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VILLAGE BACKDROP: Y'TARIS 2.0





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A stone circle marks the confluence of ley lines in this bleak and broken place. Among the ancient runes and onyx pillars burn secret powers hidden by gods and men alike. But to the people of Y'taris, the stone circle is just a tourist destination for the rich. Every year, hundreds of spellcasters make the long pilgrimage to the stone circle high in the Broken Mountains. The villagers provide food, shelter, baubles and entertainment, all for exorbitant prices. Merchants bleed visitors of their gold, while pickpockets and scam artists take the rest. Y'taris is a nest of thieves. Anyone is welcome, until they run out of coin.

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Y'TARIS AT A GLANCE

Rulers: Ayred Guilespire, Girmark Flaskgut and Mulgin Kulon
Government: Secret Syndicate
Population: 189 (57 humans, 16 dwarves, 24 elves, 39 gnomes, 14 half-elves, 7 half-orcs, 32 halflings)
Alignments: LE, NE
Languages: Common, Elven, Giant, Halfling
Resources & Industry: Tourism

A stone circle marks the confluence of ley lines in this bleak and broken place. Across its storied past, Y'taris has hosted spellbinding wizards and apocalyptic cultists, angelic battles and fey outcasts, abyssal legions and eldritch incursions. Among the ancient runes and onyx pillars lurk secret messages, spells and powers hidden through ages past by gods and men alike.

But to the people of Y'taris, the stone circle is just a tourist destination for the rich. Every year, hundreds of mages and necromancers make the long pilgrimage to the stone circle high in the Broken Mountains. Between meditation and study, these spellcasters need a place to eat, relax and play. Y'taris provides it all, for exorbitant prices. Those who are unwilling to pay may find their wallets missing all the same.

Despite this, visitors are in no rush to leave. Besides the ever-elusive call of enlightenment and power, the journey back to civilisation is harrowing. Trolls and goblins infest the mountains, and rumours of cursed dwarven holdfasts abound. While Y'taris provides caravans up the mountain, escorting the rich safely over Kuldor Pass, no such escort is offered for the return.

When visitors spend their last copper, Y'taris takes the rest piece by piece, the destitute sell themselves to Onyx Hall to pay off their inevitable debts. A liver here, a spleen there, until finally they are claimed wholesale.

For there is true power in Y'taris, and it is fed by a willing horde. Necromancers seek the Pit beneath the circle, and shower the populace with riches for access. Greedy citizens are all too willing to indulge these richest guests. Where else can you sell a human body for 10 copper a pound?

This is Y'taris. Anyone is welcome, as long as they are rich.



VILLAGE LORE

A character making a Society check may know some information about Y'taris. A successful check reveals all information gained by a lesser result.

DC 15: Y'taris is ruled by a council of three merchants: one for the inns, one for the shops and one for the thieves.

DC 20: Beneath the Confluence festers a pit of dark magic and great power. Only the citizens of Y'taris know how to find it.

DC 25: The powerful lich Xthelis has taken up near permanent residence at the Pit, and the villagers provide her with a steady stream of corpses.

VILLAGERS

Appearance: The inhabitants of Y'taris are as stark as the surrounding mountains. They wax between cold annoyance and obsequious flattery, depending on if they have something to sell.

Dress: Y'tarians dress in blacks and greys, and often wear cloaks or hoods. Many do not wish to be identified when out and about, while others simply mimic the muted landscape with their choice of clothes.

Nomenclature: *male* Belzor, Garhace, Hortran, Jodak, Kaswan, Panbul; *female* Arfin, Breni, Faybyn, Idalile, Yezlyn; *family* Calziver, Greyhand, Magespire, Totix, Uriwor.

WHISPERS & RUMOURS

A character can use Diplomacy to gather information about Y'taris and its surroundings. This takes 1d4 hours and requires a DC 10 check. A character exceeding this check gains one additional rumour for each 5 points by which they exceeded DC 10. Use the table below, to determine which rumour(s) the character learns.

