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CITY BACKDROP:
LANGUARD





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CITY BACKDROP: LANGUARD

Storied Languard—capital of Ashlar and its greatest city—stands hard against Hard Bay’s turbulent, stormy waters. To the north lies the Mottled Spire’s brooding spray-drenched mass, the curse-haunted ruins of Greystone and Gloamhold’s doom-wreathed halls. Ashlar’s greatest—indeed only—city, Languard is a noisy, dirty place. Here, amid broad, muddy streets teeming with life and shadow-mantled, danger-filled alleyways there is little beneath the sun that cannot be had somewhere—for a price.

Few Languardians overly concern themselves with the brooding terrors lurking within Gloamhold’s halls, but for others, the legendary, benighted ruin draws them to Languard as a moth to a flame. For within Languard’s stout walls live, plot and scheme a surprising number of adventurers, freebooters and mercenaries all lured here by the treasures said to lie but a scant few miles to the north.

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SYSTEM NEUTRAL EDITION

Welcome to this Raging Swan Press System Neutral Edition Village Backdrop. Herein you’ll find evocative, inspiring text designed to help you—the busy GM—run better, quicker and easier games.

This book is compatible with most fantasy roleplaying games. It’s impossible to create a truly system neutral book, though, and some generic game terms—wizard, fighter, human, elf and so on—lurk within. These generic terms are easily modified to the GM’s system of choice.

One special note about the NPCs in this supplement. While some are wizards, fighters, clerics and so on, others are simply normal folk. Because different game systems handle normal folk differently we’ve made no attempt to note their “class” leaving them simply as “female human” and so on.

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LANGUARD AT A GLANCE

Ruler: Duke Armas Nenonen

Government: Overlord

Population: 7,923 (6,614 humans, 287 dwarves, 189 elves, 236 half-elves, 264 half-orcs, 189 halflings, 144 gnomes)

Notable Folk: Atro Ahokas (leader of the Worshipful Company of Freetraders), Elmo Rekunen (First Protector), Hannele Auvuenen (High Priestess of Conn), Heimo Karppanen (High Priest of Abarin), Marja Pasanen (Chancellor), Taneli Eronen (Serat's Stormlord), Taneli Laitnen (Guildmaster of the Shadow Masks), Varma Nikkonen (Lady Protector [of Darlen]), Veli Nikkonen (Captain of the Watch)

Alignments: LN, N, NG

Languages: Common

Resources & Industry: Fishing, commerce, general industry

Languard is a busy, noisy place. The administrative and mercantile heart of the Duchy of Ashlar it is, however, also a place of fear and gradual decay.

Sprawling over a series of rocky bluffs, and heavily fortified, the town defends Hard Bay's narrow mouth and the settlements beyond. Many adventurers, sell-swords and mercenaries come to Languard. The closest settlement of note to Gloamhold, and the duchy's largest port, here are found the greatest opportunities for fame, gold and advancement. Here also (for the unlucky or careless) are found the greatest opportunities for infamy, poverty and death.

LIE OF THE LAND

Visitors approaching Languard likely first spy the towers and battlements of Castle Languard towering above the city. Then, the spires and lofty roofs of various churches and abbeys come into view along with the city's impressive defences.

From each of Languard's gates, a broad and muddy street leads into the city. The finest houses and inns flank these roads. Here, wealthy merchants live above their shops, sea captains rest when not voyaging and other rich folk—members of the clergy, adventurers (both retired and still active) and so on—enjoy life.

Narrower roads lead away from these bustling thoroughfares; along these, the houses are narrower, taller and in worse repair. From these streets, a warren of alleys and tiny lanes radiate away; here the poorest citizens live cheek to jowl. Perpetual gloom cloaks these alleys—the jetties of the ramshackle houses almost meeting those of the house opposite high above the street. Called the Shambles by visitors and locals alike, much not available in the nicer (and safer) parts of the city is on offer here. Respectable folk rarely visit the Shambles.

There are worse places to live, though, than the Shambles. Where the dilapidated houses run down toward the Svart's southern bank, the Shambles becomes the Fishshambles. Here among the tangled, reeking labyrinth of narrow, tenebrous alleys dwell many of the fisherfolk and other ne'er-do-wells. However, the basest folk—the degenerate and debased Takolen—dwell in the Wrecks, a swath of waterfront dominated by rotting wharves and fetid, half-sunken boats. The whole forms a confused mishmash of homes, warehouses, whorehouses, taverns and other unsavoury businesses. A cancerous darkness lurks within the Takolen's hearts; one day it might ooze forth to draw Languard and its folk into darkness.

CITY LORE

A PC may know something about Languard, its history and surrounds. Determine how knowledgeable the PCs are and then impart some (or all) of the information below:

- Capital of the Duchy of Ashlar, Languard is its largest and wealthiest settlement. It is also the nearest settlement of note to Gloamhold's doom-shrouded halls.
- Languard is the oldest human settlement in Ashlar, founded almost 500 years ago by the first duke. Castle Languard is the city's oldest structure.
- Caves and caverns honeycomb the rock beneath Castle Languard; some run all the way down into High City.

INHABITANTS

Appearance: Languardians are a fair-skinned folk. Brown or sandy coloured hair and brown or hazel eyes predominate. Facial hair is worn mainly by the lower classes—being clean shaven (for men) or sporting elaborate and impractical, hairstyles (for women) are the marks of breeding, class and wealth.

Dress: Woollen tunics and breeches, along with heavy woollen cloaks in the winter, predominate. Clothes worn by the wealthy are of finer quality and more colourful.

Nomenclature: *male* Armas, Einar, Jani, Onni, Taisto, Veijo; *female* Aila, Elina, Kaari, Laina, Saini; *family* Ahokas, Eskola, Korpela, Ojanen, Rintala, Varala.

WHISPERS & RUMOURS

While in Languard, a PC may hear one or more rumours. The PC can learn this information in several ways: perhaps by overhearing two locals gossiping, chatting with regulars over a few drinks at the local taverns and so on. Use the table below, to determine which rumours the PC learns.

D%	RUMOUR
01-02	The winter storms this year will be worse than normal. My sister saw it in a dream!
03-04	Hooded and cloaked figures have been seen in the Wrecks vicinity even more than normal. The Takolen are up to something!
05-06	The priests at the Great Forge recently took delivery of a small quantity of adamantine.
07-08	One of the bodies hanging from Traitor's Gate disappeared overnight! Did someone steal it for their own nefarious purposes or did the remains escape under their own power?
09-10*	More bodies than normal have been fished from the Svart recently; some are horribly mutilated.
11-12	Thievery is on the rise. Some say the Shadow Masks seek something hidden in the town; others suggest a new thieves' guild is rising to challenge their hegemony over Languard's underworld.
13-14	A body was found in the Shambles last night. Worryingly, both its eyes were gouged out.
15-16	The duke is getting increasingly angry about the lawlessness of the Shambles.
17-18*	Have you noticed dark clouds seem to hang over the Mottled Spire more than usual recently?
19-20	Lights have been moving among Greystone's cursed ruins in the dead of the night.
21-22*	There's been a murder at the Watcher's Spire. The clergy are trying to cover it up.
23-24	Mira Karpannen is trying to form a band of heroes to search the Mottled Spire.
25-26	The Bloody Eagle is a Shadow Mask front.
27-28	Strange goings on have again been reported on Vonya's Span. The dwarf's drunken spirit has awoken from its stupor.
29-30*	Someone snuck into the Father's Hall last night and daubed one of the statues with red paint! The priests are furious.
31-32	A mad old beggar is spreading insane stories of great, dripping tentacles rising from the Svart.
33-34	Dricolen Nimblefinger is a terrible singer, but beloved by the Scythe's regulars.
35-36	If you need a sailor willing to take you across the bay, go to the Shambles and ask for Vesa Ukkola.
37-38	Panu Lankinen is one the watchmen assigned to Low Gate; he's the person to see if you don't want your baggage inspected too carefully.
39-40	Raisa's Curios is one of the best places to find a bargain or strange, one-of-a-kind objects.

41-42*	Raisa Ojanen—proprietor of Raisa's Curios—is in the Shadow Mask's pay.
43-44	Several of the buildings on Water Lane in the Fishshambles are in danger of imminent collapse.
45-46	All Ashlar's noble families have homes in High City; their houses make rich picking for brave thieves.
47-48	The Takolen of the Wrecks are a foul folk. Some worship blasphemous, elder powers of foul aspect.
49-50	High Priestess Hannele Auvuenen is so beloved by the Father she can return the dead to life!
51-52*	Vonya's Span is in poor condition and needs repair, but no one wants to pay for the works.
53-54	Family Pasanen own, and collect fees from, High Market. They are almost as wealthy as the duke.
55-56	At night, the darkness around Gloamhold's ruins is almost palpable.
57-58	Don't go to Ashford plague still lurks there.
59-60	Smuggler bands are again operating from Rivengate's lower levels.
61-62*	Duke Nenonen wants to re-establish Greystone.
63-64	Packs of wild dogs have been attacking lone travellers on the Great South Road.
65-66*	Strange shapes have been seen moving in the water down by the Fane of the Waves Eternal.
67-68*	The Mistress of the Spires is gravely ill.
69-70*	Secret passages run from under Castle Languard to all over High City.
71-72	Urmis Aalto is a crotchety old sod, but few people are more knowledgeable about Gloamhold.
73-74*	The guards at River Gate are easily bribed.
75-76	Low Market is a den of thievery.
77-78	All manner of fine and expensive goods can be had in High Market, if you have the requisite coin.
79-80	Wisps of red smoke have been seen over the Shambles on the first day of every month this year.
81-82	Last week, all the beggars disappeared from Low Market. Two days later, they were back!
83-84*	Duke Nenonen hates the colour red. He's planning to ban it from the city
85-86*	The Boar's Head tavern serves dog meat.
87-88	A great treasure was found and then lost in the depths of the Murkwater.
89-90	Aea Isin has been missing in Gloamhold for a year.
91-92*	Duke Nenonen is thinking of raising taxes
93-94	One of the oaks standing on Abbey Road is home to a hedonistic dryad. She sometimes goes about the city in disguise seeking a lover.
95-96	Sometimes the bric-a-brac sellers in Low Market accidentally sell magical items of wondrous power.
97-98	A sea witch lives in the Fishshambles.
99-100	A great doom is gathering in Gloamhold; soon it will spill forth to consume all of Ashlar!
* (?)	

*False rumour

NOTABLE LOCATIONS AT A GLANCE

Most of Languard comprises homes or businesses. A few locations, however, are of interest to adventurers. Such locales are tagged on the map with a letter followed by a number. The letter portion of each tag identifies either the part of the city in which the location can be found (L, S, F, W, H) or the location's type (G, T). Thus:

- **F:** A location in the Fishshambles.
- **G:** One of Languard's gate.
- **H:** A location in High City.
- **L:** A location in Low City.
- **S:** A location in the Shambles.
- **T:** One of Languard's temples.
- **W:** A location in the Wrecks.

LOW CITY LOCATIONS

G1 Low Gate: Low Gate is always busy, choked with a multitude of carts piled high with trade goods.

G3 Traitor's Gate: "Decorated" with the remains of traitors to the crown, Traitor's Gate is well named.

L1 Low Market: A bustling market fills this muddy space.

L2 Vonya's Span: Of dwarven craft—and reputedly haunted—Vonya's Span is the only bridge spanning the Svart.

L3 The Scythe: The one-legged Arvo Outila runs this drinking den renown for live music.

T1 Fane of the Waves Eternal: Here Serat's worshippers commune with the ocean's eternal glory.

