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LANGUARD LOCATIONS: BEYOND THE WALLS





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LANGUARD LOCATIONS: BEYOND THE WALLS

Storied Languard—the 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.

Languard Locations: Beyond the Walls presents twelve additional locations designed for use with City Backdrop: Languard. While the locales within are designed with Languard in mind, they are easily convertible for use in your campaign.

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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'S HINTERLAND

Languard sprawls across both banks of the Svart River, where it widens before flowing into Hard Bay's turbulent waters. It is a busy, noisy place. The city stands on the Great South Road which links it with the rest of Ashlar's towns and villages. Travellers coming down the Great South Road see the battlements and towers of Castle Languard and the splendour of Father's Hall long before the stink of the city reaches their nostrils.

The surrounding lands are mostly ordered, peaceful and civilised. Bandits rarely lurk in the city's vicinity for the duke sends forth frequent cavalry patrols from Languard all the way to the village of Wellswood just across the Tanu River. A fortified ferry and toll station controls traffic over the Tanu, further reducing bandits' opportunity to operate near Languard.

THE PLAINS

A disordered patchwork of farms, fields and small homestead spread out from the city to the south. Huge fields—segmented into scores of smaller plots—stand hard against the Great South Road. Some of these smaller fields grow corn, while others are left fallow to be grazed by cattle, sheep, goats and pigs. In less fertile, or low-lying flood prone, areas shallow ditches or low earthen walls bound meadows used for common grazing. Some more prosperous farms have a small field enclosed by a stone wall or ditch, bank or hedge; here animals are brought in the winter months to endure the season's harsh storms.

Small, carefully managed, stretches of woodland interspace the patchwork of fields and farms surrounding the city. Here, the peasants collect firewood as well as nuts, berries and other wild growing foods. Sometimes, bandits lurk in these woods, but it is a rare group that lingers longer than a few weeks or that manages to raid more than a handful of merchant caravans.

THE HILLS

The Ochels—a range of rugged, steeply-sided but round-topped hills—rises to the east of the city. In low-lying areas heavily forested the hills are only sporadically inhabited for the place's remoteness and rugged terrain makes life hard. Several hills in the range—Helvel, Snowtop and the Giant's Seat—have colourful, some would say fanciful, legends attached.

Crumbling, ancient tree-choked ruins lie hidden deep in some of the more inaccessible, wooded valleys. Rarely, travellers in the range's far eastern reaches discover tumbled piles of stones that could have once been buildings. Sometimes, such travellers discover weather worn stones decorated with maddeningly illegible remnants of glyphs and sigils of unknown, but undeniably ancient, provenance.

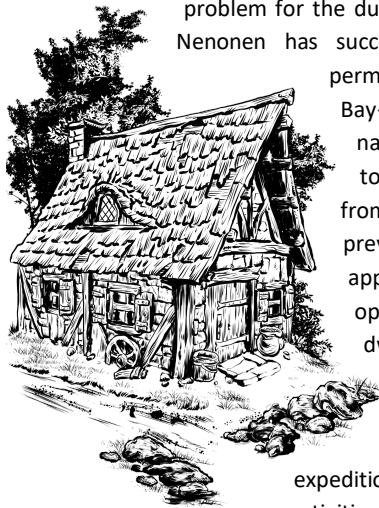
Some hardy sheep herders and the like dwell among the hills. Most such farmsteads cluster close to the Ridgeway. This seldom used track links Languard to Black Tower—home of the Sagacious Masters of the Eldritch Nexus—and the dismal village of Coldwater. From Coldwater, the track continues southwards through the tangled Briarwood to Woodridge and beyond. Few travel from Languard to the Black Tower on a whim, and fewer travel by land to Coldwater; thus for much of the year the Ridgeway is little travelled except by hunting parties riding into the hills in search of sport. In early summer, however, the Ridgeway comes alive with merchants travelling its length to buy up the farmers' supplies of freshly shorn wool.