D6 RUMOUR	
1*	The Confluence has no true power, and is simply a means to draw visitors to the village.
2	The Onyx Hall sells corpses and human sacrifices in addition to other necromantic materials, but you have to be ready to pay—and sometimes the price is uncommonly high.
3	In ancient times, a powerful necromancer created the Pit to summon forth an undead army. Raising powerful undead, in the Pit is easy for a skilled necromancer.
4	When visitors outstay their welcome in Y'taris, and can no longer pay their bills, they are sometimes delivered to the necromancers.
5*	In the sky above the Confluence, an invisible celestial structure bestows divine power on those able to find their way inside.
6	Raven's Reach has secret passages so the staff can more easily rid the guests of their possessions. Exploring these passages is punishable by a steep fine.

*False rumour

NOTABLE LOCATIONS

Most of the village comprises peasant homes. A few locations, however, are of interest to adventurers:

1. **The Grey Market:** Filled with vendors, beggars, panhandlers and pickpockets, all magical goods can be found here (at exorbitant prices).
2. **The Confluence:** The reason mages flock to Y'taris, this stone circle intensifies magical ability and enhances arcane study.
3. **The Pit:** A conduit of necromantic power, the Pit draws powerful liches and other unsavoury spellcasters from across the world. This location lies under The Confluence and, thus, does not appear on the map.
4. **Gibbering Stone Inn:** This inn epitomises everything about a cheap tavern, except for its prices.
5. **Raven's Reach:** Raven's Reach inn provides wealthy visitors with opulence and a reason to spend far too much gold on frivolities and distractions.
6. **Griffon's Call:** This gambling hall is the third best place to lose money in Y'taris.
7. **Mage Society:** Within the Mage Society, novices pay hefty dues in hopes of arcane revelations that never come.
8. **Trading Post:** At the trading post, the merchants of Y'taris buy alchemic ingredients from travelling salesmen.
9. **Onyx Hall:** Onyx Hall, which sells necromantic goods, is perhaps the only shop in Y'taris selling it merchandise for its true worth.

NOTABLE FOLK

Most of the population are nothing more than hardworking peasants. A few, however, are of interest to adventurers:

Ayred Guilespire (location 1; LE male elf cleric 2) owns nearly all the stalls in the Grey Market. He speaks for all shops and panhandlers, ensures their prices and methods are in line, and represents their interests in council meetings. He is gaunt and impossibly pale.

Davyn Highhall (location 5; N male human wizard 1) seeks to enhance his pitiful magical ability by studying the Confluence. Instead, he is being cheated out of his entire inheritance.

Girmark Flaskgut (location 1; NE female dwarf rogue 3) teaches and organises Y'taris's pickpockets and burglars, and represents their interests in council meetings.

Mulgin Kulon (location 5; LE male gnome merchant) oversees operations at all the village's taverns, inns and gambling halls, and represents their interests in council meetings. Mulgin is a disgusting, boil-covered gnome who spits when he talks.

Stockmaster (location 9; LE male gnome cleric 6) runs Onyx Hall—Y'taris's premier provider of necromantic goods and services. Taciturn and precise, he expects the same of his customers.

Xthelis (location 3; NE female human lich) spends her time almost exclusively at the Pit, studying runes and practicing her necromancy. She showers the citizens with gold and they give her whatever she needs. She is one of the few individuals actually worthy of the Pit's fell power.



LIFE IN Y'TARIS

Y'taris is a stark, grey place. To call it corrupted would imply there is a still some good left. Y'taris is built on evil and consumed by greed. In the end, the village's only purpose is the exploitation of the rich and foolish, and the villagers work single-mindedly towards that goal.

TRADE & INDUSTRY

There is only one industry in Y'taris—tourism. Luckily, the Confluence draws wealthy tourists. They come in droves, pay handsomely for every expense and extend their stays when arcane power remains tantalisingly just out of reach.

Often these magi run out of money and must resort to crafting arcane items as payment. As a result, Y'taris has an unusually high number of magical items to keep the citizens happy. A *decanter of endless water* provides clean water for drinking and bathing. *Everburning torches* light the streets. *Elixirs of life* and *panaceas* keep the inhabitants healthy. Some traders and merchants even store their goods in *bags of holding*.

Such a preponderance of magical tools might make a better settlement into something of a utopia. But in Y'taris, these items only drive greed and a desire for more.

