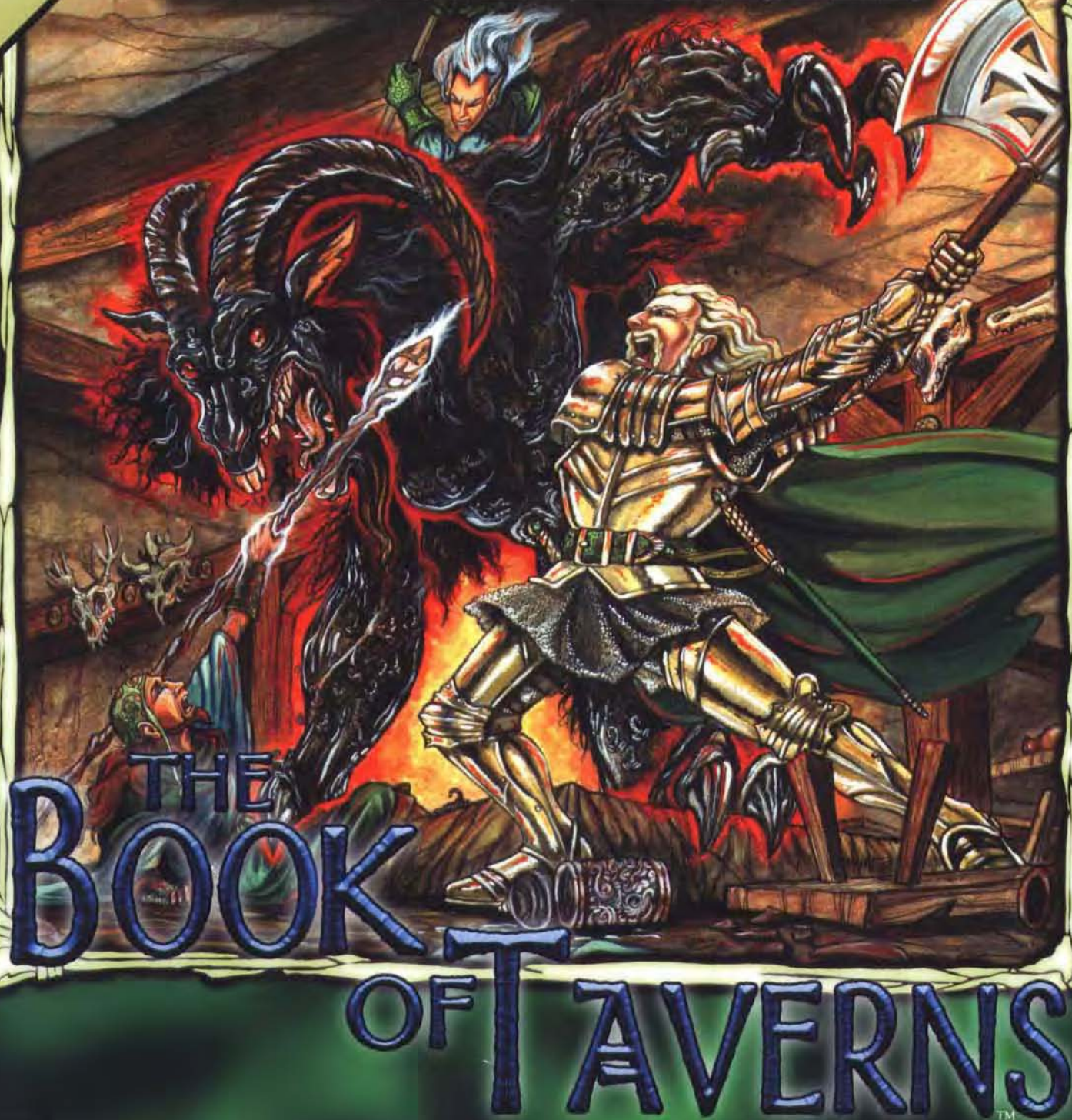


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THE BOOK OF TAVERNS

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Introduction

A Publican's Life

Werner Tonk stood almost seven feet high and weighed close to four hundred pounds with all that fancy, etched armor he liked to wear. The publican whipped a filthy rag from his belt and swiped at a wet spot on the table beside him. "Evenin', Master Tonk," he said.

Tonk, who filled the doorway of the Brass Buckle, nodded congenially. "Evening, Ron." As he squeezed through the doorframe, armor and wood scraping against one another quite loudly, he added, "Can I trouble ye for a pint of black?" The man's boots left gigantic divots in the floor as he strode across it. Ron bristled. That'd be the fifth time in as many weeks he'd need to replace those floorboards.

"Er..." he said. He hated when Tonk put him on the spot like that. The other patrons in the tavern's common room, all seven of them, watched the exchange with no small degree of amusement.

Tonk pleaded with him. "Come now, Ron. Ye knows I'm good for it. Just a pint, that's all I ask. A measly little pint."

Ron could not bring himself to tell the disgraced nobleman to sod off. If he'd been any other man.... "Sure, Master Tonk. I don't see why not."

Laughing heartily, Tonk clapped Ron on the shoulders. "Good on ye, Ron, good on ye!" He reached for his silk coin pouch, "Lessee 'ere," he mumbled, "I think I've a half sovereign. For me tab, ye ken."

The ritual was a tired one, but one to which Ron was accustomed. He waited patiently while Tonk fumbled for his coin. Embarrassed, the warrior pulled out a dingy copper token. He said, "'S' truth, Ron, I'm good for it. Ye knows I am. It's just, well, I'm having a bit o' bad luck of late."

Ron sighed, resigned to the loss he would take tonight. "I unnerstan', Master Tonk. This one's on the house, to be sure." As he made for the barrel to pour Tonk his pint, he overheard Old Smey cackling, "'Ere, now, Tonk, you gonna treat us all to a round or three?" The others laughed and Tonk replied, "Aye! Ron knows I'm good for it!"

The publican winced. He would definitely lose his shirt tonight.

Introduction

The tavern abides as a staple of fantasy literature and even more so of fantasy gaming. Who can count how many times player characters have visited the local tavern for information or to seek the seeds of adventure? DMs often

rely on the tavern to kick-start stories, using them as convenient starting points to bring itinerant characters together for the first time. Despite its often crucial role in moving a story forward, the tavern often gets relegated to background scenery.

This book is designed to change all that.

The first in *Necromancer Games'* series of aids for the overworked DM, *The Book of Taverns* assists DMs by providing ten new taverns, each one highly detailed and rich in history and character. They can be used on the fly, pulled from the book at random and inserted into a gaming session without forethought and preparation, or employed as foundations for something decidedly more permanent. And each tavern is appropriate for a range of PC levels.

These taverns need not be used as written. DMs should feel free to mix and match NPCs, creatures, encounters, and maps. Some of the establishments are designed with a specific environment in mind, such as a city settings or a rustic countryside, but should not be limited to such environments. With a few tweaks, any tavern here can be adapted to other locales. Similarly, the local cultures that describe the taverns and their inhabitants, while already rather generic, can be easily modified to suit the DM's campaign.

Using this Book

Each entry in *The Book of Taverns* is divided into six sections, as follows:

Introduction: A brief overview of the tavern, describing the general atmosphere and theme.

Background: A detailed description of the tavern's origins and history, along with the major players associated with it. Each tavern's background contains numerous plot hooks for creating adventures derived from its origins.

Dramatis Personae: Detailed descriptions of the non-player characters (NPCs) that inhabit or own the tavern.

The Establishment: This is the largest section, describing the individual rooms in the tavern and their contents.

Goods & Services: Lists the available food, drink, lodging, and any other services that the tavern provides, as well as prices.

Adventure Seeds: This section offers ideas DMs can use to create adventures in and around the tavern. Not all are necessarily related to the tavern's back-story.

The Trireme

Set in the quiet wooded hills just outside town, The Trireme is well known for catering to epicurean tastes and serving some of the region's finest wines. Local dreamers and would-be philosophers constitute the bulk of its clientele. On the average night, the sounds of enthusiastic debate emanate from The Trireme's common room, occasionally punctuated by a sudden outburst of raw magic from the overly zealous. Some nights, the party moves to the tavern's private drinking room; other nights, it takes over the *symposion*, where only the most elite thinkers and drinkers are allowed to "debate" (if they have the coin to afford the tavern's most expensive wines, that is...).

Background

For as long as anyone can remember, The Trireme has sat on its river-side hill and provided a haven for the intellectual elite to express themselves openly. Burnt down and rebuilt seven times in the last 175 years, The Trireme has changed ownership four times and served many other uses in its extensive history.

Around 180 years ago, when the city nearby was young and the countryside still untamed, a fleet of warships returned from war. The admiral of the fleet, Basilarch, a popular soldier but a better-loved politician, heard that in his absence his wife had divorced him to marry another. Angered and hurt, he stopped the fleet a day's ride from the city, sending word back that he would not enter port to claim the rewards and wealth for his victories abroad until his wife returned to him. He refused to enter his house if she was no longer part of it. He refused even to enter the city unless he was made whole again by her love — claiming that her faithlessness unmanned him and made him unfit to reap the city's adoration for his wartime actions, that he was no better than a slave eunuch. The next day, a contingent of praetors arrived with orders from the city leaders for him to return at once. They would annul his wife's marriage to the other man and rescind her divorce. Once again, he refused. If she would not come to him of her own volition, then neither he nor the city could force her. Their love had been pure, and he intended for it to remain so. He did agree to send the fleet home without him. Yet he kept his flagship: a sleek, beautiful trireme praised by many a poet and bard for her near legendary exploits under his command.

Many weeks passed. Via messenger, Basilarch's wife rebuffed his attempts at reconciliation. Each day, his depression deepened. Here was one of the greatest warriors of the time, a general with no equal, a soldier for whom defeat was an alien concept, and yet he could not win back his true love's heart from the thief who had stolen her. Meanwhile, his masters in the city grew increasingly more impatient with him. They had lost considerable prestige in the eyes of the populous by not honoring him publicly for all to see and adore. One politician in particular (Basilarch's patron, in fact) finally lost all patience with him. Late one night, assassins crept into the admiral's wife's bedchamber and sunk a knife deep into his rival's heart, stifling the man's cry with a damp rag and a firm hand. The following

day, his wife awoke to find a corpse beside her. Despondent, she left town to find her ex-husband. His trireme was anchored in the river across from a shaded hill. She cried out to him from atop it, but the wind swallowed her words. She raged against him, but to no avail. His crew had long ago fled back to the city, unable to cope with his mad ramblings, and so no one was on deck to spot her atop the hill. She believed he had killed the only man she had ever truly loved. Life suddenly seemed just as empty and pointless to her as it had been for Basilarch all these long weeks. Grief swelled in her breast. It was over. Using a silk belt, she hung herself from the branches of the hilltop tree and died heartbroken.

Later that day, the admiral came up top. Within moments, he saw her body swinging from the tree's branches. Panicked, he slashed the anchor ropes and let the current crash his trireme into the shore. Her body was ice cold to the touch; her face contorted in agony and anguish. For whatever reason, she had killed herself where he could find her. The inhuman, primal shriek that broke from Basilarch's throat masked the sound of whispering steel as he unsheathed his *gladius*. First, he raked the blade across his face, blinding his eyes in a single stroke to remove the horrid sight of her corpse from his vision. Then, he fell on his sword. Basilarch took the entire afternoon to die at his wife's feet, his innards slowly leaking through the mortal wound in his belly out onto the mossy ground.

For years following the tragedy, the more romantically inclined from the city's population journeyed to the hill to pay their respects to Basilarch and his wife, to the ideal of true love. The trireme slowly disintegrated in the water in which it lay half-embedded. The tree from which the woman's body had dangled became covered in knife-cut poetry and reflections on the nature of love. It became such a popular picnic spot that finally a woman named Meggan of Cypress decided to build a small tavern there. She called it "Basilarch's Trireme." Some say that Meggan used the tree to make the building's wall beams, which are extant in The Trireme's current incarnation, as it is called in this day and age. If one believes the rumors, those particular timbers have somehow survived every fire that has otherwise destroyed the building over the years.

The tavern has seen many owners in the years since its inception. Meggan owned it for almost a decade before a cousin of Basilarch's torched the place in indignation. The praetors ruled he owed Meggan restitution, but she no longer wanted to maintain the tavern and so sold it to the cousin for its pre-fire value. He rebuilt it, and his family operated it for the next four generations. It burnt down three more times during his tenure, twice by accident and once by arson. Each time, the tavern was rebuilt and restored to normal operation. Twice during war, The Trireme was conscripted for use as the headquarters of prominent generals. Forty-five years ago, the Xenethes family bought the tavern, and during their ownership, flames destroyed it three more times. Ten years ago, they sold it to Alecko Diakos and Zofia Zavola, a then recently married couple looking to settle down and make a life for themselves. Since then, The Trireme has stayed free of the

curse of fire that has plagued it throughout its history. Whether this string of luck lasts for Alecko and Zofia, though, remains to be seen.

Dramatis Personae

The Trireme is currently owned by **Alecko Diakos** and **Zofia Zavola**. Their adopted son **Nikolas**, an orphan abandoned by his mother at the tavern eight years earlier, takes care of the stables. Finally, **Helios Pousalaki** is the resident expert on everything under the sun and the loudest dusty-robed philosopher to grace the tavern. He spends most of his time either in the *andron* or the *symposium* hosting vigorous debates with both friends and enemies. As one of the wealthiest and most eloquent patrons, he is unsurprisingly elected "toast master" most often.

Alecko Diakos

Alecko comes from a long line of publicans extending back as far back as his great-great grandparents. His father and mother owned a tiny restaurant in the city's arena district until he was 14, at which time his father's gambling problem resulted in the restaurant's loss. Soon after this event, Alecko's mother returned to her homeland, his three older sisters became courtesans at the temple of the love goddess, and he was left homeless and penniless on the streets.

For nearly four years he wandered from job to job, following the gladiatorial circuit when he could afford the travel expenses (the taverns and restaurants always boomed wherever the gladiators went), working as a cook or a serving boy until it was time to move on again. When he was 18, the proprietor of a tavern in the political district, a surly foreigner named Thadeus Oak, took him into his employ as a runner. Politicians eating lunch or dinner in Oak's place hired Alecko to carry messages to other important personages. After a year, he became responsible for taking orders to the wine and ale merchants on the other side of town, for procuring dry goods for the kitchen, and for watching over the place during the afternoon hours when Oak was off visiting his mistress. Life steadily improved for Alecko; at the rate he was going, he figured that he could own the place before he was 25.

All such plans changed, however, when he accidentally spilled a carafe of wine in the lap of a high-ranking legionnaire. Despite his profuse apologies and offers for remittance, the soldier punished him with conscription, as was his right. Suddenly, Alecko was serving in the city's military. Word circulated of his publican background, and he was eventually assigned to the quartermasters as a cook and a barrack's servant. During this indentured servitude, he met the battalion commanding officer, Zofia Zavola, and fell hopelessly in love. After two years of pursuing her diligently and secretly (lest the other legionnaires lop off his head for mooning over such a high ranking officer), she eventually reciprocated his feelings. Many a night they spent in silent, passionate rendezvous in her quarters or in the woods, requiting their secret love. When the time came for him to be discharged, Alecko was disconsolate. He asked to stay on as a career soldier, but was told in no uncertain terms that he did not make soldier material.

Zofia, also unwilling to forego their love, decided to retire from the military early, accepting a complete loss of her future pension and the dishonor of quitting the army before the proper age of retirement (which most soldiers never reached, anyway.)

Once they quit the military, Alecko and Zofia married immediately and have lived as a happy couple ever since. They had a rough go at first, but as the years passed, they eventually made enough money to purchase The Trireme, a quaint country tavern where they intend to enjoy life and one another's company well into their twilight years.

Alecko has jet-black hair, matching eyes, and swarthy, dark skin. He laughs with great gusto. Honest in everything he says and does, Alecko is unwilling to tell lies or exchange empty social pleasantries for the sake of politeness. He considers Nikolas the stable boy as a son, having raised him along with Zofia from the time he was just a babe when his mother abandoned him in one of the guest rooms. Zofia does not regard the child in such a kind light, however, which Alecko just cannot understand. Whenever he broaches the topic, she either changes the subject or leaves the room without another word.

Alecko, Male Human Exp6/War1: CR 5; SZ M (5 ft., 7 in. tall); HD 6d6-6 plus 1d8-1; hp 18; Init +1; Spd 30 ft.; AC 15 (+1 Dex, +3 armor, *ring of protection* +1); Atk +6 melee (2d4, falchion, crit 18-20/x2) or +6 ranged; AL NG; SV Fort +3, Ref +3, Will +5; Str 11, Dex 13, Con 9, Int 16, Wis 10, Cha 11.

Skills: Craft (carpentry) +11, Craft (cooking) +13, Handle Animal +3, Innuendo +9, Intimidate +3, Knowledge (brewing) +12, Knowledge (herbalism) +12, Listen +11, Perform (drama, epic, storytelling) +3, Profession (innkeeper) +11, Spot +11, Wilderness Lore +6.

Feats: Alertness, Dodge, Expertise, Skill Focus (Profession [innkeeper]).

Languages: Common, plus 3 regional dialects.

Possessions: +1 *ring of protection*, falchion, studded leather armor, and 31 gp.

Zofia Zavola

Before she met Alecko, the only life Zofia ever knew was that of soldier. Both her parents were life-long legionnaires, and she spent her entire childhood in the barracks with the soldiers. On her twelfth birthday, the day she came of age, she enlisted. The next 10 years were some of the hardest of her life, as she endured relentless training and participated in countless battles against neighboring city-states. Yet in that time she became a capable leader and an ideal warrior.

During her tenure as battalion commanding officer, she met Alecko Diakos, a likeable chap, despite the patina of gravy, grease, and onion odor that perpetually clung to him. His gap-toothed smile and honest, no-nonsense demeanor turned her on. He seemed so decidedly *genuine* that she could not resist him. For three years, their relationship thrived. When the time came for Alecko to be released from his sentence, she was suddenly torn between the only two things in life she had ever truly loved. In the end, she realized that the military offered her only an ignoble death upon the battlefield for a cause she did not

care about or (the gods forbid!) retirement due to old age. She chose the dishonor of early retirement in order to spend her days with Alecko and bears no regrets. She enjoys maintaining The Trireme with him, finding comfort in the simple pleasures, experiences she never knew as a soldier. Under Alecko's tutelage, she has even become a capable cook in her own right. Still, a small part of her does miss the excitement of the battlefield, the feel of a weighted spear and shield. Every once in a while she catches herself gazing at her old gear where it hangs on the back wall of the andron....

Free of military regulations that she cut her hair short, Zofia now wears her red hair long, usually keeping it braided back into a ponytail. She has found adjusting to the "typical female" role in society difficult. Very muscular, dresses do not fit her body or her personality well, so she tends toward more masculine attire such as loose fitting robes belted at the waist or tunic and trousers. Like most people in the region, she wears sandals because the climate does not lend itself well to shoes or boots. On her left shoulder is a black tattoo of a skull pierced by a *gladius*, indicating the Death's Head legion, which she commanded, and its motto: "Kill Them All. The Gods Shall Know Their Own."

While the love she feels for Alecko is boundless, the same cannot be said for the boy, Nikolas. Something about him makes her exceptionally uncomfortable — namely, the fact that he is a child. If Zofia utterly lacks on quality, it is even a small inkling of maternal instinct. Her interactions with Nikolas are always curt and to the point, almost as if dealing with a legionnaire. When he was abandoned

eight years earlier, she urged Alecko to take him to one of the temple orphanages in the city, but for whatever reason he refused. She realizes now that Nikolas represents the child she and Alecko will never have, yet no matter how hard she tries, she just cannot find any emotion inside herself for the boy other than annoyance. She does not even like him, even though his personality takes after his adoptive father. This thought gives Zofia tremendous discomfort because it makes her doubt her love for Alecko.

Zofia, Female Human Ftr7: CR 7; SZ M (5 ft., 5 in. tall); HD 7d10+21; hp 51; Init +5 (Dex, Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft.; AC 14 (+1 Dex, +3 armor); Atk +10/+5 melee (1d8+3, longspear, crit x3) or +9/+4 melee (1d6+2, short sword, 19-20/x2) or +8/+3 ranged; AL CG; SV Fort +8, Ref +3, Will +3; Str 14, Dex 13, Con 16, Int 10, Wis 13, Cha 9.

Skills: Climb +7, Hide +1, Jump +7, Listen +2, Move Silently +2, Ride (horse) +7, Spot +2, Wilderness Lore +2.