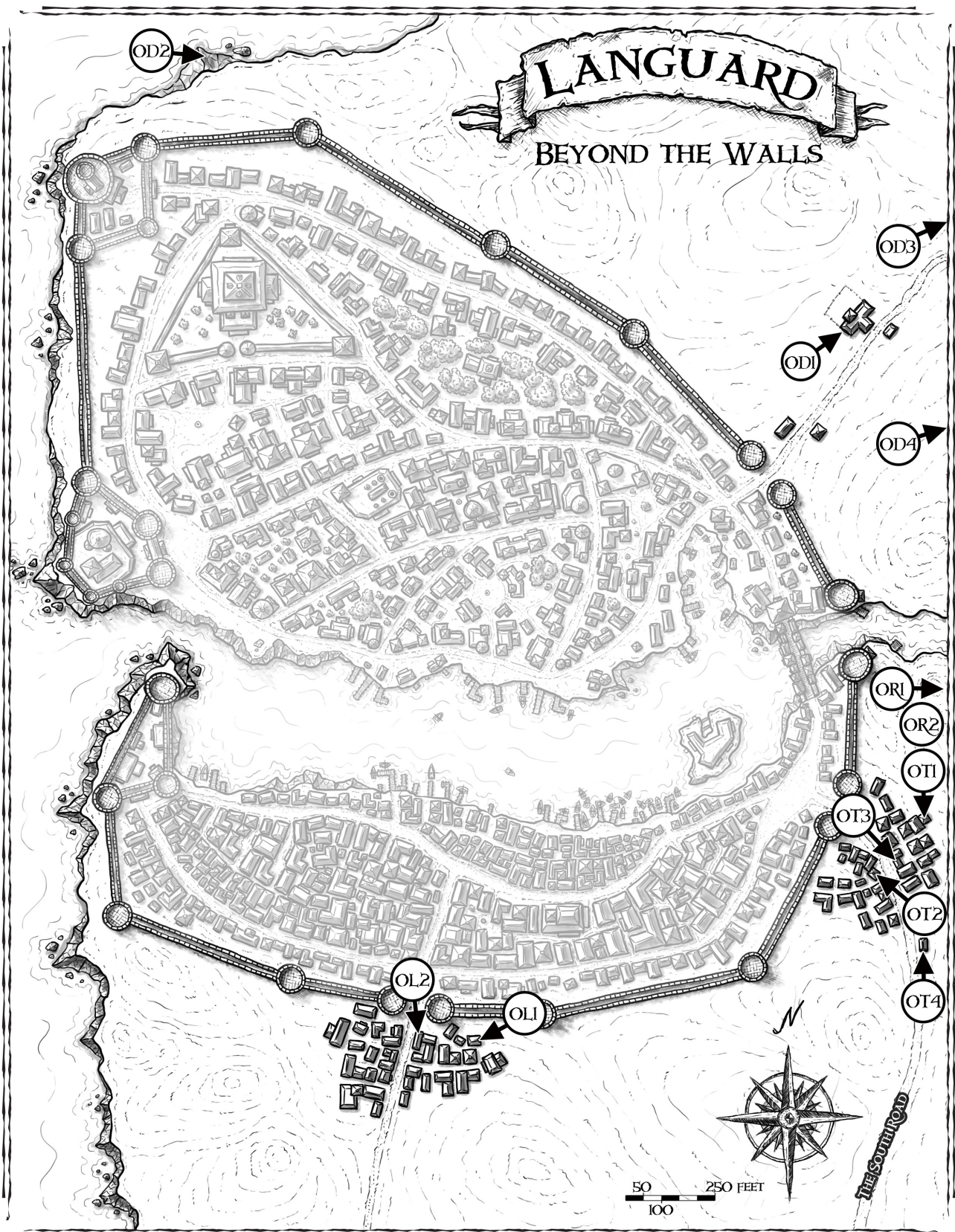
THE SEA

Languard dominates a wide peninsula of rich, fertile land separating Hard Bay from the sea; ferocious winter storms often lash the city, as a result. Two or three miles to the north west lies the Mottled Spire and Gloamhold's doom-drenched halls. Easily visible from the city, the Mottled Spire lurks on the horizons like some gloomy giant of fell mien eternally plotting the city's doom.

Much of Languard's prosperity comes from the sea. Except during the long, dark winter months Languard's docks are thick with visiting merchantmen come to trade. In many ways, Hard Bay's daily tides are like the blood coursing through Languard's stinking body. Scores of fishing vessels set sail on the ebb tide and return only when Hard Bay's turbulent waters once again flow towards the land. Much of the food consumed in Languard—particularly by the poor and lower middle classes—comes from the sea. The choicest catches go to the rich folk in High City; the leavings are sold in Fishshamble's stinking streets.

Languard has but a small navy—just three heavily armed caravels—and thus pirate and smuggling activity are a perennial problem for the duke and his officers. Family Nenonen has succeeding in destroying all permanent pirate bases in Hard Bay—the village of the same name was the last such place to fall—but pirates sailing from Deksport to the west yet prey on merchantmen as they approach Hard Bay from the open sea. Smugglers also dwell in Rivengate's lower, more accessible reaches and the duke sometimes underwrites expeditions to check their nefarious activities.





OD1: TOR'S TANNERY

The Tor family once served as Foresters to the Nenonens, but their status was reduced to that of mere tradesmen after Jarvi's grandfather was discovered taking bribes to ignore poachers. The family was allowed to keep their home and standing as freemen, but now are forced to hunt and trade for their living.

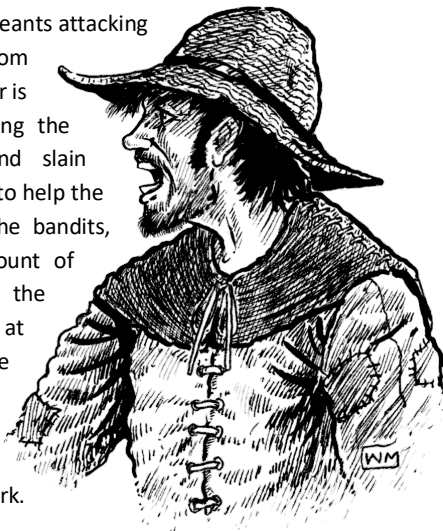
At least, that's the story told behind their backs. In reality, the Tor family was promoted to serve as Duke Nenonen's spymasters outside Languard's walls. As the duke's trusted agents, the Tor home along the road leading north from Duke's Gate is a solid redoubt with a secretly constructed basement room where the Duke and his family could escape to and hide in case of rebellion or invasion.

NOTABLE FOLK

- **Jarvi Tor** (LN male human ranger 3) is a young man with a sober, taciturn demeanour. He is a skilled and resourceful outdoorsman and is more comfortable on the road than at home. Always on the move, he becomes visibly agitated if forced to sit or stand in one place too long. He wears sturdy, well-constructed clothing, and knows the wilderness surrounding Languard as well as any mother knows her child's face. Jarvi spends much of his time ranging from Languard as far as Coldwater and Woodbridge. He keeps tabs on any threats in the wilds and brings back whatever animal hides he can for his wife to tan and sell to the leather merchants inside the walls.
- **Marita Tor** (N female human) attends to the business of the tannery while her husband is away. What her husband lacks in informal chatter, she makes up for in spades. She makes twice weekly trips into Languard to trade and to deliver news of the wilds to royal contacts in the city.

HOOKS

The PCs happen upon the aftermath of a group of miscreants attacking a delivery of fish from Coldwater. Jarvi Tor is already investigating the wrecked carts and slain horses, and offers to help the PCs track down the bandits, and get him a count of their numbers. If the PCs prove adept at dealing with the bandits, he may recommend them to the Duke for future work.