FISHSHAMBLES LOCATIONS

F1 The House of Sighs: Seeking shelter in this almshouse is little better than living on the streets.

F2 The Drunken Sailor: A popular dockside tavern.

SHAMBLES LOCATIONS

S1 Raisa's Curios: Idle adventurers often come here to browse the eclectic range of goods on offer.

S2 The Bloody Eagle: A seemingly destitute merchants runs this tavern, which is a Shadow Mask front.

WRECKS LOCATIONS

W1 Duranki's: The Duranki family will ferry (unwary, too-trusting) adventurers to Gloamhold, for a fee.

W2 The Fallen Maid: Here dwells one of Ashlar's pre-eminent assassins.

HIGH CITY LOCATIONS

G2 River Gate: These two towers oversee all river traffic.

G4 Duke's Gate: The least-used of Languard's gates. Only those traveling northwards use this gate.

H1 Castle Languard: Family Nenonen's seat.

H2 High Market: Those with a taste for the finer things in life come to High Market.

H3 Urmas' House: The aged sage Urmas—one of Ashlar's greatest authorities on Gloamhold—dwells here.

H4 The Dreaming Spires: Ashlar's centre of learning, the library here is only matched by that held at the Black Tower.

T2 The Father's Hall: A cathedral dedicated to Conn's worship and the centre of his faith in Ashlar.

T3 The Great Forge: A clamour of noise and smoke perpetually rises above Abarin's temple-forge.

T4 Watcher's Spire: Darlen's followers dwell in this fortified temple.

LOCATIONS BY CATEGORY

Fortifications: Duke's Gate (G4), Low Gate (G1), River Gate (G2), Traitor's Gate (G3), H1 Castle Languard (H1)

Homes: Urmas' House (H3)

Inns: Bloody Eagle, the (S2)

Places of Learning: Dreaming Spires, the (H4)

Shops & Markets: High Market (H2), Low Market (L1), Raisa's Curios (S1), Vonya's Span (L2)

Taverns: Drunken Sailor, the (F2), Scythe, the (L3)

Temples: Fane of Waves Eternal (T1); Father's Hall, the (T2); Great Forge, the (T3); Watcher's Spire (T4)

Services: Duranki's (W1); Fallen Maid, the (W2); House of Sighs, the (F1)

TAXES & TARIFFS

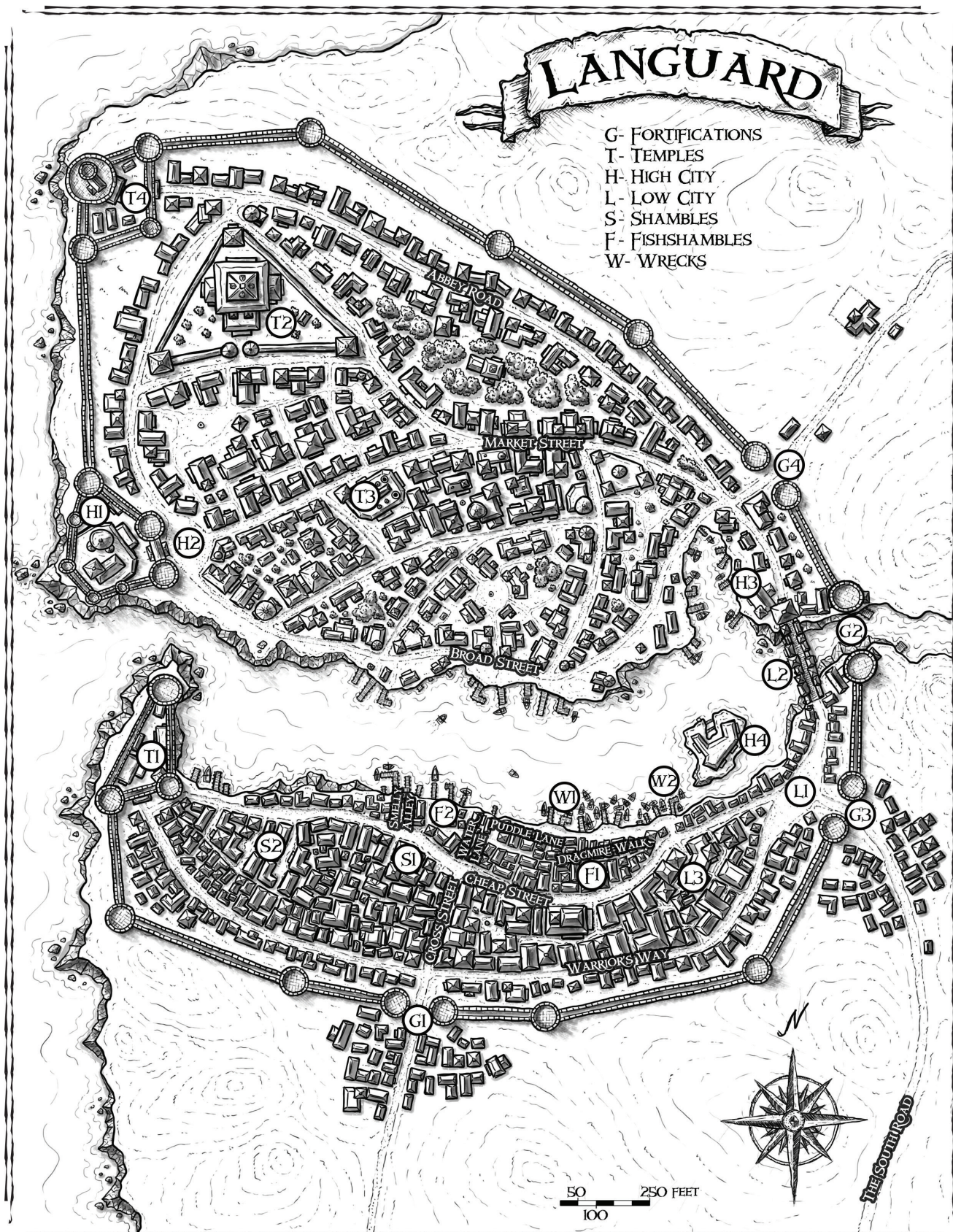
Languard's residents are subject to several taxes and tariffs. Most are no consequence to adventurers who do not own property in the city. Adventurers, however, will likely pay some or all of those listed below (unless they bribe the official levying said tariff or tax):

Cargo Tax (1%): Those entering Languard with more than their personal possessions—trade goods, loot and so on—pay this tariff.

Gate Tax (1 cp): Payable by everyone entering the city.

Horse Tax (1 sp): Levied on every mount (horse, donkey and so on) brought into the city irrespective of its size.

Sword Tax (3 gp): Payable every time an individual enters the city bearing arms. In this context, "arms" comprises any weapon longer than a dagger (with the exception of quarterstaves and any weapon such as a scythe required for a labourer's job).



LANGUARD

- G- FORTIFICATIONS
- T- TEMPLES
- H- HIGH CITY
- L- LOW CITY
- S- SHAMBLES
- F- FISHSHAMBLES
- W- WRECKS

50 100 250 FEET

THE WORSHIPFUL COMPANY OF FREETRADERS

Historically, Ashlar's nobles—led by the duke—and the priests have controlled and guided Ashlar, but this centuries-old order is being challenged by the rising merchant class. Several guilds have established themselves in Ashlar's towns, and the Worshipful Company is the most successful of these new organisations. Open to traders and merchants who practise their craft or trade regularly and who have a place of business—membership is not open to itinerant traders and the like—its influence and power grow daily as it spreads its tentacles throughout Ashlar's commercial landscape.

Unsurprisingly, the Worshipful Company has strong links to Abarin and his clergy. Many company members worship the Great Craftsman; several benefit from his divine powers. Atro Ahokas (LN male human cleric [Abarin] 2) leads the Worshipful Company. Himself a wealthy merchant he has interests throughout the duchy. His main business, however, focuses on importing fine, rare and exotic goods for Ashlar's "great and the good". Consequently, he is an influential man, and not one to lightly cross.

THE SAGACIOUS MASTERS OF THE ELDRITCH NEXUS

The pre-eminent wizard's guild extant in Ashlar, the Sagacious Masters of the Eldritch Nexus have their seat in the Black Tower—a heavily fortified, vitrified tower-complex perched on the coast to the north east of Languard. Common folk rarely visit the Black Tower; many strange rumours swirl about the wizards' home and their mysterious practises therein.

Members of the Nexus also dwell in Dulwich, Dunstone and Languard, where they often serve as magical advisers and sages to all who can afford their services.

Most wizards and their ilk belong

to the guild, or aspire to join, although a few neophyte spellcasters have found instruction with independent wizards.

In Languard, several members serve the Nenonens directly, acting as advisors on matters eldritch and sorcerous. Others dwell at the Dreaming Spires, acting as teachers and lorekeepers. Both the Master of Tomes (LN old male human magic-user 3) and Mistress of the Spires (NG old female human magic-user 6) are members of the order.

Membership of the Eldritch Nexus: For wizards, and other practitioners of the arcane arts, membership of the order is not automatic. Only those able to master the second rank of spells are eligible for membership; neophyte wizards and the like can only join the order as apprentices and must study under their master until they gain the requisite power.



DAILY LIFE

Although it is a city—and Ashlar's largest and richest settlement—living in Languard still feels like living on the frontier. Although the city has not been attacked or overtly threatened in living memory, its proximity to Gloamhold's doom-drenched halls throws a pall over its alleys and thoroughfares. The high proportion of adventurers, retired adventurers and other folk well used to magic and/or violence means the city is rarely truly peaceful.

Winter storms all but cut off the city and the duchy from the outside world. With travel by sea too perilous the populace turns inwards. Little of import or excitement is accomplished over the winter months.

FESTIVALS & TRADITIONS

The Languardians celebrate several festivals including:

Darkness Rising: On the shortest day of the year—the winter solstice—Languardians light candles and place them in their windows to ward away the coming winter darkness, and fires are kept burning bright through the night. On this day, evil's influence is seen to be strongest over the world and it is a night of wicked deeds and foul doings.

Founder's Day: Founder's Day commemorates the day the first duke, Arndul Nenonen, came ashore and established a camp on the headland upon which Languard stands.

MAGIC ITEMS FOR SALE

The following items are for sale at locations scattered throughout Languard. Locating an item takes a half-day or so and 1d6 gp in bribes, drinks and so on.

Armour +1 shield (2,500 gp), +1 scale mail (3,000 gp)

Potions *animal control* (400 gp), *climbing* (500 gp), *healing* (2; 400 gp), *invisibility* (500 gp), *sweet water* (250 gp)

Rings *protection* +2 (12,500 gp), *x-ray vision* (35,000 gp)

Scrolls (Cleric) *dispel magic* and *sticks to snakes* (2,100 gp), *sanctuary* (300 gp), *flame strike* (1,500 gp)

Scrolls (Magic-User) *comprehend languages* (300 gp), *enlarge* and *shocking grasp* (600 gp), *fireball* (900 gp), *levitate* (600 gp), *magic mouth* (600 gp), *protection from evil* (300 gp)

Rods, Staves & Wands *enemy detection* (8 charges, 800 gp), *magic missiles* (34 charges, 11,900 gp), *serpent* (28,000 gp), *smiting* (7 charges, 4,200 gp), *wonder* (38 charges, 3,800 gp)

Weapons +1 *heavy crossbow* (3,350 gp), +3 *light mace* (4,500 gp)

Wondrous Items *feather token, bird* (2,000 gp), *grey bag of tricks* (15,000 gp)

On this day, the duke and his household process through the streets to the commoners' acclaim. Family Nenonen also provide a feast for the city's commonfolk at High Market, to which all are invited. It is a day of great celebration and game playing. The revels go on late into the night. In anticipation of Founder's Day many people travel to the city; consequently, finding lodgings in the city around this time can be all but impossible.