LAW & ORDER

There is no organised law or guard within the village. Conflicts between citizens are resolved through council meetings or violence. However, the villagers are united in pursuit of gold. They work together to rob visitors of their riches, then divide the rewards unevenly. The powerful, such as the council and other successful merchants, take the lion's share. The weak are intimidated into subservience.

There are, however, a host of archaic laws which apply to outsider, almost all of which result in a hefty fine. Brawling results in a fine. Mixing potions outdoors results in a fine. Visiting the Confluence at sunrise results in a fine, though special permits are available for a price. For the curious or sceptical, there is no rulebook available for perusal, and no government building at all. Instead, citizens impose these rules as they see fit to drain the tourists' wallets. The powerful and generous are, of course, immune to such tactics. Y'tarians know better than to provoke liches or suffer the wrath of powerful archmagi.

CUSTOMS & TRADITIONS

Faux-festivals and rites abound in Y'taris; lunar festivals, solar festivals, seasonal greetings, historical remembrances, "secret" pilgrimages, political holidays, religious customs, arcane rites and much more. Nearly every other day, the citizens of Y'taris improvise moving speeches and gather willing crowds.

It's easier to fleece sheep when the flock is gathered in prayer.

VILLAGE DRESSING

Use this table to generate the minor sights and sounds the characters experience as they move about Y'taris.

D20 DRESSING/EVENT

1	When a mugging victim calls weakly for the guard, the crowd only laughs and moves on.
2	The characters overhear a group of ne'er-do-wells planning a heist in the nearby village of Gloya's Bridge.
3	Another lunar festival? Even the preacher seems unclear about the significance of this waning gibbous moon.
4	An old blind man begs for a scrap of food. Those who help him are rewarded with an "exclusive" invite to the Mage's Society.
5	A wealthy wizard and entourage arrive in Y'taris. They shower copper pieces on the crowd as they pass, and head directly for Raven's Reach.
6	A storm of hail strikes the village, breaking windows and scattering the crowds.
7	A spellcaster goes missing from his room at night. No official investigation takes place, and the market sees a slight influx of human body parts over the next few days.
8	A pickpocket is caught, but charismatically deflects the accusations. His mark passed the test of the third eye!
9	A man carrying a large bag of onyx emerges from an alleyway. His vendor is nowhere to be seen (he has just emerged from the clandestine Onyx Hall).
10	A low moan shudders from the earth beneath the Confluence; it rises in pitch and then dies away entirely.
11	A juggler spices up his act with flaming sausages.
12	A group of ragtag bodyguards stumbles into Y'taris. They lost their charge to trolls in the final days of the journey. Luckily, they recovered his purse.
13	A golden eagle croons atop a nearby building, before it is shot for lunch.
14	A fight breaks out between shopkeepers over fair pricing—apparently one was doing it! Unless the characters intervene, both merchants suffer mortal wounds.
15	A drunk sorcerer stumbles from Gibbering Stone Inn, shooting cantrips with wild abandon.
16	A council discussion explodes into the streets. The issue: competition with the nearby village of Lanthorn for the production of magical items.
17	A cold wind brings snow from the nearby mountains.
18	A child regales his peers with the tale of the dwarves that once lived here, and the curse that befell them. If the characters listen in, he requests a 6 cp fee from each.
19	A blindfolded Mage's Guild acolyte is led through the streets in sombre procession.
20	A bard sings of the evils of Y'taris before a band of villagers pulls him down and drags him off.

THE SURROUNDING LOCALITY

Y'taris is not the tallest peak in the Broken Mountains, but it does have excellent views. Protruding over a deep glacial valley, the confluence overlooks cliffs, snowy peaks and icy ravines. From this commanding plateau, visitors can trace their harrowing journey to this most "holy" place.

Caravans start in one of the many green foothill towns: Riverwharf, Talltree, or even the masked village of Gloya's Bridge for those seeking a thrill. While far from civilisation, these brief stops are verdant utopias when compared to this stark place.

From here, the path makes its way out of the gentle forests and into the rugged hills. This was once the land of a great clan of dwarves. They plundered the range of its riches until a terrible curse drove them from their homes. Now, all that remains are empty lead and silver mines and crumbling sculptures.

The path passes near the village of Azagirn before heading along God's Bow gorge. The strange, sky-loving dwarven inhabitants sometimes act as begrudging guides, but take their leave before the mountains proper.