OD2: THE CHURCH OF THE BRAE WAVES

At the church of the Brae Waves, a zealous prophet marches through the churning waters proclaiming a message of repentance and damnation. To the north of Languard's walls, where collapsed cliffs provide easier access to the rough seas, a congregation gathers at high tide to hear the fiery prophet of Serat preach and offer animal sacrifice.

The young preacher hides his name referring to himself only as the Mouthpiece of the Waves. When the tide comes in, he stalks and paddles amidst the foamy water decrying the avarice of the wealthy, the ingratitude of the merchants, and the apathy of the common folk. He insists these have enraged the Mistress of Storms who will now only be placated with sacrifice. Initially seen as a loon, his day services now attract over a hundred every high tide. These faithful cram into the brae to listen to him. Sacrifices of cattle occur by anchoring them to the foreshore at low tide. The tide rolls in covering the beasts' heads, and when the tide goes out only the anchors remain. Some followers of the Mouthpiece claim to see a monstrous avatar of the Mistress of Storms takes these offerings with its tentacles and devour them. That the Mouthpiece himself remains unharmed lends credence to his prophetic claims.

Some fervent faithful have started wearing long green robes. They call themselves "Acolytes of the Mouthpiece" and they sleep on the cliffs with him at night. Rumours abound of strange midnight services featuring human sacrifice to Serat.

NOTABLE FOLK

- **Mouthpiece of the Waves** (CN male human cleric 1/thief 1) is an enigma; rumours persist he wears his long green robes to hide sets of strange tattoos all over his body. His voice is strong, powerful and hypnotic, and quick to convict those who talk of sin.

HOOKS

- Some priests of the Fane of Waves Eternal (location T1) consider the mouthpiece to be a heretic. They want to shake the faith of his followers so they disperse without riots. Should the PCs discreetly ensure the sacrifices no longer vanish with the tide there would be a handsome reward.
- Who provides the cattle for the sacrifices? The Mouthpiece attracts many disillusioned poor, none of whom looks as if they can afford a cow. Some rumours suggest acolytes are extorting local farmers, others imply that a shadowy nobleman is financing the church for nefarious purposes.

OD3: GALLEN'S LOST MANOR

A mere shadow of its former glory, Gallen's Lost Manor sits in ruin north of the city walls. Here dwell the last of the Gallens who seems not to notice the walls crumbling around him.

A many winged monstrosity, the manor is a huge sprawling affair, built all on one level. The stone walls and excellent craftsmanship are the reason it is still standing. Haaken Gallen, the last of the family, mainly occupies the centre portion of the manor, the other wings having been closed years ago.

The walls of the west wing especially have begun to crumble and at least a few animals have found refuge inside as well as—possibly—other unknown and unwelcome visitors.

The east wing is almost completely concealed by ivy, and the garden surrounding that wing is impenetrably wild.

Rumour has it the manor retains its lavish furnishings, with a little added mildew. This is mostly conjecture, for though Haaken has a surprising number of guests, (perhaps not so surprising since he offers free food and lodging), none ever remember much about their visit. Most blame this on his homemade mead, which he shares generously.

NOTABLE FOLK

- **Haaken Gallen** (NG male human thief 3) is retired adventurer, returned to his family home after a near death experience in Gloamhold. He can't afford to keep the manor going, but he lives there anyway. There is nothing he likes better than telling tales of his adventuring days to any who will listen—whether they want to or not. Most who know him think he is a little crazy, but almost any of them will visit the manor given the chance. Most are curious if the stories of the manor's dust- and cobweb-covered treasures are true. Occasionally pieces from the manor show up at the shops in the city. There is speculation about whether Haaken is pawning his family heirlooms, if his guests are ripping him off or if thieves have been sneaking into the manor.

HOOKS

- The PCs come across something from Gallen's Lost Manor in one of the shops in the city, the owner of the shop is able to tell them where the item came from and a bit about Haaken and the Manor. They think Haaken might have something that can help them.
- The PCs meet Haaken Gallen in a tavern, show appropriate interest in his stories, and he offers them dinner and a place to stay for a night or two.

OD4: PUNGENT GROVE

Located a few miles north of Languard lies Pungent Grove. Pungent Grove is a stand of large trees and stinking mounds tended by the halfling Tapani. Pungent Grove, despite the work of Tapani, is anything but idyllic, as it serves as Languard's tip, and it is where most of the city's refuse inevitably ends up, used as fertilizer by Tapani for his beloved Grove.

Tapani is an unhinged halfling druid, having spent far too long alone in his stinking refuge, though he is not without business sense. As such, he often uses his grove as a temporary safe-house for those who are on the run, charging them a fee to keep their location a secret and to help them escape. To that end, he has excavated several small caves as refuges, and some of the trees and mushrooms are hollow, though only he knows exactly which ones.

Tapani does not work for the Shadow Masks. While they are trying to bring him into the fold, he is not interested, as his activities are beyond the city limits, and as such, none of their concern. Some members of the Shadow Masks have tried to force him to join; none of those who have made the attempt have returned from the grove.

NOTABLE FOLK

- **Tapani** (N male halfling druid 4) is an unhinged tiny halfling, who dresses in a ratskin coat, and smells even worse than the refuse he surrounds himself with. Caring only about the Grove, Tapani uses the coin he earns for his "protection services" to obtain exotic new seeds and information on plants and plant-monsters. He is followed everywhere by a gigantic cockroach he has named Pikku.

HOOKS

- Raakel Vuironen, one of the city's merchant (NG female human) is trying to escape from a murderous rival and has sought refuge in Mekaho's protective hollows, paying the halfling generously. She plans to escape Languard and get as far away from the city as possible, but she has left behind some of her belongings, and she needs someone to recover or steal them from her home.