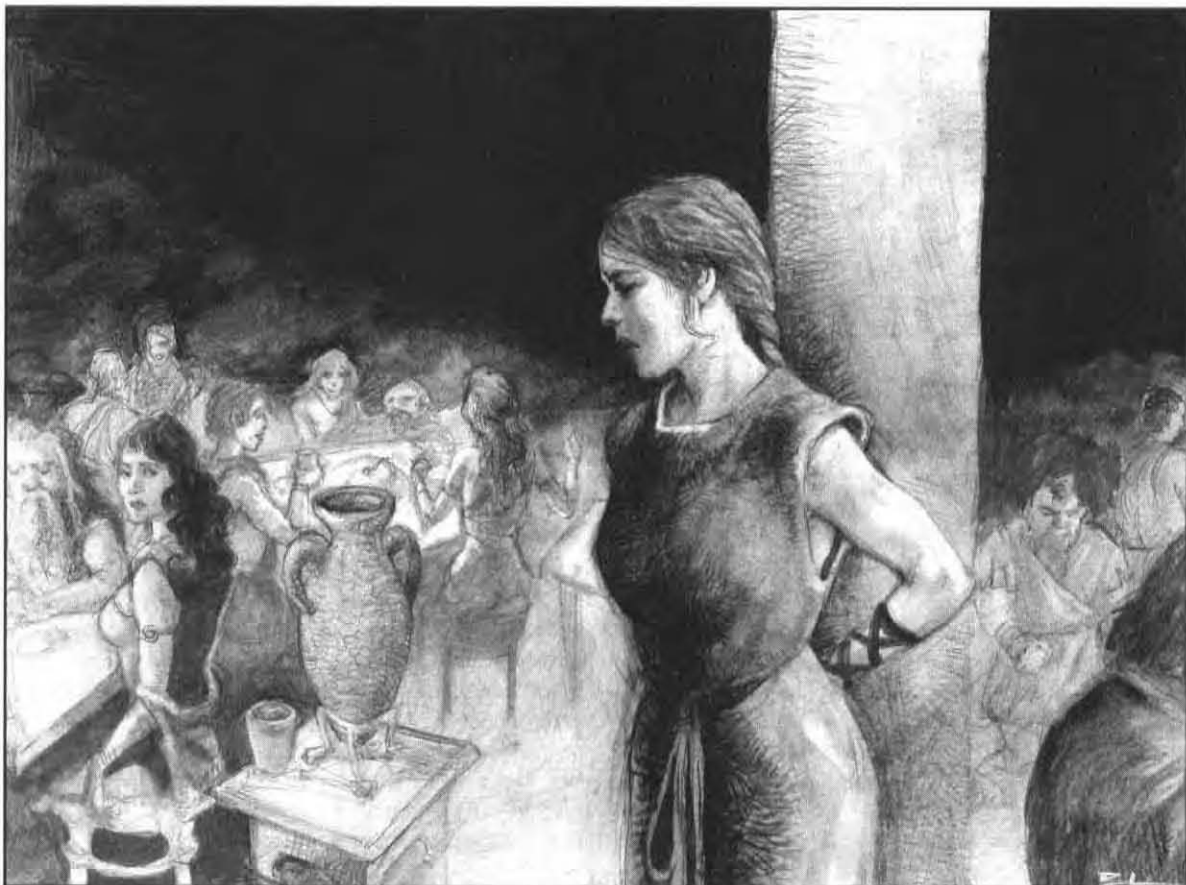
Feats: Blind-Fight, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Improved Initiative, Leadership, Mounted Combat, Ride-By Attack, Weapon Focus (longspear).

Languages: Common.

Possessions: *Earring of feather falling*, short sword, longspear, studded leather armor, and 45 gp.

Nikolas the Stable Boy

Nikolas' mother abandoned him as a babe in one of The Trireme's guest rooms almost eight years ago. Alecko and Zofia waited nearly a week for her to return, but she never did. Before Zofia could "dispose of" him in town at one of



the numerous temple orphanages, Alecko decided to adopt the boy and raise him like a son.

He loves both parents, even though he believes his mother does not like him so much. Being eight, he senses this on a subconscious level rather than knowing it for a fact; as such, he constantly seeks her approval for everything he does. In Alecko's eyes, he apparently can do no wrong. Nikolas definitely takes advantage of this attitude, manipulating Alecko to get away with practically everything short of murder.

Two years ago, he finally grew large enough to work in The Trireme's stables, a job he enjoys immensely. He loves animals and horses in particular, decorating his room with all manner of clay statues depicting them. When he grows up, he hopes to become a ranger or cavalry soldier in the military. Oddly enough, the only time Zofia actually shows much interest in him is when he talks about his hopes.

Nikolas, Male Human Com 1: CR 1/2; SZ M (4 ft. tall); HD 1d4; hp 4; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 10; Atk +0 melee; AL NG; SV Fort +0, Ref +0, Will +1; Str 10, Dex 11, Con 10, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 10.

Skills: Craft (cooking) +4, Handle Animal +6, Ride (horse) +6.

Feats: Skill Focus (Handle Animal, Ride).

Languages: Common.

Possessions: 1 gp.

Helios Pousalaki

One cannot say anything about Helios other than he knows everything about everything. In his 60's, Helios has silvery white hair and beard, and a portly figure. He speaks with an air of great dignity, severity, and authority, as if every single word he utters is of immense importance. Typically, he wears either red or taupe robes trimmed with black and gold embroidery, and expensive leather sandals that exude a truly awful odor in the spring and summer when his feet sweat.

Helios spends almost every night at The Trireme, engaging anyone whose ear he can bend in conversation and debate. He fancies himself as something of a professional philosopher and is always ready to take issue with every utterance he hears, no matter how ridiculous or tenuous his position may be. When deep into the wine, he will find a comfortable couch in the *andron* and lounge. No one can lounge as well as Helios. Once a week or so, he will hire out the *symposion* and invite those whom he thinks own the cleverest minds and sharpest wits to engage in dialogue about current events or the latest fashionably elite philosophical maxims.

Some say that Helios was once a great politician in his youth. If so, no one has yet located his marble bust in the great governing halls of the city. Others claim he is a legendary wizard living in *cognito*, and should anyone discover his true identity, Helios will turn such an unlucky snoop into a toad forevermore. Neither rumor is true, though. Helios is just a simple man who made a fortune in his youth importing foreign wines and foods.

Helios Pousalaki, Male Human Ari 10: CR 9; SZ M (5 ft., 10 in. tall); HD 10d8-20; hp 25; Init +1; Spd 30 ft.; AC 11 (+1 Dex); Atk +6/+1 melee (1d4-1, dagger, crit 19-20/

x2) or +8/+3 ranged; AL CN; SV Fort +5, Ref +6, Will +8; Str 9, Dex 13, Con 6, Int 14, Wis 13, Cha 16.

Languages: Common, Dwarven, Goblin.

Skills: Appraise +17, Gather Information +13, Innuendo +6, Intimidate +16, Knowledge (local) +12, Knowledge (geography) +12, Listen +8, Ride (horse) +6, Sense Motive +11, Spot +8, Wilderness Lore +6.

Feats: Alertness, Great Fortitude, Leadership, Lightning Reflexes, Skill Focus (Appraise).

Possessions: Dagger, *cape of the mountebank*, *figurine of wondrous power* (silver raven), and 945 gp.

The Establishment

The Trireme overlooks a gentle, languidly flowing river. Standing two stories high, a rather plain khaki daub coats its walls, and ochre-colored ceramic tiles cover its roof. Two walled-in courtyards are at the front entrance, one for patrons and one for their horses, both open to the sky above and the whims of the elements. The second floor's two balconies overlook the tavern's courtyard and the stables, respectively. All of The Trireme's windows are shuttered and contain neither glass nor oiled parchment. During operating hours, Alecko keeps the first-floor windows opened wide to allow fresh air to flow into the kitchen, common room, and *andron*. Only wealthy or especially honored guests, the staff, and deliverymen use the back entrance. Along the outside back wall, behind the kitchen and stables, a tall wooden rack runs the length of the wall where empty amphorae and extra dry goods are kept. Inside, the building's walls are painted a deep red with black, white, and yellow baseboards. Candles and lamps illuminate the rooms, except for the *symposion*, which uses torches.

A frieze painted on the wall just above the front entrance depicts a trireme broken in half and the words "Basilarch Was Here" in the region's classical dialect. Zofia painted it one night in a moment of whimsy.

Unless otherwise noted, The Trireme has the following stats:

Doors: 1 in. thick; Hardness 5; hp 10; Break (DC 13).

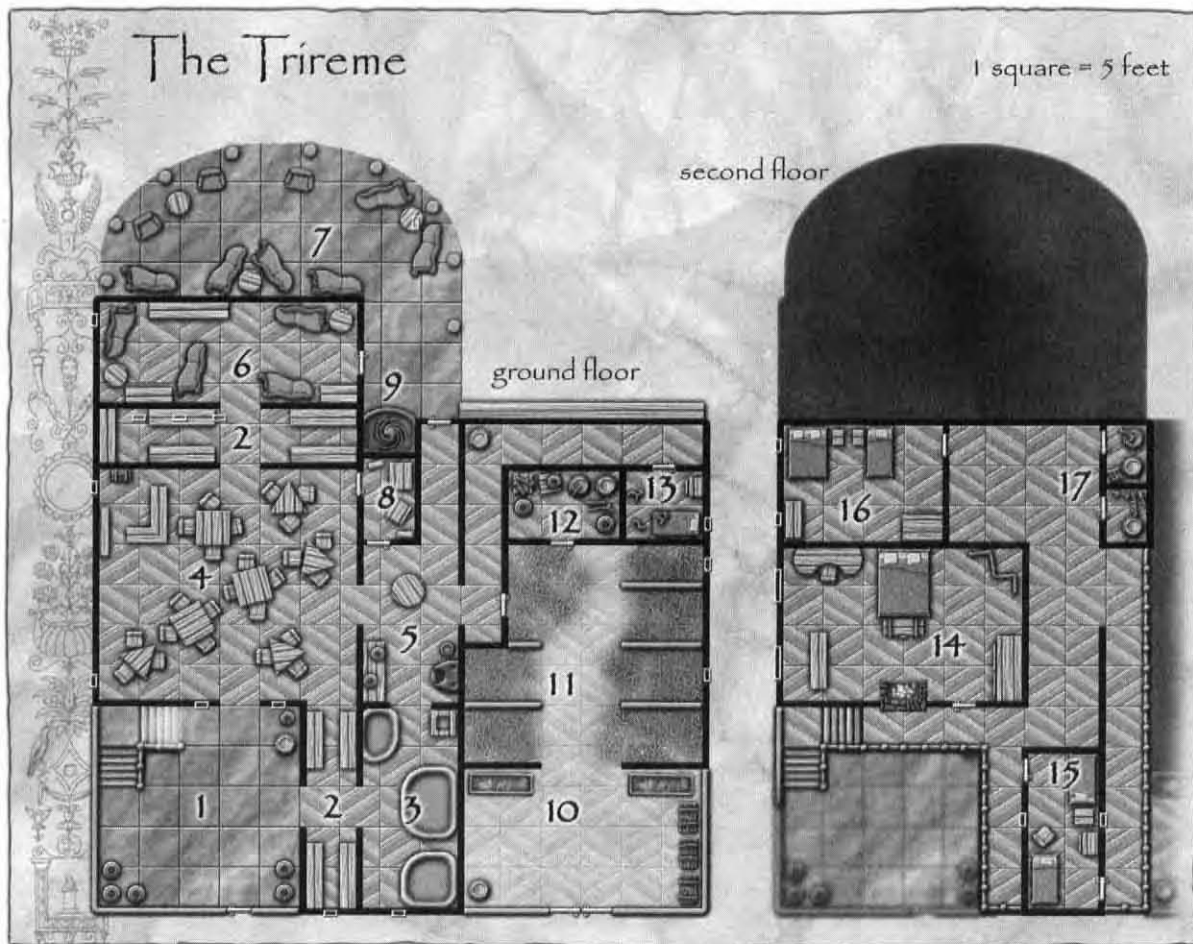
Outer walls: 1 ft. thick; Hardness 8; hp 90; Break (DC 35).

Inner walls: 6 in. thick; Hardness 5; hp 60; Break DC (23).

I. Courtyard

A 6-foot high wall hides the ground floor of the courtyard from the outside, although The Trireme's second floor balcony and the stairs climbing up to it are visible just above the wall. The front door is narrow and short, set into the wall about 1 foot off the ground and still only then rising to a person's nose — needless to say, most people must duck their heads when entering the tavern.

White ceramic tiles cover the courtyard floor. Because this area of the tavern lacks a roof and is exposed to the elements, black seams of mold caused by water accumulation from rain rim many of the tiles. Zofia spends at least one day a week scrubbing them, cursing up a storm the whole time. Alecko has placed potted plants in the corners, but they are almost always brown and on the verge of death. For whatever reason, nothing seems able to grow in the courtyard.



Courtyard door: Locked (Open Lock DC 20); 2 in. thick; Hardness 5; hp 15; Break (DC 18).

2. Antechamber

Thin, cushioned benches line the walls of this narrow room. Here, guests remove their footwear before entering the baths or parts of The Trireme other than the *kapeleion*. Pegs stick out of one wall, upon which people may hang clothes or travel cloaks.

3. Baths

This room contains numerous terracotta hip baths, benches, and even a small furnace for heating stones should anyone feel the urge to take a steam bath. As with the antechamber, pegs jut out from one wall. Zofia's polished brass shield hangs on the opposite wall and functions as a mirror, a reminder of her days in the army.

A doorway in the north wall leads directly into The Trireme's kitchen. An opaque cotton curtain usually hangs from the upper doorjamb, giving the patrons in the bath a small amount of privacy from the non-stop flurry of activity going on in the other room.

Alecko lets it be known that anyone who mistakes the hip baths for vomitorium troughs answers to his wife and the business end of her longspear.

4. Kapeleion

This is The Trireme's heart and soul, the "common room" where everyone eats, drinks, and enjoys one another's company. Triangular three-legged and square four-legged tables and their associated stools crowd the room. Along the west wall are darkly stained wood racks as tall as the ceiling and filled to capacity with wine vessels and clay amphorae. In the northwest corner is a chest-high marble counter, used by whoever is working the room for serving patrons and taking coin. No serving girls or boys work in The Trireme, so customers must get their own wine. Behind the counter is a tiny clay oven and grill for making quick cooking snacks with which the kitchen cannot be bothered. The ceiling and its support beams are darkly colored, decorated with indecipherable graffiti, epithets, and "business" propositions. Anyone caught carving in the wood must buy a round for the entire house, including the private drinking rooms in the back.

While The Trireme certainly caters to the more argumentative and philosophically minded, the patrons of the *kapeleion* also come from the ranks of everyday, ordinary folk. Most of the highbrow patrons tend to isolate themselves in either the *andron* or outside in the *symposion*.

A sturdy strongbox rests on a narrow shelf below the counter top. It contains the day's profits and is emptied by either Alecko or Zofia when The Trireme shuts its doors for the night. Coins taken from the box are placed in a



second, sturdier box hidden in the floor of the stables (Search DC 20 to locate hidden panels covering chest).

The active use of magic in the common room is expressly frowned upon, viewed as uncouth and tacky by owners and patrons alike. A permanent variation *detect magic* has been placed on a central ceiling support beam that runs the length of the room. It glows white hot when anyone in the room casts magic. Those who violate the taboo against magic use must buy a round of drinks for every patron. A modification of this particular *detect magic* spell allows magic items on a person's body to remain undetected.

Sturdy Strongbox: Hardness 5; hp 1; Break (DC 17); Open Lock (DC 20).

Sturdier Strongbox: Hardness 5; hp 15; Break (DC 23); Open Lock (DC 25).

5. Kitchen

This is a decently sized kitchen outfitted with practically every implement a cook could ever need for preparing dishes. Wood tables, cupboards, a small fireplace, and a grilling brazier are the main items in here, along with an uncountable number of utensils and other tools. Both the brazier and the fireplace release their smoke into ceramic flues that extend up through the roof of the second floor, disguised as columns where they pierce the balcony overlooking the stables.

Back door: 1 1/2 in. thick; Hardness 5; hp 15; Break (DC 18).

6. Andron

This is a private drinking room. Comfortable chairs and left-sided couches are placed strategically around the room,

as are comfortable benches and a table or two. A worn bronze-tipped longspoon, a legionnaire's helmet and a matching leather-skirted commander's tunic decorate the north wall. The west wall displays a pleasing pastoral painting. In the room's corners are beautifully decorated vases.

Patrons who use the *andron* must pay a flat fee of 10 gp per night per person, giving them an unlimited quantity of third- and second-tier wine. If they want first-tier wine, they must pay the standard price per *trikotylos* in addition to the room fee. (For more on the wines served in The Trireme, see the **Goods and Services** section of this chapter.) Food is also not included in the price. Anyone can enter the *andron* as long as he or she pays the fee and observes proper decorum.

When certain meetings are held in this room, a cloth privacy curtain is hung from the door to block the view of those in the common room. The curtain obviously does not block much sound, but then again a meeting requiring such secrecy should perhaps be held elsewhere.

Back door: 1 1/2 in. thick; Hardness 5; hp 15; Break (DC 18).

7. Symposion

This outdoor portico has just a marble floor and ceiling supported by matching columns; there are no walls. The roof is domed, the inside painted with beautiful frescoes depicting scenes from myth. The view overlooking the river from the *symposion* is inspiring, to say the least. Unlike in other parts of The Trireme, the potted plants here are vibrant and green. As with the *andron*, comfortable left-sided couches, padded chairs, and sturdy tables are spread out around it, though of much more lavish

quality. Also like the *andron*, this portion of the tavern is reserved for those who can afford the fee to rent it.

Any party wishing to use the *symposion* must include a minimum of five patrons, each person paying 20 gp for the evening. They are allowed as much wine (any tier) and food as they can consume. Regardless of how drunk they become, patrons are naturally expected to behave themselves and never forget their manners. While arguments are inevitable with so many drunken "philosophers" all in the same room, direct verbal or physical assaults on other *symposion* patrons are absolutely forbidden, and assaults directed at the owners are enough to warrant a lifetime banning from the entire establishment. The *symposion* is intended as an outlet for the "intellectual elite," and if patrons feel threatened by cutting loose in it, then its purpose is defeated entirely. Of course, this all sounds quite reasonable in theory; in practice, Alecko and Zofia are hard-pressed to turn away anyone with 20 gp to burn regardless of prior unbecoming behavior.

Sometimes, one person is elected the *symposiarch*, or "toast master," of a *symposion* drinking party. This great honor affords one much status and prestige among the resident philosophers and drunkards. A *symposiarch's* duties include selecting the most appropriate wines for the occasion (usually this means paying Alecko or Zofia extra for wines taken from their private reserve) and keeping the party dialogue interesting and entertaining. On a typical night, the *symposiarch* usually spends an additional 30-50 gp on top of what the fee for the room. Fortunately for many people, just because one is elected *symposiarch* does not mean he or she must accept the duty. No shame comes with admitting that one is not worthy of such an honorable role.

8. Small Storage Room

Spare stools, empty amphorae, and other assorted knick-knacks are kept here.

9. Fountain

This is an ornate, marble fountain fed by the river nearby by means of a complex series of pipes and water locks located deep below The Trireme and the hill it sits upon. It is both ornamental and practical, supplying the tavern with a constant supply of fresh water for the kitchen, the *kapeleion*, and the baths.

10. Stables Courtyard

Like the courtyard to the tavern, this one is open to the elements and hidden behind a wall. The double gates are usually left open to allow for easy coming and going. When Nikolas, who tends the stables, runs out of room inside, horses are sometimes tethered to hitching posts out here.

Fresh hay is delivered once a week and stacked along the east wall until it is used. Finding especially drunk patrons passed out atop or behind the bales (or in them, if collapsed from their antics) is not unusual.

Stables gates: 2 in. thick; Hardness 5; hp 20; Break (DC 23).

11. Stables

The stables contain five stalls capable of holding ten riding horses or five work horses. Halfling and gnomish riding dogs stay in the two courtyards. Six inches of dirt, musty hay, bits of leftover feed, and other detritus litter the ground. Stall walls are about 4 1/2 feet high and thick enough to allow saddles, saddle blankets, and other gear to be hung over their upper edges. The door in the north opens into a storage room while the one in the west wall opens into a small hallway that leads to the kitchen and Nikolas' room.

In the ground beneath the hay is a heavy, locked trapdoor under which lies a ten-foot square cavity approximately 4 feet deep. Stored in it are the tavern's most expensive and rare wines (worth a total of 3,625 gp) and a very secure strongbox (Open Lock DC 25) containing the following items: 1,465 gp in coin, 206 gp in gems, 400 gp in jewelry, and a suit of Death's Head legion +2 half-plate.

Strongbox: Hardness 5; hp 10; Break (DC 13); Open Lock (DC 25).

Tavern door: 1 1/2 in. thick; Hardness 5; hp 15; Break (DC 18).

Trapdoor: 1 1/2 in. thick; Hardness 5; hp 15; Break (DC 18); Search (DC 25).

12. Stables Storage Room

This storage room contains the tools for maintaining the stables, such as pitchforks for throwing hay bales around, brooms for sweeping, and shovels for cleaning up horse manure, as well as tools to care for the horses, such as brushes for rubbing them down and iron picks for scraping dirt from their hooves and shoes.

13. Nikolas' Quarters

Nikolas lives in this room, the smallest in The Trireme. Located right next to the stables, it is also the noisiest. The room has a small bed with a hay-stuffed mattress, a child-sized wardrobe, and a footstool. Lying about the floor and atop the wardrobe are numerous clay and wooden horses.

14. Alecko & Zofia's Quarters

As one ascends the stairs to the second floor, the door to the proprietors' quarters is on the left, just opposite the balcony and first floor courtyard. Inside, the room is very spacious; in fact, it is the largest room in the tavern. It contains its own stone hearth, a very expensive double-sized bed with cotton sheets and a down-filled mattress, an equally expensive mahogany writing table, three chamber pots, and an ample wardrobe. Along the west wall is a cushioned bench where a person can sit and enjoy the view out the window. At the foot of the bed is a beautifully appointed dowry chest filled with fresh linens. In one corner stands an exotic folding screen with four panels, each one illustrating a different legendary battle.

