

RAGING SWAN PRESS

LANGUARD LOCATIONS: LOW CITY





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LANGUARD LOCATIONS: LOW CITY

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: Low City presents nine 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. This instalment deals with locations in one of Languard’s districts.

Designed for use with any edition of the world’s most popular roleplaying game.

CREDITS

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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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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. 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 LOCATIONS

- G1 Low Gate**¹: Low Gate is always busy, choked with a multitude of carts piled high with trade goods.
- G3 Traitor's Gate**¹: "Decorated" with the remains of traitors to the crown, Traitor's Gate is well named.
- L1 Low Market**¹: A bustling market fills this muddy space.
- L2 Vonya's Span**¹: Of dwarven craft—and reputedly haunted—Vonya's Span is the only bridge spanning the Svart.
- L3 The Scythe**¹: The one-legged Arvo Outila runs this drinking den renown for live music.
- L4 Arlo's Stones**: Sullen, and consumed with jealousy and anger against anyone better off than himself, the jeweller Arlo Itkonen is a sycophant and frustrated social climber.
- L5 The Mixing Pot**: Hidden in the basement of a nameless tenement, rich brews are shared in merry (but odd) company.
- L6 The Orc's Head**: Cut from a chunk of local limestone and set above the tavern's front door, the luridly carved face of an orc identifies this place as the infamous Orc's Head.

L7 Laukkanen's Collectors: Raimo Laukkanen is ostensibly a dealer in manure—his four carts trundle about Languard day and night collecting the leavings of horses, residents' night soil and other foul things—but not all as it first seems.

L8 Marja's House of Sighs: Famed through the city—and also known as the Moaning Halls—for the pleasures to be had under its roof, Marja's House of Sighs is a popular destination for those seeking respite from the day's travails.

L9 Hannu's House of Healing: Location trumps reputation, particularly when most clients are from out of town. Hannu's House of Healing is one of the first buildings inside the Traitor's Gate, and it advertises well.

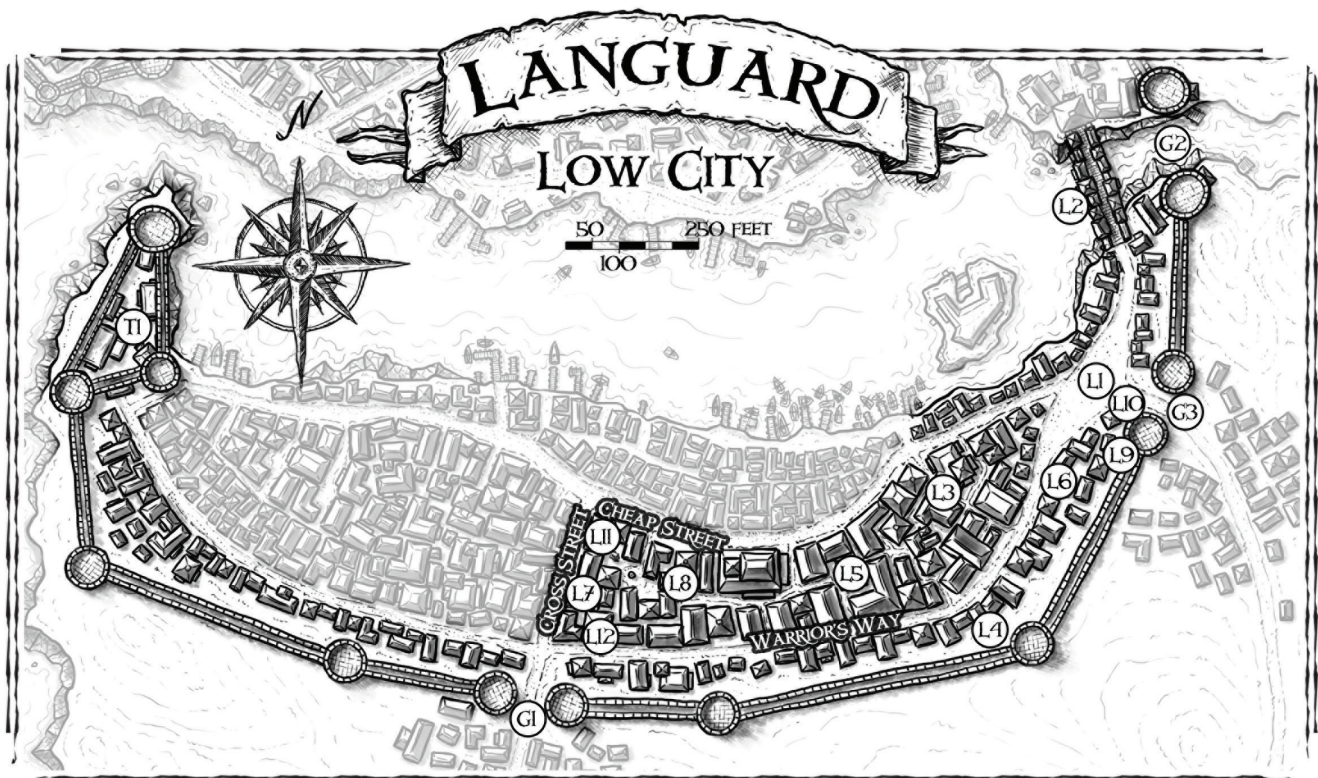
L10 The Last Chance: In sight of the corpses swinging from the Traitor's Gate crouches a tavern with a deep, shadowy porch furnished with scarred tables and a sign bearing a grinning skull with a die between its teeth.