OR1: THE MOTHER'S GARDEN

The Mother's Garden is an open-air farmer's temple that blends into a riotous garden of uncanny fecundity. The Garden is dedicated to the Mother's agricultural aspect, especially her influence over fertility and harvest yields. The Mother's Garden is over a mile east-southeast of Languard, near the river's south bank. It is a dark green tangle amid a sea of orderly farmer's fields.

The Eye: The Garden's layout focuses its ritual power on a megalithic double ring at its centre, called the Eye. Each ring comprises massive standing stones with lintels laid atop them; the lintels join to each other to form a solid overhead ring. The Eye is both a site of mass worship and a functional calendar. A massive slab altar occupies the Eye's centre, large enough to hold the oxen and steer the Daughters (priestesses) sacrifice before mobs of peasant worshippers to feed the earth with blood. The Eye is aligned with the equinoxes and the sun shines through notches and cut holes in the stones onto smaller marker stones on astronomically important dates.

The Womb: This formation of ancient trees, miraculously grown together in a vaulted bower three stories tall contains the Garden's main site of daily worship. Climbing vines cloak the Womb with greenery and perfumed flowers most of the year.

The Heart: This collection of simple cottages is where the Daughters live around a small central hall. All are roofed with living grasses.

NOTABLE FOLK

- **Eldest Daughter Eevi** (N middle-aged female human cleric 5) is the Garden's head priestess. She is an attractive, middle-aged fanatic radiating barely-contained life, fertility and sexuality. Rumours abound of her never-ending parade of lovers and of her predatory practises for acquiring them.
- **Daughter Kukka** (N female half-elf cleric 2) is the Eldest Daughter's chief assistant and oversees much of the Garden's administration. When not officiating, she is contemplative and withdrawn. Her beauty is stunning, but she is not known to pursue lovers as the other Daughters do.

HOOKS

- Someone steals the Egg from the Garden. The Egg is a relic, able to influence crop yields and alter weather. The Daughters and the Duke both offer a reward for its return. Unscrupulous foreign merchants and the Shadow Masks may complicate the hunt.

OR2: THE TWISTED WREATH

There stands a mighty oak bent heavy with the weight of unspoken curses, standing as mute witness as dark intent bears bitter fruit. Once a hanging tree, it was split apart by a bolt of lightning in the middle of an execution and now its broken limbs form a mangled wreath that stubbornly clutches to a dead stump. The tree is avoided by sane folk who considered the bolt of lightning to be a foul portent and the tree haunted by the spirits of those dying beneath its boughs. But there are those who still venture there when the dark of moonless nights hide their grim purpose.

The Twisted Wreath is watched over by an elf named Mother Nivea, the Keeper of Curses. Anyone desperate enough to come to her beneath the forsaken boughs has nowhere else to turn. Visitors give her a name and she crafts them a poppet to hang from the branches. As soon as the doll is hung, the curse slowly takes hold and the unfortunate victim finds their fortunes slowly waning.

Those who happen upon the Twisted Wreath, claim these poppets whisper to each other at night in tones of anguish lamenting their sorry fate. Still, even the most god-fearing soul dares not disrupt the curse once it has been set.

NOTABLE FOLK

- **Mother Ilona** (NE female half-elf druid 5) was once a respected Daughter of the Mother's Garden but was shunned due to her deluded ideas of balance and justice. Mother Ilona is both beautiful and disturbing, her fine features are pale and lifeless, and her lips bruised from the eating of bitter roots. Rarely speaking, she never demands an explanation and only asks for a single unspecified favour in return for her services. Now, after pursuing this work for 40 years, Ilona has gathered a small fortune in favours and powerful friends.
- **Brother Matias** (LE old male human thief 4) was saved from the noose by a bolt of lightning. After that, the man who would become Brother Mathias devoted himself to the service of Mother Ilona as his saviour. Now an old man, Mathias still bears the mark of the noose around his neck, although he conceals it under rags and filth to appear as a vagrant, so he can move unseen in plain sight. Mother Ilona uses the aged rogue as a spy and a poisoner when she believes someone endangers her sacred duty.

HOOKS

- The heroes discover their recent run of bad luck is due to their names being taken by The Twisted Wreath. Mother Illona will not simply unbalance fate by removing them without having other names take their place.

OT1: HECKLER'S HALL

Preceded by the stink of carts of rotten produce, cartwheeling acrobats and the rowdy derision of the crowd, Heckler's Hall is part mobile circus, part jester's academy and part rent-a-riot.

The fearless performers of Heckler's Hall do anything on a dare—whether it be death-defying acrobatics, sword and flame swallowing, or the comedic impressions of local merchants, nobles, guards or even esteemed personae like the aged sage Urmas. The true "Hall" is a ramshackle set of tents and produce carts set up outside the city gates—mere storage for costumes, props and a place for the performers to train and sleep.

Though the Hecklers provide some performances outside their own tents, their real stage is the city itself. No theatrical production in Languard escapes their notice. They roll in, entertaining those waiting in line with their absurd antics, shilling for tips and selling rotten produce should the advertised shows not be to the audience's liking.

Well known is that their gnomish leader, Satu, has a soft spot for urchins and those down on their luck. She'll feed pretty much anyone at her tent if they're willing to pay her back with untrained work, and she'll happily take on as an apprentice anyone with a bit of talent or shamelessness as a performer.

Less well known is that Satu sometimes needs to placate the criminal elements of Languard with small offerings of assistance to keep them from harassing her small business. Need an iron-clad alibi? The Hecklers can place an illusion of you in the crowd, booing them mercilessly where a hundred other people can see. Need a distraction to keep the guards from watching a business that they were guarding? The Hecklers can appear in all their rambunctiousness for the guards to chase off.

NOTABLE FOLK

- **Satu Tylik** (CG middle-aged female gnome thief 3) has wild-rainbow coloured hair and loves to pull off pranks and daredevil stunts that can get her personally in trouble, but she's protective of her people. No one she befriends goes hungry, or without a place to sleep in her tent kingdom.

