks like an accident—but he thinks someone's trying to kill him, and hires the PCs to investigate. The evidence leads to Tent Town, where Broadhammer's laborers worked on a shady task for one of Freeport's crime lords—and now some of those laborers are missing or dead. Someone's trying to tie up loose ends, and the PCs must work out the truth before a second attempt is made on Broadhammer's life.

- Mrs. Miggins, the Office's secret agent in Tent Town, informs Celeste d'Arran of the PCs' efforts. Wanting to test them further, she hires them to investigate discrepancies in the Admiralty's financial records. The paper trail winds from the Office of Public Records, through the Admiralty, to the Captains' Council itself, and exposes a brisk trade in forged letters of marque.

- While Celeste investigates the evidence the PCs uncovered, she has a new assignment for them. Night after night, someone is raiding the Vault and stealing from its "impregnable" storage units. If word gets out, public faith in the Vault (and the council) will suffer. The culprit? A magical stone statue stored in one vault that animates at night to break into the other units. Who owns it—and can it be stopped before it escapes with the loot?



- The city is in an uproar after the murder of the Harbormaster's assistant, but the Guard have arrested the killer—T'Giri, Libertyville's shipwright. He claims he's innocent, and Celeste believes him; she thinks this is the work of the spy she's hunting. To prove T'Giri's innocence, the PCs have to find the real killer; the key is Silas Freland, but he has an alibi—and powerful friends in the Golden Pillar Society.

- The PCs are becoming famous for their investigative prowess, and now Torsten Roth hires them for a high-profile case. The lead soprano at the Freeport Opera House has gone missing, two days before the anniversary performance of Donadrien's opera. Has she been kidnapped? Has the ghost returned? Has she run off with a pirate lover? All eyes are upon the PCs, and if they can solve the case their fame is assured.

- And then, disaster—Celeste is murdered! Or at least that's what she wants everyone to think. The truth is that the spy tried to have her killed, so she faked her own death. From hiding, she asks the PCs to uncover the truth. It's all connected to the embezzlement the PCs investigated earlier; they just have to piece together the clues and uncover the spy before the double agent destroys the Office's intelligence network—or kills the PCs.

Swords against the Brotherhood

The Brotherhood of the Yellow Sign suffered a great setback years ago with the fall of Milton Drac, but they're finally ready to make a comeback—and drag Freeport into madness and damnation. A group of cultists have discovered the Prophecy of the Three Abhorrent Idols, which says that if they can find and combine three lost stone artifacts, it will create a doorway for the Unspeakable One to enter the world. And they want the PCs to help them do it.

This action-horror thread revolves around fighting three things—cultists, monsters, and paranoia. The Brotherhood has spent years infiltrating the power structures of the city, and the PCs face betrayal from those they considered allies. And when they've had enough of questioning their friends and neighbors, they can beat up inhuman creatures in hidden temples for relief. Almost any group can get some mileage from this campaign thread, as long as the players enjoy a good fight.

- A well-trusted ally of the PCs needs help. He has uncovered evidence of a cell of cultists operating from the Marquis Moon tavern. They're up to something, and he needs the PCs to find out what. The heroes break up the cult meeting and find hints of a strange prophecy guiding the cult's activities.

- To get more information on the prophecy, the PCs need to plumb the libraries of the Freeport Institute. But the cult is there before them, and dangerous creatures roam the halls! Once they defeat the invaders, the PCs learn that the cultists are looking for three lost stone items that can be used to summon the Unspeakable One—or shut him out of this reality forever.

Three killed by "Magic Deer" Cultist in Bizarre Street Rampage

~ The Shipping News

- The race is on to collect all three stones before the cultists get them. The first is the Pelagic Effigy, currently up for bidding at the Auction House. There are many buyers interested in the Effigy, some of them known to the PCs—are they secret members of the cult? Can the PCs obtain the Effigy (honestly or not) before the cult, the Wizards' Guild, or the sea devils get hold of it?

- Next is the Jaundiced Altar, but no one knows where this artifact is hidden. Piecing together clues and searching the sewers, the PCs track it to Manor Maeorgan—on a day when the Sea Lord is visiting her degenerate cousin. Is she connected with the prophecy? Why do her guards stop the PCs from taking the altar? What will happen when the cult attacks and Mendor Maeorgan unleashes his own blasphemous powers?