Storms' End: Celebrated when the worst of the winter storms have abated, the exact date of Storms' End is at the whim of Serat's Stormlord (Taneli Eronen). The festival occurs on the open water and comprises a great flotilla of fishing vessels and other small craft setting sail into Hard Bay to release offerings into the water for a good season.

LAW & ORDER

Duke Armas Nenonen, through his elected officials and the city watch, holds Languard in an iron grip. However, despite his best efforts, lawlessness—particularly in the Wrecks, the Shambles and the Fishshambles—yet flourishes. A certain amount of low-level crime is—of course—inevitable, but the Shadow Masks continue to operate in the city, something which greatly vexes the duke.

TRADE & INDUSTRY

Daily life in Languard centres around the Low Market (location L1) and the sea. A great, wide-open space of mud and sparse, worn grass the marketplace hosts weekly markets. Then, small stalls and tents crowd the place as merchants and tradesmen from the nearby settlements, as well as visiting merchants and itinerant pedlars, flock here to sell their wares.

Languard's harbour hosts a multitude of small fishing boats, which set sail daily to haul in their catch to the fishmongers, inns and street vendors of the town. Despite the risks inherent in fishing Hard Bay's waters, catches are always plentiful, the water around Languard seemingly ever-teeming with fish.



FORTIFICATIONS

An aged fortress, Castle Languard (from which the city gets its name), well equipped with catapults and ballistae, defends Languard's seaward approaches and serves as Duke Nenonen's demesne. Vague, but persistent, rumours among the populace speak of a network of deep caves and caverns below the castle and of dark, terrible deeds wrought in their shadowed depths.

Formidable, 20-foot high walls encircle Languard. At three points, stout gates, flanked by 50-foot tall towers, pierce the wall. Heavily fortified and well garrisoned, they close at dusk and do not reopen again until dawn caresses the horizon.

Duke's Gate: The quietest of all Languard's Gates, the little-used road from here leads northwards to Black Tower and the dismal village of Coldwater.

Low Gate: Warding the harbour's approaches, Low Gate was built to remove as much cart and wagon traffic as possible from the narrow confines of the city.

River Gate: A misnomer, River Gate isn't a gate at all. Instead, stout watchtowers flank the Svart River where it flows into the city. Protected by a thick chain that can be raised and lowered as needed, the river is tidal and is used by the populace as a convenient place to dump much of their filth and rubbish. For those willing to get wet and cold, River Gate is the easiest way to enter Languard after dark.

Traitor's Gate: The rotting, mutilated bodies of thieves, murderers and other ne'er-do-wells hang in iron cages from Traitor's Gate. Left here as a warning—and as a stark demonstration of the duke's power and high regard for the law—they serve as a grim welcome to the town. Most visitors enter Languard through Traitor's Gate, as beyond lies the South Road which links the town with the rest of the duchy.

G1: LOW GATE

Named for its proximity to the Low City and—not ironically—its elevation, Low Gate is the least, but widest, of Languard's gates. The rich and the powerful must have a spectacularly good reason to pass through this battered, traffic-choked portal which is wide enough to fit two carts abreast.

Through Low Gate flows much of the traffic going to and from the docks via Cross Street, itself one of Languard's busiest—and for the unwary most dangerous—thoroughfares. Here the danger of being crushed beneath the wheels of a carelessly driven wagon is higher than anywhere else in the city.

Given this, Low Gate is heavily garrisoned, but the sad truth is that many of those on duty here are easily bribed, in the employ of the Shadow Masks or even fully-fledged members of the thieves' guild.

NOTABLE FOLK

- **Elina Keto, Sergeant-at-Arms** (LN female human fighter 3): Elina has chambers in Low Gate itself and oversees the day garrison. Frustrated by the rampant toll evasion she is certain goes on at the gate, she is often exhausted as she insists on watching over as many transactions as possible. Several of her subordinates hate her—their extra take-home pay suffers from her vigilance—and they plot against her.
- **Pia** (N female half-elf thief 1): One of the waifs and strays hanging around Low Gate in hopes of casual work, Pia stands to profit by dint of her heritage. With the ability to see in the dark far better than any human, she often secures work as a night-watchman for merchants forced to store their goods in one of the nearby warehouses that rent space by the day. Inherently honest, she is, however, easily distracted.
- **Teuvo Aalto** (N male human fighter 2/thief 1): Part of Low Gate's night watch, Teuvo is easily bribed to look the other way as long as no law (beyond toll or tax evasion) is broken. He is not a huge fan of authority but still believes society requires laws to function. He uses his bribes to support the operation of a small orphanage tucked away deep in the Shambles.

HOOKS

- The party approach the Low Gate laden down with loot after a successful adventure. A guard unsubtly offers to look the other way and not investigate their goods too carefully.
- As above, but if they pay a bribe, Elina Keto pounces and arrests both the party and the guard.

G2: RIVER GATE

River Gate is a bit of a misnomer—there is no actual gate at River Gate. Instead, a pair of squat watch towers command the Svart's course where it begins to widen before flowing into Hard Bay. Each of these watchtowers is heavily fortified and topped by ballistae capable of sweeping the river.

Each tower also boasts a small dock from where the garrison can intercept any vessels entering the city. Unless they are bored, or the day is slow, the men-at-arms don't usually bother with small craft—rowing boats and the like—and only meet vessels obviously bringing trade goods into the city. While vessels entering the city are subject to pay a toll, those leaving are free—literally and metaphorically—to do so. River traffic is light as the Svart is not navigable by ocean-going vessels beyond a few miles south of the city. Thus, those after an easy time seek out a posting to River Gate.

NOTABLE FOLK

- **Irina Ahokas** (NG female human): Irina has a small hut near the Svart's south bank and, for a small fee, takes individuals across the river. She is honest and does not get involved with dodgy folk. Her husband is dead, and she is raising two young teenage boys—Ossi and Uljas—on her own; consequently, her nerves are fraught, and she is perpetually in debt—her children are eating her out of house and home!
- **Revv Naviv** (N old male human thief 1): This beggar is more than a little mad. He hangs around the southern tower and mutters about the "Thing in the Water". A month ago, he swears he saw a giant glistening tentacle briefly emerge from the waters to pull down an angler. No-one else saw the attack—it was night-time—and no-one believes his tale. Still, a fisherman is missing, and parts of his shattered boat have turned up on the muddy river bank at low tide.

HOOKS

- A fisherman shouts and waves energetically from his boat in the middle of the Svart. He has snagged a badly decomposed body while fishing. The body does not look human—in fact it has scales and a fin-like protrusion growing from its head!
- The guards in the north tower are bored and feeling mischievous. When they see the party's boat approaching, they set sail to intercept. When they reach the party, they try to levy all sorts of impromptu levies and tolls. They don't push the issue if the PCs seem to have rumbled their scam.

G3: TRAITOR'S GATE

Named for the corpses—or bits of corpses—often hung from its parapets, Traitor's Gate serves as a grisly reminder of Duke Nenonen's absolute authority over his duchy. Those with nefarious intent—particularly smugglers and thieves—prefer to enter the city elsewhere.

Most people who enter Languard on foot do so through Traitor's Gate. Here the Great South Road linking the city to the duchy proper merges with the hustle and bustle of the Low Market (itself a tangled confusion of stalls, pedestrians, wagons and roving pedlars).

Two towers and a stoutly reinforced gatehouse comprise Traitor's Gate. The towers—each fifty-foot high—provide excellent views over the surrounding area and are always manned by vigilant watchers. Traitor's Gate is the busiest of Languard's gates and thus is the most heavily guarded. The guards here let the vast majority of visitors pass unmolested, once they have paid the so-called Gate Tax. Suspicious or aggressive individuals, however, face greater scrutiny and perhaps even an interview with the Sergeant of the Watch before being permitted entry.

Beggars and street urchins cluster just beyond Traitor's Gate hoping for a coin from generous travellers or to—perhaps—secure work as a guide.

NOTABLE FOLK

- **Irja** (CN young female human thief 1): Grubby and skinny, Irja lingers at the gate in the hope of securing work as a guide. She works for the Shadow Masks and marks those who might be worth mugging or robbing. Trapped in her life through a combination of poverty and misplaced loyalty to her handler she wants to flee Languard to start a new life.
- **Onni Markku** (LN middle-aged male human fighter 2): A jobsworth who delights in following the letter of the law—the more obscure law the law, the better—Onni revels in the power he has over those trying to enter the city. Onni has risen to the rank of Sergeant-at-Arms, not because of his social skills—in truth, he lacks all such skills—but through his almost unrivalled ability to raise taxes.

HOOKS

- The Sergeant of the Watch takes a dislike to a PC and subjects them to a rigorous search and interview. He has a good memory and bedevils the PC whenever they again meet. The Sergeant could be in the employ of some sinister master or could just enjoy bringing adventurers down a peg or two.
- One of the urchins working the gate is in the Shadow Masks' employ. He tries to manoeuvre the PCs to a Shadow Mask haunt where they can be thoroughly robbed.

G4: DUKE'S GATE

Named in honour of Ashlar's dukes, Duke's Gate is the least-used of Languard's gates. The road here heads northwards toward Black Tower and dismal Coldwater, and also loops around the city to eventually meet the Great South Road after fording the Svart.

NOTABLE FOLK

- **Kaari Nikkonen** (LN middle-aged female human fighter 3): Crippled in a skirmish a decade ago, Kaari commands at Duke's Gate. She is a much-trusted servant of the Nenonen's and runs Duke's Gate like a military camp. Smugglers and other ne'er-do-wells know to avoid Duke's Gate.

HOOKS

- All commoners are questioned before passing through Duke's Gate. As the PCs wait their turn, a nobleman rides passed with his entourage. Their horses splatter the PCs with mud.
- Kaari Nikkonen asks the PCs to hunt down a small bandit gang preying on travellers heading north.

MAJOR TEMPLES

T1: FANE OF THE WAVES ETERNAL

Overlooking the Svart's estuary, the Fane of the Waves Eternal is dedicated to the Mistress of Storms (Serat, CN goddess of the sea, Storms and Voyages). Here, her worshippers bathe in the daily high tides and give thanks for the sea's unending bounty.

The Fane encompasses a thin spit of land riddled with sea caves and the like jutting out into the Svart's estuary. Above ground, the faithful maintain a lighthouse and the other facilities one would expect in a temple. In the largest of the sea caves below, the faithful have several small subterranean docks exclusively for use by the temple's flotilla of vessels. Other small sea caves feature cleverly designed tidal pools for the faithful to bathe in while worshipping their mistress.

NOTABLE FOLK

Many ordinary folk can be encountered at the Fane. A few of its folk, however, are notable. They include:

- **Taneli Eronen** (N male old human druid 9) Serat's Stormlord in Ashlar, Taneli is a reclusive figure rarely seen beyond the fane's bounds. Now old and wizened, he yet leads daily services. Protective of his flock, he is growing increasingly worried about the rumours of Dagon worship reaching his ears. His mistress is opposed to Dagon and his fell worshippers, and he works subtly behind the scenes to thwart and stymie their growing influence.
- **Anafa Wildthorn** (N female half-elf druid 7) is a capricious, wild soul drawn to the ocean from an early age. She feels alive when sailing the ocean waves or exploring its depths in animal form. Increasingly drawn to Hard Bay's dangerous waters, she has started visiting several of the islands therein.