The table drawers contain 36 gp in coin; an inkstone; a writing quill and an ink bottle (worth 4 gp); 6 sheets of parchment (worth 5 sp); a bound parchment book with 45 pages filled with accounting records and notes for running the

THE TRIREME MENU

Wine*, Third Tier†	Cost	Preserved fish	1 cp
Kippya's Temple Nectar (white)	5 cp	Radish cakes	4 cp
Satyr's Delight (rose)	3 cp	Roasted goat hocks	2 sp
Vulcan Fire (red)	2 cp	Roasted sheep legs	3 sp
Wine, Second Tier		Sour plums	7 cp
Delilah Hill Gold Seal (white)	4 sp	Other Services	
The Gorgon's Eyebite (rose)	2 sp	Bath, per person	1 cp
Vulcan Fury (red)	1 sp	Laundry, per person	1 sp
Wine, First Tier		Message running	1 gp
Delilah Hill Platinum Seal (white)	3 gp	Narrow guestroom, per night	3 sp
Satyr's Rose (rose)	3 gp	Rear guestroom, per night	5 sp
Vulcan Rage (red)	1 gp	Stables, per horse, per night	6 sp
Wine, Private Reserve		Strongbox rental, per night	3 cp
Delilah Hill Gold Seal (22 years old)	16 gp	<p>* Wine is typically served in an increment called a <i>trikotylos</i>, which equals approximately one and a half pints (literally, "three half pints"). A carafe contains five pints of wine and costs three times as much as a <i>trikotylos</i> of the same type; a small clay amphora contains approximately 20 pints and costs six times as much as a <i>trikotylos</i> of the same type. Amphorae are painted according to the winery from which they come, so that the different types of wine and their respective prices are easily identifiable. Larger amphorae are used for transporting the wine and never for serving it.</p> <p>Most wine contains vine and grape debris and is often strained before serving, though not always. The proprietors will often add herbs, honey, or even bits of dough to the wine, especially third-tier wine on the verge of becoming vinegar.</p> <p>† Wine at the Trireme is categorized by "tiers" — first tier is the best and most expensive, second tier is the second best and moderately priced, while third-tier is the cheapest and of the lowest quality.</p>	
Delilah Hill Gold Seal (31 years old)	45 gp		
Delilah Hill Platinum Seal (12 years old)	21 gp		
Erinyes Ambrosia (234 years old)	100 gp		
Praetorian Cellar (1,400 years old)	900 gp		
Vulcan Fury (42 years old)	30 gp		
Vulcan Rage (15 years old)	32 gp		
Other Beverages			
Goat milk	2 cp		
Olive oil	5 cp		
Food			
Dried dates	1 cp		
Fish stew	2 cp		
Fruit	3 cp		
Grilled fish	4 sp		
Lamb tripe	5 sp		
Olives	2 cp		
Pecan cakes	5 cp		
Pita bread	2 cp		

tavern; and an ancient, yellowed piece of whalebone with black scrimshaw artwork etched into it bearing a fanciful likeness of a kraken attacking a trireme (worth 125 gp).

Room door: 1 1/2 in. thick; Hardness 5; hp 15; Break (DC 18).

15. Narrow Guestroom

Longer than it is wide, this room contains two plain beds with hay-stuffed mattresses, a wardrobe, two chamber pots, an end table, and a stool.

16. Rear Guestroom

This room is the larger of the two guestrooms. It has two beds, one a single and the other a double, both of average quality and with hay-stuffed mattresses. The room also contains a very large wardrobe, two end tables, four cham-

ber pots, and two foot stools. Along the west wall below the window is a cushioned bench.

17. Storage Rooms

These two storage rooms contain barrels and wash boards for cleaning clothes and linens, extra soap stones, extra sheets for the guest rooms, brooms, and three small strongboxes with their keys in the locks (rented to customers for storing their valuables).

Goods & Services

The Trireme is first and foremost a drinking establishment, so the goods and services it offers primarily reflect this focus. It does offer a pretty adequate food menu, however, and two guest rooms that may be rented, as well as a few other services available.

Adventure Seeds

The following ideas can be used as seeds for adventures set in or around The Trireme:

- Before Zofia knew Alecko, her lover was a prominent commander from another battalion. Recently, he started coming to the tavern once a week to woo her, much to Alecko's chagrin. Unfortunately, Alecko can neither say nor do anything, for if he offends the legionnaire in the slightest he could find himself back in the military as a conscript or worse. Zofia has rebuffed the legionnaire's advances, but her patience is wearing thin while Alecko's jealousy continues to grow. He has put the word out among the regulars that he seeks to hire assassins to murder the legionnaire, which PCs may learn on a successful Gather Information check (DC 18).

- The spirits of Basilarch and his wife have been manifesting lately, sometimes appearing in the upstairs rooms, other times materializing in the *andron* or stables. With each new appearance, increasingly larger and more dangerous fires erupt in their wake. The first time, for example, a potted plant in the narrow guest room's corner began smoldering; the second time, a chair leg in the *kapeleion* caught fire — and so on. Fires generally break out in other rooms, not necessarily the one haunted by Basilarch and his wife haunt. Alecko fears that soon the entire tavern will burn to the ground as it has so many times in the past. The spirits may be appeased, temporarily, if the descendant of the politician who started the whole mess is brought to the pub judgment and sentencing.

- Alecko owns an amphora of ancient wine over one thousand years old and once owned by a legendary personage. He has kept its existence secret the entire time he has owned it, but now someone has found out about it. That person, a wealthy politician from the city, desperately

wants the wine. Alecko is not selling it, however, because it possesses a curious enchantment: some who drink it become more intelligent, while others become brain damaged. To sell it would be irresponsible. The politician will not take no for an answer, so he hires someone to steal it for him. Unlike the rest of Alecko's private reserve, the magical wine is hidden in a secret, locked chamber built into the base of the fountain at the back of the tavern (Search DC 30, Open Lock DC 30). If one *trikotylos* of the wine is consumed, the imbiber gains a +2 inherent bonus to his Intelligence score if he succeeds at a Will save (DC 20). If the save fails, the imbiber is affected as if by a *feeblemind* spell. Note the inherent bonus does not stack with another inherent bonus. If it is higher than a previous bonus granted to the imbiber's Intelligence, this bonus replaces it. Enough wine is left in the amphora for 3 more cups, and it is worth approximately 12,000 gp.

- A visiting wizard recognizes Nikolas as the heir to the throne of Faerie, that mystical otherworld from where all fey creatures originate. The boy is a changeling child — he was stolen from the Faerie Queen shortly after birth by one of her ladies-in-waiting, brought to this world, and exchanged for a mortal baby. The fate the lady-in-waiting had in store for Nikolas is unknown, as she disappeared eight years earlier and was never heard from again. Now, the wizard hopes to claim a reward for finding the Faerie Prince, but Alecko desperately does not want that to happen. He loves Nikolas more than life itself; should he lose his son, he would be utterly devastated. Zofia, on the other hand, is glad for the opportunity finally to be rid of the boy. She secretly plots with the wizard to deliver Nikolas to the Queen's retinue when it arrives on midsummer night, keeping her husband in the dark about her true intentions. If she is lucky, Zofia will also claim part of the reward, which she hopes to use for building an addition to the tavern.

The Witch's Teat

Its reputation precedes it. It is a place of violence, a refuge for the damned and a gathering place for world-weary adventurers to swap stories and trade information. The Witch's Teat is most famous, though, for the gladiatorial fights that occur there on a nightly basis. The blood of those who have died in the tavern's fighting pit stains its walls. Not only do patrons fight each other when the urge or the incentive overcomes them, they also fight the hellish creatures summoned to the pit by a faulty magic portal spawned by the tavern's long dead, titular witch.

Background

For nearly 50 years, the building that The Witch's Teat now occupies functioned as a temple for an obscure conclave of northern barbarian cultists. They hewed its logs with just their bare hands and the axes they brought south with them. Their leader, a rail-thin man named Gunter Griefbow, claimed their god had come to him in the form of a black moose one night while he hunted wolves, commanding that he take the faithful into heathen lands to spread the sacred word. A week later, he and two hundred of his most devout followers began a long trek that would culminate, after many years, in the loss of more than half their number and the construction of this building. The residents of the land they chose to settle did not mind just as long as the barbarians kept their primitive religion to themselves. Unfortunately, that sentiment ran contrary to Griefbow's purpose here, and ultimately the barbarians came into grievous conflict with the locals. After half a century, the locals finally sent their militia — under the leadership of Red Henrickson — after the cultists, killing every last one of them. The temple was left standing, however, because the locals did not want to push their luck. Killing the cultists was one thing, but destroying a god's sacred altar was altogether another. Years passed, the town grew, and the temple remained vacant except for dust and rats.

Eleven years ago, Kaliban of Ustran Pazeel claimed the lot for his own, paying a modest fee to the town burgher for his blessing despite the fact that many people thought it best to leave the temple alone. They saw no sense in taking chances. Kaliban did not care. If the temple meant that much to the god to whom it was consecrated, he argued, this god would have sent his devout back to reclaim it. After spending months refurbishing the temple, Kaliban opened "The White Wolf," a tavern named for the stained glass window on the building's second floor, a remnant of the former inhabitants' religion that depicted Griefbow slaying the legendary rival of their god and the northern symbol of universal good, the White Wolf. Otherwise, he left the building more or less intact, removing just the altar and other religious accoutrements.

The tavern prospered. In the early days, the townsfolk frequented it until it gained a reputation for attracting criminals, mercenaries, and seedy adventurers. Before long, the townsfolk wished Kaliban and his public house would go the way of the cultists. Red Henrickson decided to take matters into his own hands and "persuade" Kaliban to take

his business, money, and clientele elsewhere. He led 30 of the town's best soldiers and warriors to The White Wolf, armed to the teeth and thirsty for blood. He called Kaliban out and set forth the town's demands: leave, or else. Kaliban spit contemptuously and went back inside. Red's temper snapped and he gave the order to kill everyone inside the tavern and hang their heads from both entrances as a warning and a lesson. The townsfolk charged — but in their zealotry they never considered that Kaliban's patrons were better armed and better trained than the cultists from so many years before. Three townsfolk survived the battle. Their dead were piled up outside the burgher's house and a message written in blood was pinned to one of their corpses' with a dagger. It read: *Yew owe me five and ten gold fore sixe broke chaires and two broke tables* — signed, *Kaliban of Ustran Pazeel*. From that point on, the townsfolk begrudgingly tolerated the tavern, though they never forgave Kaliban or his friends for the slaughter. Yet they can blame only themselves, for they took the fight to him, as the burgher is so fond of reminding them any time complaints resurface.

Four years ago, the northern cultists returned. They were a party of four burly warriors and one haggard, cataract-blinded witch. Word had reached them that their brethren had been viciously murdered and their temple desecrated. They did not know at whom to direct the most anger for their role in the tragedy, the townsfolk or Kaliban. As they sat in the tavern, discussing their options, looking around at a once beautiful temple dedicated to their lord now named for his adversary, their rage blossomed. Finally, the warriors lost control, unsheathing their weapons and attacking the patrons. The witch cast her blind gaze directly at Kaliban and uttered a curse. He would not die — no; that would be too kind a fate for him. Rather, for the next nine generations his kith and kin would suffer. Where crimes were committed, they would be blamed and punished regardless of their innocence. Where they settled, cattle and sheep would be rendered barren and their milk sour. Where they did business, their coin would be forever worthless and their crafts eternally flawed. As her warriors fell under the patrons' steel, Kaliban unsheathed his weapon — a glorious magical artifact acquired in his youth — and charged the witch. She opened a portal, a wicked gash in the floor from which foul demons and beasts climbed to defend her. Kaliban and his cohorts hacked them to pieces as they fought to close in on her. Fireballs, burning streamers of acid, and razor sharp spears of ice flew from her fingertips. With a flash of light, Kaliban's sword pierced her breast. Blood and spittle flew from her lips as she released a bone-chilling cry of anguish. The foundations of The White Wolf rocked as she died at Kaliban's feet, reminding him of the curse as she coughed out her last breath.

Kaliban knew the curse was real. It was also extremely potent; he could feel it clinging like oil to his soul. The following day, he sold the tavern for a pittance to a good friend and regular, an ugly ex-mercenary everyone called "Dogface," and quit the town for parts unknown. Dogface shut down the tavern for a week while he fixed the hole in its floor, filling it in and covering it over. Unfortunately,

the witch's legacy remained, and the magic she called upon to summon her monstrous guardians would not dissipate. The portal hissed open for a second time, collapsing the repairs into a new hole and releasing a fresh wave of creatures upon the patrons. For weeks this situation continued. Each time Dogface sealed the hole, the magic re-opened it at seemingly random intervals. A local priest told him the witch's magic had been corrupt and that, short of a miracle, he would never be rid of it. Resigned, Dogface turned the portal hole into a fighting pit and put out word that he would reward any patrons who slew the beasts emerging from it. Of course, no one knew for certain when the beasts would come through, so many of his patrons made a regular ritual out of coming to the tavern "to watch the hole," as they put it. Not long after, patrons used the pit for more generic gladiatorial matches while they waited for the portal to spit out the next creature.

To spite the memory of the witch who left the tavern with this accursed pit, Dogface renamed the place after her most unflattering piece of anatomy: the withered, dried-up breast Kaliban severed when he killed her.

Dramatis Personae

The Witch's Teat is owned and operated by **Dogface**, a gristly human whose temper matches his nasty appearance. Upstairs in the kitchen works an old adventuring friend of his, **Qaddiq al Yusef**, an exotic half-elf from remote lands. **Thana Jotsdottir**, an emigrant from the north, works the second floor common and private rooms. A strong, broad-shouldered woman, she is more than capable of fending off the stray hands of the drunkards who spend their coin on the courtesans upstairs. When business is slight, she goes downstairs to join **Danal** and **Danille Gren**, the young twins who work on the first floor.

Dogface

One cannot say much about Dogface other than he is ugly as sin and owns a disposition to match. He barely clears 5 feet in height and epitomizes stocky with a chest and shoulders like an ale barrel, arms and thighs like tree trunks, and a neck that would make a bull proud. He keeps his salt-and-pepper black hair cut so short it makes him look nearly bald. Lately, he is growing a beard, but it makes him look too much like a dwarf so he may shave it off. Though he absolutely loathes dwarves, he will not deny them service; their money is as good as anyone else's.

He spent 23 years serving in the military, both as a professional soldier in the king's army and as a mercenary serving under Captain Madrock Fist with the not-so-renowned *Company of Severed Steel*. While with the Company, he met Kaliban when the other man was recruited after being the only one to emerge from the lair of the great blue wyrm *Haeseptenessokkon*. Kaliban's entire company died while trying to bring the wyrm down. How he alone made it out alive is anyone's guess. The wyrm was never slain, but he could not his lair for many years after the raid. Madrock offered Kaliban command of an entire platoon and the other man accepted. Dogface served under Kaliban for many years before their friendship blossomed in the aftermath of a failed assault on a city

of human-sacrificing mages. With barely 20 men left in the platoon, Kaliban promoted Dogface to second lieutenant. Dogface soon became his most trusted aide and advisor.

When they retired from the Company, Kaliban and Dogface went their separate ways. Kaliban disappeared until the time he bought that old barbarian temple, while Dogface traveled to another continent. In a remote desert kingdom there, he helped to depose an undead pharaoh and started a war with a race of sand dwarves, who captured him and held him prisoner for five years. The dwarves forced him to work in the water mines buried deep beneath the surface of a desert oasis. He eventually escaped with the assistance of another slave, a half-elf named Qaddiq. They became fast friends and together made their way to the jungle kingdoms in the south. They wasted years searching for a mythical city of gold, a place so wondrous that the streets were supposedly paved with diamonds. When they emerged from the jungles, both were severely battle-fatigued. Dogface hired the next available ship he could find to carry him home, where he hoped to retire from the adventuring life for a while. Surprisingly, Qaddiq elected to go with him. When they arrived, word of Kaliban's whereabouts reached Dogface and he was overjoyed at the prospect of seeing his old friend again. So, he and Qaddiq spent six months getting to the tavern, where a warm, friendly welcome awaited them.

Dogface's long, adventurous life has filled him with a great weariness. When Kaliban said he needed to see an elf queen about removing the witch's curse, he gladly accepted responsibility for the tavern during the other man's absence. And it cost him only 7,000 gold. Of course, Kaliban retains half of the ownership and profits, but Dogface is not complaining, not in the least. Happy to retire, he enjoys the patrons' company and the "quiet" life.

For a while, he thought that the witch's magic would be the tavern's end. Fortunately, it increased business considerably instead. Adventurers and thrill seekers from all over come to fight in the pit, inspired by greatly inflated stories of its strange summonings and the incredible money to be gained in dispatching them. Dogface lets the gladiators keep whatever valuables the pit-spawned creatures have on them in addition to paying them a flat fee out of his own pocket, ranging from 100 gp to 15,000 gp, depending on the nature of the beast. For most fights, whether between people and beasts or just between two people, he charges a small commission on bets brokered through the house and then pays out the prize purse from that money. While private bets are not entirely disallowed, they are discouraged. Most private bets do not pay as well as the house and so really are not a problem. Only twice in the tavern's history have creatures escaped the pit. In both instances, they almost destroyed the tavern and the town. Needless to say, the townsfolk were not too happy with Dogface, asking him to make a hefty "donation" to three temples and the burgher in restitution. Moreover, the money he spent on repairing the tavern almost put him out of business for good. Dogface truly fears the day something no one can handle emerges from the pit. As of yet, he has proven rather lucky in that regard. Who knows how long his luck will last, though?

Dogface, Male Human Ftr11: CR 11; SZ M (5 ft., 1/2 in. tall); HD 11d10+11; hp 77; Init +6 (Dex, Improved Initiative); Spd 20 ft. (base 30 ft.); AC 17 (+2 Dex, +5 armor); Atk +18/+13 melee (1d6+6, +2 *short sword*, crit 17-20/x2) or +16/+11 melee (1d3+1, +1 *handaxe*, crit x3); AL NE; SV Fort +10, Ref +5, Will +4; Str 19, Dex 15, Con 13, Int 13, Wis 13, Cha 6.

Skills: Climb +8, Handle Animal +6, Jump +8, Profession (innkeeper) +8, Ride (horse) +12, Swim +6.

Feats: Blind-Fight, Cleave, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Great Cleave, Improved Bull Rush, Improved Critical (short sword), Improved Initiative, Power Attack, Sunder, Weapon Focus (short sword).

Languages: Common, Dwarven.

Possessions: *Breastplate of invulnerability* (damage reduction 5/+1), +1 *handaxe*, +2 *short sword*, 2 *potions of cure serious wounds*, *potion of gaseous form*.

Qaddiq al Yusef

Qaddiq's father was an elf noble named Jaesof who, along with his entourage, had become lost in the desert. Wira, a human woman and the leader of a tribe of desert nomads called the Sahoduin, subsequently rescued Jaesof. She and six of her best warriors were on their way to an inter-tribal conclave when they happened upon Jaesof at an oasis watering hole. The last survivor of his group and on the brink of death, Jaesof lay mere feet from the life-saving water. As Wira and her warriors nursed him back to health, rivals of the Sahoduin attacked. The watering hole

was in the other tribe's territory; Wira, her men, and Jaesof were trespassing by being there. They were also thieves for drinking the precious water without first asking for permission. The battle was short, with Wira and her men making quick work of the enemy warriors. They took Jaesof back to the Sahoduin, where he lived for the remainder of his days. He and Wira eventually fell in love and married. Qaddiq was born three years after their marriage and given his father's name as a surname, as is customary among the desert cultures: al Yusef, or "of Jaesof," a rough approximation of the elf's name in Wira's language.

Qaddiq inherited the best features of both his parents. From his father, he received his emerald green eyes and golden hair, and from his mother he received his dusky skin and wiry, muscular body. While one might think his physical grace signals his elven heritage, Qaddiq actually inherited this trait from his mother's people. The Sahoduin are renowned in the desert kingdoms for their whirling dervishes, warrior-priests who spin and dance in combat to achieve an ecstatic high in order to acquire amazing powers. A patient people, the Sahoduin are slow to anger and take offense, especially at the social inadequacies of outsiders. Other tribes claim this makes them soft, but anyone who faces them in battle knows otherwise. If one aspect stands out about Qaddiq, it is that he is truly a product of the Sahoduin — his patience is legendary, as well as his martial prowess.

When he was 22, his people discovered sand dwarves undermining three of their territorial oases. Wira sent emissaries to inform the dwarves of their encroachment. The



dwarves sent the emissaries back without their heads and animated by necromantic magic. This response set off a war that would last almost 20 years and involve every nomad tribe in the kingdoms. Qaddiq fought for seventeen years before the dwarves captured him in a raid against his group's encampment. They enslaved him in their water mines, where he met a gnarled, heavily scarred human named Dogface who had toiled there for many years. The sand dwarves had captured him as well, but not in their battles against the nomads. Rather, they captured him farther to the north, where they also warred against the undead pharaoh's people. Qaddiq enjoyed the other man's irreverent sense of humor, his implacable will, and the wonderful tales he told of his homelands half a world away. By the time they escaped, Qaddiq and Dogface had become very good friends. Life in the tribes seemed so small and inconsequential to Qaddiq, now. He had never realized before the war, and especially before meeting Dogface, just how much there was to see and do out there. So, he decided to travel with his odd foreign friend, to see with his own eyes the world the human had described during their imprisonment.

He has traveled with Dogface ever since. Like his friend, Qaddiq has finally grown tired of the constant travel — of never knowing where he might find his next meal, where they would bed down for the night, or whether he would even live to see the next day. When Dogface told him of Kaliban's offer, he quickly agreed. Dogface would run the day-to-day operations and manage the common rooms, while Qaddiq would work in the kitchen. Qaddiq is not the most versatile cook, but he gets by. Besides, patrons do not come to The Witch's Teat for the cuisine. So far, the job has not been so bad. The patrons are his type of people, the weekly fights are entertaining, and the women in these lands are beautiful beyond his wildest dreams. He is especially fond of Thana, though she absolutely detests him for reasons he has yet to determine. Not that he really cares; he knows she will succumb to his charm one of these days. They all do, in the end.

Qaddiq al Yusef, Male Half-Elf Ftr2/Mnk7: CR 9; SZ M (5 ft., 9 in. tall); HD 2d10+2 plus 7d8+7; hp 72; Init +8 (Dex, Improved Initiative); Spd 50 ft.; AC 17 (+4 Dex, +2 Wis, +1 Mnk); Atk +6/+2 melee (1d8+1, unarmed strike) or +9/+4 melee (1d6+2, +1 *quarterstaff*); SA unarmed strike, stunning attack; SQ evasion, still mind, slow fall (30 ft.), purity of body, wholeness of body, leap of the clouds; AL LN; SV Fort +9, Ref +9, Will +7; Str 12, Dex 18, Con 12, Int 12, Wis 15, Cha 14.