L11 Sentinel Apartments: A series of small, semi-uniform houses line a small cobblestone street that leads to a tall tenement building.

L12 The White Tower: Here dwell the Esoteric Fellowship—a rival wizards' guild to the Sagacious Masters of the Eldritch Nexus.

T1 Fane of the Waves Eternal¹: Here Serat's worshippers commune with the ocean's eternal glory.

1: See *City Backdrop: Languard*, for more information.



L4: ARLO'S STONES

Sullen, and consumed with jealousy and anger against anyone better off than himself, the jeweller Arlo Itkonen is a sycophant and frustrated social climber. A fixture of Low City, his heavily fortified shop is often sought out by adventurers selling their low-value loot.

Arlo's Stones has been broken into repeatedly over the years. Every new break-in spurs Arlo to invest in more and more security. He constantly complains of the cost of maintaining "his defences" and is perhaps one of the least trusting souls an adventurer is ever likely to encounter.

Arlo's shop is on the ground floor of an old, narrow building overlooking Warrior's Way. He has a heavily protected salesroom, workshop and vault in the cellar. (Here also dwell his gnomish workers). Arlo lives on the second floor of the building; the third floor is empty and abandoned due to a roof that periodically leaks (and which Arlo cannot afford to repair).

NOTABLE FOLK

Arlo employs two gnomes—sisters—Leneal and Ural to craft the tawdry jewellery he sells to Low City's denizens.

- **Arlo Itkonen** (LN old male human): Bedevilled with delusions of grandeur and angry at his lot in life, Arlo is a frustrated social climber for folk of quality do not patronise his shop. He craves the attentions of Languard's great and good but instead must make do with adventurers selling their loot and poor folk difficult to separate from their scarce wealth.
- **Leneal Owaen** (N female gnome thief 2): Leneal both crafts jewellery and maintains the shop's locks and other defences. She is cheerful and loves city life—there is so much to see, do and "acquire". She doesn't steal from Arlo, though, as she knows it would anger Ural.
- **Ural Owaen** (N female gnome illusionist 2): Bafflingly, Ural is in love with Arlo. A skilled gemcutter and jeweller, she could easily set up in business on her own. She can't be bothered with the nitty-gritty of running a business, though, and is content with her lot.

HOOKS

- Adventurers off-loading loot discover Arlo drives a hard bargain and isn't interested in stones worth more than about 50 gp (mainly because he won't be able to sell them on).
- The PCs witness Leneal committing a minor crime. If they follow her, she unwittingly leads them back to the shop (which might give the impression Arlo's Stones is a thieves' den).

L5: THE MIXING POT

Hidden in the second basement of a nameless tenement, rich brews are shared in merry (but unusual) company. Here, finely dressed aristocrats rub shoulders with street urchins and scum. This is the Mixing Pot, where social class and wealth do not apply. While no self-respecting gentleman or lady would be seen in these halls, many newly wealthy seek a return to their roots which only the Mixing Pot can bring.