- Finally, the PCs must find the Azoth Stone, an artifact lost in the dungeons of old Valossa. The Wizard's Guild has sought it for years, and the PCs fall afoul of the Starry Wisdom cult within the mage's organization. Meanwhile, a regiment of hobgoblin Redblades in thrall to the cult are racing to find the Stone. The PCs must defeat the Redblades, the horrors of the dungeons, *and* the mad wizards to get the last piece of the puzzle.

- The PCs' ally claims he can combine the Idols to hold back the Unspeakable One, with the heroes' help and a ritual performed at (where else?) Milton's Folly. But it's a trap! The PCs' friend was a member of the cult all along, and has used them to obtain the Stones for the Brotherhood! As the lighthouse erupts in treachery and black magic, the PCs must risk everything to save the world from the coming of the Unspeakable One.

Something Rotten in the State

Captain Garth Varellion wants to be Sea Lord, and he's tired of waiting for the Captains' Council to just give him the throne. He is making his play to control the city, and is prepared to play dirty. A chance encounter with a minor bureaucrat enmeshes the PCs in a web of political chicanery and double-dealing. Will they pick the winning side and reshape Freeport's political landscape—or be used and thrown aside in the machinations of the rich and powerful?

This thread focuses on politics, intrigue, and social interaction, giving characters a chance to make their mark on Freeport's power structure. It is ideal for players who enjoy complex social scheming and plotting, and has enough danger to keep more action-oriented characters busy. While designed for groups that are newcomers to Freeport, it is easy to adjust for PCs that are already involved in city politics.

- While relaxing at a tavern, the PCs meet Nobkerrie Flinders, a minor functionary at the Ministry of Fisheries. When he is mugged outside the tavern, he begs his new friends to find the thieves; they've stolen his office keys along with his gold. If the PCs chase the muggers, they find them leaving the Ministry building in the Old City, but they don't seem to have taken anything from the building.

- Nobby's glad to get his keys back, but doesn't know what the muggers were doing with them. He's got other problems—sales of spoiled fish are causing illness all over Scurvytown. Trying to defuse the situation, Mortimer Quango hires the PCs to investigate—and to deliver hush-money payments to the sufferers. It's straightforward—so why are both the Blackened Knot and the hobgoblin Redblades attacking the PCs?

- As unrest grows in Scurvytown, Varellion accuses Sea Lord Maeorgan of deliberately poisoning the citizens; investigators from the Guard have found documents at the Fisheries office directing Quango to sell bad fish to the poor. Varellion claims the Sea Lord wants to drive the poor from Scurvytown and give the district over to the orcs and hobgoblins. Riots break out, and the PCs are trapped in the midst of the action.

- Nobby confesses to the PCs that he sold information about Ministry operations to one of Varellion's agents; the muggers must have broken into the offices to *plant* false documents, not to steal them. The Sea Lord needs to know about this, but she's not available for meetings—however, both Captain Lydon and Captain Torian want to meet the PCs. Is one of them in league with Vallerion? Are the PCs walking into a trap?

- There are calls to remove the Sea Lord from power as hobgoblins and vigilantes run riot. Varellion announces that he has signed a deal with the Redblades to both stop fighting and to safeguard shipments of untainted food from the farms. In truth, Varellion has paid off the Redblades and the Blackened Knot to first cause the trouble and then call a halt, making him look like a hero. The evidence is in the Chumhouse and the Redblade Barracks, and getting it won't be easy.

- As an emergency meeting of the Captains' Council is called, the PCs need to get the evidence of Varellion's schemes to the Sea Lord. But the captain's agents will do anything to stop the PCs from attending, including threatening their loved ones. And even if the PCs can make it to the meeting, Varellion has allies in the council—thanks to his ruthless blackmailing tactics—who'll back him up, unless the PCs can convince the other Captains to expel their colleague and appoint someone else to take his place.

Appendix: Publishing History

This appendix is a guide to the previously published products of the Freeport line, organized by date of release. It shows how the Freeport line developed over the years and provides a useful resource for collectors and completists.