Skills: Craft (cooking) +8, Escape Artist +16, Handle Animal +7, Jump +11, Listen +7, Move Silently +12, Search +4, Spot +7, Swim +5.

Feats: Alertness, Combat Reflexes, Deflect Arrows, Dodge, Improved Initiative, Improved Trip, Quick Draw, Skill Focus (Jump), Weapon Focus (*quarterstaff*).

Languages: Common, Elven, Gnome.

Possessions: +1 *quarterstaff*.

Thana Jotsdottir

Thana is a typical northern woman: tall (over 6 feet), stocky ("built like a brick icehouse" is a more apt description), and so blond her hair borders on white. With icy blue eyes, ruddy lips and cheeks, and a laugh deeper than

most of the tavern's male patrons, she is quite a sight to behold. Many people encountering her for the first time often find themselves staring until she politely informs them to look elsewhere lest they end up in the pit with whatever snarling, drooling creature from Hell pops in for company this week.

She hails from a remote village in the north called Ayce Loch, where the favored trades are ice fishing and whale hunting. With half of the year spent either in twilight or darkness, practically the only activity to do for fun is getting cozy under the bearskin blankets with a neighbor or three. Is it any wonder she came south looking for a more interesting life?

At least, such is the story she tells anyone who asks. Of course, she is not who she claims. Tavern regulars speculate she is another cultist witch come to spy on the town while her cohorts make ready for an all-out assault. Dogface thinks she might be related to one of the cultists who died all those years ago but that she is not necessarily one herself. Qaddiq thinks she is just plain gorgeous and cannot wait to infiltrate her bearskin undergarments. The truth, however, is hardly as glamorous as the rumors might lead one to believe. She actually comes from Glesgin Loch, near Ayce Loch, banished from those territories for being suspected in the murders of 12 young men and women over the last four years. No one could prove it, though, so the elders from both villages ruled for exile instead of the lynching intended by the villagers. They did not want to risk having innocent blood on their hands if Thana had not, in fact, committed the murders, but they also did not want her around in case she was really guilty of the crimes. Let someone else deal with her, was the unanimous sentiment.

Word preceded her wherever she went. Armed villagers intercepted her at village boundaries, driving her away. She finally had no choice but to move south, where no one would know her or the atrocities she supposedly committed. A year ago, she arrived at The Witch's Teat looking for work. Dogface hired her on the spot, desperate for reliable help. Her wages are adequate, and Dogface allows her to sleep in the private room upstairs without charging her or docking her pay. Unlike most tavern masters, he has not tried coercing sexual favors out of her in return for room and board or other "niceties." Then there is Qaddiq, whose not-so-subtle overtures have gone unanswered. While she finds him charming (who doesn't?), he is just not her type. She prefers them younger, truth be told. Currently, she has her eye on the new ones, the twins. Danal has so far proven unresponsive, but Danille has expressed obliquely that she might be interested in a rendezvous... for a price. That makes her nothing more than a filthy whore, in Thana's opinion. She cannot abide that kind of immorality, that lasciviousness, and that utter disrespect for the beautiful body and soul with which the gods blessed her. If given the opportunity, Thana intends on teaching the girl a lesson in morality. Perhaps after their liaison.

Thana Jotsdottir, Female Human, Adp2/Com2: CR 2; SZ M (6 ft., 7 in. tall); HD 2d6-2 plus 2d4-2; hp 10; Init -1; Spd 30 ft.; AC 9 (-1 Dex); Atk +2 melee (1d4, dagger, 19-20/x2); SA spells; AL LE; SV Fort -1, Ref -1, Will +6; Str 10, Dex 9, Con 8, Int 13, Wis 16, Cha 12.

Skills: Concentration +1, Craft (leatherworking) +7, Knowledge (arcana) +5, Knowledge (nature) +4, Knowledge (religion) +3, Listen +6, Sense Motive +5, Spot +6.

Feats: Extend Spell, Run, Scribe Scroll.

Languages: Common, plus one regional dialect.

Adept Spells Prepared (3/2; base DC 13 + spell level): 0 — cure minor wounds, ghost sound, light; 1st — command (x2).

Possessions: Dagger and 34 gp.

Danal and Danille Gren

Danal and Danille are 17-year old twins. Orphaned eight years ago, they have lived on their own ever since. When they can manage it, they secure passage with cargo caravans traveling between towns and cities, always moving from one place to the next. Both have pudgy bodies; long, jet-black hair they wear tied back in ponytails; and black eyes.

They love to eat, especially sweet meats when they can afford them, hence their relative bulk. Any chance they get, they swipe leftovers from the plates of patrons or from Qaddiq's kitchen. Dogface tolerates their gluttony only because they are the best servers he has hired in a long time. They are always polite, friendly, and timely. The only cause they give his patrons for complaint is that they are not for hire like the courtesans working the second floor commons. Dogface does yet know, however, that Danal has been twanging his sister — hiring her out behind the boss' back like a common "buttock-and-file" girl. He takes the fees from patrons; she takes their valuables when they sleep off the romp. None of this happens inside the tavern's walls and never with regulars. Many patrons have complained to Danal about losing items to the girl, to which he offers to let them search their belongings: when suspicious patrons take Danal up on the offer, they find only a few changes of clothes, a handful of coppers, and little else. The twins actually stash their loot in a secret spot in the woods outside town.

Dogface intends to let the twins sleep in the second floor storage room until they can find a place of their own (which will never happen, as they will rob him blind first then move on when they tire of the work and the lifestyle, as is their habit). Complaints regarding the kids have reached Dogface, implying that he is colluding with them in thievery. While he does not believe they are up to as much mischief as some suggest, he dislikes the disparaging remarks made about his integrity. Danal and Danille ensure that he trusts them implicitly by going out of their way to be attentive to his desires. When they are not hustling, they also spend time taking care of minor business matters on his behalf, reinforcing his favorable opinion of them. So far, the ruse is working like a charm. Not even Qaddiq suspects, and he is as wily as they come; however, he does reprimand them frequently for pinching food from the stove pots.

Danal Gren, Male Human Com1: CR 1/2; SZ M (5 ft., 3 in. tall); HD 1d4-3; hp 1; Init +1; Spd 30 ft.; AC 11 (+1 Dex); Atk -1 melee (1d4-1, dagger, 19-20/x2); AL CE; SV Fort -1, Ref +1, Will +0; Str 8, Dex 12, Con 5, Int 14, Wis 11, Cha 13.

Skills: Climb +3, Hide +2, Listen +3, Profession (innkeeper) +3, Ride (horse) +3, Swim +2, Use Rope +4.

Feats: Great Fortitude, Skill Focus (Use Rope).

Languages: Common, plus two regional dialects.

Possessions: Dagger and 4 gp.

Danille Gren, Female Human Com1: CR 1/2; SZ M (5 ft., 2 in. tall); HD 1d4-3; hp 1; Init -1; Spd 30 ft.; AC 9 (-1 Dex); Atk +0 melee (1d3, unarmed strike); AL NE; SV Fort -3, Ref -1, Will +1; Str 10, Dex 9, Con 5, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 14.

Skills: Craft (sewing) +6, Listen +3, Profession (courtesan) +7, Spot +3.

Feats: Skill Focus (Craft [sewing], Profession [courtesan]).

Languages: Common.

Possessions: Silver earrings (2 gp), a silver necklace (3 gp), and four silver bangles (4 gp total).

The Establishment

The Witch's Teat is a square, two-story wooden structure that once functioned as a temple. It looks like a big log cabin, with walls, doors, roof, and shingles all cut from the massive pine and oak trees for which the region is famous. Two stone hearths run up the south wall through the second floor and out the roof. The tavern has two ground floor entrances. On the west side, just above the entrance and set in the second floor wall, is a beautiful stained glass window showing a scene of the barbarian cultist Gunter Griefbow killing a snarling, white-furred wolf. Other windows are shuttered, with neither oiled parchment nor glass, and closed in the winter to keep out the chill.

The tavern's inside is just as rustic and charming as the outside, with the pelts and heads of many animals (such as bears, wolves, and moose) and unnatural creatures (such as demons, ettins, ogres, and bugbears) adorning the walls and floors. A young adult red dragon's head hangs prominently on the south wall between the fireplaces in the first floor common room, even. The first floor ceiling is 30 feet high, supported by thick wood columns carved with the visages of totem spirits. The wood floors of The Witch's Teat are heavily stained and scuffed, as is the furniture. At the center of the common room, which constitutes the entirety of the first floor, is the Pit, descending 15 feet into the ground and lined with hellishly black stone.

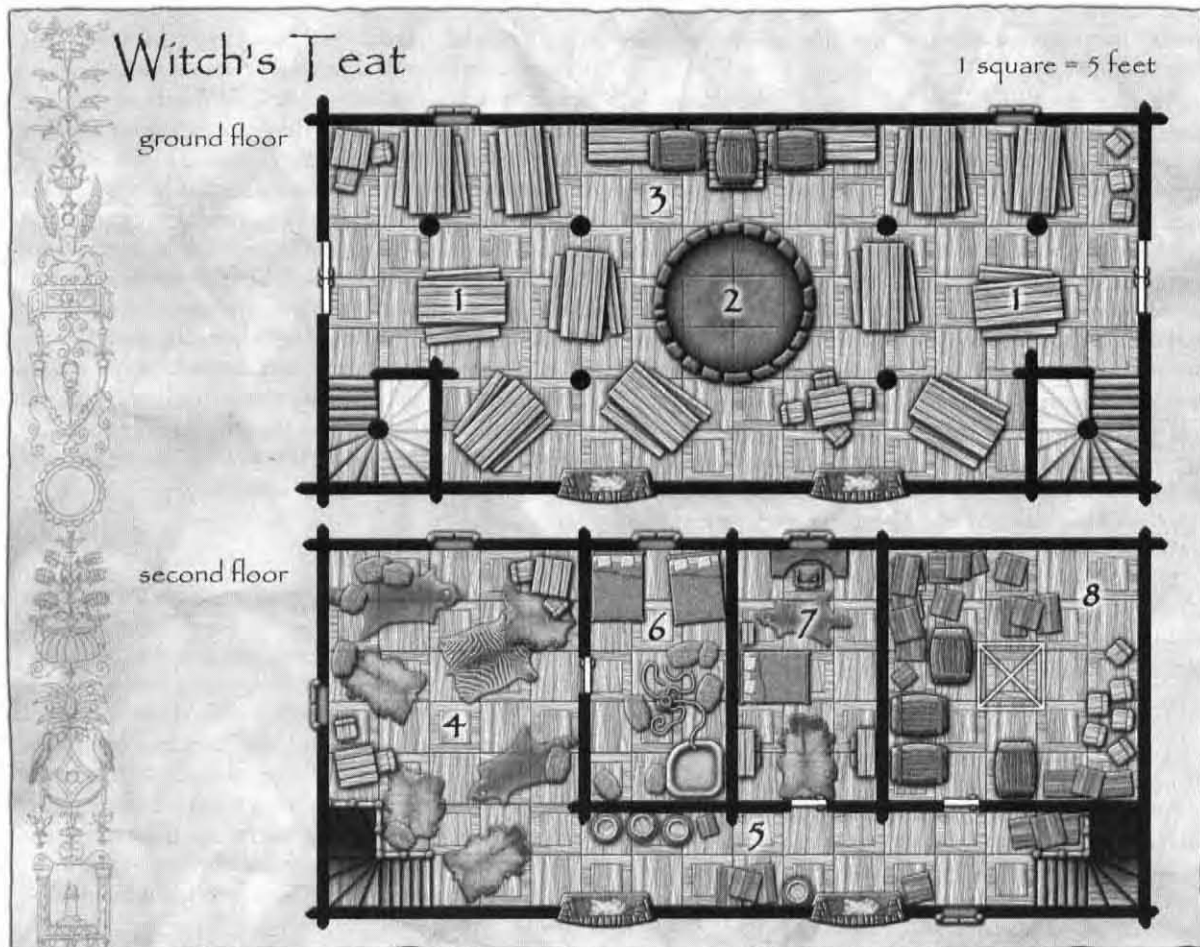
Unless otherwise noted, stats for The Witch's Teat are as follows:

Doors: 1 in. thick; Hardness 5; hp 20; Break (DC 23).

Walls (Outer and Inner): 1 ft. thick; Hardness 5; hp 120; Break (DC 23).

I. Common Room

This was once the chapel of the barbarian cultists. The entire first floor is open, with numerous long tables and benches occupying most of it (with a few smaller tables and chairs). Thick wood columns to support the second floor and roof are spaced regularly down the center length of the common room. The tavern's notorious fighting pit is in the exact center. Along the south wall is a pair of stairs and a pair of stone hearths. Some say that the cultist's altar once sat between the hearths in the spot that a red dragon's head claims as its own now.



As with all the other rooms in the tavern, the walls bear a bevy of trophies taken over the years from pit duels (not from patrons, though, just those from creatures that come through the portal) — heads of all manner of strange beasts, multi-colored pelts, racks of tree-tined antlers, and anything else Dogface can think to put up there. Of course, the most prized trophy is the aforementioned dragon's head. The dragon it belonged to did not come through the portal. Instead, a former regular — a professional dragonslayer named Niobe of Star River — donated the head to the tavern. Unfortunately, an ancient black wyrm got the better of Niobe a month after she made the donation.

The common room, and by proxy the rest of the tavern, never shuts down. If people stay late enough, they are allowed to sleep on the tables and floors downstairs, though Dogface and Qaddiq do shut down the second floor when it looks like business is waning. Part of the reason for Dogface's generosity is that he does not really want to leave the pit unattended. At the very least, he has one duel master (a skilled fighter in his or her own right) remain behind if no patrons appear willing to take the night watch.

2. The Pit

It is 15 feet deep and almost as wide. The stones of the walls are black from the portal magic and the blood of the slain. Heavy, rune-encrusted stones line the rim. Centered perfectly in the open space of the pit is a purplish-blue, crackling eye of eldritch energy: the portal itself, the

remnant of the witch's magic from five years earlier. No one knows what fuels it or how long it will last. All they do know is that at least once a week the portal awakens. It expands outward and, moments later, *something* comes through it. The duel master (hired by Dogface to run the gladiatorial matches) chooses the gladiators who will fight that night, either against one another or against whatever foul beast the portal spits up. He marks them with colored spots painted on their tunics. If a gladiator forfeits the match, perhaps because his opponent or the creature proves too powerful for him, he cannot fight for a month. Fortunately, the duel masters are rather adept at picking matches and so few forfeits occur. Duel masters also take house bets and handle payouts to the winners, receiving 2% of the house take for their work.

To determine whether the portal "awakens" on any given day, roll 1d20. On a result of a 1, something comes through it; this check should be made only once in a single 24-hour period. Roll another 1d20 and consult the table below to determine the type of creature that comes through the portal. Generally, creatures with 8 HD or less come through the portal most frequently, as the witch originally cast a *summon monster VIII* spell. The corruption of the magic fueling it occasionally brings higher HD creatures through, however. The portal is one-way, allowing transit only into the tavern. Creatures arriving through the portal, regardless of their HD, immunities, and resistances, are immediately stunned for 2 rounds, providing the duel

masters ample opportunity to call out the “colors” of those who will fight them.

After an incident in which a powerful demon nearly destroyed the tavern before a pair of warriors managed to put it down, Dogface hired a traveling wizard to enchant the stones rimming the top of the pit with magic that could be used in case of an emergency. Twelve of the stones collectively act *teleportation circle* spell, which are activated with a command word only Dogface, Qaddiq, and the duel masters know. Once activated, the stones teleport anything in the pit to a location many hundreds of miles away. If even one stone is removed, the enchantment is broken until the stone is returned to its original position. Fortunately, Dogface had the stones embedded permanently in the floor to prevent people from wandering off with them. Few people know about the stones, as they have seen them used only twice since their installation. The stones can be pried loose with a successful Strength check (DC 40).

The teleportation stones, for which Dogface paid handsomely, were created by a 20th-level wizard in exchange for a magical *iron flask* taken from the corpse of a summoned efreet weeks before his rather timely arrival. Each teleportation stone has 48 charges left.

3. Ale Altar

Along the common room's north wall one finds the tavern's official “altar,” as Dogface jokingly refers to the collection of huge ale barrels and shelves laden with flagons. Three of the barrels contain the tavern favorites: *Pazeel Wanderer*, a hearty golden ale possessed of a distinc-

tively musty odor, and *Silver Cloud*, a sour tasting brew that patrons swear becomes urine if left out over night. Smaller barrels may contain either *Darkdale Bogwheat*, a dense black ale with a rich earthy flavor, or *Bellowforge Bock*, a wickedly potent drink made by a family of local brewers in the business for over 300 years. What the barrels contain all depends on availability and whether or not Dogface had any particular brand brought in with the bi-weekly shipment from the ale merchants. When the common room is crowded, regulars are encouraged to serve themselves, just so long as they pay — those caught cheating the house are either banned or thrown in the pit, depending on the night and whether or not the portal is awake. Most people would not think of cheating Dogface, though, respecting him and the tavern too much. The few who do are most often outsiders ignorant of the local customs.

4. Upper Commons

This common room is one-third the size of the first floor and darker, with less torches and candles. It also contains fewer tables and chairs; instead, plush animal skins and filthy pillows cover the floor. Courtesans from town ply their trade here, handing over 60% of their earnings to the house each night. Thana Jotsdottir waits on second-floor patrons, but when the night is slow, she can often be found either downstairs working with the twins or in the kitchen chatting with Qaddiq. Like the rest of the tavern, the upper commons sport a plethora of trophies on the walls. The most prominent trophy hangs next to the hearth: the



Pit Summonings*

Die Roll Creatures

- 1-14 HD: 1d8. Type: Animal, Beast, Fey, or Humanoid. Examples: a dire badger, a drow elf warrior, a dryad.
- 15-16 HD: 2d6. Type: Construct, Magical Beast, Monstrous Humanoid, or Plant. Examples: a medusa, a flesh golem, a treant, a blink dog.
- 17-18 HD: 4d4. Type: Aberration, Giant, Shapechanger, or Undead. Examples: a beholder, a frost giant, a werewolf, a mohrg, a giant skeleton.
- 19 HD: 5d4. Type: Elemental, Dragon, or Outsider. Examples: a young adult red dragon, a Huge earth elemental, a marilith (demon), a formian queen.
- 20 HD: 1d8+12. Type: Any. Examples: a titan, a 20th-level human wizard, a 6th-level yuan-ti abomination cleric.

* The number of creatures summoned is almost always one. If you desire one or more creatures, and wish to determine the number appearing randomly, simply roll 1d6 with 1-4 equaling one creature, 5 equaling two creatures, and a roll of 6 equaling three creatures. Alternatively, instead of multiple creatures of the same type coming through the portal, the DM might have one creature of the type rolled above and any additional creatures of a different type with less HD. For example, a frost giant might appear with three winter wolves. Any more than three would probably lay waste to both the tavern and the town if something really nasty comes through.

head a storm giant who once believed he was actually a halfling trapped in a body ten sizes too tall.

5. Kitchen

This cramped room was once a hallway, but Kaliban converted it into a kitchen when he rebuilt the temple interior. Qaddiq spends much of his time here preparing dishes (such as they are) for patrons. The twin hearths are used for the majority of the cooking, though there is also a small clay oven and braziers for grilling meats. Cupboards, shelves, tables, crates, and barrels make the kitchen even narrower. Food is taken to the common room using the stairs, though Qaddiq has been trying to talk Dogface into installing a dumbwaiter for the last couple months.

6. Private Room

This large room is reserved for patrons willing to pay the steep prices to rent it out. Like the upper commons, more pillows fill this room than anything else. Two double-sized beds occupy the north wall, and a towering hookah currently claims the center of the room. In one of the southern corners is a bathing tub, large enough to hold at least three people. Tavern employees are allowed to use the room only on the condition that they keep it clean.

7. Dogface's Quarters

Another private room, this is where Dogface resides. A very well appointed room, it holds expensive furniture, an imported writing desk brought over to this continent many years ago by a proud cleric who lost it to the house on a bad bet, a wardrobe, and, of all things, a garderober. While no trophies adorn the walls, Dogface has spread a couple of nice bear and wolf skins across the floor.

In a heavy, extremely well locked travel chest (see below), Dogface keeps the following items: 3,886 gp, a

potion of ghoul touch, a *wand of cure light wounds* (28 charges), and a +1 *greataxe*.

Door (Locked): 2 in. thick; Hardness 5; hp 15; Break (DC 18); Open Lock (DC 20).

Well-Locked Travel Chest: Hardness 5; hp 15; Break (DC 23); Open Lock (DC 30).

8. Storage Room

In addition to the barrels downstairs, one week's worth of ale, mead, and other beverages are kept in this room. A large trap door built in the center of the storage room floor opens into the common room below. Attached to the ceiling are a pulley and ropes for raising and lowering items through it. The room also functions as storage for the dry goods and food used by the kitchen.

For such a large room, it is incredibly crowded with crates, barrels, sacks, and anything else Dogface and Qaddiq can fit in here (including spare furniture.) One corner, however, has been cleared to allow Danal and Danille a temporary place to live. They are both extremely protective of their possessions and have set up numerous "traps" to discourage interlopers. These traps are mostly tripwires designed to pull precariously stacked chairs down on a person's head or to sound bell alarms. One device, though, shoots a poisoned crossbow bolt into a would-be thief. Yet strangely the twins keep nothing worth taking in their little private space. All it contains are some dirty blankets and half-eaten bread and hardtack.

Chair Trap: CR 1; no attack roll necessary (1d6 subdual); Reflex save (DC 12) avoids; Search (DC 12); Disable Device (DC 12).

Alarm: CR 1; no attack roll necessary; Search (DC 15); Disable Device (DC 10). *Note:* When tripped, three brass bells hanging in the corners of the room ring loudly, alerting anyone within 60 feet to the noise.