The Mixing Pot is dark, smoky and crowded, but the immense tavern easily holds 200 people. For a venue of its size, however, it is strangely quiet. Little rises above the low murmur of talk and clatter of mugs. Loud entertainment would risk the clandestine nature of the tavern.

To the discerning eye, details set the Mixing Pot apart from taverns above. Unmarked paintings line the walls, recognizable as masterpieces only to connoisseurs. The sconces are burnt silver instead of copper. The glassware is actually fine crystal. The wealth hidden in every corner thrills the rich and poor alike, and only solidifies the aura of an exclusivity.

- **Food & Drink:** hearty meal (eel and eggs, cheese [fondue], cow ribs and bread) 1 gp, light meal (vegetables [fried] and chicken) 3 sp, thin ale 6 cp, wine (pitcher) or dark beer 3 sp.

NOTABLE FOLK

- **Rikhard Laminen** (N male human) is the head bartender. Once a charismatic butler for a wealthy noble, Rikhard was promoted to the Mixing Pot by a friend.
- **Joonas Filn** (CN male human) worked his way up from fisherman to owner of a small fleet of vessels. Though he lives in High City, he cannot stand snobbery.
- **Emma Kurtti** (LE female human thief 3) is in the profession of bringing criminals together for certain jobs. She sits in the corner, smoking a cigar and flanked by hired goons.
- **Irma "The Stink"** (CN female human fighter 1) was never supposed to be here. She wandered into the Mixing Pot on the heels of a patron and hasn't wandered out since.

HOOKS

- A born and raised socialite with no ties to Low City wants in to Low City's most exclusive club. She'll pay any price for membership, even if nobody wants her there.
- The identity of the Mixing Pot's mysterious owner is a matter of some conjecture among the regulars and is the subject of much discussion in the taproom.

L6: THE ORC'S HEAD

Cut from a chunk of local limestone and set above the tavern's front door, the luridly carved face of an orc identifies this place as the infamous Orc's Head. Notorious throughout the duchy as the haunt of adventurers preparing to dare Gloamhold's depths, the Orc's Head is a place of tall tales and hard drinking. Decent folk rarely venture inside.

The tavern's proprietor, Einar Salonen, was once an adventurer. A giant of a man standing almost 6 and a half feet tall, Einar was a mighty warrior in his prime. Now inactivity and too much drink have robbed him of his physique. He is still strong, though, and it is a brave—or spectacularly drunk—customer who risks his ire.

Within the Orc's Head, the drink is cheap, the music loud and the customers (often) drunk. It is a raucous place; brawls are not uncommon. The Shadow Masks operate—cautiously—here but, in the main, limit their activities to information gathering.

The Orc's Head is an oddity in that its common room is in the cellar. The first Orc's Head burnt down mysteriously decades ago. The owner—desperate to get back into business as quickly as possible—converted the cellar into the common room and later—when funds allowed—rebuilt the rest of the inn. The common room comprises four separate, snug and shadowy chambers perfect for plotting and scheming.

Of the two above-ground floors, the ground floor is given over to guests' lodgings while Einar, his family and several servants dwell on the upper level.

Einar stores his vitals and other supplies in a low structure behind the main building where he also brews his own beer.

TARIFF

- **Food & Drink:** meal (cold sausages, hard cheese and bread) 3 sp, weak ale 6 cp, wine (pitcher) 3 sp.
- **Accommodation:** Two-bed chamber 10 sp; four-bed chamber 20 sp; common room 2 sp.

NOTABLE FOLK

- **Einar Salonen** (N middle-aged male human fighter 5): The Orc's Head's proprietor is gregarious and welcoming. Relatively lax in the running of his establishment he doesn't much mind the occasional brawl as long as no-one is seriously hurt and nothing valuable is broken. He is popular with his customers, but not beloved of the city watch who see the Orc's Head as a perennial trouble-spot.

HOOKS

- Adventurers seeking to join or create an adventuring company often visit the Orc's Head. Adventurers seeking hirelings or henchmen are also well advised to speak with Einar, who knows many such folk.

- A brawl breaks out. Soon, many customers are enthusiastically participating. (The fracas is cover for a thief to steal a rival party's map of their recent Gloamhold exploration.)
- Dragon and the Thief is a popular game at the Orc's Head; visiting adventurers can often get a game—several boards are kept behind the bar. Such games are a good opportunity to make new friends, hear rumours and try to discover what rival bands of adventurers plan for their next foray into Gloamhold.