Death in Freeport (2000)

Author: Chris Pramas

This was the adventure that started it all. Released at GenCon 2000, *Death in Freeport* was one of only two d20 books to release the same day as the new *D&D Player's Handbook*. It was designed to provide an introductory adventure for new adventuring parties. Death in Freeport went on to win an Origins Award and the very first ENnie Award. It has been translated into French, Spanish, and Portuguese.

Terror in Freeport (2000)

Author: Robert J. Toth

This adventure was part two of the Freeport Trilogy. It continued the story started in *Death in Freeport* and featured the murder of Councilor Verlaine. He was but the first member of the Captains' Council to meet an untimely end in the course of the Freeport adventures.

Madness in Freeport (2001)

Author: William Simoni

The Freeport Trilogy concluded with this adventure. The true purpose of the lighthouse was revealed and the reign of Milton Drac ended. With the Sea Lord dead and no declared heir, however, the city was thrown into a succession crisis.

Hell in Freeport (2001)

Authors: Paul Bazakas, Jim Bishop, and Jess Lebow

Released at GenCon one year after *Death in Freeport*, this adventure was designed to tie into the *Legions of Hell* sourcebook. This time an infernal lich schemed to pull all of Freeport into Hell. At 88-pages this was the biggest Freeport adventure to date. Hell in Freeport also featured an 8-page color section.

Freeport: The City of Adventure (2002)

Authors: Jim Bishop, Matt Forbeck, Hal Mangold, and Chris Pramas

With the success of the Freeport Trilogy, it only made sense to do a dedicated sourcebook about the City of Adventure. This 160-page hardback is the precursor to the *Pirate's Guide to Freeport*, and until the latter's publication, it was the core book of the line. *Freeport: The City of Adventure* won two ENnie Awards (Best Setting Supplement and Best Cartography).

Denizens of Freeport (2003)

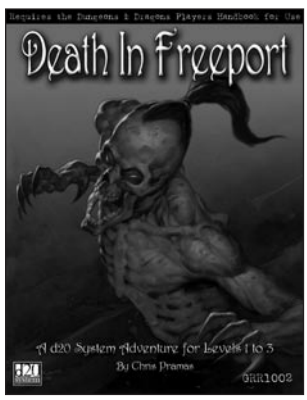
Editor: Chris Wilkes

This book was all about characters. Its 96 pages were full of NPCs from the streets of Freeport. Submissions were solicited from many freelance writers and the book features the work of 19 designers. These ranged from previous Freeport authors like Robert J. Toth and William Simoni to new blood including Patrick O'Duffy and Keith Baker. Many of these characters are included in the Pirate's Guide to Freeport, though time has sometimes changed them in unexpected ways. Denizens of Freeport was also the first book of the line graced by a Wayne Reynolds cover.

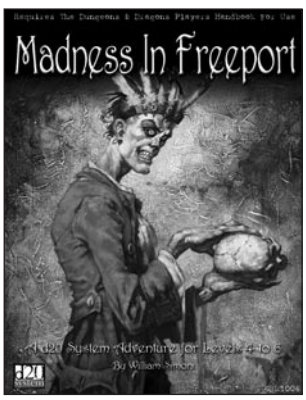
Tales of Freeport (2003)

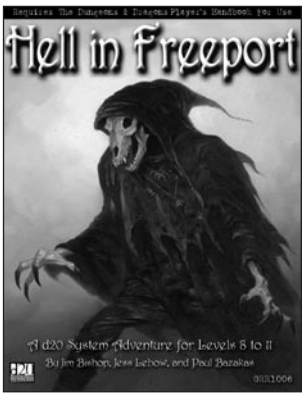
Author: Graeme Davis

Tales of Freeport was something new for the line: an adventure anthology. The book featured four adventures, a variety of plots, and two new locations. The biggest of the adventures, the Soul of the Serpent, delved deeper in the history of the serpent people.