The Witch's Teat Menu

Ale & Mead

Bellowforge Bock
Darkdale Bogwheat
Pazeel Wanderer
Silver Cloud

Other Beverages

Acorn coffee
Darkdale burgundy
Rum cider
Willow bark tea

Cost

1 cp
2 cp
3 cp
1 cp
1 cp
3 sp
1 sp
2 cp

Food

Cabbage soup 1 cp
Barker kabobs 2 cp
Fried eggs and hardtack 3 cp
Barley cakes 2 cp
Meat of the day 6 cp
Unleavened bread, day-old 1 cp
Unleavened bread, fresh 4 cp

Other Services

Courtesan, low-ranking 8 sp
Courtesan, high-ranking 6 gp
Private room, per person, per night 6 gp

Crossbow Bolt Trap: CR 1; +5 ranged (1d8 and poison, 19-20/x2); Search (DC 20); Disable Device (DC 20).
Note: 160-ft. maximum range, target determined randomly from those in its path. The poison is asp venom (1d6/1d6 Con).

Goods & Services

The Witch's Teat offers a good selection of alcoholic beverages — unlike many other places in town — with at least three always on tap. It even offers an adequate non-alcoholic beverage selection. Food is run-of-the-mill pub grub, prepared by Qaddiq. It is not really that good, but the drunkards in the common rooms have so far not complained... or become ill.

Adventure Seeds

The following ideas can be used as seeds for adventures set in or around The Witch's Teat:

- Late one night, Jora, the daughter of Red Henrickson, replaces the spell stones around the Pit with counterfeits. She spiked the ale barrels with a potent soporific to ensure that late-staying revelers and the on-duty duel master would fall into a deep, dreamless sleep, affording her the opportunity to switch the stones unseen or unimpeded. Dogface offers a reward of 15,000 gp for their return. Jora Henrickson is a 14th-level sorcerer.

- One afternoon, a severely wounded planetar comes through the portal. Moments later, a half-elf dressed in midnight black leathers and wielding a silver sword follows. The half-elf slays the planetar without hesitation. Before the gladiators can jump into the pit to challenge

him, he explains that he is Senjick Wael and not only does he know the source of the portal's power, he is also willing to shut it down... for a fee. Dogface cannot decide if he wants the portal closed — after all, it has brought him more wealth, in one form or another, than he ever dreamed possible. Unfortunately, he recognizes the danger inherent in letting the portal continue to function. Meanwhile, word of the rogue's offer reaches the burgher and the town elders. They want the portal closed and will stop at nothing to raise the money Senjick requires. Senjick is a 20th-level rogue.

- Five bounty hunters come to the tavern seeking Thana Jotsdottir's head. Dogface, Qaddiq, and the tavern regulars refuse to let them have her. She is a part of their family now, despite the accusations the bounty hunters have presented, and they refuse to give her up without a fight. So, the bounty hunters retire to the forest outside town to formulate a plan. Meanwhile, Dana and Danille Gren plan to double-cross Thana and Dogface and turn her over to the hunters in exchange for a portion of the reward money.

- A vampire lord begins coming through the portal to feed late at night while everyone sleeps. When he finishes, he returns from whence he came by going back through the portal (something so far considered impossible). At first, no one dies, but eventually corpses start piling up — first one, then two, and then half the room. After three weeks of this situation, certain regular patrons transform into vampire spawn and go on a rampage. The vampire lord's nightly arrival is marked by sleeping patrons experiencing surreal dreams, milk and cheese in the kitchen curdling, ale going horribly sour, and vermin and supernatural creatures that share an emotional affinity with the vampire (bats, rats, a gargoyle on the roof, wolves, and so on) infesting the tavern.

The Quintain's Tower

"You-Mans Well Kom"

The ogres, bugbears, goblins, and other assorted humanoid creatures living in and around The Quintain's Tower are unusual in that they do not live by the mad urge to exterminate the so-called "beautiful" races (humans, elves, halflings, and so on). While they do not exactly like said races, they have reached a kind of emotional and social equilibrium within their own society that lets them ask questions first and shoot later when dealing with members of such races. Perhaps this development relates to the fact that the ogres are embroiled in a long-standing war with the local orc tribes and so have neither the time nor the inclination to hunt humans and their foul, smooth-skinned ilk. One of these days, the ogres will probably drop the informal truce they hold with the region's humans and go on a murderous rampage. Fortunately for the humans, this event will not happen as long as orcs plague the region.

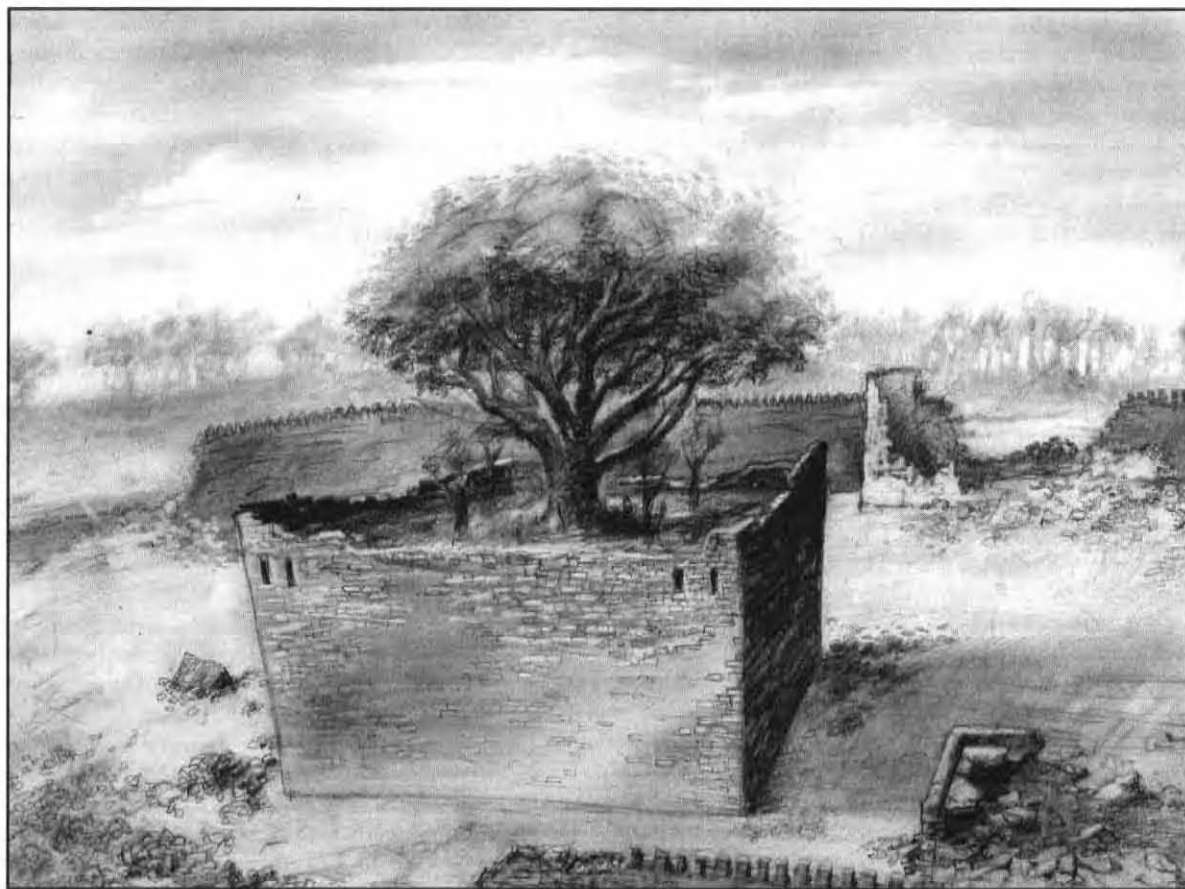
Nonetheless, humans and their allied races tread carefully while in the demesne of The Quintain's Tower. Even though the ogres do not necessarily look for trouble with them, they are more than happy to put down any outsider that gets too uppity or meddlesome.

A tavern, established in the ruins of a once-mighty castle, caters to the ogre and goblin tribes inhabiting the region and houses a conclave of rangers devoted to the memory of the manor's lady. Hundreds of years ago, the castle was known as *Caer Dunaven*, named for the duke and duchess who resided there with a contingent of ever-loyal knights. Today, people call the castle *Caer Dire*, the nobles' memory having crumbled into so much dust along with the stones that once made up its walls. The great tower stands at the heart of the ruins. Its hollowed-out ground floor, the tavern itself, is known as *The Quintain's Tower* — after a peculiar tale of love and madness set in the castle's remote past. Its upper floor functions as the rangers' roost, a strange, mysterious world unto itself where a tree can be sainted.

Annually, the ogres hold a trademeet on the castle grounds, with all manner of humanoid caravans coming to buy and sell wares of both the licit and illicit variety. The tavern's owner, *Brazzer Mandragora*, ensures that *Caer Dire* remains neutral ground through an impressive combination of cunning and might. Those who violate the laws or break the tenuous peace soon regret their actions.

Background

The castle fell 500 years ago — half a millennium since its walls felt the laughter and merriment of Lord and Lady *Dunaven*. *Utrek Dunaven* was a very promi-



nent duke in his king's council, while Sophia Dunaven (néé Westmarche) came from a highborn family that held the king deep in its debt thanks to considerable loans made to him for his war efforts against a neighboring kingdom. Unlike the vast majority of arranged marriages between noble families, Utrek and Sophia were very much in love. They traveled frequently between the kingdom's capital, where they kept their winter home, and the countryside, where they held court in the summer. Caer Dunaven was their summer home, a rustic manor and frontier fort combined.

Many years passed and Lord Dunaven fell out of favor with the king due to the machinations of the Dragul, a rival family. At the queen's behest, Utrek forfeited his manor near the capital and moved his household to Caer Dunaven permanently. Many more years fell by the wayside and his holdings shrank; each year he lost a small portion to the king's treasury only to see it awarded a month later to Lord Dragul. Finally, after ten years in exile, the king issued an edict that Caer Dunaven's demesne would become a vassal county of the Dragul, to whom Lord Dunaven and his wife would swear oaths of fealty. Angered and dishonored, Lord Dunaven refused. He was promptly labeled a traitorous outlaw, and his lands were officially ceded over to Lord Dragul. War was declared. Utrek's knights received the option of surrendering by royal proxy to Lord Dragul's seneschal and subsequently being ransomed from Caer Dunaven, thus absolving them of any complicity in their former liege's crimes. They refused, bound as they were by oath and love. With the war officially engaged, Lord Dragul's armies began their long siege.

During the months that followed, hardship became a way of life for those in the castle. Supplies ran low, the knights grew weary, and the castle walls gradually weakened under the constant assault from Lord Dragul's siege weapons. Utrek considered surrender, but Sophia would not hear of it. She could not bear the dishonor of her husband's cowardice if he capitulated. She had sent many messages by carrier pigeon and homing falcon to the Westmarche family, pleading for help of any kind. Dragul's archers shot down most of the carriers, but one finally managed to get through. Sophia's mother, wed to Lord Haring since Lord Westmarche's unfortunate hunting accident 10 years earlier, convinced her latest husband to talk to the king on Dunaven's behalf. A week later, Dragul's forces withdrew to the wood, ordered to stand-down for a fortnight while the king reconsidered. Displeased and disgruntled, Dragul sent assassins over the castle walls, but Dunaven's men killed them before they could wreak havoc. At the end of the reprieve, the king commanded Dragul to return Dunaven's familial holdings. The Dunavens' lands would be restored as would their titles, though the influence they wielded at court would be non-existent henceforth. Lady and Lord Haring, it seemed, had not only bent the king's ear — they had also filled his coffers with fresh coin, enough to ensure victory over the kingdom's enemies once and for all. The Dunavens, of course, were to pay the interest on

the loan in return for Haring's generosity and "faith" in them while the king reaped the benefits of it.

Lord Dunaven was a broken man afterwards, unmanned by his lack of courage during the siege and humiliated by his wife's rescue of the family. The annual payments to the Harrings would make them no better than a vassal county. Yet better than the Dragul. Lady Dunaven, meanwhile, felt shamed for the same reasons. She refused to break bread with her husband, taking her meals in the Lesser Hall. Eventually, she claimed the great tower for her own, unable to abide the outside world any longer as she slipped first into depression and then into madness. Each year as she retreated higher and higher away from the world, the tower's lower floors were cut down and the stairs lengthened. She became delusional, talking to visions of her dead sire, accusing him of setting up the whole affair by not giving the king the loans he required. Lord Dunaven and his knights continued to watch the frontier, spending increasingly more time away from the castle as they hunted down and annihilated the encroaching orc and hobgoblin tribes.

Soon, Sophia's madness reached its pinnacle. Down in the west bailey, she spied her one true love: a handsome knight, nay, a beautiful knight — from whose eyes the light bordered on being holy, from whose lips the voice could bring tears even to Lord Death's hollow orbs. Unfortunately, this knight was not human; he was not even alive. In fact, he was the *quintain* Lord Dunaven's knights used for tilting practice. Sophia commanded the quintain be brought to her chambers, and for the next six weeks it was her lover. The castle seneschal found himself at a complete loss as to what he should do. The manor women gossiped mockingly about their Lady's affair; the guards and knights left behind to watch the castle grew ashamed for their liege lord. When he returned and heard of his wife's latest antics, he flew into a rage. In her chambers, he accused her of attempting to drive him to his grave and claimed that she should have let Dragul take his head and spare him the dishonor she had brought to their name. She, in turn, responded with charges of cowardice, revealing to all who heard their shouts that he never intended to fight Dragul to the bitter end, that he instead wanted to abdicate. Heady with anger, he dragged her from the tower by her hair, kicked her, beat her, and finally tied her to the quintain's post in the west bailey. If she would take a jousting dummy for a lover, then she could take his house for her own, as was proper. From that day forward, she would be the quintain and the quintain her new lord. As such, the quintain received the great tower for its own domicile.

For five days, Lady Dunaven hung from the quintain's pole. Thirsty, hungry, and tired, she nevertheless refused to quit her mad ramblings. Lord Dunaven fell deeply into the wine bottles during this time. His knights, while still loyal to him, discussed their doubts. Finally, their captain approached Lord Dunaven in his Great Hall, where the broken lord slumped in his throne wearing only soiled bedclothes and stinking of alcohol. The captain begged his liege to release their

lady, to confine her to the tower at the very least; to leave her strapped to the pole would kill her before the week ended. Dunaven agreed, numbly, but only on the condition that she kneel before him, beg for mercy, and admit she did it all to spite him. The knights brought Lady Dunaven before her husband. She glared at him. When he issued his "request," a mad cackle escaped from her lips and she claimed the quintain was more of a man than six generations of Dunavens. At least it was not craven — it stood up to the knights' lances daily with a blind, unfaltering courage Utrec could only ever dream about. Lord Dunaven screamed in rage, issuing new orders to his men: tie her up again — and this time use her for tilting practice. When the captain hesitated, Dunaven drew his blade and threatened to lop off the other man's head if he refused to obey his liege lord.

Against their better judgment, the knights complied: Lady Dunaven was returned to the courtyard. Lord Dunaven remained behind in his hall, weeping. Shortly, the harsh thud of the first strike followed by a blood-curdling scream filled the air. There came second strike, then a third and a fourth. After the fifth and final strike, all the knights involved returned to him, knelt and asked humbly to be censured. They no longer felt they could uphold their vows and oaths, and so must be punished appropriately, they said. Dunaven nodded numbly, drew his sword and slid it into each of their hearts, one after the other. He told his seneschal to dispose of his wife's body and then retired to his chambers for the next five years straight, never to emerge alive from them again. The castle fell into disarray, the knights abandoned their lord, and by the time Dunaven wasted away from alcohol poisoning, not even Lord Dragul wanted the place.

The castle was occupied just one last time before becoming inhabited centuries later by its current denizens. Enemy forces took control of it in their war against Dunaven's king, but Caer Dunaven fell within three days under the assault of Dragul's army. It was an accursed place that no one in his right mind would inhabit — or so it seemed, until a tribe of goblins moved in, unaware of the castle's history. Later, human rangers also took up residence, claiming descent from the censured knights Dunaven had murdered in his hall. Finally, an ogre mage by the name of Brazzer Mandragora showed up and turned the great tower into a tavern.

Dramatis Personae

Of the numerous residents of Caer Dire and the surrounding lands, none are more colorful than the tavern's owner, **Brazzer Mandragora**, an ogre mage of no small repute. Three ogre tribes living in the area — **Warhammer**, **Steel Ring**, and **Black Iron** — allow Brazzer to serve as the final arbiter of local laws and customs, mostly out of fear for his magical might. The **Wood Wards of St. Sophia**, and their sheriff **Jon Oakborn**, are the highest human authority in the land, wielding their power sparingly yet brutally at times. His rival, **Sara of Westmarche**, was once a Wood Ward,

but she quit the group when Oakborn ordered her death. She leads a breakaway group of rangers who call themselves the **Riders of Westmarche**. Finally, there is **Freesifoot's Pootoon**, a tribe of goblins living under the tavern stairs. They often help Brazzer with his publican duties, especially when business booms.

Brazzer Mandragora

The seventh son of a seventh son; his mother was a witch, and she was burned alive; his father was an infamous warlock who challenged the gods themselves with his power: these are just a few of the tales surrounding Brazzer Mandragora. None of them are true, not even remotely. In reality, his parents were unexceptional, his tribe was typically mundane, and all he could really look forward to was a future at the top of a very small food chain. Ogre mages are rare in ogre society, so he received a little more respect than, say, his siblings, most of whom died in brawls before they reached puberty. As he grew older, he became increasingly dissatisfied with his life — raiding villages, killing innocents, and selling prisoners into slavery just was not his mug of ale. In fact, he preferred life away from his brethren as much as possible, spending time in the deep woods exploring ancient ruins or sneaking into the human villages late at night to steal books, scrolls, and anything else he could find to read (having taught himself years earlier while his moronic playmates contented themselves with pulling the legs off bobcats).

On one such excursion, Brazzer discovered a half-submerged temple in the heart of a swamp so large he took two weeks to reach it. The temple was older than time, he could feel it in his bones. Arcane glyphs covered every square inch of its walls, bristling with raw magical power and shedding a cold, argent light into brackish water. It looked as if the moon herself had drowned there.

The temple called out to him.

Brazzer spent the next 50 years there, using every waking moment to decipher the mysterious language on the walls when he was not traveling back to civilization to purchase rare historical tomes. One day, it finally happened. The years he spent studying paid off when he at last recognized a single word. He remembered seeing a similar word many years ago in a book he had purchased from a wandering party of dungeon delving adventurers. That one word eventually unlocked the wall's mysteries. The temple was not a temple at all, but a prison built in an age long forgotten. The words on the walls detailed an imprisoning enchantment designed to hold the most powerful wizards of the time. Learning the enchantment opened wide the doorways in Brazzer's soul to the arcane mysteries of the world, and he suddenly found himself on the sorcerer's road.

Eventually, he learned all he could from the sunken prison walls and moved on. He traveled for another half century, seeing the world and uncovering ancient secrets of sorcery wherever he went. In some places,

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civilized peoples reviled him for a hideous, blue-skinned freak; in others, they accepted him at face value for whom and what he was. Unfortunately, as his magical powers continued to grow, the years began to weigh heavily upon him. One hundred and twenty-some odd years were a long time for ogres to live — supernaturally long, actually. He decided finally to retire from the adventuring life. A decade earlier, told him the story of *Caer Dire*, and so went to find it, thinking it would make a nice place to spend the rest of his days. He found the castle in utter disarray, except for the great tower at its center, which had, of all things, a tree growing through its roof. Goblins lived in the north wall, while humans lived inside the great tower. This made for a strange arrangement, to be sure, but not one without its charm. The goblins were “tame” by the humans’ standards, while the humans could care less about with whom they shared the castle just so long as the tower’s solar was left alone. Brazzer moved into the tower’s ground floor, happy to have such... unique... company. He rebuilt the tower’s stairs, out of courtesy to the humans upstairs more than anything else, and they brought him food and drink when they could manage it. The goblins feared him at first, but gradually became accustomed to him. He built an alcohol still for himself; while he was happy for the rangers’ contributions, they did not come quite frequently enough for his tastes. One thing led to another, and within a couple of years of Brazzer’s arrival, an impromptu tavern had evolved.

That was nearly 50 years ago. The goblins moved into the stair infrastructure not long after Brazzer rebuilt it. The humans have seen another generation and have not

changed one iota in their outlook on life, which suits him just fine. They leave him well enough alone, though they are certainly not above drinking his ales when the mood overcomes them, and he is more than happy to leave them to their trees upstairs. The ogre tribes roaming the land have never learned to trust him fully, yet they do accept him and *The Quintain’s Tower* as a permanent part of the landscape now (or, at the very least, until his death). As barbaric as ogres everywhere tend to be, Brazzer has needed repeatedly to encourage the local tribes to behave properly while on castle grounds. The rangers take this request one step further and similarly encourage “proper conduct” within 50 miles of the castle. At first, the other ogres resented Brazzer’s intimations of authority over them. A well-timed display of his considerable magical powers quickly swayed them, however.

For reasons nobody knows, Brazzer fears cattle. He often goes out of his way to kill the poor beasts. Normally, he throws their carcasses into the sapper’s tunnel (where a few of them return from the grave as undead zombie cows, again for reasons no one can decipher). Strangely, he is not above using their meat to cook up pub grub if other supplies run low. Some of the rangers think he carries a curse that he does not know about. They will not tell him their suspicions, finding it more amusing to watch him go crazy whenever ranchers drive their cattle past the castle as they migrate to new feeding grounds or when wild cattle wander into the region (wild forest buffalo are particularly maddening for the ogre mage). Others suspect the phobia runs deeper than a simple curse, perhaps something he has held since childhood.

Brazzer Mandragora, Male Ogre Mage Sor12: CR 20; SZ L Giant; HD 5d8+20 plus 12d4+48; hp 118; Init +5 (Dex, Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft., fly 40 ft. (good); AC 15 (-1 size, +1 Dex, +5 natural); Atk +15/+10 melee (1d6+7, +2 *quarterstaff*) or +12/+7 melee (1d4+5, dagger, 19-20/x2); SA spell-like abilities, spells; SQ flight, regeneration (2), SR (18); AL NE; SV Fort +12, Ref +6, Will +10; Str 21, Dex 12, Con 19, Int 14, Wis 12, Cha 23.