HOOKS

- PC worshippers of Serat could come to Taneli's notice after a few successful forays into Gloamhold's depths. Tales of battles against Dagon's cultists automatically pique his interest.
- If the PCs are struggling to find a sailor brave enough to take them to Gloamhold—and crucially wait for them to return from their foray—they might visit the fane in search of such a redoubtable soul.
- Anafa spots the PCs in Hard Bay and follows them in animal or fish form to see what they are doing. She could even come to their aid if they are overmatched by Hard Bay's monstrous denizens or violent weather.

T2: THE FATHER'S HALL

The most impressive of Languard's landmarks, The Father's Hall is an immense structure—perhaps the largest in all Ashlar. Standing 70-foot tall the cathedral dwarfs the finely appointed townhouses of the wealthy and the various other places of worship scattered throughout the city.

Dedicated to Conn (LN god of community, family and rulership) the cathedral serves not only as a place of worship but also as a law court. Here, the Lawgiver's priests sit in judgement upon those accused of both major and minor transgressions against the duchy's laws.

With an impressive stepped entrance dominated by carved statues of Conn in his various guises, the cathedral comprises four separate law courts arrayed around a central, cavernous hall of worship. It stands in the middle of a walled compound containing an almshouse, a prison for those awaiting trial, housing for its priests, staff and visiting pilgrims and so on. Beneath it, extensive catacombs pierce the earth. Their full extent is unknown to all but the priests who tend them but is nevertheless a matter of conjecture—not least among Languard's thieves who idly wonder what burial goods may lie interred within.

NOTABLE FOLK

Hundreds of folk live, work at and visit The Father's Hall. Most are nothing more than ordinary folk—cooks, labourers and so on. Scores of minor priests also dwell within. Some folk, however, are particularly noteworthy:

- **High Priestess Hannele Auvuinen** (LN middle-aged female human cleric 9) The ultimate arbiter of Conn's wisdom throughout Ashlar, Hannele is arguably the second most powerful individual in the duchy. She is reputed to be able to recall the worthy from Death's domain.
- **Nuluani Sehiateir** (LN female half-elf cleric 6) Nuluani has dwelled in the Father's Hall for almost 40 years. Approaching middle-age, she has seen much and has believes she would make an excellent replacement for Hannele when the time comes. To this end, she has built a network of alliances within the clergy and is politically influential both in the cathedral and the surrounding city. A skilled communicator and orator she is one of the most well-known of the Hall's clergy.
- **Teuvo Eskola** (LN middle-aged male human cleric 6) One of Conn's Arbiters, Teuvo is a stern, rigid fellow obsessed with the rule of law as written in *Law and Duty*. A traditionalist, he often clashes with the more liberal Nuluani Sehiater over punishments for wrongdoers.

T3: THE GREAT FORGE

The centre of Abarin's faith in Ashlar, the Great Forge is a buzzing hive of industry and commerce. Here, the Great Craftsman's faithful—reputedly the most skilled craftsmen and women in Ashlar—work at their forges or toil over their workbenches in search of new creations and inventions. While most such folk have a shop or workplace in the city, they congregate here to share news, stories and new techniques.

The clamour arising from the Great Forge and clouds of smoke often belching into the air make the residences near the church less salubrious and desirable than other locations on the Svart's northern bank.

An extensive network of underground storerooms lies beneath the temple. Here are stored not just the mundane engines of industry—charcoal, wood, coal and so on—but also more esoteric and valuable materials including—it is rumoured—small stocks of mithral and adamantine which they sometimes make available to particularly devout worshippers. Fiendish mechanical traps and merciless clockwork guardians protect the restricted areas (or so it is said).

NOTABLE FOLK

Scores of folk live, work at or visit the Great Forge. Some folk at the Great Forge, however, are particularly noteworthy:

- **Heimo Karppanen** (N male human cleric 6) The high priest is renowned as a skilled weaponsmith and armourer. He is also fascinated with crafting elaborate clocks. Examples of his work adorn several nobles' homes and other notable buildings such as the Dreaming Spires. His work is expensive, but sought after; consequently, there is a long waiting list for his services.
- **Janaela Vonothvar** (LN female half-elf cleric 3) Fascinated by the movement of the planets and the effects they have on the world, Janaela has constructed a giant orrery. Pale skinned—from long hours spent toiling over her mechanism—she only emerges to speak with other learned craftsmen and women or to visit the library at the Dreaming Spires.

HOOKS

- In Gloamhold, the party have encountered an unusually tough creature resistant to mundane weapons. Following rumours the church possesses a small supply of magical weapons—or weapons crafted from unusual metals—the PCs come here to purchase the weapons. Unfortunately, they are not for sale. Instead, Heimo Karppanen requests a favour.
- The party have recovered the twisted remnant of a small orrery. While trying to sell it, they hear of Janaela Vonothvar's interest (or perhaps obsession) in such objects.

T4: WATCHER'S SPIRE

The home of Darlen's faithful in Languard, the Watcher's Spire—also known as Champion's Abbey—is a heavily fortified temple complex in the north of the city. Girded by 20 ft. walls—and part of Languard's city wall in places—it is an integral part of the city's defences. Here dwell Darlen's militaristic followers, in a perpetual state of readiness.

The complex's main feature is a stout, massively fortified donjon upon which stands a slender watch tower fully 50 ft. high. From its battlemented roof, sentinels keep watch over Languard's western seaward approaches.

Much smaller than Father's Hall, the relative size of the two compounds speaks volumes as to the two sects' political power and influence. While Darlen's faithful are ever-watchful against evil's rise, they have little influence over the commoners' day-to-day life, many of whom see them as an irrelevance.

NOTABLE FOLK

Many of the folk found at the Watcher's Spire are essentially normal people. A few, however, are notable:

- **Irina Vitikka** (LG female human paladin 5): A rising star among the Darlenites, Irina is widely acknowledged as one of Darlen's greatest champions of recent years. She is particularly well travelled and knows the duchy well. Recently returned to Watcher's Spire from Tor Abbey she spends much time at prayer waiting for a sign from her divine patron.
- **Lady Protector Varma Nikkonen** (LG middle-aged female human paladin 5/cleric 3): Now grey around the temples, Varma is still a formidable warrior. She chafes at the common folk's opinion of the order and yearns for some great battle or test to prove her followers' worth. She is a skilled diplomat beloved by the common folk (even if her order is not).

HOOKS

- Darlen's faithful are ever vigilant—some might say too vigilant—against evil's rise. While they are a force for good, some can be too quick to judge and see evil where it is not.
- All too aware of the lurking aura of evil pervading Gloamhold's halls the faithful keep a particular eye on adventurers frequently plumbing its depths. Church agents may question the adventurers on their return and even preach to them to keep them safe from Gloamhold's encroaching darkness.
- The party might go to Darlen's followers for help—perhaps healing and the like—after a delve. Aid will not be without cost—even for a fellow adherent. Such payment will likely entail some form of service that keeps the party away from Gloamhold so any influence it has over them may diminish with time.

LOW CITY

The name given to the bulk of Languard sprawling to the south of the Svart, the Low City is home to most of the city's populace. Also comprising the Shambles, Fishshambles and the Wrecks, the Low City is named both for its position below the High City and for the low-born status of most of the folk dwelling therein.

LOW CITY DRESSING

Use this table to generate the minor sights and sounds the PCs experience as they explore the Low City.

D10	DRESSING/EVENT
1	A patrol of four watchmen push through the throng; several rakish men disappear into alleys.
2	A newly arrived, mud-splattered itinerant trader guides his overloaded donkey through the throng.
3	A woman carrying a basket full of vegetables and other staples walks down the street; two unruly children follow in her wake.
4	A steaming pile of horse manure lies in the mud. As the party watch, a small boy dumps it into a bucket.
5	Sounds of an argument—shouts and curses—float over the crowd.
6	A scruffy man stands on a wooden box haranguing the crowd about an unspecified encroaching doom. He is mad, but not necessarily wrong.
7	A crowd of child beggars congregates around the party. Seemingly pitiful waifs and strays, they beg for money and all have a sad tale to tell.
8	A scantily clad woman leans out of a high window and calls lewd greetings to the men walking below.
9	A man bumps into another man, knocking him to the ground. The first man helps the other to his feet before apologising. Perceptive PCs notice the first man's hand slipping into the other's pouch.
10	A skinny black and white cat stalks through the alleyway's shadows. It freezes before pouncing on something scurrying through the rubbish pushed up against the wall. Seconds later, it emerges from the rubbish a limp rat held in its mouth.

LI: LOW MARKET

Sprawling across a swath of hard-packed earth (or cloying mud depending on the season) Low Market is a hodgepodge of stalls, handcart vendors and wandering pedlars. Here Languard's unwashed masses come to browse, shop and gossip.

Unsurprisingly, thievery is rife in Low Market, and the Watch maintains a strong presence. Unfortunately, due to the sheer crush of people in the market during the day, their efforts are often sadly unsuccessful. By local ordinance, all business in the market must be concluded by dusk; thus, once night has fallen the place is seemingly empty. However, not all is as it seems for

many clandestine meetings are convened here at night; some come to drink, others are merely passing through while some tented stalls host prostitutes; others become the temporary home of beggars and outcasts.

The stalls filling the Low Market almost uniformly deal with the mundane things in life—food, drink, household wares, cheap cloth and so on. Little of actual value is sold here, except—perhaps—among the bric-a-brac stalls whereon desperate folk sell whatever they can to make ends meet. Sometimes, unbeknownst to these folk, valuable items come into their possession which they pass on for a pittance. Thus, adventurers can often be found idly browsing such stalls—stories (perhaps spread by the vendors)—are rife of lucky adventurers buying magic items here for a pittance from clueless sellers.

NOTABLE FOLK

Many people work or visit Low Market on a daily basis. Most are nothing more than ordinary folk going about their business. Others are more notable; such folk include:

- **Asta Ojanen** (N female human thief 2): Asta ostensibly sells weak wine to thirsty shoppers from the handcart she trundles through the crowds. She doesn't ply her thievish skills in the market—it's hard to make a quick getaway with a wheelbarrow. Instead, she deals in rumours, and for an extra silver, she can tell of minor events of local import. For gold, she might be able to relate other, more interesting, whispsers.
- **Riku Eerola** (LN male human): Riku has just purchased a rug for his home, but stupidly neglected to get the merchant to include delivery in the price. Thus, now dangerously low on funds, he is forced to try to carry it home on his own. The rug is long and unwieldy; his passage through the crowds presages a chorus of shouting and swearing. Riku is angry—both with himself and the merchant who sold him the rug. He's desperate for help, but can't pay anything. He can, however, introduce any PCs helping him to his sister, Armi, a skilled, but minor, wizard (NG female human magic-user 3).

HOOKS

- Low Market is a place rife with adventuring opportunities. Perhaps, a PC is pickpocketed or witnesses and intervenes in a crime. Alternatively, the PCs could purchase a fragment of a treasure map or the diary of adventurer which describes several of her delves into Gloamhold.

L2: VONYA'S SPAN

The only bridge spanning the Svart, Vonya's Span—or "the Span" as it is colloquially known—is a prominent city landmark. Comprising three great stone arches, it stands at the point the Svart widens on its journey toward the sea. It marks the spot beyond which ocean-going vessels cannot pass.

A towering gatehouse stands at its northern end, warding High City. This gate is shut, in times of crisis or danger. Typically, however, it remains open. It is always, however, protected by the City Watch who maintain a small garrison here.