As the caravan climbs into the Broken Mountains, trolls become the greatest threat. They squat in caves and on cliffs, attacking any deemed too juicy a target. Nature is also against the travellers. Autumn and winter bring snowstorms. Spring brings torrential downpours. In the summer, hot winds from the lowlands scorch even the mountaintops.

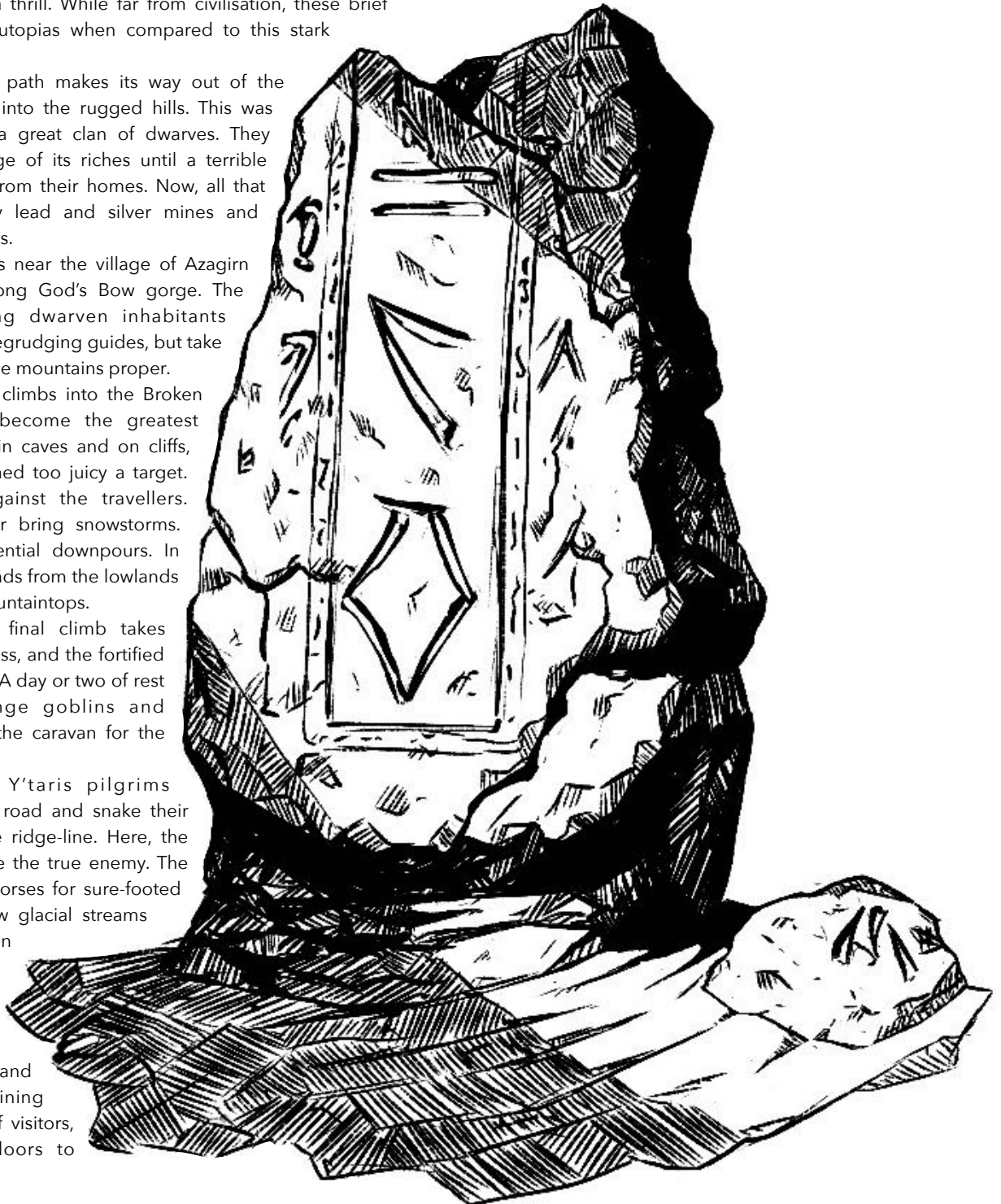
An exhausting final climb takes visitors to Kuldor Pass, and the fortified village of Lanthorn. A day or two of rest among the strange goblins and artificers prepares the caravan for the final stretch.