HOOKS

- Impressed by their storytelling and acrobatics, Satu offers to hire one or more of the PCs for a larger than normal performance; then the PCs discover the local gangs are pressing in on Satu's turf.
- The PCs seek evidence on a smooth criminal whose only alibi was the Hecklers most recent performance.
- A local noble seeks revenge on the Hecklers for one of their impersonations.

OT2: JOKINEN PASSENGER & FREIGHT

It is no overstatement on Aina Jokinen's part when she boasts she has the ability to transport any cargo anywhere within Ashlar—but she needs reliable and effective employees to do so. She is always on the lookout for competent new hires.

Aina runs a sizeable freight operation which specializes in moving cargo and passengers safely between Languard and Ashlar's other settlements. Her reliability makes her services especially desirable to those looking to move valuable or unique goods. She even offers express service to anywhere in the duchy, to those who can afford it.

Aina's main office lies a little way out of Languard along the South Road. Several large stables and barns housing draft animals and wagons, a well-kept and spacious residence, and a small office with a sign reading "Jokinen Passenger and Freight" sit just off the road. Smaller offices staffed by her lieutenants can be found in Ashlar's towns.

NOTABLE FOLK

- **Aina Jokinen** (NG human female fighter 2) started as a caravan guard, but eventually started her own company. She has built a reputation as a reliable and honest businesswoman. Aina is professional but affable (it's good for business), but she is always vigilant. With her broad connections in the duchy, she can also be an excellent source of information, if her trust is earned.
- **Kaarina Ruoho** (N human female fighter 2) is one of Aina's top lieutenants and is often called upon to personally accompany shipments for more important or expensive cargo. Kaarina is far more taciturn than her employer, but no less professional.
- **Sakari Jokinen** (LN human male) is Aina's lieutenant in Dulwich, and her uncle. He oversees the Dulwich office and all operations in the area.

HOOKS

- Aina has been approached by a client looking to move some particularly valuable cargo to Dulwich, but unusually brisk business plus some recent injuries have left her short a few guards. Having heard the PCs' reputations, she seeks to employ them as guards for the trip.
- While travelling, the PCs encounter two wagons belonging to Aina being attacked by bandits. If the PCs help the guards defend the wagons, Kaarina offers them a reward from Aina if they go to her office in Languard.

OT3: THE REINSMAN'S REST

Affixed directly to the livery yard gate, an oversized wagon wheel—nearly four feet across and painted to match the boarding house's red tile roof—marks this sprawling compound as the Reinsman's Rest.

Somewhat removed from the tumult of Traitor's Gate, the compound fronts onto the Great South Road. Anja Tuomi purchased the two-storey boarding house when she retired from a life on the road as an itinerant musician, and shortly thereafter added a mass of low, shambling buildings—livery stables, farrier's smithy and a small personal cottage—to the Reinsman's Rest.

Though travellers comprise the bulk of Anja's profits, most of her boarders are wagon drivers and guards for hire. In addition to her duties as proprietor, Anja serves as a go-between for merchant, wagon drivers and guards for hire—for a small fee. Her recommendations do not come lightly, and so she prefers to work within a small stable of regular contacts.

TARIFF

- **Food & Drink:** meal (cabbage and fish stew, [cheap] sausage and [hard] bread) 3 sp, meal (honey glazed rabbit, mixed greens and butter beans) 5 sp, weak ale 6 cp, wine (pitcher) 3 sp.
- **Accommodation:** one-bed chamber 2 gp; bed in a shared room of four 5 sp.
- **Stabling:** full livery 5 sp, partial livery 2 sp.

NOTABLE FOLK

- **Anja Tuomi** (NG middle-aged female human thief 4) is garrulous and light of step. She thoroughly enjoys her role as the Rest's proprietor. Though she prefers to spend her evenings pouring drinks and leading a crowd of carousing patrons in a lifetime's worth of bawdy songs, Anja's sharp eyes and even sharper tongue keep her employees and patrons well in line.
- **Mauri Seppanen** (N male half-elf fighter 1/thief 2) is dour and gruff amongst other people and prefers to spend his time in the smithy or deep in his cups. Having fallen in debt with disreputable lenders, he serves as a reluctant informant for the Shadow Masks, reporting the comings and goings of merchants and other likely targets.

HOOKS

- A group of red-cheeked and slurring guards, well into their cups, loudly discuss the merits of financing an expedition to Gloamhold. When one of their number, Elias Jarvinen (N male human ranger 3) lets slip he has information regarding a grand treasure in the Twilight City, the other patrons clamour to join the expedition.

OT4: ACORN'S WAYSHRINE

Beside the vandalized statue of a barbaric god stands a wayshrine for weary travellers, but can sleeping pilgrims trust the secretive caretaker?

Maintained by the church of Conn, the single-storey wayshrine stands just outside the city. Its thatch is old, and the walls are askew, but a warm fire burns within. Travellers can sleep here for free before entering the city.

Disturbingly, a decapitated stone head sits outside the shrine. Said to portray a cursed troglodyte god, its face has been gouged by hundreds of passer-by for the good luck it's said to bring.

Front Room: This large chamber takes up most of the shrine. A large kettle of thin, flavourless broth hangs above a fire. A dozen piles of straw and blankets are available for travellers. A small altar to Conn sits near the door with a donation box chained to it.

Back Room: This is the personal chamber of the shrine's caretaker, Brother "Acorn" Terho. Behind a bookshelf of religious tracts is a small locked box with a wooden divider inside. On one side is 47 copper, 20 silver and 11 gold. On the other is the food he keeps hidden for himself: bones rich with marrow and salty dried meat.

NOTABLE FOLK

- **Brother Acorn** (N male human cleric 1) is nicknamed Acorn because of his pointy chin, brown skin and rumpled topknot. He was assigned to the shrine after a theological quibble with Tuevo Eskola (location T2). He gets a regular shipment of coins and supplies for upkeep, but he skims off the top, keeping it in his lockbox. He's knowledgeable about Languard and happy to chat with new arrivals; however, his knowledge is years out of date.