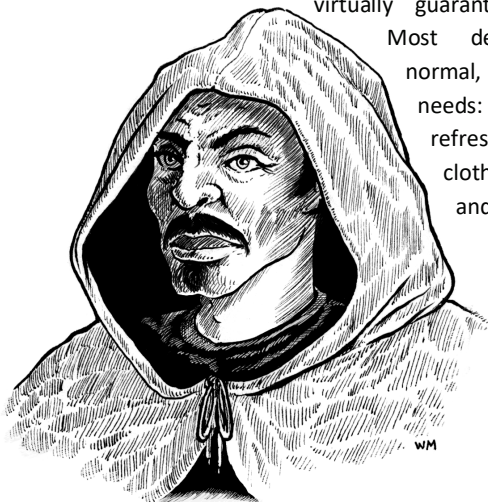
The bridge itself is 25-foot wide, but buildings cluster on both sides of the street reducing the usable carriageway to barely 15-foot wide. Housing shops at street level, and cantilevered out over the Svart for an extra ten feet to so, these buildings reach three stories or more into the air. A chokepoint, Vonya's Span is one of Languard's busiest streets. It is barely wide enough for two carts to pass side-by-side. Sometimes traffic becomes snarled here and chaos results.

Vonya's span is named for Vonya Madann—the alcoholic dwarven stonemason responsible for its construction. A companion of Arndul Nenonen—the wandering adventurer who founded Ashlar—she was as skilled as she was troubled. The bridge is of stout dwarven design and construction. Although it is over four centuries old, and one of the oldest structures in the city, it is in excellent condition. Despite this, some say the bridge is haunted by its architect's capricious shade. Vonya disappeared—tragically—one night while crossing the bridge. Local legend has it her ghost wanders the bridge on the anniversary of her disappearance—but as no-one can agree on the anniversary's actual date, any strange events on the bridge tend to get blamed on Vonya's restless spirit.

BUSINESSES ON THE SPAN

The businesses clustering on the Span are almost all uniformly successful and busy—the sheer volume of traffic on the bridge virtually guarantees this.

Most deal with normal, mundane needs: refreshments, clothes, shoes and the like.



L3: THE SCYTHE

Standing on a dingy side street, a stylised sign of an oversized scythe cutting through an ankle spurting a ridiculous amount of blood marks this semi-reputable establishment. Run by its one-legged owner Arvo Outila this inn has operated under its current name since he purchased it 15 years ago after a horrendous accident on his farm. It doesn't offer food or accommodation. This is a place to drink (copiously) and listen to music.

The tavern has a narrow frontage but extends back a surprisingly long way. Steps lead down into the common room, which is dingy and often smoke-filled. A bar runs down one wall and steps downward lead to another large room. The lower common room is popular with those who wish privacy—illicit lovers, thieves planning their next job and perhaps adventurers plotting their next quest.

The Scythe is renowned for its live performances. The upper common room has a small stage which hosts performances—some of dubious quality—most evenings. Mid-week sees the "famed" halfling bard Dricolen Nimblefinger (N male middle-aged halfling) take to the stage. Bafflingly, Dricolen has a devoted following amongst the locals; when he performs, the Scythe is packed.

TARIFF

- **Drink:** Ale (flagon) 8 cp, spiced wine (flagon) 3 sp, wine (flagon) 2 sp

NOTABLE FOLK

- **Arva Outila** (N old male human) The one-legged, long-haired owner works most nights, hopping dextrously about the place. He is friendly, but a little morose and when deep in his cups he bemoans the accident that cost him his leg.
- **Anafa Goodwater** (NG female halfling thief 2) Yet young, Anafa has already retired from adventuring. The only survivor of a disastrous expedition to Gloamhold, she blames herself for her companions' deaths. She is cheerful and light-fingered, but only pilfers a few coins from those too drunk to notice.
- **Delthur Elduum** (N male dwarf fighter 3) This immensely fat dwarf serves as the tavern's only (occasionally needed) bouncer. Typically, he is at the bar nursing a cup of spiced wine. He is surprisingly perceptive and intelligent for a dwarf and sees all that goes on.

REGULAR CUSTOMERS

Many regulars drink at the Scythe. They include Berig Many-Belly (male dwarf), Calum (male human), Danil Farwander (female halfling), Elarik Swiftwind (male elf), Hard Armbreaker (male half-orc), Garrow (male human), Parg (young female half-orc) and Skaar (male half-orc).

THE SHAMBLES

Lying exclusively to the south of the Svart, between Cheap Street and Low Gate, the Shambles is a place of narrow, twisting alleyways, tottering tenement buildings and cloying desperation. Here dwell Languard's poor in cramped, unsanitary conditions.

Most of the Shambles' dilapidated buildings are of shoddy wooden construction. Typically, three—or sometimes four—stories high, they cluster together; upper levels jut out over the alleys below giving the whole district the aspect of a gigantic sunken maze. The streets are nothing more than packed, worn earth that turns to slippery mud during heavy rainfall. To the north, Cheap Street divides the Shambles from the Fishshambles.

CHEAP STREET

Wide enough for a cart, Cheap Street is one of Languard's main thoroughfares. During the day, the street is always busy. The name of the street (unsobly) alludes to the quality and cost of goods and services available here.

The wealthiest of the Shambles' denizens—mostly those with respectable or semi-respectable jobs—dwell in the houses along Cheap Street. Some have pretensions of moving into the Low City proper. Others, cling on by their fingernails—doing whatever it takes to avoid destitution. Many of the buildings here have shops or workshops on the ground floor.

CROSS STREET

Cross Street is one of the busiest in Languard. Running from Cheap Street to Low Gate, it handles much of the traffic going to and from the docks. Also known as Carter's Way, carts and wagons are a common sight. Businesses on Cross Street cater to travellers; taverns, inns and cartwrights are particularly common here as are provisioners and suchlike.

WARRIOR'S WAY

Those who escape the Shambles but lack the funds to dwell in the nicer part of Old City, end up in the swath of buildings between Warrior's Way and the southern wall. Here the buildings are more substantial and some are even of stone. Those entering the city through Low Gate with business in the Old City—and desirous of avoiding the unique challenges and dangers of the Shambles—take Warrior's Way to reach the Low Market and Vonya's Span. While pickpockets lurk among the crowds—ready to escape back into the Shambles with their prizes—the chances of being mugged or murdered on Warrior's Way are low.

The Watch—from their barracks on Low Gate and Traitor's Gate—maintain a strong presence on Warrior's Way. They do not typically enter the Shambles, except in large numbers.

SHAMBLES DRESSING

Use this table to generate the minor sights and sounds the PCs experience as they move about the Shambles.

D10 DRESSING/EVENT

1	Two laughing children, clad in ragged clothes, chase a mud-splattered mongrel through the streets.
2	A drunk, wearing filthy clothing, staggers along.
3	A stray dog sniffs through a pile of discarded rubbish.
4	Here, the shadows are particularly deep—the buildings on either side of the alley practically touch their opposite number high above the street.
5	A weary peasant wends his way home through the murk. He carries a small sack over one shoulder.
6	A woman pours a bucket of excrement onto the street, from a high window.
7	Two men stagger along carrying a large, battered and obviously empty barrel between them.
8	A scream, followed by the brief clatter of blade on blade, echoes from a narrow and dingy side alley.
9	The mud here is particularly slippery and viscous. Examination reveals the mud to actually be a mixture of blood, mud and animal entrails.
10	Shadowy figures lurk in the mouth of a nearby alley. If the PCs obviously spot them, the lurkers slip away into the alley's deeper recesses.

THE SHADOW MASKS

Languard's pre-eminent thieves' guild, the Shadow Masks rule the city's underworld from a network of hideouts, safe houses and subterranean dens scattered through the Shambles. Led by Taneli Laitnen (LE middle-aged male human thief 9), the Shadow Masks are well organised and the scourge of the watch. Many businesses in Low City pay the Shadow Masks protection money and the guild has literally hundreds of informers among the common folk. Little occurs in the city that Taneli does not eventually learn about. The Shadow Masks do not often work in the High City; in the past operating there has brought swift retribution from the duke's personal guards.

Other notable members of the Shadow Masks include Tahlys Azariarn (CE female half-elf thief 8) widely acknowledged as the guild's most skilled burglar and deputy guild mistress, Narlen Vuolle (LE female half-orc fighter 3/thief 2) the Masks' chief enforcer and Haguk Salonen (LE male half-orc thief 8) the self-styled "Gentleman Explorer" known for his expeditions into Gloamhold's outer reaches in search of lost treasures or—if the price is right—lost adventurers.

S1: RAISA'S CURIOS

One of the best-known establishments on Cheap Street, Raisa's Curios fills the first three floors of a tottering four-storey townhouse. Known throughout the city, Raisa's Curios is one of those places adventurers often come to browse in hopes of finding something interesting or valuable among the junk and bric-a-brac.

As well as selling all manner of things, Raisa also offers money changing and pawn broker services. Rumours suggest (untruly) she has links with the Shadow Masks, and these anger her. Consequently, she is scrupulously honest in her dealings in an attempt to disprove the rumours.

She maintains a strong-vault of sorts hidden in her private quarters on the fourth floor where favoured customers can store items (for a small fee). The vault contains items left by several customers who have subsequently disappeared in Gloamhold's depths. At some point, if they remain unclaimed, they'll find their way onto the shop floor.

NOTABLE FOLK

Raisa employs a staff of three young, brawny men—Mikko, Tuukka and Viljo—to tend her busy shop; many people come here to browse her wares. Notable folk at Raisa's Curios include:

- **Mikko Leino** (LN male human fighter 1): Bearded and swarthy, Mikko often follows customers he thinks look dodgy around the shop. He thinks he is subtle; he is not. For Mikko, dodgy customers include anyone visiting the shop for the first time. And halflings—all halflings.
- **Raisa Ojanen** (NG middle-aged female human magic-user 2): Raisa was once an adventurer, but a near-death experience—coupled with the realisation she could make good money as a dealer in curios—led to her retirement. She is happy to part fools from their money but respects intelligence. Raisa likes to chat with customers and often shares stories from her adventuring days. In truth, these tales are generally other people's stories, and so their veracity is doubtful. Still, careful listeners may gain some useful nuggets of information.
- **Tuukko Takala** (N male human thief 2): Half Takolen, Tuukko hides his heritage to avoid the prejudice surrounding those dwelling in the Wrecks. Raisa has guessed the truth of his birth but has not yet confronted him. Tuukko is fiercely loyal to Raisa and does not steal from customers or the shop. Of late, though, he has begun to consider trying his hand at a spot of late-night burglary.
- **Viljo Hafelttyr** (CG male half-elf fighter 1/magic-user 1): Viljo is happy-go-lucky and irritatingly cheerful. He loves working here and has a prodigious memory of where particularly interesting items are stored.

S2: THE BLOODY EAGLE

A ship's figurehead—a rampant eagle with wings outstretched—looms over this tavern's door and casts its shadow into the muddy street. Flecked with peeling, weather-worn paint the once-proud eagle has seen better days. In many ways, it reflects the faded fortunes of the Bloody Eagle's owner, Fruen the Unlucky (CN female half-orc fighter 2/thief 3).

Once a wealthy merchant widely suspected of being a smuggler, Fruen has fallen on hard times. Both her ships lie wrecked beneath Hard Bay's storm-tossed waves, and she is all but bankrupt. All that remains of her fortune is the figurehead that gives the establishment its name and the tavern itself (which she purchased with the last of her dwindling wealth).