At Lanthorn, Y'taris pilgrims abandon the main road and snake their way east along the ridge-line. Here, the cliffs themselves are the true enemy. The group exchanges horses for sure-footed donkeys, and follow glacial streams and ancient dwarven paths.

Any respite is welcome from this treacherous hike. Silver Bluff and other desolate mining villages are wary of visitors, but open their doors to enough coin.

All in all, the journey takes the better part of two weeks. Some pilgrims go broke before even reaching Y'taris, bargaining with the caravan masters for an extra blanket or cup of soup to stave off the cold. The weak, poor or unprepared may not make their destination at all.

For all of this journey and hardship, visitors to Y'taris are rewarded with pickpockets, trinkets and the pleasure of knowing their corpses may fetch a high price.



NOTABLE LOCATIONS

1: THE GREY MARKET

The Grey Market is unusually bleak for a bustling centre of commerce. Magi and sorcerers move between the shops and stalls, comparing goods, prices and the integrity of the vendor. Everything can be found here, and everything is overpriced. Dragon blood, fairy wings, troll fingers and other ingredients all sell for far above their actual worth. Basic necessities like food, boots and weapons are equally expensive. Their increased cost is justified by woven runes, magic crystals or whatever else the merchants can say to scam gullible marks out of their money.

Anything can be purchased in the Grey Market, as long as a customer knows where to look. In the back alleys, taciturn halflings offer human eyeballs, elf ears and living pixies in jars. Merchants hide less savoury stock below trapdoors or chained up in basements. Such dark items are rare, difficult to get and perhaps the only thing in this foul place worth the price.

Crooked vendors aren't the only danger. Pickpockets and panhandlers roam the plaza, looking for easy prey. Merchants often get in on the deal, expounding verbosely as a dagger opens the customer's purse. The vendors and thieves work in tandem—distracting and filching—and split their profits accordingly.

In addition to all manner of magical trinkets and arcane ingredients sold at twice standard rates, the following magical items are for sale:

- **Potion:** *panacea* (450 gp).
- **Scroll (Divine, Occult):** *detect alignment* (4 gp).
- **Scrolls (Arcane, Divine, Occult):** *glyph of warding* (30 gp), *locate* (30 gp).
- **Wands:** *Detect magic* (60 gp), *purify food and drink* (60 gp).

Common Fines: Selling without a license (1 gp), touching wares (1 sp), haggling (1 sp).

EVENTS

Use this list, to determine what events occur while the characters are at Grey Market:

1. A tourist tries to pay for a bottle of troll dust, but realises his coin pouch is missing.
2. A shady merchant hocks artefacts from the abandoned dwarven mines near Lanthorn.
3. The phoenix feathers on sale look suspiciously like large dyed pigeon wings. The same "rare goods purveyor" is selling a selection of bird pies.
4. Two large (unconscious) trolls are brought into the market, carved up for parts, and auctioned off.
5. A tan dwarf from nearby Azagirn and her trained wolf buy potions from a local "love vendor."
6. A group of miners from nearby Silver Bluff arrives to hock wares: silver ore and shards of adamantine.

2: THE CONFLUENCE

Without the Confluence, Y'taris would not exist. Nobody knows who built this stone circle, or if it was built at all. The structure itself is impressive: thirteen jagged obsidian pillars, some up to 20 feet tall, each covered in runes from a thousand different forgotten scripts. Glowing green symbols trace ley lines running from the columns to the sacrificial slab in the ring's centre. At certain sunsets throughout the year, including the solstice and equinoxes, the runes burn and smoke with green flame.

While the Confluence was once a meditative and awe-inspiring place, it is now overrun with magical tourists seeking to enhance their skill. They come from across the realm to study the powers at work here, often boorishly and with little respect. At any given hour at least a dozen spellcasters loudly hypothesise, practice garish cantrips or carve their own arcane signets into the ancient rock. Meditation or true magical insight is impossible with these distractions.

The use of the confluence requires the payment of various license fees. These costs are not always clear, and are often collected as a fine after the fact.