HOOKS

- While initially hesitant to open up, if his trust is gained, Acorn rails against Eskola. He might even bribe new "friends" to publicly embarrass the Arbiter and have Acorn reinstated in the city. He offers 10 gold up front and promises more once the deed is done.
- Acorn has a box of money, bones and meat. How strange. If discovered out of context, many clerical and legal shenanigans are sure to follow.
- When gouging the statue for good luck, an adventurer's blade breaks through—the head is hollow! A malodorous spirit escapes and blesses its saviour by imbuing them with its powerful stink, cursing bystanders and attracting nearby troglodytes. Can the spirit be exorcised?

OL1: KARVONEN'S SHADED SHACK

Just south of Languard's walls stands a ruined stone shack pierced with a mighty olive tree; Onni Karvonen grows exotic herbs and practices his unwholesome magic beneath its black-fruited boughs.

The olive tree is massive and always gives forth a bounty of pitch-black fruit but its harvest decays around the old, dark stone hovel. The rotting, fly-covered olives fertilise the messy garden of unusual plants, many of which have strange red leaves. The house has long ago collapsed, is missing its roof and is kept standing only by the tree; it is empty of all but a bed, desk, chest and cold, stone cellar.

Onni began occupying this ruin after a short career as a soldier and lives alone, focusing on his necromantic studies. Most locals know he is strange and distant, but few know the details of his powers. The herbs in his garden are mundane, but tainted by the continual presence of necromancy, and the corpses sometimes buried beneath their roots.

The chest in his house contains his spellbook and components for necromantic rituals. The cellar contains ritual circles inscribed in iron, and cells, which are populated by the dead or undead.

NOTABLE FOLK

- **Onni Karvonen** (N middle-aged male human fighter 1/magic-user 3) is rail thin, pockmarked, dark-haired, and pale. He is misanthropic and prefers to be alone. His interest in necromancy is largely academic. He speaks passionately with anyone on the topic of herbs or arcane magic, and happily tells war stories, focusing on the death and horror he witnesses. He asks to copy spells from any spellbook he sees, and begrudgingly pay for the privilege, but doesn't offer spells in return.

HOOKS

- The PCs get word either through overhearing tavern chatter or a local contact, that Onni Karvonen wishes to purchase corpses. He will pay good coin for animal corpses, more for impressive specimens and even more for human. Though these sales are mostly legal, Onni won't explain what he intends to do with the cadavers.
- The PCs are hired by Ansa Lassila (LN female human), a successful merchant, to recover her mother's corpse, which was exhumed without her permission. Their investigations lead them to Onni's home, who purchased the corpse for experimentation.

OL2: THE OUTSIDE INN

Standing just outside Low Gate, the Outside Inn offers more than simply food and lodging. Thought of by most as a traveller's inn, few know the elderly barmaid is a streetwise information broker.

A sturdy two-storey structure, the inn enjoys a prime location along the road leading to Low Gate. Banners from faraway lands drape the entryway. Cluttered with decoration, the common room is filled with souvenirs left by merchant customers and items the owner, Kalle, looted on campaign. Several guest chambers and the owner's private rooms fill the upstairs.

Despite being Beyond the Walls, Kalle believes the inn turns a small profit by the sheer volume of traffic passing through the Low Gate. While this is true, barmaid Jonna's underworld dealings earns substantial coin. She explains these proceeds as generous tips from wealthy merchants.

TARIFF

- **Food & Drink:** meal (vegetable and fish pottage) 4 sp, ale 6 cp, wine (pitcher) 4 sp.
- **Accommodation:** two-bed chamber 13 sp; common room 3 sp.

NOTABLE FOLK

- **Kalle Niemi** (N old male human fighter 3) is a wrinkled old man with a kind smile. A veteran of many campaigns, he has travelled widely and relishes opportunities to tell stories and practice his foreign languages. He is honest, quick to trust and completely unaware of his wife's illicit dealings.
- **Jonna Niemi** (CN old female human thief 3) is wife to Kalle and barmaid at the Outside Inn. She offers far more services than her husband realizes. She found lucrative, if felonious, means to support herself during Kalle's years soldiering. A fixer and information broker, Jonna arranges meetings with her underworld contacts for a finder's fee.

HOOKS

- PCs new to Languard are encouraged to visit the Outside Inn for information. Kalle provides helpful advice, albeit peppered with exaggerated and longwinded stories. Jonna concocts an excuse to speak privately to any PCs with a skullduggerous air, such as "accidentally" spilling a drink, to cautiously imply the nature of her services.
- Several wagons, each laden with trade goods, block the road near the Outside Inn. The caravan's porters stand idle while a finely dressed trader agitatedly speaks with Kalle in some foreign language. If the PCs investigate, Kalle explains the caravan's guards have all quit and suggests the merchant may pay handsomely for a last-minute escort to Dulwich.

OUTSIDE THE WALLS LOCATIONS

OD1 Tor's Tannery: The Tor family once served as Foresters to the Nenonens, but now are thought of as nothing more than hunters and tanners fallen from grace. In reality, the family serve as Duke Nenonen's spymasters without the city walls.

OD2 The Church of the Brae Waves: At the church of the Brae Waves, a zealous prophet of Serat marches through the churning waters proclaiming a message of repentance and damnation.

OD3 Gallen's Lost Manor: A mere shadow of its former glory, Gallen's Lost Manor sits in ruin north of the city walls. Here dwell the last of the Gallens who seems not to notice the walls crumbling around him.