In truth, Fruen is not as poor as she makes out. Her business had become deeply in debt to the Shadow Masks. Hiding her wealth on an isolated island far out in Hard Bay she wrecked her vessels and hoped the Shadow Masks would forget about her. Sadly, they did not and now force her to run the Bloody Eagle—one of their many fronts in the Shambles—to pay off her debt.

TARIFF

- **Food:** Cabbage soup with bacon and bread 1 sp, pork and leek pie with fried parsnips 3 sp
- **Drink:** ale (flagon) 6 cp, wine (flagon) 2 sp
- **Accommodation:** Bed in a shared room of four 5 sp

NOTABLE FOLK

All the staff of the Bloody Eagle are in the Shadow Masks' pay.

- **Fruen the Unlucky** (CN female half-orc fighter 2/thief 3) Still clad in faded finery, the dark-haired, muscular Fruen casts a dejected figure. Although once wealthy, Fruen was a child of the streets and has many friends among the seedy clientele frequenting the Bloody Eagle. She dreams of the time when her service with the Shadow Masks is complete, and she can (secretly) reclaim her lost treasures.
- **Indyere Shortstep** (NE male halfling thief 2) Mean, vicious and moody, Indyere desperately wants to become an enforcer for the Shadow Masks and be feared throughout the underworld. Forced to work here, his plan is not going well, and he is frustrated. He thinks adventurers are idiots for going anywhere near Gloamhold and steals from them whenever possible. He's also not above a little bit of "light murder" if he can get away with it.
- Many of the regulars at the Bloody Eagle are members of, or affiliated with, the Shadow Masks. They include Cyanae Kaniateir (NE male elf thief 2/magic-user 1), Neega (NE half-orc female fighter 1), Usko "the Sly" (NE male human thief 1) and Varma Vuolle (CE female human thief 3).

THE FISHSHAMBLES

The Fishshambles sprawls along the waterfront to the north of Cheap Street. Here a tangled, reeking labyrinth of narrow, tenebrous alleys—punctuated by a few wider roads—runs down to the Svart and the network of rickety wharfs and jetties jutting from its southern bank. A few folk maintain tottering decrepit warehouses, hard against the docks; most such locations are used for nefarious activities such as smuggling. At least two are under the Shadow Masks' control.

The folk here are tough, well used to dealing with the vicissitudes of life and Hard Bay's perils. Adventurers seeking a boat and its master brave enough to sail to Gloamhold will likely eventually gravitate here.

Many of the folk and businesses in the Fishshambles—unsurprisingly—make their living from the sea. Most of the choicest fish is landed in the Old City; the folk dwelling here must make do with the cast-offs and leavings of the wealthier folk across the river.

FISHSHAMBLES DRESSING

Use this table to generate the minor sights and sounds the PCs experience as they explore the Fishshambles.

D10	DRESSING/EVENT
1	The maddeningly cloying stench of fish is particularly overpowering here.
2	A man pushes a wheelbarrow full of stinking fish. He enthusiastically tries to sell the PCs some fish. Even a cursory glance reveals the fish are passed their best.
3	A small dog tears down the alley—a fish in its mouth; behind it an angry fishmonger screams curses at the “furry thief” and threatens dire revenge.
4	Two women struggle along carrying a ragged fishing net. A huge hole pierces the net which must be repaired before it can be used again.
5	A figure swathed in a cumbersome hooded cloak move down the alley. Perceptive PCs notice the figure keeps to the shadows and seems to have something bulky concealed under the cloak.
6	A particularly swarthy and ugly man walks passed the party; he is a Takolen and pays them no mind. If the PCs engage him in conversation he curses them and leaves as quickly as possible.
7	From an upper window, two children shout cheerful greetings to the party; their calls could alert a lurking trio of muggers of rich pickings coming their way.
8	A throng of pushing and shoving commoners fills the alley; all are trying to buy some suspiciously cheap fish from a trader's handcart.
9	Deep grooves and footprints mar the muddy ground.
10	Two women loudly curse each other from buildings opposite each other across the alley.

SMELLY ALLEY

A hub for fishmongers and the like, this surprisingly wide alley reeks of fish, salt and the stench of unwashed bodies. Here, fishermen sell their daily catch from small booths while others smoke fish or bake fish pies. The freshest fish on Smelly Alley are available as soon as the daily catch has been landed. Unscrupulous fishmongers—of which there are many on Smelly Alley—have no qualms about selling fish several days old to unsuspecting (or poor) customers.

Smelly Alley can be very busy—normally after the daily catch has been landed. Other times, while the boats are at sea, it is almost deserted.

Notable businesses operating from Smelly Alley include Honest Irina's Fishmonger (a small, surprisingly clean establishment), Ossi's Fish Emporium (a grand name for little more than a dingy shopfront and small storeroom) and Sauli & Alma's (a scrupulously honest, but wildly unlucky, husband and wife team).

WATER LANE

Bounded by ruined and crumbling buildings, Water Lane is the haunt of beggars, lepers and those with nowhere else to go. No one really cares what happens on Water Lane; it is a good place to plot nefarious doings (or to dispose of a body).

THE CITY WATCH

Charged with maintaining law and order throughout the city, except within Castle Languard's walls, the watch maintains garrisons at strategic points throughout the city. Led by Veli Nikkonen (LN middle-aged male human fighter 5) the watch numbers roughly 180 individuals, although only a quarter or so of this number are on duty at any given moment.

The watch maintains a continuous presence in High City and Low City with daily and nightly patrols. Disturbances—particularly in High City—are quickly investigated.

In the Shambles and Fishshambles, however, the watch is a rare sight; here they only venture in large numbers. The watch avoids the Wrecks except in times of great need; incursions against the clannish Takolen are always well-planned and often have support from the Watcher's Spire such is the foul reputation of these degenerate folk.

Unless they are specifically expecting trouble, watch patrols normally comprise four men. Sometimes, in the Low City, the watch mounts double patrols led by an experienced sergeant. Most watchmen prefer working in the High City; here the folk are generally more pleasant, violence and robbery are rarer and the opportunity for bribery is greater.

Water Lane is low-lying and often floods. Heavy rain, unusually high tides and the savage annual winter storms regularly inundate it—and the surrounding buildings. Mud and silt fill the cellars of the houses here. Persistent rumours speak of treasures lost in several of the cellars. Occasionally, treasure hunters come here to dig; none have admitted finding anything of value. No-one voluntarily dwells on Water Lane.

PUDDLE LANE

Puddle Lane lies at the top of Water Lane. Here, when Water Lane floods the ground is merely boggy. Folk living along Puddle Lane are some of the poorest, most desperate folk in Languard.

DRAGMIRE WALK

Another low-lying part of the city, this alley is often little more than a quagmire. Here, houses—their meagre foundations eroded away—lean drunkenly against one another. The sun rarely banishes the gloom from this narrow thoroughfare. The folk living here will do almost anything for coin.

GETTING TO GLOAMHOLD

One of the first problems adventurers face when trying to explore Gloamhold is Hard Bay's turbulent waters. PCs with the requisite skills and coin could purchase their own vessel. Most, however, seek one of Fishshambles' many sailors to convey them thither. Sailors are in the main superstitious folk and fear Gloamhold and its terrors. However, those with enough coin (1 gp a day) can secure the services of a sailor brave enough to dare the journey. For extra coin, they may even return at an appointed time to collect their charges. Fisherfolk willing to dare the journey include:

Aaro Korpela (NG old male human): Aaro is a skilled sailor, but lost in dreams of his youth. He often exaggerates his own skills and prowess, which has resulted in a couple of situations he survived through luck alone.

Taneli Leino (LN male human): Taneli has a large family and is desperate for extra coin to feed his growing brood. He takes no unnecessary risks.

Usko Rintala (N middle-aged male human): Usko has sailed Hard Bay's waters for decades and knows them well. He can spend hours just staring at the water; recently, he has begun to believe the ocean is whispering secrets to him.

Laina Eronen (NG female human fighter 1): Laina once served in the Nenonen's household guard to pay off a family debt to the crown. Once the debt was paid she returned to her first love—the sea. She is a skilled sailor and an enthusiastic brawler. She has a reputation as a reliable hire and, consequently, charges double the normal rate.

F1: HOUSE OF SIGHS

This large, dilapidated building was once a warehouse and is now an almshouse. However, where once the House of Sighs was a charitable enterprise funded by local merchants it is now little more than a workhouse. People here have literally nowhere else to go. Conditions within are grim; the roof leaks, the place is overcrowded and the food is poor. In return for the dubious benefits of a bed, the "inmates" fix nets, plait rope and attend to other less wholesome tasks. Many rumours swirl about the House of Sighs and its chancellor, Nalias Boferg.

NOTABLE FOLK

- **Chancellor Nalias Boferg** (NE male dwarf fighter 5): A skilled warrior, Nalias is adept both in fighting and deception. Few realise the black depths of his heart. He cares little for his charges' health or wellbeing and only cares for profit. He is shameless, lazy and a sadist.

HOOKS

- Rumours reach the PCs ears that the House of Sighs is a front for a clandestine slaving operation. (This may well be true; certainly, inmates disappear with surprising regularity.)
- Nalias—hearing of the PCs' successful adventures—seeks the party out in hopes of securing a donation to keep the House of Sighs running. Most of any coin given ends up in his pockets.

F2: THE DRUNKEN SAILOR

A rowdy dockside tavern, the Drunken Sailor is a favoured sailors' drinking den. The crowd here ebbs and flows with the tides' ebb and flow and, surprisingly, violence and brawls here are rare. The offering is basic, but cheap—just how the clientele likes it. Run by the balding, bombastic half-elf Arlamen Evdrearn (N middle-aged male half-elf fighter 3) the Drunken Sailor is the place to meet sailors, fisherfolk and the like.

TARIFF

- **Drink:** Ale (flagon) 8 cp, wine (flagon) 2 sp
- **Food:** Fish stew (2 sp), crusty fish pie (2 sp)

NOTABLE FOLK

- **Arlamen Evdrearn** (N middle-aged male half-elf fighter 3): Well-known and respected, Arlamen is one of the best-connected folk in the Fishshambles. A retired adventurer, he has a soft-spot for those following in his footsteps. He is particularly fond of bardic tales of high adventure.

HOOKS

- The PCs hear the Drunken Sailor is a good place to meet someone willing to sail them to Gloamhold.

THE WRECKS

Where the ramshackle and slimy, sagging wharfs redolent with decay cluster thickly along the Svart's muddy, slick bank gather the ferociously independent and inbred Takolen. A singular air of ruin and decay hangs heavily over the rotting wharves and the festering, stinking boats moored alongside or grounded in the shallow water thick with silt, seaweed and jetsam.

Many of the fetid hulks moored along the crumbling docks have not put to sea in living memory. In truth, most cannot. Lashed together, the boats form a confused mishmash of homes, warehouses, whorehouses, taverns and other less pleasant businesses. Even the agents of the Shadow Masks dare not work here, but some of the braver—or perhaps more debased—souls do occasionally visit certain of these uniformly foul, unwelcoming businesses.

Perhaps numbering 200 souls, the Takolen are universally thought of as a surly, rude and violent folk. Rumours of inbreeding, the unknown fate of those venturing into the Takolen's rotting realm and strange religious practices conspire to keep outsiders at bay. Even among the unsavoury and debauched Takolen, however, the cult of Dagon—the Shadow Under the Sea—has found little purchase. Still, a few of the more deranged and morally bankrupt individuals have embraced his blasphemous teachings. Hidden deep in the part-flooded hold and bilges of the semi-sunken *Acheon* lurks the centre of his profane worship—the so-called Briny Fane—in the Wrecks.

THE WRECKS DRESSING

Use this table to generate the minor sights and sounds the PCs experience as they explore the Wrecks.