Spells cast within the stone circle function as Heightened by one level if this option is listed in the spell's description. On a critical success, the spell is cast without using up a spell slot. Additional spellcasters assisting the first caster heighten the spell by one additional level (if the spell description has Heightened [+1] in its description).

Occasionally, large groups of spellcasters gather to attempt a particularly powerful ritual. These rituals provide access to higher level divination and teleportation spells unknown to any participating individual. Though the exact mechanics are not fully understood, they generally require a number of participants equal to twice the desired spell level, a number of hours equal to the spell level and some sort of sacrifice. Even with these precautions, success is not guaranteed.

- **Common Licenses:** Entering the confluence (1 gp), speaking loudly (1 sp), spellcasting (5 gp per spell level), touching the runes (1 gp), groups of five or more (5 gp), expensive material components in spellcasting (1 gp), material components bought outside of Y'taris (10 gp).

EVENTS

Use this list, to determine what events occur while the characters are at the Confluence:

1. A destitute wizard dressed in rags breaks past the guards and begins to desperately cast a spell to further his research. He's quickly dragged away.
2. A group of young students lean on a pillar, drinking and discussing their genius.
3. For a split second the Confluence erupts into searing green flame. Any creatures within the ring take 2d6 fire damage (DC 17 Reflex halves).
4. Faery lights and strange, translucent images of battle dance above the stones.

5. A wealthy sorceress offers to pay license fees for anyone willing to help her in a ritual of scrying.
6. A group of eighteen druids work for nine hours to call forth the god of nature. They fail.

3: THE PIT

The Confluence is a well-known arcane wonder, but fewer individuals are aware of the Pit. Situated deep within the caverns below the famous circle, the Pit plunges through the bleak stone into oppressive darkness. Here, the runes adorning the onyx walls smoke black and red. Partially fossilised skulls of ancient primordial beings litter the cyclopean spiralling steps. Whispers of madness echo from the darkness, and the screams of trapped spirits erode the listener's sanity.

This place writhes with arcane evil, and it attracts a certain unseemly breed of visitor—necromancers and liches, blood sorcerers and death speakers; only the foulest study in the Pit. Unlike the tourists above among the Confluence's stones, the denizens of the Pit are often powerful and sometimes even equal to the darkness they seek. They mingle with the rest of the visitors during the day, then hire citizens to lead them, torch in hand, through the underground labyrinth to the Pit. The villagers are all too-willing to oblige these masters of evil for a handful of gold and a blessing of arcane favour.

Necromantic spells cast within the stone circle function as Heightened by one level if this option is listed in the spell's description. On a critical success, the spell is cast without using up a spell slot. Additional spellcasters assisting the first caster heighten the spell by one additional level (if the spell description has Heightened [+1] in its description).

Rituals may be performed within the Pit just like the rituals of the Confluence, but they provide access to necromancy spells instead of divination or teleportation. Attempts to awaken ancient kings or dead gods are common (and sometimes successful), but rarely disturb the village above.

4: GIBBERING STONE INN

Gibbering Stone Inn is Y'taris's cheapest inn, and it shows. A thick layer of grey dust coats every surface, black tar leaks from the walls and the thin smell of sour beer permeates the rooms. Yet the inn costs more than even the most luxurious inn in a major city. After all, the guests are paying for proximity to the Confluence, not comfortable beds or clean living quarters.

- **Food & Drink:** Meal (typically soup or stew with bread) (5 sp), ale (1 sp), wine (5 sp).
- **Accommodation:** A room costs 2 gp a night, is sparsely furnished and smells of sour beer.
- **Common Fines:** Mimicking or talking poorly of the stone (5 cp), sleeping two in a bed (1 sp), waking another guest (2 sp), complaining (4 sp).