OD4 Pungent Grove: Pungent Grove is a stand of large trees and stinking mounds tended by the halfling Tapani. Pungent Grove, despite the work of Tapani, is anything but idyllic, as it serves as Languard's tip,

OR1 The Mother's Garden: The Mother's Garden is an open-air farmer's temple that blends into a riotous garden of uncanny fecundity. The Garden is dedicated to the Mother's agricultural aspect, especially her influence over fertility and harvest yields.

OR2 The Twisted Wreath: There stands a mighty oak bent heavy with the weight of unspoken curses, standing as mute witness

as dark intent bears bitter fruit. Once a hanging tree, it was split apart by a bolt of lightning in the middle of an execution

OT1 Heckler's Hall: Preceded by the stink of carts of rotten produce, cartwheeling acrobats and the rowdy derision of the crowd, Heckler's Hall is part mobile circus, part jester's academy and part rent-a-riot.

OT2 Jokinen Passenger & Freight: Aina Jokinen boasts she has the ability to transport any cargo anywhere within Ashlar

OT3 The Reinsman's Rest: At this inn's sprawling compound, Anja serves as a go-between for merchant, wagon drivers and guards for hire—for a small fee.

OT4 Acorn's Wayshrine: Beside the vandalized statue of a barbaric god stands a wayshrine for weary travellers, but can sleeping pilgrims trust the secretive caretaker?

OL1 Karvonen's Shaded Shack: Just south of Languard's walls stands a ruined stone shack pierced with a mighty olive tree; Onni Karvonen grows exotic herbs and practices his unwholesome magic beneath its black-fruited boughs.

OL2 The Outside Inn: The Outside Inn offers more than simply food and lodging. Thought of by most as a traveller's inn, few know the elderly barmaid is a streetwise information broker.

ABOUT THE DESIGNERS

Christopher Bunge rolled his first d20 at age 8, and was hooked on pen-and-paper. After many years playing the games, he finally realized his dream of writing and designing in the industry. Most of the time, you can find his work in the pages of Trailseeker Magazine or in supplements for The Open Gaming Store. You can also read up on his own gothic fantasy campaign setting at hallowtideblog.wordpress.com

LOCATIONS BY DESIGNER

- **Christopher Bunge:** The Twisted Wreath
- **Sam Cameron-McKee:** Karvonen's Shaded Shack
- **Kim Frandsen:** Pungent Grove
- **Christopher Hunt:** Outside Inn
- **Aaron King:** Acorn's Wayshrine
- **Ben Martin:** Jokinen Passenger & Freight
- **Rebecca McLaren:** Gallen's Lost Manor
- **Hilary Moon Murphy:** Heckler's Hall
- **Adam Ness:** Tor's Tannery
- **Treyson Sanders:** The Reinsman's Rest
- **Kris Vezner:** The Mother's Garden
- **John Whyte:** Church of the Brae Waves

Sam Cameron-McKee is a writer and role-player from the homely town of Adelaide, Australia. He has studied both Creative Writing and Linguistics and has been playing Pathfinder and other roleplaying games for all his adult life, with most of that time spent behind the GM screen.

He writes novels, short stories and poetry in his spare time, focusing on fantasy and science fiction. His favourite roleplaying games run the gamut of genres from *Pathfinder* to *GURPS* and *Exalted*. His other hobbies include cooking, video games and listening to prog-rock.

He dreams of one day being a published author, moving to Maine, buying a golden retriever and bothering Stephen King. You can find his blog at: tenthousandfantasies.blogspot.com.au

Kim Frandsen is 38 years old and has been an avid gamer for the last 25, though only a designer for the past two years. He has more than 20 releases to his name, not including the ones as an editor.

When not writing or working the day-job, his time is spent with his daughter, wife and basset hound. His games of choice these days are Pathfinder, 5e and Starfinder, with the occasional foray into Star Wars. He has a weekly blog where he looks at

things that catch his fancy; find it on the D20 Radio Network at www.d20radio.com/main/author/kfrandsen.

Christopher Hunt is a staff writer for d20radio's Gamer Nation Blog where he has helmed the HoloNet Uplink series for two years and counting, churning out weekly Star Wars fan content. A newcomer to fantasy RPG freelancing, he designed the titular monster for Rusted Iron Games' *Deadly Gardens: Razorleaf Swarm*. Chris has also moderated several AetherCon themed panels and is the 2018 AetherCon Magazine Editor-in-Chief.

When not writing or playing roleplaying games, Chris paints miniatures poorly, jogs very slowly, and—as any good Canadian would—apologizes profusely.

Aaron King is a writer and DM from Minneapolis, home of Dave Arneson and the first D&D hack. He's currently running four campaigns and loves running games for new players. He's @aaronmfking on Twitter.

Ben Martin is a computer programmer, game designer, writer and content creator from Indiana, where he still lives with his wife, three cats, a dog and a very disoriented marine hermit crab. He can be found on Twitter @woollyrhino79.

Rebecca McLaren has only recently been introduced to table top RPGs and has so much to learn! She has played board games with her family since childhood but has broadened her interest in recent years and have begun to amass a good-sized collection.

She lives in Toronto, Canada with her better half, and their many dogs. She enjoys reading, writing and some good summer sunshine.

Hilary Moon Murphy (Hm) is a real-life martial artist, librarian and gamer from Minnesota. She's written for both Steve Jackson Games and several fantasy magazines. When she was fourteen, she juggled as a performer in London's Convent Garden—and discovered to her chagrin her hecklers had better comedic material than she did.

Adam Ness is a software engineer by day. He raises chickens, a 3-year-old and soon goats by night. He lives with his wife in his ancestral family home—which needs constant upkeep and repair—and enjoys walking in the woods, and running games for his friends. He occasionally maintains a small gaming blog at diceblog.greylurk.com.

Treyson Sanders is a writer, graphic designer and worldbuilder, and plans on spending the next seventy years or so turning his English degree and a lifetime of reading doorstopper

fantasy novels and historical texts into a pantheon of fantastic worlds.