Skills: Alchemy +12, Concentration +10, Knowledge (arcana) +10, Listen +4, Profession (innkeeper) +11, Scry +11, Spellcraft +12, Spot +4.

Feats: Combat Casting, Heighten Spell, Improved Initiative, Scribe Scroll, Silent Spell, Skill Focus (Alchemy).

Languages: Common, Draconic, Giant, Goblin.

Sorcerer Spells Known (cast per day: 6/8/8/7/7/6/4; base DC 16 + spell level): 0 — *dancing lights*, *detect magic*, *ghost sound*, *light*, *mage hand*, *open/close*, *prestidigitation*, *ray of frost*, *read magic*; 1st — *identify*, *magic missile*, *Nystal's magic aura*, *silent image*, *ventriloquism*; 2nd — *alter self*, *levitate*, *Mel's acid arrow*, *mirror image*, *summon monster II*; 3rd — *dispel magic*, *flame arrow*, *hold person*, *summon monster III*; 4th — *fire shield*, *hallucinatory terrain*, *polymorph self*; 5th — *cone of cold*, *wall of iron*; 6th — *mislead*.

Possessions: Excellent clothes; *ring of animal friendship*; *ring of sustenance*; *wand of suggestion* (23 charges); +2 *quarterstaff*; dagger; 2,451 gp; 1,211 gp in gems and jewelry.

Warhammer Tribe

This tribe of ogres owes its fame to its ruthlessness in making war against the orc and hobgoblin tribes to the north and west. Its members stop at nothing to kill their enemies, willing to take the hunt all the way to the heart of the orc cities if need be (though they first must find an orc city). The tribe's the second largest of the three inhabiting the region surrounding Caer Dire. Its warriors wield massive warhammers, thus giving the tribe its name. Warhammer ogres are physically impressive, being significantly stronger than the average ogre from other tribes. Their choice in weaponry might have something to do with this difference.

The tribe's leader is Fenner Packweasel, a towering specimen who rarely speaks; when he does, he uses calm, measured tones and carefully chosen words. While not the shiniest coin in the box, Fenner is nevertheless extremely patient and cunning. He and his warriors fight in small groups, preferring hit-and-run guerilla tactics to direct confrontation.

Of the three tribes, the Warhammers spend the least amount of time in The Quintain's Tower as they are usually out on the warpath. The times they return to the Tower, they often bear the spoils of war and more cured orc meat than Brazzer knows what to do with. The Warhammers bristle the most under the Wood Wards' totalitarian governing of the forest and seek one day to bring them down for good. Fenner particularly hates Jon Oakborn.

Warhammer Ogre, Male Ogre, Bbn1 (30): CR 3; SZ L Giant; HD 4d8+12 plus 1d12+3; hp 39; Init +0; Spd 30 ft. (base 40 ft.); AC 17 (-1 size, +3 hide, +5 natural); Atk +9 melee (1d8+5, warhammer, crit x3), or +3 ranged

(1d6, shortbow, crit x3, range 60 ft.); SQ rage (1/day), fast movement; AL CE; SV Fort +9, Ref +1, Will +3; Str 21, Dex 10, Con 17, Int 6, Wis 15, Cha 7.

Skills: Climb +8, Intimidate +2, Listen +4, Spot +4.

Feats: Blind-Fight, Weapon Focus (warhammer).

Languages: Giant.

Possessions: Hide armor, warhammer, shortbow, 20 arrows, manacles, a backpack filled with miscellaneous items, and 1d20 gp.

Warhammer Ogre, Male Ogre, War5 (10): CR 6; SZ L Giant; HD 4d8+16 plus 5d8+20; hp 71; Init +1; Spd 20 ft. (base 30 ft.); AC 21 (-1 size, +1 Dex, +6 armor, +5 natural); Atk +14/+9 melee (1d8+5, warhammer, crit x3) or +8/+3 ranged (1d6, shortbow, crit x3, range 60 ft.); AL LE; SV Fort +12, Ref +3, Will +2; Str 21, Dex 12, Con 18, Int 7, Wis 11, Cha 7.

Skills: Climb +3, Intimidate +2, Listen +2, Spot +2.

Feats: Cleave, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (warhammer).

Languages: Giant.

Possessions: +1 *chainmail*, warhammer, shortbow, 20 arrows, manacles, a backpack filled with miscellaneous items, and 5d20 gp.

Warhammer Ogre, Male Ogre, Adp3 (5): CR 4; SZ L Giant; HD 4d8 plus 3d6; hp 25; Init -2; Spd 30 ft.; AC 13 (-1 size, -2 Dex, +5 natural, *ring of protection* +1); Atk +8 melee (1d4+4, light hammer) or +1 ranged (1d4+4, light hammer, range 20 ft.); SA spells; AL LE; SV Fort +5, Ref +0, Will +6; Str 18, Dex 7, Con 10, Int 10, Wis 14, Cha 10.

Skills: Climb +8, Knowledge (nature) +8, Listen +4, Spot +4.

Feats: Brew Potion, Skill Focus (Knowledge [nature]), Weapon Focus (light hammer).

Languages: Common, Giant.

Adept Spells Prepared (3/3; base DC 12 + spell level): 0 — *cure minor wounds* (x2), *light*; 1st — *cure light wounds* (x2), *cause fear*.

Possessions: *Ring of protection* +1, light hammer, a backpack filled with miscellaneous items, and 3d20 gp.

Fenner Packweasel, Male Ogre Rgr10: CR 12; SZ L Giant; HD 4d8+12 plus 10d10+30; hp 107; Init +6 Dex, Improved Initiative; Spd 20 ft. (base 30 ft.); AC 25 (-1 size, +2 Dex, +7 armor, +2 shield, +5 natural); Atk +21/+16/+11 melee (1d10+11, +2 *greatclub*) or +15/+10/+5 ranged (1d8, composite longbow, crit x3, range 110 ft.); SA favored enemy (+4 human, +3 dwarf, +2 goblin, +1 elemental), spells; AL LE; SV Fort +14, Ref +6, Will +6; Str 22, Dex 15, Con 16, Int 12, Wis 15, Cha 9.

Skills: Animal Empathy +9, Climb +7, Concentration +8, Hide -1, Knowledge (nature) +11, Listen +4, Move Silently +2, Profession (bowyer) +7, Spot +4, Wilderness Lore +12.

Feats: Improved Initiative, Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Rapid Shot, Track, Weapon Focus (greatclub).

Languages: Common, Giant, Goblin.

Ranger Spells Prepared (2/2; base DC 12 + spell level): 1st — *summon nature's ally I*, *speak with animals*; 2nd — *cure light wounds*, *summon nature's ally's II*.

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Possessions: +2 breastplate, +1 small steel shield, +2 greathub, composite longbow, 20 arrows, ioun stone (dusty rose prism), a backpack filled with miscellaneous items, and 376 gp.

Steel Ring Tribe

This is the largest ogre tribe in the region, though not the most powerful. Poor organization and leaders addicted to natural drugs keeps the Steel Rings from achieving dominance. Their name comes from the peculiar weapon they like to wield: a large, broad-headed scimitar with a thick steel ring looped through its point. Tribal in-breeding has caused most of its members to bear some sort of genetic flaw, resulting in diverse effects ranging from severe mental retardation to missing limbs and stunted growth to an infant mortality rate exceeding 70%. How the Steel Rings maintain their high population is a mystery to everyone.

One genetic anomaly that virtually all Steel Rings share is a high susceptibility to addiction. In the case of the tribe's current crop of leaders, the addiction responds primarily to somaberries, a wickedly potent narcotic that can be found growing in the nearby forest. When eaten, the berries induce a near-catatonic state of bliss and hallucination that lasts for over six hours per dose. The Steel Ring's chieftain, Zurgadin Treelayer, is reportedly so addicted to somaberries that he spends all his waking hours in a drug-induced stupor, leaving management of the tribe to his second, Odekkor Blueblood, who is curiously immune to the drug's effect.

Steel Ring Ogre, Male Ogre Bbn1 (40): CR 3; SZ L Giant; HD 4d8+8 plus 1d12+2; hp 40; Init +0; Spd 30 ft. (base 40 ft.); AC 17 (-1 size, +3 hide, +5 natural); Atk +9 melee (1d6+5, scimitar, 18-20/x2) or +3 ranged (1d6+5, javelin, range 20 ft.); SQ rage (1/day), fast movement; AL NE; SV Fort +8, Ref +1, Will +1; Str 21, Dex 10, Con 15, Int 9, Wis 10, Cha 9.

Skills: Climb +8, Listen +2, Spot +2.

Feats: Combat Reflexes, Weapon Focus (scimitar).

Languages: Giant.

Possessions: Hide armor, scimitar, javelin, manacles, a backpack filled with miscellaneous items, and 1d20 gp.

Steel Ring Ogre, Male Ogre War4 (20): CR 5; SZ L Giant; HD 4d8+8 plus 4d8+8; hp 52; Init +0; Spd 20 ft. (base 30 ft.); AC 19 (-1 size, +5 armor, +5 natural); Atk +12/+7 melee (1d6+5, scimitar, 18-20/x2) or +6/+1 ranged (1d6+5,

javelin, range 20 ft.); AL CE; SV Fort +10, Ref +2, Will +2; Str 21, Dex 10, Con 15, Int 9, Wis 11, Cha 5.

Skills: Climb +8, Listen +2, Spot +2.

Feats: Cleave, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (scimitar).

Languages: Giant.

Possessions: +1 scale mail, scimitar, javelin, manacles, a backpack filled with miscellaneous items, and 4d20 gp.

Steel Ring Ogre, Male Ogre Adp2 (5): CR 3; SZ L Giant; HD 4d8 plus 2d6; hp 31; Init -2; Spd 30 ft.; AC 12 (-1 size, -2 Dex, +5 natural); Atk +7 melee (1d6+2, quarterstaff) or +2 ranged (1d4+2, dagger, 19-20/x2, range 10 ft.); SA spells; AL LE; SV Fort +4, Ref -1, Will +5; Str 14, Dex 7, Con 11, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 2.

Skills: Climb +6, Knowledge (arcana) +4, Listen +5, Spot +5.

Feats: Alertness, Weapon Focus (quarterstaff).

Languages: Common, Giant.

Adept Spells Prepared (3/2; base DC 11 + spell level): 0 — cure minor wounds (x2), , light; 1st — inflict light wounds, sleep.

Possessions: Quarterstaff, dagger, 2 potions of cure moderate wounds, potion of enlarge (5th level), 2d20 gp.

Zurgadin Treelayer, Male Ogre Ftr6: CR 8; SZ L Giant; HD 4d8+12 plus 6d10+18; hp 88; Init +1; Spd 20 ft. (base 30 ft.); AC 14 (-1 size, +1 Dex, +9 full plate, +5 natural); Atk +18/+13 melee (1d6+11, +1 scimitar, 18-20/x2) or +16/+11 melee (1d10+12, heavy flail, 19-20/x2) or +9/+4 ranged (1d6+8, javelin, range 20 ft.); AL LE; SV Fort +11, Ref +4, Will +4; Str 27, Dex 12, Con 16, Int 9, Wis 12, Cha 5.

Skills: Climb +7, Jump +6, Listen +3, Spot +3.

Feats: Blind-Fight, Cleave, Great Cleave, Power Attack, Quick Draw, Weapon Focus (scimitar), Weapon Specialization (scimitar).

Languages: Giant.

Possessions: +1 full plate, +1 scimitar, heavy flail, javelin, a backpack filled with miscellaneous items, and 302 gp.

Odekkor Blueblood, Male Ogre Ftr8: CR 10; SZ L Giant; HD 4d8+24 plus 8d10+48; hp 124; Init +5 (Dex, Improved Initiative); Spd 20 ft. (base 30 ft.); AC 25 (-1 size, +1 Dex, +10 full plate, +5 natural); Atk +21/+16/+11 melee (1d6+12, +1 scimitar, 15-20/x2) or +11/+6/+1 ranged (1d6+9, javelin, 20 ft.); AL NE; SV Fort +16, Ref +4, Will +2; Str 29, Dex 12, Con 22, Int 10, Wis 9, Cha 8.

Skills: Climb +15, Jump +11, Listen +3, Spot +3.

Feats: Alertness, Cleave, Great Cleave, Improved Critical (scimitar), Improved Initiative, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (scimitar), Weapon Specialization (scimitar).

Languages: Common, Giant.

Possessions: +2 full plate, +1 scimitar, javelin, bag of holding (type I) filled with miscellaneous items (including a whole smoked sheep in a gunnysack), and 351 gp.

Black Iron Tribe

The smallest of the area's resident ogre tribes, the Black Irons are also, all told, the most intelligent of the entire lot put together. Perhaps this is because they are not entirely of the ogre race. They are a mix between

Somaberries

Somaberries are glossy red poisonous berries that grow in clusters of 10 or 12 on thin parasitic vines that wind around oak and willow trees. A creature eating any of the berries is unaffected until he consumes a number of berries equal to his Constitution modifier (minimum of one berry for creatures with a negative Con modifier). At this time, the creature must make a successful Fortitude save (DC 25) or suffer a -4 competence penalty to attack and damage rolls, checks, and saves for the next 1d3 hours as the berries cloud the creature's mind.

orc and ogre; a race known as the *orog*. Their name, Black Iron, comes from the distinctive black iron armor they favor, forging it themselves with ore pulled from an "abandoned" dwarf mine in the south. Physically, their broad, flat noses, their relatively tiny ears, and their high foreheads set them apart from the other tribes. Also unlike the other two tribes, Black Iron ogres are both fastidious and clean.

Their leader is a proud female named Wolfbone Deathrattle, a shaman famous for the innumerable bone piercings she sports. She and Brazzer once engaged in a brief love affair, but he cut that off for reasons neither of them are willing to talk about. She currently has her eye on the sub-chieftain of the Warhammer tribe.

Rumors tell that the Black Irons are the least likely to enter into direct combat with the ogres' orc and hobgoblin enemies. Some attribute this reluctance to cowardice, others to treachery. Some even believe the Black Irons are so strange looking because they have orc blood in them.

Black Iron Ogre, Male Orog War1 (20): CR 2; SZ M [Orog]; HD 3d8+6 plus 1d8+2; hp 29; Init +1; Spd 20 ft. (base 30 ft.); AC 19 (+0 Dex [armor], +7 armor, +2 black iron shield); Atk +10 melee (1d8+9, black iron longsword); SQ orc/ogre blood, darkvision (60 ft.); AL LE; SV Fort +5, Ref +2, Will +2; Str 24, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 16, Wis 12, Cha 10.

Skills: Climb +8, Listen +6, Spot +6.

Feats: Alertness, Weapon Focus (longsword).

Languages: Common, Giant, Goblin, Orc, Ogre.

Possessions: Black iron breastplate*, black iron longsword*, small black iron shield*, manacles, a backpack filled with miscellaneous items, and 1d20 gp.

Black Iron Ogre, Male Orog War8 (5): CR 8; SZ M [Orog]; HD 3d8+6 plus 8d8+24; hp 80; Init +0; Spd 20 ft. (base 30 ft.); AC 19 (+9 armor); Atk +18/+13 melee (2d6+13, +1 black iron greatsword) or +10/+5 ranged; SQ orc/ogre blood, darkvision (60 ft.); AL LE; SV Fort +12, Ref +3, Will +4; Str 25, Dex 10, Con 16, Int 14, Wis 12, Cha 12.

Skills: Listen +8, Spot +8.

Feats: Alertness, Cleave, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (greatsword).

Languages: Common, Dwarven, Ogre, Orc.

Possessions: +2 black iron breastplate, +1 black iron greatsword, manacles, backpack filled with miscellaneous items and 8d20 gp.

Wolfbone Deathrattle, Female Orog Clr12: CR 13; SZ M [Orog]; HD 3d8+9 plus 12d8+36; hp 110; Init +0; Spd 20 ft. (base 30 ft.); AC 21 (+7 armor, ring of protection +2, +2 small black iron shield); Atk +17/+12 melee (1d8+8, +2 black iron heavy mace); SQ orc/ogre blood, darkvision (60 ft.), feat of strength (domain power); AL LE; SV Fort +14, Ref +7, Will +13; Str 18, Dex 10, Con 16, Int 18, Wis 18, Cha 12.

Skills: Alchemy +12, Concentration +18, Diplomacy +17, Knowledge (religion) +19, Listen +12, Spellcraft +19, Spot +12.

Black Iron Armor and Weapons

Black iron armor is made from a peculiar variant of normal iron that becomes black as coal when oxygen is pulled from it during the forging process, creating a weird type of "half-steel." Where the Black Iron Ogres learned to forge this metal is a mystery; suffice to say they are the only ones in the region that know how it is done. Armor forged from black iron tends to afford more protection than some varieties of steel armor, but it is unsurprisingly heavy and awkward to wear. The metal is not often used for weapons, since it is difficult to get the weight properly distributed.

Black Iron Breastplate: Medium armor; cost 650 gp; armor bonus +7; maximum Dex bonus +0; armor check penalty -6; arcane spell failure: 40%; speed 20 ft./15 ft.; weight: 40 lb.

Black Iron Small Shield: cost 20 gp; armor bonus +2; armor check penalty -2; arcane spell failure 10%; weight 15 lb.

Black Iron Weapon: As per the normal weapon, with the following modifications: attack -1; damage +2; critical threat range -1 (if the threat range is "20" this modifier does not apply); weight +20%; cost x2

Feats: Alertness, Brew Potion, Empower Spell, Lightning Reflexes, Maximize Spell, Weapon Focus (heavy mace).

Languages: Common, Draconic, Giant, Goblin, Ogre, Orc.

Cleric Spells Prepared (6/6/5/5/4/3/2; base DC 14 + spell level): 0 — detect magic, detect poison, inflict minor wounds, light, read magic, resistance; 1st — bane, cause fear, doom, inflict light wounds, obscuring mist, magic weapon; 2nd — darkness, death knell, delay poison, desecrate, inflict moderate wounds; 3rd — bestow curse, cure serious wounds, dispel magic, locate object, wind wall; 4th — discern lies, divine power, imbue with spell ability, inflict critical wounds, poison; 5th — break enchantment, circle of doom, spell resistance; 6th — antimagic field, greater dispelling.

Domains (Strength, War) 1st — endure elements; 2nd — bull's strength; 3rd — magic vestment; 4th — spell immunity; 5th — flame strike; 6th — blade barrier.

Possessions: Black iron breastplate, small black iron shield, ring of protection +2, +2 black iron heavy mace, scroll of gaseous form, scroll of magic circle against good, backpack filled with miscellaneous items, and 412 gp.

*See the sidebar for information on black iron weapons and armor.

Note: The Orog is detailed in the *Tome of Horrors* by Necromancer Games. See that book for more information.

The Wood Wards of St. Sophia

They claim descent from the original knights responsible for stringing up and killing Lady Dunaven, whom they call St. Sophia. While Lord Dunaven killed the knights after they committed their crime, he left their wives and children alone. The families' shame was great, so the wives vowed never to let their children, or

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their children's children, forget what their fathers had done. Over the years, the families broke up and moved on, but some of the children remembered and in turn taught their descendants. Now, many generations later, few of the knights' descendants actually learn the tale of their awful family history. Those who do and hear St. Sophia's "calling" eventually find their way to Caer Dire, where the Wood Wards adopt them.

The Wood Wards are primarily guardians of the tree growing from the top of the great tower. Tales claim that the tree began growing from the quintain immediately upon Sophia's death, supposedly a reincarnation of the woman killed so horribly at the hands of her husband's men. How or why she became a tree remains a mystery to this day, though each Wood Ward has his or her own theory. The tree is about 500 years old, and it *does* grow within Sophia's original chambers, so already the evidence weighs in the Wood Wards' favor (to hear them argue the matter). They believe she will one day return, perhaps emerging from the tree trunk like a dryad or maybe transforming the tree altogether. When the day comes, the Wood Wards hope to be prepared. The land will be cleared of Sophia's enemies, and she will rebuild the kingdom in her name and with her ideals. Already, they control about 50 miles of the land around Caer Dire. Because their liege lady is a tree, they have learned nature's ways over the course of many decades, respecting the land as they respect her (and her saplings). As such, every Wood Ward is a ranger.

Unlike the average rangers of other lands, the Wood Wards do not bear any particular malice toward goblinoids. In fact, they tend to get along pretty

well with them — although they and the ogre tribes are not necessarily best friends. Rather, they have reached a mutual understanding. The Wood Wards do actively go after orcs and hobgoblins, though, sharing the ogres' enmity toward those races. The Wood Wards will also hunt down members of the so-called "good races" if the laws they and Brazzer Mandragora have issued are violated in the least. Brazzer's an odd one, in their estimation, but certainly not intolerable. They have become quite fond of the tavern in recent years, actually, visiting it when their duties do not keep them otherwise preoccupied.

Some Wood Wards are prone to having "visions" that allegedly come directly from St. Sophia. Such Wood Wards are called "greensouls" and are the most respected members of Wood Ward society. Most greensouls become druids, though such a choice certainly is not mandatory. Whether the visions are genuine or not remains a matter for debate (namely, outside Wood Ward society, among visitors — inside Wood Ward society, no one questions their validity or authenticity).

Wood Ward, Vassal, Male Human Rgr 1 (30): CR 1; SZ M; HD 1d10; hp 10; Init +3; Spd 30 ft.; AC 17 (+3 Dex, +4 chain shirt); Atk +3 melee (1d8+2, longsword, 19-20/x2) or +4 ranged (1d6, shortbow, crit x3, range 60 ft.); SA favored enemy (+1 goblins); AL NE; SV Fort +2, Ref +3, Will +4; Str 14, Dex 17, Con 11, Int 13, Wis 18, Cha 9.