HOW TO PLAY DRAGON AND THE THIEF

To play, Dragon and the Thief, each player needs two six-sided dice. The game is best played with three or more players.

Start: Before play begins, the players must decide what denomination of coin (copper, silver, gold or platinum) to wager. All players start by placing a coin on the number 7.

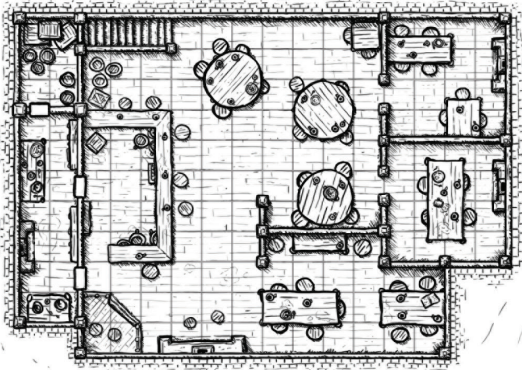
Who Goes First: The players all roll their dice. The player with the lowest score goes first. Thereafter, play passes to the left.

Playing: Each player rolls his dice. The result determines the player's action:

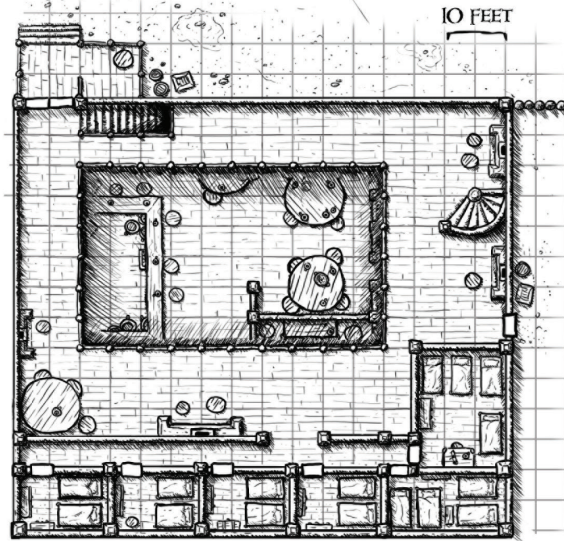
- **2 (The Thief):** The player takes all the coins except those on number seven (The Hoard).
- **3, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10 or 11:** The player checks the number for a coin. If a coin is there, the player takes it. If there is no coin the player puts one down on that number.
- **4:** The player does nothing.
- **7 (The Hoard):** The player puts a new coin on that number.
- **12 (The Dragon):** The player takes all the coins on the board.

Play continues as long as the participants want to play; players can join or drop out at any time.

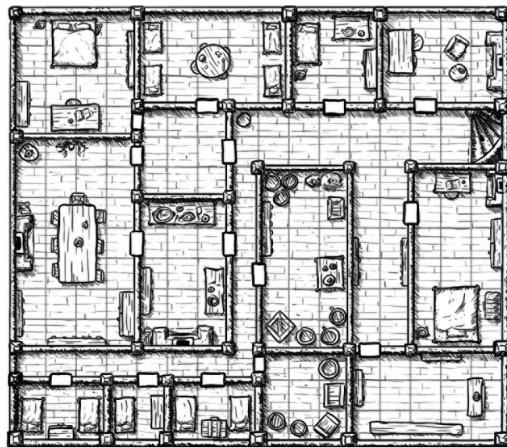




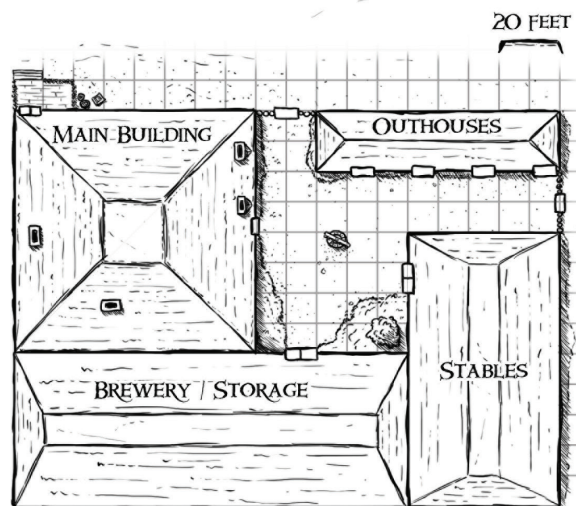
CELLAR / COMMON ROOM



GROUND FLOOR



UPPER FLOOR



OUTBUILDINGS

L7: LAUKKANEN'S COLLECTORS

Raimo Laukkanen is ostensibly a dealer in manure—his four carts trundle about Languard day and night collecting the leavings of horses, residents' night soil and other foul things—but not all as it first seems.