A recent transplant after three decades in sweltering subtropical Florida, Treyson has readily embraced the cold and mountainous coast as his true home.

As a freelance writer, Treyson has authored several books, *Heroes of Azag-Ithiel* (Purple Duck Games), *Heroes of the Advent Imperiax* (Purple Duck Games), *Letters from the Flaming Crab: Strange Weather* (collaborator, Flaming Crab Games), *Heroes of the Hinterlands of Kesh* (Purple Duck Games) and *Heroes of the Haunted Sea* (Purple Duck Games).

Kris Vezner began gaming in 1981, with the Holmes blue box and 1st edition *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons*. Over 37 years he has played or read many, many RPGs, across every genre. Today he runs a variety of RPGs at local conventions, including his old-school fantasy RPG *First Fantasy* and his 18th century historical horror RPG *Dark Frontiers*. He has been a guest on the old-school *Dead Games Society* podcast and runs old-school games at conventions under the DGS banner. He was the first *Dreadball* champion for the United States (2013) and successfully defended his title the following year.

Mr. Vezner's design credits include the zombie boardgame supplement *Raid on the Maul!* for Chaturanga Concepts and contributions to the new edition of *Delta Green* by Pagan Publishing. He sold a post-modern horror investigation for *Fear Itself* to Pelgrane Press which is in pre-printing. He is currently writing a campaign for *The Morrow Project*, under contract with Timeline Ltd.

Mr. Vezner grew up in the Michigan countryside. Today he lives near Chicago, Illinois with his family. He gardens and has a small prairie on his property. He enjoys hiking and backpacking.

John Whyte lives half an hour's drive from Hobbiton. He has a background in law and now runs his own business selling cleaning chemicals to dairy farmers. Shortly after he was married, some friends asked him to run a D&D campaign. When he asked his wife if he could she said, "Only if I play too!" and thus roleplaying became a permanent fixture of their married life. He has now have read more books on roleplaying than he ever read across his entire time with the law and has no plans on stopping.

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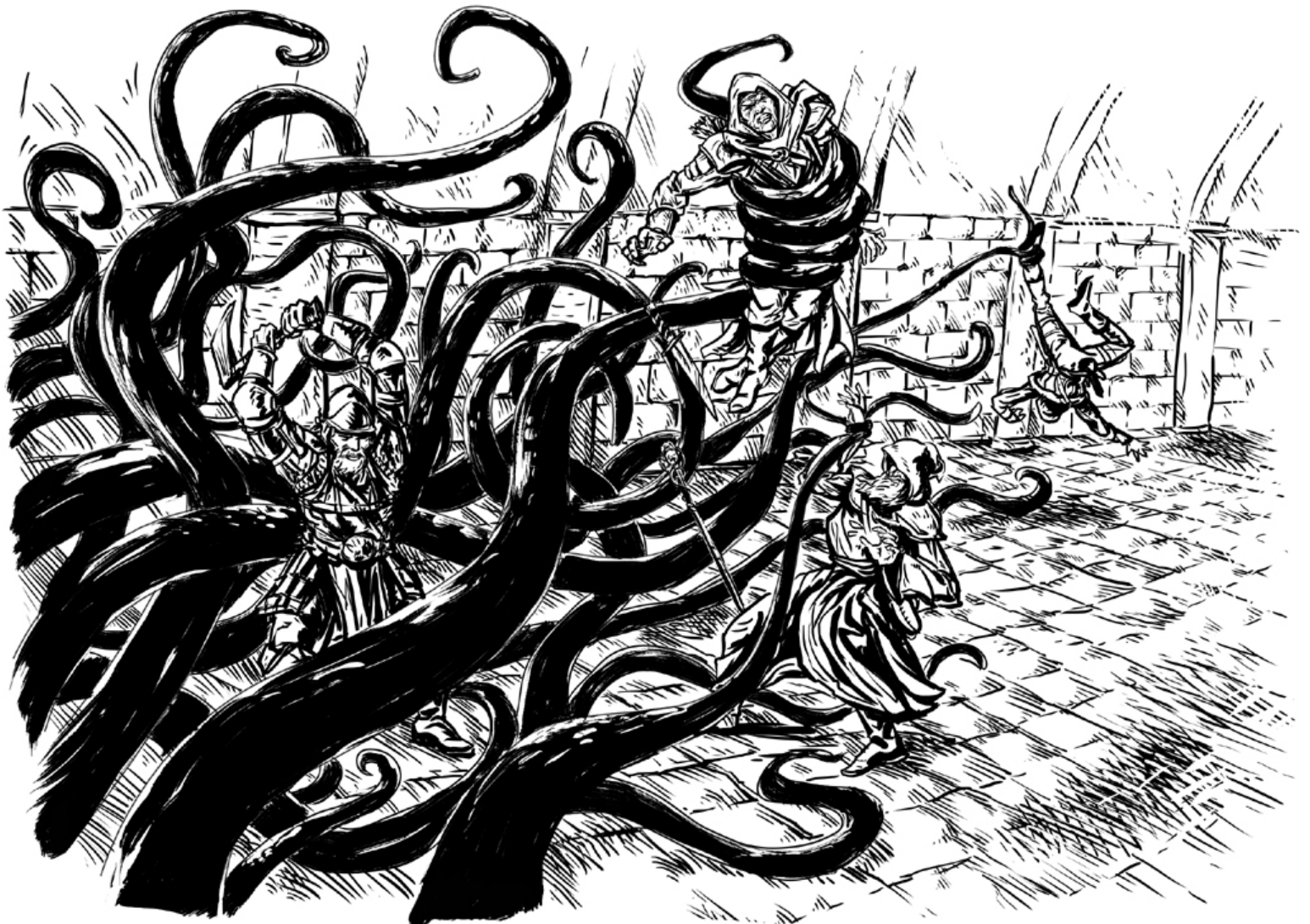
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