D10	DRESSING/EVENT
1	This section of ramshackle wharf is particularly odorous and slippery. Long slide marks in the muck show where others have fallen.
2	The stench of rubbish and tang of saltwater hangs heavily in the air.
3	A black-haired man stares menacingly at the party from his rowboat that bobs a dozen or so feet away from the wharf. When he locks eyes with one of the PCs, he spits into the river.

4	Flotsam and jetsam choke the water obscuring all sight of the surface; the rubbish undulates with the movement of the water.
5	A pile of stinking rubbish intertwined with a fishing net litters the ground. The pungent smell of rotting fish rises from the pile.
6	Three small grubby children of indeterminable age use long sticks to try and snag choice pieces of floating rubbish. As the PCs watch, one of the children pushes another into the water.
7	The sound of cackling followed by faint chanting in an unknown language floats through the air.
8	Mould and fungi grow thickly among the glistening seaweed draped over a nearby boat's hull.
9	Somewhere in the distance, a baby begins shrilly screaming.
10	A group of scruffy Takolen watch the party as they explore the Wrecks. They do not accost the party, but never seem that far away.

NOTABLE FOLK

Many of the folk living in the Wrecks are depraved or disfigured or both.

- **Aea Larak** (NE female human thief 4): As vicious and depraved as the most merciless assassin, nevertheless Aea has a rough moral code. She would never willingly submit to Dagon's worship and despairs of the rumours of the Shadow's influence among her people.
- **Gudea Ki-Am** (CE middle-aged male human fighter 4): Son of Samuqan, Gudea is a simple, violent man. In love with his muscles, he loves to smash those weaker than himself. Bald, he has decorated his head and face with elaborate tattoos of various mythical sea creatures.
- **Samuqan Ki-An** (NE old male human cleric [Dagon] 5): The Takolen's elderly patriarch, Samuqan is also—secretly—the High Shadow of Dagon. He slowly works to nudge the rest of his people to his fell lord's worship but knows his life is drawing to an end. He loves his son but despairs of his simple, violent and unsubtle nature. Thus, he searches for a successor.

THE TAKOLEN

Of obviously different racial stock to the majority of Ashlar's human population, most ordinary people see the Takolen as a debased, lesser—or perhaps even aberrant—strain of humanity. With grey or dark blue eyes and dark brown, jet black or occasionally red hair a profusion of wild, unkempt body hair marks them as a strange folk. Most make their living on or near the water and thus possess a fisherman's wiry build, strength and stamina. Most live in—or on the brink of—poverty, and all have an eye for a quick profit no matter the consequences to others.

W1: DURANKI'S

For adventurers seeking to explore Gloamhold's doom-drenched halls one of the first problems to present itself is how to actually get there. Sensible folk, seek out one of the braver—or more desperate—boat owners in the Fishshambles. Adventurers with a bad reputation—or who seek a sailor with no fear or few morals—often come to Duranki's.

The Duranki are a family of Takolen who make a living ferrying adventurers, explorers and smugglers to and from Gloamhold. Foul and coarse, they are not pleasant company. Ugly rumours also have them abandoning their charges to a terrible fate if circumstances warrant.

The family make their home on the remains of a once proud three-masted caravel—the *Wave Dancer*—which sunk here under mysterious circumstances long ago. A huge hole pierces the waterline and the Duranki have expanded the breach to create a sheltered boathouse of sorts. Here—away from prying eyes—they moor their two skiffs. It is a tight squeeze inside and so the Duranki have removed many of the *Wave Dancer's* internal walls (and much of the lower decks).

Almost a dozen Duranki—three generations of the family—dwell here. The family have long buried their dead in the *Wave Dancer's* bone-choked bilge (Ekur, the family patriarch, plans to animate the remains once his dark lord—Dagon—has seen fit to grant him enough power to do so).

NOTABLE FOLK

All the Duranki are skilled sailors, but Ekur or Ibi-Sin conduct most of their business with outsiders.

- **Ekur Duranki** (CE middle-aged human rogue 1/cleric [Dagon] 3): Ekur has given himself wholly over to Dagon's worship. He enjoys pushing heavily laden adventurers overboard in the middle of Hard Bay as a sacrifice to his dark lord.
- **Ibi-Sin Duranki** (NE male human fighter 2/rogue 1): Ibi-Sin is an evil man, but not a patch on his father. Driven by normal lusts—principally gold and women—he is simple, but capable of breath-taking violence (when he is certain he'll triumph).

HOOKS

- The PCs learn of the Duranki's willingness to convey adventurers to Gloamhold from another group planning their first foray across the bay. The PCs never see the other adventurers again.
- While the PCs are exploring Greystone or some other portion of Gloamhold close to the Murkwat they lose their means of escape. (Perhaps their ship sinks or the sailor they hired gets scared and flees). The Duranki offer to take them to safety for a hefty fee (and make it clear they must abandon their original employers to do so).

W2: THE FALLEN MAID

This ramshackle vessel lies at the end of a rickety dock littered with broken crab pots, shredded fishing nets and other rubbish. Even the Svart's slimy, debris-filled waters seem strangely subdued here.

Here dwells Arura Kutha, one of Ashlar's preeminent assassins. Feared by all right-minded folk, few visit Arura's lonely home. *The Fallen Maid*—a name Arura bestowed on the part-sunken vessel when she installed a lop-sided figurehead she received as payment for a job which amused her—serves as both her home and her place of business. She has two apprentices—Enmul Mari (CE male human rogue 3/fighter 1) and Utu Sirara (NE male human rogue 3)—who both constantly seek to undermine the other in pursuit of Arura's favour.

NOTABLE FOLK

- **Arura Kutha** (NE female human assassin 7): Arura goes by many names and is a master of disguise. Utterly without mercy or compassion she'll kill any non-Takolen, for the right price.
- **Enmul Mari** (CE male human fighter 1/assassin 3): A hulking brute of a man, in some ways Enmul is even more terrifying than his master. He often serves as Arura's public "face". When his lust to kill grows to strong, Enmul sneaks into the Fishshambles to kill some unsuspecting beggar or vagrant.
- **Utu Sirara** (NE male human thief 3): Where Enmul is a brute, Utu is cunning and stealth personified. A weedy, weak man he favours guile and cunning over outright violence. Utu prefers the use of poison in his work and is a good cook. He completes many of his kills in taverns and private homes.

HOOKS

- The PCs witness Enmul attack a beggar late one evening. If the PCs interrupt his "work" he flees into the Wrecks, but vows revenge. He does not rest until he has killed the beggar who escaped his attentions.
- The PCs are in a tavern when Utu slips a deadly poison into his mark's meal. The mark collapses almost immediately and dies if the PCs do not intervene. If the PCs do intervene, Utu does all he can to learn more about them. If his mark survives, he tries again when an opportunity presents itself.



HIGH CITY

Set upon the Svart's northern bank, High City rises above the stink and muck of the rest of Languard by dint of a series of bluffs rising from the river's waters. Here dwell the great and the good (or perhaps just the wealthy) of Languard.

In High City, the streets are cleaner and broader, the houses are of stone and slate, and the folk are wealthier and healthier. The concentration of so much wealth and power should attract thieves and other ne'er-do-wells. However, given the large numbers of men-at-arms, bodyguards and other armed personages serving the folk dwelling here, it is a brave, stupid or superlatively skilled burglar who works in High City.

All Ashlar's noble families maintain townhouses in High City for when family members visit the city on business (or pleasure). Such places are staffed permanently by trusted servants and a small garrison of men-at-arms to discourage theft.

ABBEY ROAD

Fringed by ancient oaks planted long ago, Abbey Road runs in the shadow of the city's north wall. It leads directly to Watcher's Spire and by local ordinance must be kept clear of rubbish, debris and stalls so that the abbey's garrison can move quickly and freely to Duke's Gate and Vonya's Span.

BROAD STREET

Running along High City's docks, Broad Street is a bustling centre of commerce for businesses grown too successful for High Market. Here, shops and workshops catering to the residents' expensive tastes crowd closely together.

MARKET STREET

Like many of Languard's streets and roads, Market Street is imaginatively named—for it leads directly to High Market. Market Street is one of the few roads in the High City where businesses may display their wares on the street. Consequently, many porches or capacious awnings shelter tables, display cases and the like crammed with items for sale. Children and apprentices work hard to lure potential buyers into examining the goods therein.

HOOKS

Although it is a relatively safe place, adventure can still be found in High City.

- As they wander High City's streets, the party (literally) bump into Jorma Outila, trusted servant of Wido Gall (the ruler of Dulwich), and his bodyguard. Jorma is imperious and demands an apology. If such is not readily forthcoming, he demands to

know their names. In the future, he revels in any opportunity to repay their slight.

- A town crier wanders the streets calling out news of import and making ducal proclamations. Chief amongst these are increasingly severe punishments for those caught stealing in High City. (This is also a good way for the PCs to hear of adventuring opportunities or rumours the GM specifically wishes them to learn.)

HIGH CITY DRESSING

Use this table to generate the minor sights and sounds the PCs experience as they move about High City.

D10 DRESSING/EVENT

1	A richly dressed woman—attended by two servants and an armed and obviously vigilant bodyguard—imperiously walks the street.
2	Two men on horseback canter along the street. The two are finely dressed, clearly in good spirits and are not paying much attention to pedestrians.
3	Two horses pull a heavily laden wagon piled high with boxes and barrels through the streets. Two children perch among the boxes and gawk at the finery of those on the street.
4	A town crier, carrying a small wooden box, walks passed on the way to set up in High Market. He carries a proclamation about several murderers and the timing of their public executions.
5	A well-dressed apprentice stops the PCs to enquire if they have need of his master's services.
6	A patrol of four watchmen casually wander along the street. It is obvious from their demeanour they don't expect any trouble.
7	A caged wagon guarded by a patrol of watchmen escort two dejected prisoners to trial at the Father's Hall.
8	Wooden scaffolding covers the front of a fine house abutting the street. Workmen swarm about the scaffolding, hard at work.
9	A man pushing a wheelbarrow totters down the street. Every now and then he stops to shovel horse manure into his barrow.
10	The sound of marching feet heralds the arrival of a detachment of the duke's personal guards. As they march down the street—everyone except the noble-born—is expected to get out of their way or be run over.

H1: CASTLE LANGUARD

The grim walls and towers of Castle Languard loom over the city like an ever-watchful guardian. The castle stands on the site of Arndul Nenonen's first fort and is the oldest continuously occupied building in the city.

The centre of Ashlar's governance, it is the most heavily fortified and protected place in the duchy. The castle has evolved over the centuries and has undergone several distinct building phases under various dukes. (Even the castle, though, is dwarfed by the Father's Hall's bulk.) The oldest part of the castle—the central keep—stands high up on the bluffs with commanding views of both Languard and the Mottled Spire.

The ancient builders also discovered a network of caves riddling the bluffs and incorporated these into the castle's original design. Thus, the castle incorporates extensive subterranean workings. Rumours abound of several long tunnels linking the castle to various buildings in the city proper. A little-visited hidden level of oubliettes and cells wherein the Nenonens' enemies languish are also said to exist. Family Nenonen's family burial crypt also lies deep under the central keep as do a well-stocked network of storage chambers and cisterns.

As well as housing the Nenonen family and their immediate servitors, the castle also protects Ashlar's royal mint and serves as an armoury and barracks for the duke's household warriors.