Raimo is also a prolific and skilled fence and smuggler with extensive links to the Shadow Masks and a whole range of other cads, scoundrels and brigands. His carts—piled high with manure, night soil and other stinking rubbish—are an excellent means of transporting illicit goods around the city. After all, who would willingly search such a cart?

His workers—a dirty collection of foul-smelling, surly and often shunned lot—are collectively known as “Raimo's Shovelers”.

Raimo owns a large building on Cross Street, which is the centre of his illegal operation. A secretly excavated—and extensive—hidden cellar holds the illicit goods under Raimo's protection and the Laukkanen family wealth. Additionally, several small chambers serve as bedchambers (or perhaps holding cells)—all have stout, lockable doors.

Raimo also owns walled compounds without the city walls near both Low Gate and Traitor's Gate; here he sells the legal proceeds of this trade to farmers and the like and sometimes passes smuggled goods to his contacts.

NOTABLE FOLK

- **Raimo Laukkanen** (NE old male human thief 3): This gnarled, hirsute old man is utterly without scruples. He'll transport anything in his carts, if the price is right. Crippled in a carting accident decades ago, Raimo is never without his heavy cane of polished mahogany—which he adeptly uses as a weapon, if the need arises.
- **Terhi Laukkanen** (NE female human fighter 2/thief 1): Raimo's granddaughter, and the only one of his progeny with the necessary morals to work in the family business, Terhi is at home among the filth and squalor. Coarse of mouth, muscular and often coated in grime and muck she is sometimes mistaken for a man. She has her revenge—a savage beating or maliciously placed pile of manure—against such folk.

HOOKS

- One of Raimo's carts has lost a wheel. Manure and other foul things have tipped onto the street. The two men are working hard to fix the wheel and clean up the mess. As a watch patrol approaches, their efforts reach almost (suspiciously) frantic levels.

L8: MARJA'S HOUSE OF SIGHS

Famed through the city—and also known as the Moaning Halls—for the pleasures to be had under its roof, Marja's House of Sighs is a popular destination for those seeking respite from the day's travails.

Comprising the entirety of a three-storey tenement building overlooking one of the many small lanes leading north from Warrior's Way it is gaudily decorated with—now faded—semi-lurid murals. The paintings leave no doubt as to the services offered within. Marja lives in a personal apartment on the top floor while the ground floor is given over to a series of lounges, bars and snugs. The middle floor comprises a maze of small passages and rooms decorated in a variety of styles and themes. Much of the Moaning Halls' business is conducted, here.

Marja employs a multitude of street urchins and street people to guide—or perhaps lure—customers to her door. Thus, those obviously with coin—and everyone assumes adventurers have gold to spare—are accosted by a succession of street folk when they are in the Moaning Hall's general vicinity.

NOTABLE FOLK

- **Marja Sianio** (N female half-elf magic-user 2/thief 3): Marja knows many of Languard's residents—she has a prodigious memory—but few people know the real Marja. Secretly the bastard offspring of a minor member of the Nenonen family, she masquerades as a human but is well aware of her true heritage. Her staff are loyal and she—in turn—zealously watches out for their wellbeing. Rumours abound that Marja knows many embarrassing secrets about her customers.

HOOKS

- The PCs seek some local expert, merchant or suchlike. Enquiries lead them to the House of Sighs where the man is believed to be “resting”. Of course, Marja is delighted at the arrival of a group of wealthy adventurers and does her utmost to entice them into availing themselves of the house's services.
- The PCs befriend (perhaps in a nearby tavern) Aila Keto (CN female human), one of Marja's staff. They subsequently see her being harassed by a man swathed in a voluminous cloak. If they intervene they earn her thanks and the ire on the man Einar Rantanen (NE middle-aged male human)—a wealthy craftsman, skilled in holding grudges, who does his best to bad mouth Aila's rescuers.