In the taproom, a rough stone about the size of a hound emits sounds not unlike the babble of a broken mind. This is the eponymous gibbering stone, an ancient relic from an experiment

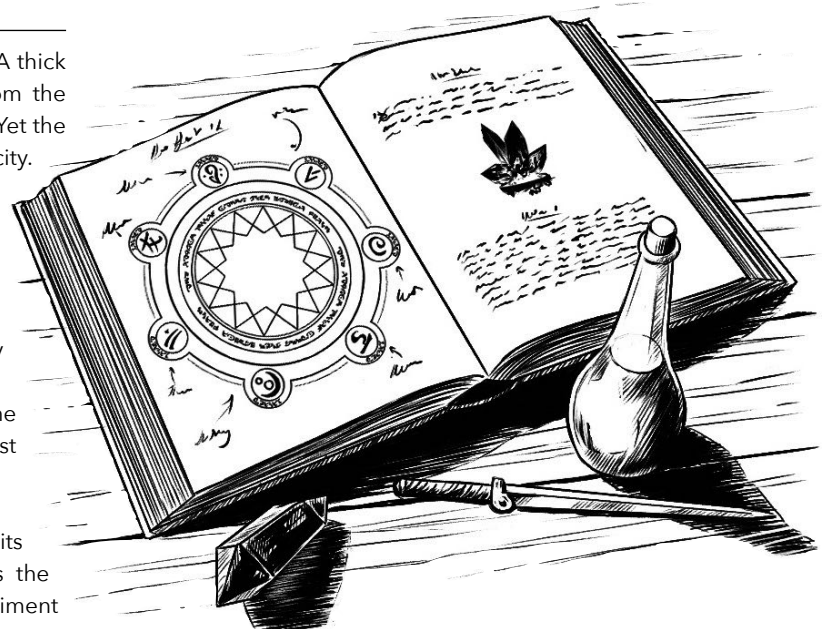
gone wrong. Angard (LE male half-orc rogue 4), the inn's proprietor, endures its ceaseless babbling while taking orders and serving drinks. He's a busy man, but still has the time to mark the wealthy, notice hidden purses and direct his staff to where guests mistakenly believe their possessions lie hidden.

5: RAVEN'S REACH

Raven's Reach is an opulent inn designed for the wealthiest of travellers. Black satin curtains cover walls and windows, and the building itself is made of rich mahogany. The effect would be far more grand if the trappings were not stained and dusty.

- **Food & Drink:** Meal (typically meat pie and vegetables) (1 sp), ale (2 sp), wine (1 gp).
- **Accommodation:** A room costs 4 gp a night and comes with a large bed, dresser and table on which to perform experiments. Alchemical equipment and arcane books are available for a price. Each room also has a secret passageway (DC 25 Perception check finds) for the staff to sneak in and out, stealing away possessions one item at a time.
- **Common Fines:** Consuming liquor not purchased at bar (4 sp), reading a book from the library (1 gp), exploring secret passages (1 gp), casting a spell (3 sp).

Mulgin Kulon (LE male gnome innkeeper) owns the Reach, but leaves most of the day-to-day work to his employees. This disgusting gnome spends his time at the bar, drinking fine liqueurs and smoking cigars. The bar is the manifestation of luxury, complete with serving girls, magic lanterns and crystal cups. Through smiling women and well-dressed competition, wealthy patrons are pressured into throwing their money away on frivolities. Once a guest runs out of money (which happens quicker than they expect), they are ejected from the inn. Whatever they leave behind becomes property of Raven's Reach.



6: GRIFFON'S CALL

After crooked merchants and clever thieves, Griffon's Call is the third best place to bleed gold in Y'taris. Apprentices and hedge mages toss dice to relieve stress after a wasted day at the Confluence. Within these stone rooms, dealers and croupiers distribute rigged cards and collect the winnings. Magic of any form is forbidden, a rule which is frequently broken and more frequently punished.

Griffon's Call stinks of sweat and beer. Weak torches discharge oily smoke into the air. Those who work the tables expertly harass their customers, provoking them into irrational spending and frustration. Brawls are a nightly occurrence, an encouraged disobedience punishable by a hefty fine.

- **Drink:** Ale (1 sp), wine (3 sp).
- **Common Fines:** Brawling (2 gp), accusing another of cheating (1 gp), using personal dice or cards (3 gp), spellcasting (3 gp).