Skills: Animal Empathy +3, Climb +4, Heal +8, Ride (horse) +7, Spot +8, Wilderness Lore +8.

Feats: Combat Reflexes, Quick Draw, Track.

Languages: Common, Elven.



Possessions: Chain shirt, longsword, shortbow, 20 arrows, manacles, backpack filled with miscellaneous items, and 1d10 gp.

Wood Ward, Shiren, Male Human Rgr4 (40): CR 4; SZ M; HD 4d10+8; hp 28; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; AC 16 (+2 Dex, +4 armor); Atk +8 melee (1d8+2, masterwork longsword, 19-20/x2) or +6 ranged (1d6, shortbow, crit x3, range 60 ft.); SA favored enemy (+1 giants), spells; AL NE; SV Fort +5, Ref +3, Will +2; Str 14, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 11, Wis 12, Cha 11.

Skills: Animal Empathy +7, Concentration +8, Handle Animal +7 (+9 with animals), Knowledge (nature) +2, Ride (horse) +4, Search +3, Wilderness Lore +8.

Feats: Blind-Fight, Power Attack, Track, Weapon Focus (longsword).

Languages: Common.

Ranger Spells Prepared (1; base DC 11 + spell level): 1st — detect snares and pits.

Possessions: chainshirt, masterwork longsword, shortbow, 20 arrows, manacles, backpack filled with miscellaneous items, and 4d10 gp.

Wood Ward, Tracker, Male Human Rgr6 (20): CR 6; SZ M; HD 6d10+6; hp 40; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; AC 17 (+2 Dex, +5 armor); Atk +11/+6 melee (1d8+4, +1 longsword, 19-20/x2) or +8/+3 ranged (1d8, composite longbow, crit x3, range 110 ft.); SA favored enemy (+2 giants, +1 humans), spells; AL NE; SV Fort +6, Ref +6, Will +3; Str 16, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 12, Wis 13, Cha 11.

Skills: Climb +10, Hide +9, Intuit Direction +9, Listen +6, Spot +6, Use Rope +13, Wilderness Lore +10.

Feats: Combat Reflexes, Lightning Reflexes, Skill Focus (Use Rope), Track, Weapon Focus (longsword).

Languages: Common, Giant.

Ranger Spells Prepared (2; base DC 11 + spell level): 1st — detect snares and pits, entangle.

Possessions: +1 chain shirt, +1 longsword, composite longbow, 20 arrows, manacles, backpack filled with miscellaneous items, and 6d10 gp.

Wood Ward, Reeve, Male Human Rgr8 (10): CR 8; SZ M; HD 8d10+8; hp 71; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; AC 18 (+2 Dex, +6 armor); Atk +13/+8 melee (1d8+4, +1 longsword, 19-20/x2) or +10/+5 ranged (1d8+3, +1 mighty composite longbow crit x3, range 110 ft.); SA favored enemy (+2 giants, +1 goblins), spells; AL NE; SV Fort +7, Ref +4, Will +5; Str 16, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 12, Wis 17, Cha 11.

Skills: Animal Empathy +10, Hide +10, Listen +10, Move Silently +9, Profession (bowyer) +11, Ride (horse) +12, Spot +5, Wilderness Lore +13.

Feats: Combat Reflexes, Endurance, Power Attack, Track, Weapon Focus (longsword).

Languages: Common, Giant, Goblin.

Ranger Spells Prepared (2/1; base DC 13 + spell level): 1st — detect snares and pits, entangle; 2nd — snare.

Possessions: +2 chain shirt, +1 longsword, +1 mighty composite longbow (Str +3), 20 arrows, manacles, backpack filled with miscellaneous items, and 8d10 gp.

Wood Ward, Greensoul, Male Human Drd5 (4): CR 5; SZ M; HD 5d8; hp 23; Init +3; Spd 30 ft.; AC 17 (+3 Dex, +4 armor); Atk +3 melee (1d10+1, +1 longspear, crit

x3); SA spells; SQ nature sense, woodland stride, trackless step, resist nature's lure, wild shape (1/day); AL NE; SV Fort +4, Ref +4, Will +8; Str 10, Dex 16, Con 11, Int 12, Wis 18, Cha 12.

Skills: Concentration +8, Handle Animal +5, Heal +10, Intuit Direction +10, Knowledge (nature) +9, Scry +9, Spellcraft +9.

Feats: Dodge, Heighten Spell, Scribe Scroll.

Languages: Common, Druidic, Giant.

Druid Spells Prepared (5/4/3/2; base DC 14 + spell level): 0 — detect magic, detect poison, flare, light, resistance; 1st — animal friendship, detect animals or plants, goodberry, invisibility to animals; 2nd — barkskin, charm person or animal, summon nature's ally II; 3rd — call lightning, summon nature's ally III.

Possessions: +1 hide armor, +1 longspear, scroll of command, scroll of invisibility to animals, 2 scrolls of cure moderate wounds, scroll of cure serious wounds, scroll of plant growth, backpack filled with miscellaneous items, and 4d4 gp.

Jon Oakborn, Wood Ward Sheriff

The current leader of the Wood Wards, Oakborn is a tough, sometimes ruthlessly vicious man with no patience for meandering. He was born into the Wood Wards (unlike many who find their way into its ranks), the child of a prominent greensoul, who died during childbirth, and the group's former sheriff, who died three years ago in an orc ambush. Jon is tall and fit, with raven black hair, crisp blue eyes, and ghostly white skin. He favors black armor and silver weaponry to accent his natural pale coloring. All told, he presents quite a dramatic, almost theatrical image.

In the years since assuming the mantle of authority over his brethren, Oakborn has brought to them a stronger sense of purpose and focus. Utterly convinced of the Wood Wards' "divine right" to the land, Jon believes deeply that they will be absolved of the crimes their forefathers committed when St. Sophia returns and that they will help her reclaim the lands and titles that are rightfully hers. Oakborn sees himself at her side, siring the Westmarche heirs and leading her army against the kingdom (what remains of it) that so horribly used her for its political machinations. Lord Dunaven brought shame to everyone serving under his banner. Jon hopes to restore the pride, name, and honor of the knights' descendants. Slowly but surely, he is turning the Wood Wards into an organized fighting force to be reckoned with.

While he enjoys Brazzer Mandragora's company, Jon knows that one of these days he must kill the ogre mage. According to the greensouls, the Reckoning is almost at hand. On the day St. Sophia emerges from the tree, not only will Brazzer die at Wood Ward hands, but so too will the ogre tribes: the castle must be purified and restored to the glory it once represented, and the ogres simply do not form part of the equation. If Oakborn detests anyone, it is Sara of Westmarche, a former Wood Ward turned rebel and highway robber. Her blasphemous claim that she is St. Sophia's direct descendant sets his nerves on edge and

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makes him want to kill something, anything — especially her.

Jon Oakborn, Male Human Rgr10: CR 10; SZ M; HD 10d10+10; hp 76; Init +7 (Dex, Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft.; AC 20 (+3 Dex, +7 armor); Atk +16/+11 melee (1d8+5, +2 *longsword*, 19-20/x2) or +14/+9 ranged (1d8+5, +1 *mighty composite longbow*, crit x3, range 110 ft.); SA favored enemy (+3 giants, +2 goblins, +1 humans), spells; AL LE; SV Fort +8, Ref +6, Will +4; Str 16, Dex 16, Con 12, Int 14, Wis 12, Cha 11.

Skills: Animal Empathy +10, Craft (bowmaking) +9, Handle Animal +9, Heal +10, Hide +6, Listen +8, Move Silently +5, Ride (horse) +13, Search +4, Wilderness Lore +13.

Feats: Alertness, Improved Initiative, Quick Draw, Track, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (*longsword*).

Languages: Common, Giant, Goblin.

Ranger Spells Prepared (2/1; base DC 11 + spell level): 1st — *detect snares and pits*, *pass without trace*; 2nd — *summon nature's ally II*.

Possessions: +3 *chain shirt*, +2 *longsword*, +1 *mighty composite longbow* (Str +3), 20 arrows, backpack filled with miscellaneous items, and 220 gp.

Riders of Westmarche

While they all claim descent from the five men who murdered St. Sophia, they sympathize with Sara's cause and have given their fealty to her. Conveniently, she can overlook their blood relation to the Wood Wards and gladly rides as their captain. Most of the Riders were already on the fringe of Wood Ward society when they followed her flight: some were criminals whose slight blood connection to the families kept them alive, though just barely; others resented the Oakborn family and the elders loyal to them, and so eagerly jumped at the chance to side with Sara.

Lately, Sara and her top lieutenants have started recruiting warriors from abroad to their cause, promising them great wealth should they help the Riders bring down the Wood Wards. So far, 10 have signed up. The mercenaries are especially useful because they are unknown in and around Caer Dire, so Sara uses them primarily for spying, sending them to The Quintain's Tower as wandering soldiers and adventurers and seeing what information they can gather from the Wood Wards not on watch or out on patrol. Soldiers first and foremost, Sara's mercenaries are not too good at spying, unfortunately. Word has been put out in less reputable circles that she also wants rogues, bards, and wizards.

The Riders of Westmarche live in a network of abandoned ogre caves about two days ride from Caer Dire. The ogre tribes tolerate them as much as they do the Wood Wards, essentially viewing them as two sides of the same coin. Certainly, relations are not hurt by the Riders' aid to the ogres in their war against the orcs and hobgoblins.

Rider, Whitefeather, Male Human Rgr1 (10): CR 1; SZ M; HD 1d10+1; hp 11; Init +1; Spd 30 ft.; AC 14 (+1 Dex, +3 armor); Atk +3 melee (1d6+2, rapier, 18-20/

x2) or +2 ranged (1d8, composite longbow, crit x3, range 110 ft.); SA favored enemy (+1 giants); AL NG; SV Fort +3, Ref +1, Will +0; Str 14, Dex 13, Con 12, Int 11, Wis 10, Cha 10.

Skills: Animal Empathy +4, Handle Animal +4, Knowledge (nature) +4, Ride (horse) +5, Wilderness Lore +4.

Feats: Combat Reflexes, Power Attack, Track.

Languages: Common.

Possessions: Studded leather armor, rapier, composite longbow, 20 arrows, manacles, backpack filled with miscellaneous items, and 1d10 gp.

Rider, Redfeather, Male Human Rgr3 (10): CR 3; SZ M; HD 3d10; hp 21; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; AC 16 (+2 Dex, +4 armor); Atk +5 melee (1d6+1, rapier, 18-20/x2) or +6 ranged (1d8, masterwork composite longbow, crit x3, range 110 ft.); SA favored enemy (+1 goblin); AL NG; SV Fort +3, Ref +3, Will +2; Str 13, Dex 14, Con 10, Int 11, Wis 12, Cha 12.

Skills: Animal Empathy +7, Craft (bowmaking) +6, Handle Animal +7 (+9 with animals), Ride (horse) +8, Wilderness Lore +7.

Feats: Dodge, Power Attack, Track, Weapon Finesse (rapier).

Languages: Common.

Possessions: +1 *studded leather armor*, rapier, masterwork composite longbow, 20 masterwork arrows, manacles, backpack filled with miscellaneous items, and 3d10 gp.

Rider, Blackfeather, Male Human Rgr5 (5): CR 5; SZ M; HD 5d10+10; hp 43; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; AC 15 (+2 Dex, +3 armor); Atk +8 melee (1d6+2, +1 *rapier*, 18-20/x2) or +7 ranged (1d8+1, *mighty composite longbow*, crit x3, range 110 ft.); SA favored enemy (+2 goblins, +1 giants), spells; AL NG; SV Fort +6, Ref +3, Will +2; Str 12, Dex 15, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 10.

Skills: Animal Empathy +8, Hide +5, Listen +5, Move Silently +5, Ride (horse) +10, Spot +5, Wilderness Lore +9.

Feats: Endurance, Mounted Combat, Track, Weapon Finesse (rapier).

Languages: Common.

Ranger Spells Prepared (1; base DC 11 + spell level): 1st — *detect snares and pits*.

Possessions: Studded leather armor, +1 *rapier*, *mighty composite longbow* (Str +1), 20 arrows, manacles, backpack filled with miscellaneous items, and 5d10 gp.

Mercenary Recruit, Male Human Rgr1 (8): CR 1; SZ M; HD 1d10; hp 10; Init +6 (Dex, Improved Initiative); Spd 20 ft. (base 30 ft.); AC 19 (+2 Dex, +6 armor, +1 shield); Atk +2 melee (1d8, *longsword*, 19-20/x2); SA favored enemy (+1 giants); AL CG; SV Fort +2, Ref +2, Will +0; Str 11, Dex 14, Con 11, Int 12, Wis 11, Cha 11.

Skills: Animal Empathy +2, Craft (weaponsmithing) +4, Handle Animal +4, Heal +2, Hide +0, Move Silently -2, Wilderness Lore +4.

Feats: Improved Initiative, Track, Weapon Focus (*longsword*).

Languages: Common, Elven.

Possessions: Banded mail, small steel shield, *longsword*, backpack filled with miscellaneous items, and 2d20 gp.



Mercenary Sergeant, Male Human Ftr3 (2): CR 3; SZ M; HD 3d10+6; hp 22; Init +4 (, Improved Initiative); Spd 20 ft. (base 30 ft.); AC 18 (+6 armor, +2 shield); Atk +6 melee (1d10+2, bastard sword, 19-20/x2) or +3 ranged (1d6, shortbow, crit x3, range 60 ft.); AL CG; SV Fort +5, Ref +1, Will +1; Str 14, Dex 11, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 11, Cha 10.

Skills: Climb +2, Profession (soldier) +6, Ride (horse) +6.

Feats: Blind-Fight, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (bastard sword), Improved Initiative, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (bastard sword).

Languages: Common.

Possessions: +1 small steel shield, banded mail, bastard sword, shortbow, 20 arrows, backpack filled with miscellaneous items, and 4d20 gp.

Sara of Westmarche

Born to a family of merchants 27 years ago, Sara discovered the Wood Wards when her father brought her to the trademeet at the age of nine. The following year, she ran away to join them. At first, their leader balked because she did not descend from one of the five founding bloodlines. Yet the fire in her eyes and her sheer determination, already evident despite her age, convinced him to let her join. He adopted Sara into the Oakborn family and raised her as Jon's stepsister, which the boy clearly resented.

In her 17th year, the visions started. No one understood how she could have them, not being a true Wood Ward, yet they could not deny their validity. The group's greensouls admitted the girl must share a link with St. Sophia. Initially, the role of clan oracle did not fit her

well, but she soon grew accustomed to it. Unlike the other greensouls, though, she did not cease her training as a ranger to become a druid. On her 20th birthday, the last vision she was ever to experience came to her: St. Sophia, beautiful and young, stood before her in a white gown and haloed in a holy green light. As the woman spoke, without words but directly to Sara's heart, blood flowed down the woman's thighs. Sara awoke, ghostly words echoing in her mind that she was Sophia's heir apparent.

She went to the Wood Wards' sheriff and clan elders straight away, conveying the gist of what she had seen. To prove the vision's reality, she revealed that one of the five founding knights had raped Sophia before they tilted against her, and she singled out that knight's descendants — Jon Oakborn and his father. The elders had always known this information, and the Oakborn family's shame was especially great. Jon's father left the meeting. The boy just stared at her, wishing her dead, hand on his longsword and ready to kill her himself. Fortunately, the elders stayed Jon's hand. The greensouls in attendance affirmed the vision's reality, but suggested that Sara's claim must have other meaning. It was impossible that Sara was the daughter-descendent of Lady Sophia Dunaven: St. Sophia died upon the quintain's pole, and she was not pregnant at the time. Nonetheless, Sara remained firm in her conviction; she also did not know how she could be related to St. Sophia, yet it was true. She had heard the calling even though she was not a descendent of the first five families. She had experienced visions like the greensouls. She knew, in her heart, that Lady Sophia was her mother.

The next day, orcs ambushed Jon Oakborn's father. The sheriff was so careless and distraught that the orcs had little

trouble catching him unaware. Jon's first act as the new sheriff was to order Sara killed and hung from the Red Crown inside the great tower for her blasphemy. She escaped, along with a few loyalists whom she had previously converted to her cause. Today, she leads a separate group of rangers called the Riders of Westmarche. Because they are less numerous and less skilled than the Wood Wards, they must confine themselves to the fringes of Wood Ward territory, attacking the Wood Wards and passers-by with hit-and-run tactics, always fading into the forest before retaliation can find them. Sara plans one day to destroy the Wood Wards, holding all of them accountable for the crimes of their ancestors. She hopes to convince the ogres to aid her.

Sara of Westmarche, Female Human Rgr8: CR 8; SZ M; HD 8d10+8; hp 47; Init +5; Spd 30 ft.; AC 20 (+4 Dex [armor], +6 armor); Atk +15/+10 melee (1d8+6, +2 longsword, 19-20/x2) or +15/+10 ranged (1d8, masterwork longbow, crit x3, range 100 ft.); SA favored enemy (+2 goblins, +1 bugbears), spells; AL CG; SV Fort +7, Ref +7, Will +4; Str 18, Dex 20, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 15, Cha 12.

Skills: Animal Empathy +9, Heal +10, Hide +9, Listen +10, Move Silently +9, Ride (horse) +11, Spot +10, Wilderness Lore +13.

Feats: Alertness, Blind-Fight, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (longsword), Track.

Languages: Common.

Ranger Spells Prepared (2/1; base DC 12 + spell level): 1st — *animal friendship*, *speak with animals*; 2nd — *animal messenger*.

Possessions: +2 chain shirt, +2 longsword, masterwork longbow, 20 masterwork arrows, backpack filled with miscellaneous items, and 100 gp.

Freesifoot's Pootoon

The goblins have lived in Caer Dire for as long as anyone can remember, some say even before the Wood Wards. King Freesifoot claims he is the 300th ruler in an unbroken chain of goblin nobility. His followers, the *pootoon* (a goblin word literally meaning "helluva bloody lot," but also variously meaning "tribe" and "big military unit"), live inside the tavern among the timber crossbeams supporting a giant stairway. They did not always live there, though — the stairs were rebuilt only 50 years ago after Brazzer Mandragora showed up. Before then, they lived in the castle wall and tower ruins. Since the ogre's arrival, their lives have improved considerably.

Their incredibly red eyes and the white bands marking their skin make Freesifoot's goblins stand out. These natural stripes give them a tiger-like appearance, but having never seen a tiger, none of the goblins would know this. They prefer to call the stripes "beauty marks." The more stripes on a goblin, the more highly the others regard him or her.

They do not much like the humans living in the solar above them, finding them too stuffy and serious for their own good. The ogres can be good fun, especially after they get a couple of buckets of ale in them. Unfortu-

nately, the members of Black Iron Tribe seem to think throwing goblins across the common room for sport is utterly hilarious. The goblins admit the flight itself is quite fun, but the landing hurts like hell. As such, they tend to avoid the Black Iron ogres whenever possible. Of all the ogres, though, they like Brazzer the best. He even pays some of them to help manage the brewing still and serve patrons when the tavern gets crowded.

Freesifoot Goblins (45): hp 6 each.

King Freesifoot, Male Goblin Sor5: CR 5; SZ S [Goblinoid]; HD 5d4; hp 12; Init +1; Spd 30 ft.; AC 12 (+1 size, +1 Dex); Atk +4 melee (1d4+1, +1 dagger, 19-20/x2); SA spells; SQ darkvision (60 ft.); AL NE; SV Fort +1, Ref +2, Will +4; Str 10, Dex 12, Con 11, Int 13, Wis 11, Cha 14 (16 with cloak).

Skills: Concentration +6, Hide +8, Knowledge (arcana) +6, Scry +6, Spellcraft +7.

Feats: Brew Potion, Combat Casting.

Languages: Common, Goblin.

Sorcerer Spells Known (Cast Per Day: 6/7/5; base DC 12 [13 with cloak] + spell level): 0 — *detect magic*, *ghost sound*, *light*, *mage hand*, *prestidigitation*, *read magic*; 1st — *identify*, *magic missile*, *shield*, *summon monster I*; 2nd — *arcane lock*, *mirror image*.

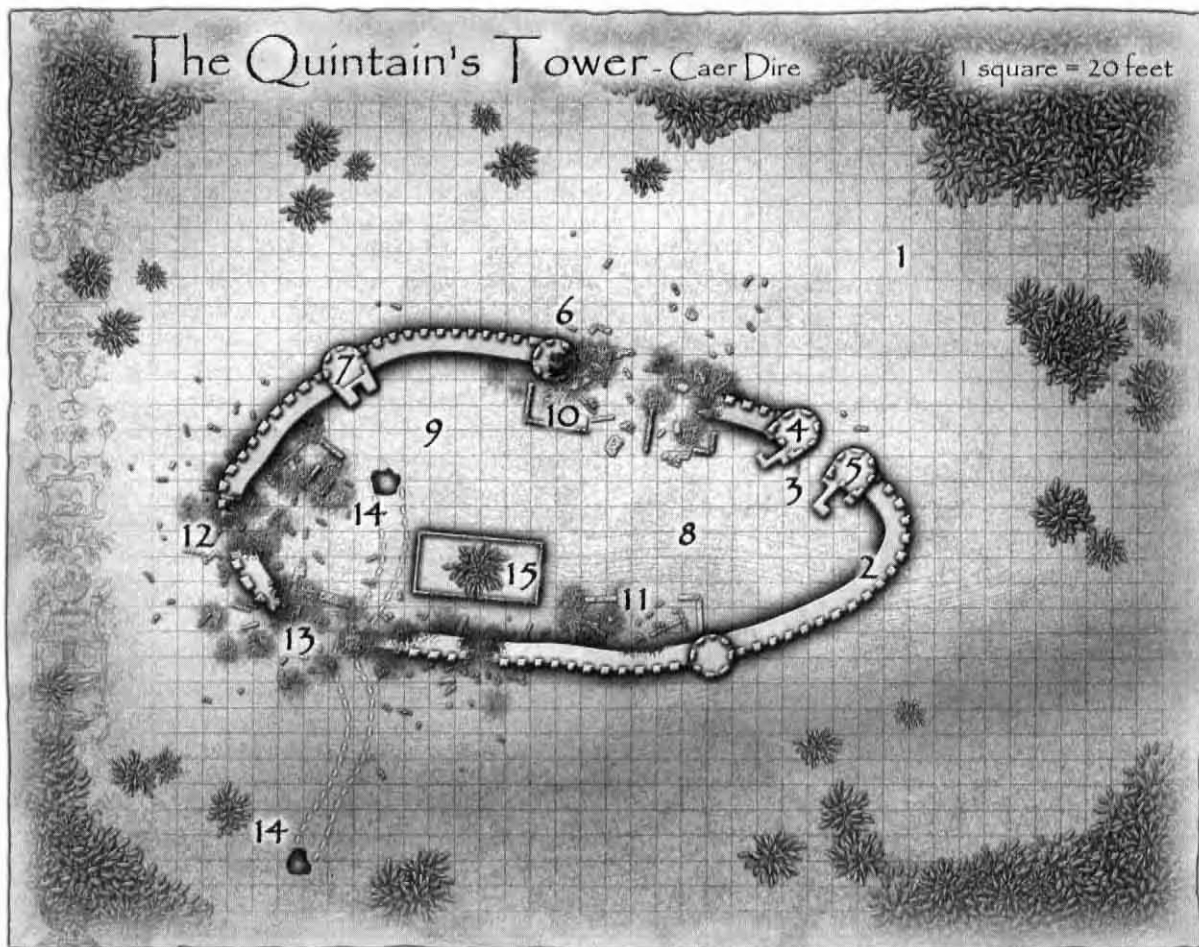
Possessions: Cloak of Charisma +2, +1 dagger, and 599 gp.