L9: HANNU'S HOUSE OF HEALING

Location trumps reputation, particularly when most clients are from out of town. Hannu's House of Healing is one of the first buildings inside the Traitor's Gate, and it advertises well. Wounded visitors see the giant sign and stumble through the door in need of medical attention. Hannu himself is a charlatan of middling skill who overcharges for even the simplest procedures. If he has to amputate a hand, there's a good chance he'll keep the rings. If he sees rings, there's a good chance he'll amputate the hand.

Waiting Room: A hanging wooden alembic directs passers-by to the waiting room, a small, relatively clean space with half a dozen wooden chairs. In these cramped quarters, customers wait to be treated.

Operation Room: Compared to the waiting room, the operation room is filthy. A wooden platform serves as an operation table, stained red and black from thousands of previous procedures. Rusty scalpels, chipped scissors and recycled bandages sit in heaps or in dirty jars around the room. One scent rises above all others—Dreamweed, which Hannu uses to induce sleep in nearly all his patients. While the patients are insensate, he rifles through their gear.

Recovery Room: Upstairs, a dozen thin beds line the walls. Here, patients sleep off the Dreamweed and recover from particularly traumatic surgeries. The recovery room also doubles as an inn when business is slow.

NOTABLE FOLK

- **Hannu** (CE male human thief 4) is himself a traveller from the south, come to Languard when he was young. He apprenticed briefly with an alchemist until the healer's untimely death, and then went into business for himself (his almost total lack of formal training seemingly no impediment to his business).
- **Reeta** (CE female human fighter 2) is Hannu's nurse, and stands a head above all but the tallest man. She is a giant of a woman, broad and busty, with far too much makeup, a booming voice and a bizarre garbled accent.

HOOKS

- A wealthy traveller visited Hannu, but walked away without his family ring. Hannu denies he ever saw the jewellery, but the visitor is adamant.
- An adventurer returned from Gloamhold did not survive Hannu's administrations. However, her journal is full of notes on the dungeon. Hannu is willing to sell it for a favour.

L10: THE LAST CHANCE

In sight of the corpses swinging from the Traitor's Gate crouches a tavern with a deep, shadowy porch furnished with scarred tables and a sign bearing a grinning skull with a die between its teeth. The owner is Jyry, a thrifty businessman who cultivates the tavern's grim atmosphere. He starts macabre wagers about executions, discusses bounties with his regulars and supplies human knucklebones for games.

The interior is a single-room floor lit only with flickering candles and the hearth fire behind the bar. Patrons cluster around these points of light, forming insular groups that laugh at private jokes and make bets as the staff offer odds on all aspects of upcoming executions and punishments. No one sits at the bar at the tavern's far end as its counter is reserved for food preparation. Behind the bar, a hatch leads to the basement, where Jyry stores food, racks his alcohol and has his personal room.

TARIFF

- **Drink:** fermented milk (flagon) 6 cp, mead (flagon) 1 sp.
- **Food:** cabbage rolls with mashed turnips 1 sp, blood dumpling soup with fried mushrooms 3 sp.

NOTABLE FOLK

Bounty hunters and off-duty watchmen are common among the patrons, making the Last Chance a surprisingly honest establishment.

- **Impi Jyrentytär** (N female half-elf thief 1) Last Chance's gloomy barmaid dresses all in black and entertains customers with her dry wit. A former street urchin who got her job out of pity, she has a good eye for trouble and a steady work ethic.
- **Jyry Mustonen** (N middle-aged male human) Jyry was once a brewer of middling skill but has a knack for business that earned him enough money to establish the Last Chance. He still brews but focuses more on management these days.
- **Ruska Isotalo** (LN female human ranger 3) Bald, towering and covered in tattoos, Ruska is a bounty hunter infamous for brutal methods that carefully toe the line of the law. The Last Chance is her second home, and her tendency to help staff and buy rounds has earned her goodwill. She loves her work and laughs loud at the grim jokes.

HOOKS

- A list of wanted criminals and their bounties is kept behind the bar for Jyry's wagers. Impi points out a bounty to the PCs, hoping they'll collect quickly to win her a bet.