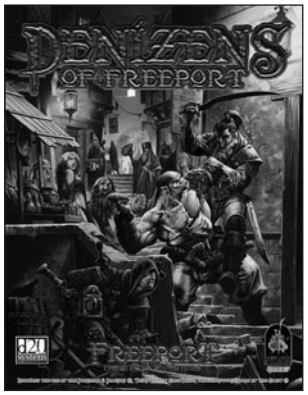




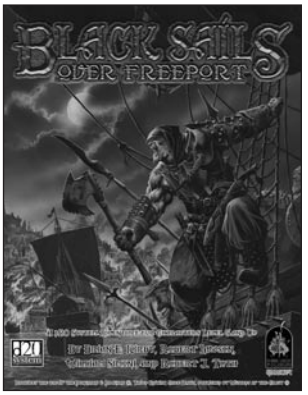












Black Sails Over Freeport (2003)

Authors: Brian E. Kirby, Robert Lawson, William Simoni, and Robert J. Toth

There had been many Freeport adventures before this one, but none so epic. *Black Sails Over Freeport* was 256 pages of swashbuckling action climaxing with the barbarian invasion of the city…and of course a giant kraken. *Black Sails Over Freeport* won an Origins Award for Best Roleplaying Adventure.

Creatures of Freeport (2004)

Authors: Keith Baker and Graeme Davis

Creatures of Freeport took a deeper look at the monsters in and around the Serpent's Teeth. It detailed only 17 creatures, but lavished a lot of attention on each one. This was the first Freeport book to use the 3.5 d20 rules.

Freeport Trilogy: 5-Year Anniversary Edition (2005)

Authors: Chris Pramas, William Simoni, and Robert J. Toth

With the original adventures out of print and the fifth anniversary of *Death in Freeport*'s release approaching, GenCon 2005 seemed the perfect time to release a revised and updated version of the Freeport Trilogy. In addition to the original adventures, this book included two short interlude adventures, *Holiday in the Sun* and *Thieves and Liars*.

Crisis in Freeport (2006)

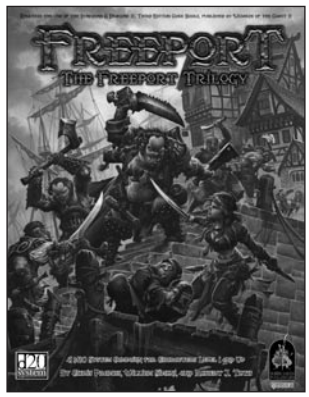
Authors: Chris Pramas, Robert J. Schwalb, and Rodney Thompson

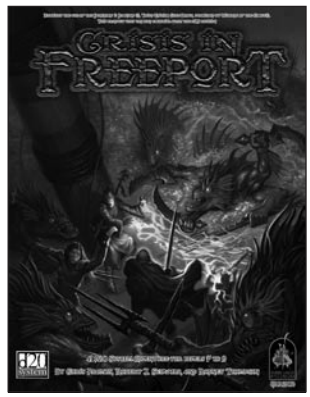
With plans underway for the *Pirate's Guide to Freeport*, it was finally time to resolve the succession crisis. This meant more bad news for various members of the Captains' Council. With the end of the adventure, Marilise Maeorgan became the new Sea Lord and the stage was set for the *Pirate's Guide*.

Odds and Ends

The preceding eleven books are the major titles of the lines, but there have been some other related releases as well. Several companies chose to include Freeport in their own campaign settings, most notably Paradigm Concepts in *Arcanis: the World of Shattered Empires*. The adventure "Dead Man's Quest" appeared in *Dungeon Magazine* #107. Goodman Games published a Dungeon Crawl Classic, *Shadows in Freeport*, set in the City of Adventure and written by Robert J. Schwalb. Ronin Arts produced *Treasures of Freeport*, a PDF collection of magical items and treasures. There have also been two PDF adventures, *Vengeance in Freeport* (published by Green Ronin) and *Gangs of Freeport* (published by Adamant Entertainment). Finally, in a superheroic twist, Freeport appears in the *Freedom City* campaign setting for Green Ronin's *Mutants & Masterminds* RPG.







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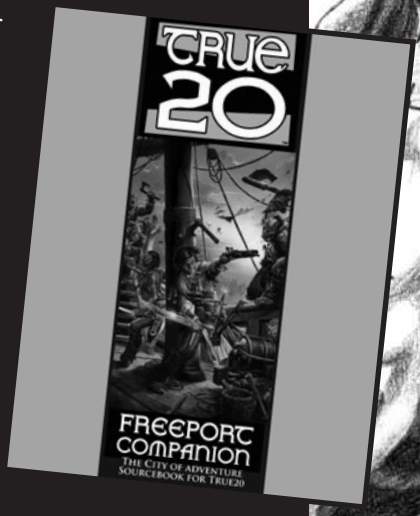
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