EVENTS

Use this list, to determine what events occur while the characters are at the Griffon's Call:

1. Griffon's Call is closed to outsiders for a few hours for the weekly council meeting between Kulon, Flaskgut and Guilespire.
2. A group of adventurers drink heavily, bragging of their quest to kill Atarmajeir the elder wyrm.
3. The room goes cold as a dark figure strides to the bar and orders a drink. No payment is asked for or given.
4. A brawl breaks out between a croupier and a patron. The patron loses badly, and is summarily fined.
5. A local blatantly cheats at cards, but the staff refuses to fine him. The players are outraged.
6. A bard croons a lonely tale of loss, abandonment and searching for love in all the wrong places.

7: MAGE SOCIETY

The Mage Society is an immense waste of time. Peel away the empty rituals, obtuse rulebook and eye-watering membership fee, and all that's left is an overpriced bar and social club.

The Society entices novices with promises of arcane secrets and access to hallowed halls. Instead of power, they find an entrance fee, the rank of "Initiate," and a secret handshake. Increase the donation, perform an absurd pseudo-ritual, and the Initiate can increase his rank to "Probationer." Probationers are taught the first word in a "fantastical" rite that will, they are promised, grant incredible power. They then ascend to "Conjuror," where they must solve a simple puzzle (and pay an increased entrance fee) to proceed. Then "Scion." Then "Clairvoyant." Then "Runewatcher." Then "Arcanum."

There is no end to the intermediary ranks within the Mage Society, though with each step and increase in price the member feels closer to greatness. They are allowed to spend additional time mingling with the higher ups at the Silver Staff bar. They are

given additional words of a secret arcane phrase. They are receive an ever-widening view into the complexities of the order.

It's all a ruse. There is no way to progress to any meaningful level in the organisation because there exists no meaningful level. Most Mage Society members are not spellcasters at all—merely practiced con artists who embrace this as the most effective method to separate marks from their gold.

8: TRADING POST

Nearly two miles from Y'taris proper, the small wooden structure of the trading post overlooks the road. This is the only place in the village where trading is done fair and square. Traders come from across the land, bringing spider venom, phoenix feathers and hundreds of alchemical goods. Corpses and other unsavoury items are not uncommon. Here, the Y'tarians pay honest rates for high quality material, either trading in gold or magically crafted items. They double these prices at the Grey Market.

Once the cargo is unloaded, it is covered in tarps or placed in mundane wooden crates. Then vendors use horses or donkeys to cart the merchandise up to Y'taris. It is crucial to keep the traders and the tourists far apart, out of sight and out of mind. If the spellcasters were allowed to purchase directly from the traders, the economy of Y'taris would be irreparably damaged.

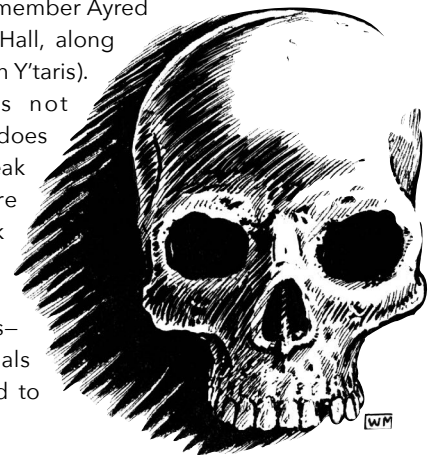
9: ONYX HALL

Onyx Hall is situated far from Grey Market, down a dismal alleyway and behind an unmarked door. Interested customers are met with gruff responses, but if they can show enough gold they are invited inside. The shop floor is small and almost completely barren—all merchandise is kept in a locked room in the back. A one-eyed gnome, who goes by the name "Stockmaster" (LE male gnome cleric 6), stands behind the counter. He expects his patrons to have specific needs, order specific products, pay with precise coinage and leave before they cause trouble.

Onyx Hall provides goods and services for necromancers and the undead. Its primary resource is onyx, but shadow-laden ingredients and corpses are also popular items. Stockmaster asks no questions as to the use of such items. Why bother? He knows the answer, and as long as it doesn't disrupt trade in Y'taris there's no need for concern.

If Onyx Hall values its secrecy, it is not for any fear of legal retribution (the council member Ayred Guilespire owns Onyx Hall, along with most of the shops in Y'taris).

No, Onyx Hall does not advertise because it does not want to attract weak spellcasters and mere dabblers in the dark arts. It seeks only the most powerful and wealthy necromancers—the types of individuals who would be annoyed to wait for service.



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