L11: SENTINEL APARTMENTS

A series of small, semi-uniform houses line a small cobblestone street that leads to a tall tenement building. All the buildings on the street are a part of Sentinel Apartments and are rented out to an eclectic assortment of travellers, adventurers and city folk. Though the rooms are mediocre and sparsely furnished, rates are cheap and the tenants are free to leave and rent erratically. Adventurers often choose to hole up in one of the apartments while they plan expeditions into Gloamhold, giving them plenty of time to gather the equipment and support they need.

TARIFF

- **Accommodation (per month):** one-room tenement apartment 5 gp; two-room tenement apartment 10 gp; house 15 gp.

NOTABLE FOLK

Most of the apartment's tenants are regular travellers or merchants staying for a while in the capital. A few, however, are notable.

- **Ensio Meri** (CN male human thief 1) Though homely, Ensio's affability and melodious voice make him popular in Languard. He is an incurable gossip and an invaluable source of politics and current events. He makes regular circuits of the Duchy and sings in countless taverns, but he rents a house in the apartments when he isn't travelling.
- **Kaste** (NG female human ex-paladin 6) About a year ago, Kaste arrived in Languard. She has few friends, lives in the cheapest tenement room and toils ceaselessly. Kaste was once a paladin but fell from grace when she took justice into her own hands, a deed for which she hates herself. She never speaks about her past, but still owns and treasures a sacred sword (about which rumours are beginning to circulate).
- **Valio Oiva** (CE male dwarf thief 2) Valio claims to be an experienced adventurer with extensive knowledge of Gloamhold. In truth he is a coward who rarely ventures far in, but he knows how to navigate a few dangerous spots. He regularly comes to check these locations for dead explorers that he can loot for valuables.

HOOKS

- Valio eagerly offers to guide the PCs into Gloamhold, but purposefully leads them into danger. He looks for any opportunity to get them in over their heads so he can scavenge their bodies.
- Some information is dangerous, but Ensio simply can't resist learning juicy secrets. The Shadow Masks are looking to silence him, and Ensio is desperate for protection. He would make a very grateful contact in Languard.

L12: THE WHITE TOWER

The White Tower is the fortress of the Esoteric Fellowship and where they store their trove of lore and mysticism. They stand in opposition to the Sagacious Masters of the Eldritch Nexus, decrying them as elitist and narrow-minded. However, the White Tower and the Fellowship are far less glamorous than they portray themselves. Their 'tower' is an unremarkable two-storey building on Warrior's Way, and most of their members possess little magical skill or talent.

Chamber of Gates: Just beyond the entrance is the Fellowship's meeting area, a room filled with cushioned chairs, thick rugs and a massive round table painted with fanciful archways. Emerald fire crackles at the hearth, incense burns in candle holders and shelves filled with knick-knacks line the walls.

Dawn Archive: All of the second floor is dedicated to a haphazard library and museum. Bookshelves, cupboards and scroll-racks clutter the space in uneven rows. There is very little of worth in the collections: the books are elementary or inaccurate, the scrolls merely illustrations of somatic components, and the cupboards filled with depleted wands and broken trinkets.

House of Air: A ladder on the second floor leads to the tower's open, flat stone roof. An elaborately painted magic circle decorates its surface, and a few holes allow for curtains or canopies to be erected around it. The Fellowship stages dramatic ceremonies and rituals here when the mood strikes them.

NOTABLE FOLK

- **Magister of Tongues** (NE male elf magic-user 3) Grand and handsome, the Magister is the Esoteric Fellowship's guiding force, though he pretends all members are equal. He is hungry for magic but lacks the skill to join the Sagacious Masters, so he has gathered their leavings and gullible apprentices to build up a powerbase.
- Other members include Master Ichor (CN male human magic-user 1) the fellowship's alchemist who is more skilled with poison than magic, the Visionary (N female human magic-user 1) a talented artist who made the Fellowship's paintings and the Keeper of Wisdom (N female human cleric 1) who is attempting to master arcane and divine magic.

HOOKS

- The Esoteric Fellowship eagerly recruits spellcasters and is in awe of anyone with even a little skill beyond the basics. Magister tries to persuade spellcasting PCs to join and share their knowledge and resources.

DRAGON AND THE THIEF

The Dragon and the Thief is a free download from the Raging Swan Press Shop.

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