NOTABLE FOLK

Castle Languard houses hundreds of people. A few of the most notable include:

- **Chancellor Marja Pasanen** (LN old female human): Learned and wise, Chancellor Marja oversees the mundane, day-to-day running of the duchy. Duke Armas implicitly trusts Marja, and she has his complete confidence. They have worked together for decades, but now Marja grows old. Her mortality much troubles her, and she has begun searching for a worthy replacement.
- **Duke Armas Nenonen** (LN male half-elf fighter 4/magic-user 8): Armas has held the title of duke for almost a century. Determined to keep his people safe, he believes in the rule of law over all else. Because of this, many of his subjects see him as harsh and inflexible, and he is not beloved by many. A joyless man, duty and honour consume him.
- **First Protector Elmo Rekunen** (LN middle-aged male human fighter 7): First Protector Elmo leads and oversees house Nenonen's household warriors. A skilled warrior, Elmo is steeped in warcraft and has a reputation as being unbeatable on the field of battle.

H2: HIGH MARKET

In contrast to Low Market, High Market is well ordered and regulated. Here, stand neat rows of tented stalls ready to receive wealthy patrons who can browse freely without fear of thievery or assault.

By ancient gift, family Pasanen—a commoner family—owns the land upon which High Market stands. Consequently, although they are obliged to pay a hefty tax on their income to the ducal family, they have grown exceedingly affluent. (In fact, they may be the duchy's wealthiest commoner family). To protect their revenue, they recruit guards to patrol the market; consequently this is one of the safest places in Languard.

All manner of fine and expensive goods are for sale in High Market. Many of the city's most skilled crafters maintain stalls here, staffed by their apprentices and servants, from which to sell their merchandise and hawk their services.

NOTABLE FOLK

Many people visit or work in High Market. Some notable examples include:

- **Reima Sianio** (LN old male human fighter 2): The longest-serving guard in High Market, Reima is a beloved fixture of the place. His duties are now really honorific rather than actual, but he still wanders the aisles using his spear as a walking stick. His knowledge of the market is unrivalled, making him a useful person to know.
- **Virpi Korpela** (N female human): Virpi has ideas above her station (or so her rivals think). A clothier by trade, she has a stall in Low Market, but desperately wants to expand to High Market. When the PCs encounter her, she has just been denied a booth and is angry; she has invested much of her savings in a shipment of fine cloth and now has nowhere to sell it.

HOOKS

- The PCs witness a rare crime in High Market and intervene. The victim, Aaro Ahokas, is grateful to the PCs and could be a valuable contact for them in the future.
- The PCs are approached by a middle-aged woman, Kirsti Purho, selling a magical dagger so she can settle her husband's debts. She doesn't want to sell the blade as it is a family heirloom but feels she has no choice. She has approached the PCs because they are not part of Languard's "high society" and thus—she hopes—the transaction will stay private.

H3: URMAS' HOUSE

Overlooking the Dreaming Spires on the Isle of Scholars (or Alina's Isle to give it its ancient name) Urmas' house stands on the Svart's northern bank near Vonya's Span. The once-finely decorated three-storey town house has a faint air of dilapidation and neglect about it. Few people now visit the aged wizard and renowned sage dwelling within, and that's just how he likes it.

Ground Floor: Little-used these days, the front room is where Urmas met his friends, guests and customers. Most of his friends are now dead, however, and he hates having to take on paying work. A thin dust covers much of the room—mutely bearing witness to its lack of use.

The room is outfitted as a comfy wizard's study; strange things cluster on side tables and a dozen weighty tomes fill a sagging bookshelf. None of these things is magical or valuable; they are little more than props to augment Urmas' image as a sagacious sage and wizard.

First Floor: These rooms comprise Urmas' living quarters. They are dirty, disorganised and stuffy. Urmas doesn't care—and it shows. His children have long-since left home, and their rooms lie empty and dusty. Sadly, for Urmas, his wife is dead—cut down tragically by an out-of-control cart a decade ago. Since her death, knowledge has been his mistress.

Second Floor: Here are Urmas' library, workshop and personal sanctum. Rarely for Languard—the windows are glazed to enable natural light into the well-heated rooms. Urmas is proud of his glass windows; anyone breaking them suffers his ire; local children have learnt this the hard way and no longer throw stones at them.

NOTABLE FOLK

- **Urmas Aalto** (N old male human magic-user 4): Urmas is old and cantankerous; lust for knowledge consumes him utterly. When he was younger, Urmas made his fortune exploring Gloamhold's outer halls. His fortune now dwindles. As death creeps closer, he spends more and more time among his beloved books—he suspects he is on the verge of an important discovery about Gloamhold's ancient history, but it thus far remains maddeningly out of reach.

HOOKS

- Urmas probably won't want to deal with the PCs, but a shortage of funds may force him to take on paying customers. He is well known as a knowledgeable authority on Gloamhold, but he will exact a hefty price for his help.
- Alternatively, his studies may require a certain object which he could hire the PCs to acquire. This item lies in Gloamhold's halls—perhaps he glimpsed it on one of his long-ago delves, but could not retrieve it for some reason. Wherever possible, Urmas delays or forgets his debt to the PCs.

H4: THE DREAMING SPIRES

Languard's Dreaming Spires—or sometimes simply “the Spires”—is the duchy's greatest seat of learning and its only university. Sprawling over Alina's Isle, the Dreaming Spires stands in splendid isolation from the city's stink and clamour. It is here those desirous of learning come.

Merchants and nobles alike send their children to the Spires to learn their letters and numbers as well as many other scholarly subjects. Commoners are rarely found among the students, for their parents cannot afford the near-ruinous fees required to secure a place at the school.

The Dreaming Spires maintains an impressive library—the so-called Sequestered Hall—for use by its students and teachers. The Sagacious Masters of the Eldritch Nexus hold the only library of greater extent in Ashlar behind the Black Tower's vitrified walls. The Sequestered Hall is a hard place for outsiders to reach. A gift of a rare book or handsome donation is, however, usually enough to secure a brief perusal of its stacks.

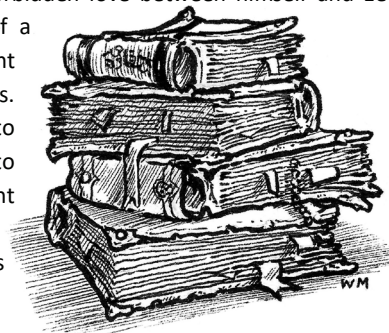
NOTABLE FOLK

Many of the folk encountered in the Dreaming Spires are nothing more than students, minor members of staff and so on. A few, however, are notable:

- **Master of Tomes** (LN old male human magic-user 3): Responsible for safeguarding the Sequestered Hall, the Master of Tomes is almost sixty years old. He oversees a small staff and cares little for anything happening beyond his small empire. In truth, he resents letting anyone into the Sequestered Hall—including the students.
- **Mistress of the Spires** (NG old female human magic-user 6): The Mistress has dedicated her life to the pursuit of knowledge. A powerful wizard, she has not left the Dreaming Spires in years. In truth, she is tired—exhausted—but a near-fanatical devotion to her duty keeps her going.

HOOKS

- Kanbrar Nuninrae (NE male half-elf thief 3) approaches the PCs. He has been hired to steal a certain book from the Sequestered Hall but knows he needs help. He lies to the PCs, spinning a tale of forbidden love between himself and Eeva Laitnen—daughter of a wealthy merchant studying in the Spires. He begs the PCs to help him break into the Spires so he might steal some tender moments with his love.



PLAYER'S GUIDE TO LANGUARD

Languard is a busy, noisy place. The administrative and mercantile heart of the Duchy of Ashlar it is, however, also a place of fear and gradual decay.

Sprawling over a series of rocky bluffs, and heavily fortified, the town defends Hard Bay's narrow mouth and the settlements beyond. Many adventurers, sell-swords and mercenaries come to Languard. The closest settlement of note to Gloamhold, and the duchy's largest port, here are found the greatest opportunities for fame, gold and advancement. Here also (for the unlucky or careless) are found the greatest opportunities for infamy, poverty and death.

Although it is a city—and Ashlar's largest and richest settlement—living in Languard still feels like living on the frontier. Although the city has not been attacked or overtly threatened in living memory, its proximity to Gloamhold's doom-drenched halls throws a pall over its alleys and thoroughfares. The high proportion of adventurers, retired adventurers and other folk well used to magic and/or violence means the city is rarely truly peaceful.

LIE OF THE LAND

From each of Languard's gates, a broad and muddy street leads into the city. The finest houses and inns flank these roads. Here, wealthy merchants live above their shops, sea captains rest when not voyaging and other rich folk—members of the clergy, adventurers (both retired and still active) and so on—enjoy life.

Narrower roads lead away from these bustling thoroughfares; along these, the houses are narrower, taller and in worse repair. From these streets, a warren of alleys and tiny lanes radiate away; here the poorest citizens live cheek to jowl. Perpetual gloom cloaks these alleys—the jetties of the ramshackle houses almost meeting those of the house opposite high above the street.

THE LOW CITY

The name given to the bulk of Languard sprawling to the south of the Svart, the Low City is home to most of the city's populace. It is named both for its position below the High City and for the low-born status of most of the folk dwelling therein.

THE SHAMBLES

Lying exclusively to the south of the Svart, between Cheap Street and Low Gate, the Shambles is a place of narrow, twisting alleyways, tottering tenement buildings and cloying desperation. Here dwell Languard's poor in cramped, unsanitary conditions.

Most of the Shambles' dilapidated buildings are of shoddy wooden construction. Typically, three—or sometimes four—

stories high, they cluster together; upper levels jut out over the alleys giving the whole district the aspect of a gigantic sunken maze. The streets are nothing more than packed, worn earth that turns to slippery mud during heavy rainfall.

THE FISHSHAMBLES

The Fishshambles sprawls along the waterfront to the north of Cheap Street. Here a tangled, reeking labyrinth of narrow, tenebrous alleys—punctuated by a few wider roads—runs down to the Svart and the network of rickety wharfs and jetties jutting from its southern bank. A few folk maintain tottering decrepit warehouses, hard against the docks; most such locations are used for nefarious activities such as smuggling. At least two are under the Shadow Marks' control.

The folk here are tough, well used to dealing with the vicissitudes of life and Hard Bay's perils. Adventurers seeking a boat and its master brave enough to sail to Gloamhold will likely eventually gravitate here.

Many of the folk and businesses in the Fishshambles make their living from the sea. Most of the choicest fish is landed in the Old City; the folk dwelling here must make do with the cast-offs and leavings of the wealthier folk across the river.

THE WRECKS

Where the ramshackle and slimy, sagging wharfs redolent with decay cluster thickly along the Svart's muddy, slick bank gather the ferociously independent and inbred Takolen. A singular air of ruin and decay hangs heavily over the rotting wharves and the festering, stinking boats moored alongside or grounded in the shallow water thick with silt, seaweed and jetsam.

Lashed together, the boats form a confused mishmash of homes, warehouses, whorehouses, taverns and other less pleasant businesses. Even the agents of the Shadow Masks dare not work here, but some of the braver—or perhaps more debased—souls do occasionally visit certain of these uniformly foul, unwelcoming businesses.

HIGH CITY

Set upon the Svart's northern bank, High City rises above the stink and muck of the rest of Languard by dint of a series of bluffs rising from the river's waters. Here dwell the great and the good (or perhaps just the wealthy) of Languard.

In High City, the streets are cleaner and broader, the houses are of stone and slate, and the folk are wealthier and healthier. The concentration of so much wealth and power should attract thieves and other ne'er-do-wells. However, given the large numbers of men-at-arms, bodyguards and other armed personages serving the folk dwelling here, it is a brave, stupid or superlatively skilled burglar who works in High City.



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