Caer Dire

The castle and the lands surrounding it are located in a remote wilderness area relatively free of civilization. Ogre and goblin tribes rule the area immediately around it, along with the small population of human rangers with whom they more or less co-exist peacefully. The forests of Caer Dire are generally regrowth, so the trees are not as old or as tall as those in other similarly isolated areas. The Wood Wards keep the animal populations in balance, allowing the three ogre tribes to hunt within a fifty-mile radius of Caer Dire as long as they do not exceed certain quotas. The ogres comply for the most part, as the rangers otherwise leave them to their own devices, which is quite unusual. Beyond the fifty-mile border of the Wood Wards' territory, one encounters dense clusters of orc and hobgoblin tribes, the descendants of military units from a war all but forgotten these days.

I. Demesne

While the land about Caer Dire is heavily forested and lightly inhabited by humanoid races, the hill the castle sits upon — called the *motte* by the Wood Wards — is mostly devoid of trees, though more appear at its base. From atop the hill, the denizens of the ruins have an excellent view of the forest in all directions, especially from the top of The Quintain's Tower, the crown of which rises higher than the tallest tree. Despite the presence of so many ogres and goblins, deer run freely through the wood, as do numerous other mundane animals. The Wood Wards allow limited hunting by the humanoid tribes, in part to keep the animal populations stabilized but primarily because they recognize the need for the others to eat. When they can manage it, the Wood Wards hunt animals in more remote territo-



ries and bring their dressed carcasses back to the castle to supplement the tribal hunting. They also donate fruits and vegetables grown in the solar of The Quintain's Tower to Brazzer's gigantic stew pots.

2. Walls

The castle walls, of course, no longer stand as high as they once did. Nevertheless, the portion that remains offers quite a formidable barrier to overcome. Standing 20 feet tall at its highest and a mere 5 feet at its lowest, the walls are built out of rough hewn stone and earthen mortar. In places where they have not collapsed, the walls are hollow with tight walkways. A few sections have flared arrow loops set into the wall 15 feet up, the wooden planks that once allowed archers to fire through them long ago rotted away. The top of the wall is broad, almost 25 feet across and large enough to allow for carts, catapults, and ballistae, and it is serrated along the outer face with toothy battlements.

Two gangs of bugbears live inside the wall stretching between the northernmost watchtower ruins and the prison. An old corpulent ex-mercenary named Dunagal Stroat leads the Red-Ear gang while a young female ranger named Varluka Selt leads the other gang, called Loud Howl. Both groups claim portions of the inner wall as their individual territory. They tolerate one another, but just barely.

Red-Ear (7) and Loud-Howl (4) Bugbears: hp 16 each.

Dunagal Stroat, Male Bugbear, Ftr3: CR 5; SZ M [Goblinoid]; HD 3d8+9 plus 3d10+9; hp 48; Init +1; Spd 30 ft.; AC 19 (+1 Dex, +5 armor, +3 natural); Atk +9 melee (2d6+4, greatsword, 19-20/x2); SQ Darkvision (60 ft.); AL NE; SV Fort +7, Ref +7, Will +2; Str 16, Dex 12, Con 16, Int 11, Wis 10, Cha 10.

Skills: Climb +9, Hide +3, Listen +3, Move Silently +2, Spot +3.

Feats: Alertness, Blind-Fight, Combat Reflexes, Lightning Reflexes, Weapon Focus (greatsword).

Languages: Common, Goblin.

Possessions: +1 chain shirt, greatsword, backpack filled with miscellaneous items, and 3d20 gp.

Varluka Selt, Female Bugbear, Rgr5: CR 7; SZ M [Goblinoid]; HD 3d8+9 plus 5d10+15; hp 76; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; AC 20 (+2 Dex, +5 armor, +3 natural); Atk +14/+9 melee (2d6+8, +1 greatsword, 19-20/x2); SA favored enemy(+2 elves, +1 humans), spells; SQ darkvision (60 ft.); AL LE; SV Fort +8, Ref +6, Will +5; Str 20, Dex 14, Con 16, Int 10, Wis 16, Cha 8.

Skills: Animal Empathy +3, Climb +7, Hide +4, Listen +6, Move Silently +7, Spot +6, Wilderness Lore +11.

Feats: Alertness, Blind-Fight, Track, Weapon Focus (greatsword).

Languages: Common, Goblin.

Ranger Spells Prepared (1; base DC 13 + spell level): 1st — *pass without trace*.

Possessions: +1 chain shirt, +1 greatsword, backpack filled with miscellaneous items (including a small wooden tube of lip rouge imported from the East worth approximately 112 gp), and 5d20 gp.

3. Gatehouse Ruins

This gap between the two guard towers once contained the guardhouse and barbican. Now just a pile of rubble remains. On warm, sunny days, King Freesifoot likes to picnic here with his two handmaidens and watch the goings-on in the forest below, such as they are.

4. North Guard Tower

This tower once housed Lord Dunaven's gatehouse guards. It used to have three floors joined by a narrow timber staircase, and it accommodated 15 men, but now a hollow shell is left. The tower roof is gone, exposing the interior to the sky above, and bird and squirrel nests fill the arrow-loops. A single, recently cut wooden beam crosses the roof gap. Thick hemp rope dangles from the beam. Goblins use it for a lookout post, when they can remember to post lookouts.

5. South Guard Tower

Much like the north guard tower, this one housed some of the gatehouse guards, namely the officers. It, too, once had three floors, though now only the ground floor and the uppermost floor remain. The stairs disintegrated into dust centuries ago, thus a wooden ladder ascends to the top floor. Rebuilt innumerable times, the tower's roof is intact. A bugbear named Gonagal Stroat lives here. He used to be part of the Loud-Howl gang living in the north wall until Varluka ran him off. His elder brother is Dunagal Stroat, the Red-Ears' leader, whom he absolutely loathes. Gonagal intermittently works for Brazzer by keeping watch on the northeastern woods. He hates humans, and Brazzer constantly reprimands him for slights against the Wood Wards and those merely passing through the area. When not in the tower spying through the arrow loops on those outside it, Gonagal preys on unwary travelers, fancying himself something of a highwayman. The Wood Wards do what they can to protect travelers; fortunately, Gonagal is hardly much of a threat to anyone but himself.

Gonagal Stroat, Male Bugbear, Ftr2: CR 4; SZ M [Goblinoid]; HD 3d8+6 plus 2d10+4; hp 37; Init +5 (Dex, Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft.; AC 18 (+1 Dex, +4 armor, +3 natural); Atk +10 melee (2d6+7, +1 greatsword, 19-20/x2); SQ darkvision (60 ft.); AL NE; SV Fort +6, Ref +4, Will +1; Str 18, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 8.

Skills: Climb +8, Hide +3, Listen +3, Move Silently +6, Spot +3.

Feats: Alertness, Blind-Fight, Improved Initiative, Weapon Focus (greatsword).

Languages: Common, Goblin.

Possessions: Chain shirt, +1 greatsword, and 1d12 gp.

6. Watch Tower Ruins

Lord Dunaven's men once used these two watch towers to keep an eye out for enemies. Each tower stands 45 feet high. The north tower is half-collapsed and completely uninhabitable, its stones constantly shifting and its walls on the cusp of falling over completely. The Wood Wards use the south tower. Inside, a string of ladders ascending through trapdoors links together four sturdy wooden floors. If threatened, the Wood Wards can pull the ladders up and seal the trapdoors with stone weights. At any given time, two Wood Wards have watch duty, taking station on the roof or the fourth floor when the weather turns foul. The first three floors are uninhabited, used instead for storing weapons found in the forest on the bodies of those unfortunates waylaid by Sara's bandits or by woodland beasts.

Trapdoors: 2 in. thick; Hardness 5; hp 20; Break (DC 23).

7. Prison

This stocky, thick-walled tower's original purpose is lost to time. These days, Brazzer imprisons those who break the castle peace here, as well as orc prisoners taken by the three ogre tribes. The tower has two stone floors above the ground floor and stairs strong enough to allow the massive ogres to ascend them. The second and third floors have six stone cells each. The cell doors are made from three black iron plates and locked with heavy chains and padlocks. Inside each cell are a brass chamber pot, a stone sleeping tablet, and hay. Prisoners must empty their own chamber pots as well as rid their cell of food waste and other detritus, usually by tossing it through the narrow square windows of their cell. The ground floor contains fresh hay, crates of iron rations, and barrels of semi-stagnant water. An ogre guard from one of the three tribes stands duty only when prisoners are held upstairs. Occasionally, the nearby bugbear gangs get hired for guard duty if the prisoners are not especially valuable.

Cell Doors: 2 in. thick; Hardness 10; hp 60; Break (DC 28).

8. East Bailey

In the castle's glory days, this was a pleasantly grassy courtyard. The grass is long gone, however, replaced by dirt and mud. In the spring, the trademeet sets up camp here, sometimes spilling over into the West Bailey (only as a last resort, owing to the stench) or into the motte if more caravans than usual show up during a given year.

The Trademeet

Originally, the trademeet took place every spring when the ogre tribes returned to the castle in order to gather and exchange the spoils of their war against the orcs and hobgoblins. Over the years, it has changed considerably, becoming the largest mercantile rendezvous in the region. Caravans from all over show up for the four-week event, carrying people of all races — elves, halflings, humans, goblins, lizardfolk, and so on. Everyone is welcome, even very limited numbers of orcs and hobgoblins, despite the tensions with the ogres. (The trademeet is the only truce the ogres will ever honor with their enemies.) Most merchants use the trademeet for the opportunity to move their goods to other countries without actually going to those places

themselves, working out complex but highly profitable trade agreements with trusted merchants who come from such countries, and vice versa. The trademeet has become a mid-way distribution center for exotic goods.

During this time, the Wood Wards and the ogre tribes are especially quick to enforce Brazzer's and Oakborn's laws. Violators receive no mercy whatsoever as a lesson to any who would copy their crimes, their bodies strung from the Red Crown inside the great tower. The most common crime, naturally, is highway robbery. Fortunately, those keeping the peace are exceptionally good at what they do, and so the castle and its surrounding lands are probably safer during the trademeet than any other time of year. Yet because tensions run high (they are bound to when that many races from so many conflicting alignments get together), the Black Iron ogres hold Brazzer-sanctioned "death matches" down the hill, near the sapper's tunnel entrance. Grievances are worked out in fights or duels to the death.

9. West Bailey

This area appears the same as the East Bailey, except that it was not so much a courtyard as a training ground for Lord Dunaven's knights. Its most notable feature is the massive hole at the center of the yard, the exit of the sapper's tunnel winding through the interior of the castle hill. Considerable foot traffic passes between the tunnel mouth and other parts of Caer Dire because everyone dumps their garbage here. The smell coming from the tunnel is nauseating at best.

Freesifoot's goblins often sit along the rim of the hole and "fish" for rats. Rat fishing involves one goblin rubbing a length hemp rope with especially rancid bits of cattle fat, dipping it in the hole, and carefully drawing it back up when a giant rat climbs aboard for a sniff and a lick. A second goblin then clubs the rat to death as soon as it clears the hole. The goblins typically go rat fishing late at night when the filthy vermin are most active.

10. Great Hall Ruins

This is the shattered remnants of the castle's Great Hall, where Lord and Lady Dunaven took their meals, received guests, heard reports from the village reeves, sat in judgment over the affairs of their vassals, and generally conducted their business. All that stands now are rotten timbers, crumbling masonry, and shards of the wall that once buffered it from the outside world.

11. Lesser Hall Ruins

Like the Great Hall, the Lesser Hall lies in ruin. It once contained Utrec Dunaven's private quarters, dining rooms, parlors, and a private chapel. The Wood Wards assigned to duty in the south watchtower use the Lesser Hall for their horses now, tying them to timber and letting them graze on the grass growing between the rubble.

12. Barracks Ruins

The rubble of the old castle barracks, which housed Lord Dunaven's knights, squires, and men-at-arms, litters the ground here. While the ruins have long been picked clean of

valuables, fragile, rusty weapons and armor may still be found here.

A 30-foot spruce-wood pole rises from the center of the barracks' ruins, bearing Brazzer's standard: a rook and a broken lance.

13. Livery Ruins

Even less remains of this part of the castle than of the barracks. The most notable feature is the skeleton of an ancient mangonel that appears to be crawling from the debris surrounding it. Otherwise, nothing is left except for aging wall stones and petrified timbers.

Jutting from the siege weapon's heart is a 30-foot spruce-wood pole bearing the Wood Wards' standard: a tree mounted atop a rook.

14. Sapper's Tunnel

A remnant of the last real battle the castle withstood, this tunnel begins at the base of the motte and terminates inside the west bailey. It was originally tall and wide enough for two or three ogres to stand comfortably upright within, shoulder-to-shoulder. Much of it has collapsed, while rock debris and all manner of humanoid garbage fill the portions still intact. An unusual number of cattle carcasses fill the tunnel's southern end, deposited there by Brazzer. Hordes of vermin and other kinds of animal scavengers infest the tunnel, ranging in a size from Tiny to Large. Bears can often be found rustling around in the tunnel's south exit, feeding on putrefying cow flesh.

The stench of rot is so awful that any non-goblin or non-ogre standing within 20 feet of either opening must make a successful Will save (DC 18) or become sickened, suffering a -1 circumstance penalty to attack rolls, checks, and saves for the next 1d6 rounds.

Late at night, an unearthly, spine-chilling lowing can be heard drifting out from the tunnel's darkest depths.

15. Quintain's Tower

This is the castle's great tower, which once rose almost 100 feet. Currently, it stands approximately 70 feet high, 100 feet wide, and no longer has a roof—instead, a 60-foot tall tree grows from its upper floor. The tower is named for the tilting quintain Lady Dunaven took as a lover during her madness.

Wandering Monsters in the Sapper's Tunnel

Roll a wandering monster check once per hour (using a 1d20):

Roll	Result
1	4d8 dire rats
2	1d3 black bears
3	1d4+1 fire beetles
4	1d4+1 large monstrous spiders
5-20	No encounter

For more detailed information on The Quintain's Tower, refer to the following section.

The Establishment

In its heyday, the great tower constituted the heart of the castle's defenses, with hundreds of arrow loops piercing the walls and great ballistae occupying its upper floors. Later, it became Lady Dunaven's private abode, with all but the upper four floors cleared out. Today, just the solar remains, home to the Wood Wards, as well as the tree they call St. Sophia and her saplings. The tower's walls are 5 feet thick, and the sole entrance is located on the north side, facing the west bailey. The doors are solidly built from a pair of thick oak-wood slates. When the sky is clear, hundreds of beams of golden sunlight stream through the tower's hollow windows and arrow loops, casting an almost holy light into the interior.

Unless otherwise noted, The Quintain Tower's stats are as follows:

Walls: 5 ft. thick; Hardness 8; hp 810; Break (DC 50).

1. Common Room

Coming in through the tower's arched doors, the first sight one notices is the gargantuan staircase winding its way around the inside wall. An extraordinary network of timber crossbeams, which are inhabited by King Freesifoot's goblins, supports the stairs in their ascent to the solar some 50 or so feet above. Debris litters the room's stone floor, and enough haphazardly constructed tables and chairs are placed about the tavern to seat two hundred patrons comfortably while still leaving plenty room for moving about. Five fairly sizeable cook fires burn in various places, becoming tiny islands of orange light as the sun sets outside. Quite disconcerting to newcomers are the ochre-stained buckets placed set around the room to catch blood falling from the ceiling (see Area 4, The Red Crown, below). Brazzer Mandragora, the tavern's current "owner," maintains a massive ale and mead still in the southeast corner. Supplies packed into crates, barrels of fresh ale and mead, empty barrels waiting to be filled, and sacks of hops and barely are stacked high on either side of the impromptu brewery. Woodchips of oak, hickory, and spruce are piled up behind the still.

A huge wooden chandelier hangs from the ceiling by a rope as thick as a human's arm. Yellow-gray wax drips from it like so many pasty stalagmites. The chandelier has not seen use for illumination in many generations, though the goblin children find it fun to play on.

In times when business is booming (such as when a neutral army passes through the area or during a trademeet), Freesifoot's goblins (male and female alike) assume the roles of "saucy serving wenches" and wait on patrons, much to the patrons' chagrin.

Double Doors: 2 in. thick; Hardness 5; hp 20; Break (DC 23).

2. Goblin Villa

The stairs leading to the solar above begin on the east wall and wind their way around until they terminate at the floor above on the west wall. The staircase and the crossbeams holding it are collectively called the "Goblin Villa" for the tribe of goblins inhabiting them. King Freesifoot, the tribe's leader, pays rent in the sum of 20 gp a month to Brazzer. In addition, the goblins provide Brazzer with other services such as a steady supply of Goblin Mead, keeping watch when the ogre tribes are out of the territory making war against the orcs and hobgoblins, and attempting—at the very least—to keep the common room clean (by goblin standards).

Built into the crossbeams are dozens of nests, platforms, and huts. Whole goblin families live here, some of them having never once set foot on the ground below. At night, when the cook fires cast their feeble light into the tower's darkness, the Goblin Villa looks like a dim field of stars for all the candles burning up there. Larger fires are not permitted in order to keep the stairs from accidentally igniting.

The constant chatter of goblin voices permeates the Villa, regardless of the hour. People climbing the stairs are often subjected to an unending stream of abuse as their footsteps thunder in the ears of the goblins living directly beneath their feet. King Freesifoot's throne is located below the stairs' terminus on the west wall. The platform on which it rests is large enough to support 10 goblins or 5 humans or 1 ogre (roughly half a ton). It juts 15 feet out from the staircase, with bracers and additional beams attached to the wall or rising up from the floor helping to support its weight. The goblins' diminutive mead still is built into the base of the stairs on the east wall, behind a stack of crates belonging to Brazzer. When he is absent, goblin youths love to monkey down the hemp rope from which the chandelier dangles and get it swinging.

3. Brazzer's Still

This rough collection of vats, tubes, ovens, and other miscellaneous clockwork devices is used by Brazzer for brewing his "distinctive" alcoholic beverages. He built it himself, in four days if one believes the stories he tells about it—and it shows. Only he can make sense of the machine, apparently. The smell of fermenting hops and barley that fills the common room is not entirely unpleasant, just rather strong. After a couple of hours and many rounds of the pub favorite, few even notice the smell anymore, truth be told.

The most common drink available is *Cracked Claw*, an extremely bitter barley ale so thick it is practically chewable. *Goblin Mead*, brewed by Freesifoot's brewmasters, is a rich amber color and light on the tongue. Once a month, Brazzer brews two special drinks: *Knuckle Bones*, which gets its distinctive musty flavor from the bones of slain orc warriors (used in lieu of wood chips in the fermenting vats); and *Spruce Ale*, a lighter version of *Cracked Claw* that uses, as per the name, spruce wood chips to give it flavor. The Wood Wards also contribute something to the tavern: *Lord Fern's Bitter*, a mossy green ale that they acquire from a highly secretive conclave of druidic mendicants in return for hunting services rendered. The bitter has a heady, earthy flavor and an aftertaste reminiscent of hay. Finally, if a group of patrons would rather buy ale by volume instead of by the flagon, there is the *Botte Av Harsk*, a literal bucket filled to the rim with a rancid, low quality ale brewed from flavor-depleted

wood chips, rotten barley, and bad hops. This drink is always available, since any given shipment of fresh supplies is bound to contain material that does not make the grade, as it were.

Every fourth day at approximately 6 PM, a brass whistle atop the still lets loose a piercingly shrill *toot* that can be heard all over the castle compound, signifying that the most recent batch of brew is ready. At this time, 15-20 goblins descend from the Villa and spend the next two hours "barreling the booze." While much of it gets shipped out, most gets consumed on the spot over the following two or three days. Goblins also help out with "chipping" — shoveling wood chips from the piles behind the still into empty vats after removing the chips that have already been used. They dump the used chips in the sapper's tunnel.

Most patrons have the good sense to leave the still alone. If anyone other than the duly authorized goblin assistants touches it, Brazzer pummels him then throws him in the sapper's tunnel. No exceptions.

4. The Red Crown

The roots of St. Sophia pierce the floor of the solar to dangle above the common room like a druid hierophant's crown. They are collectively called the "Red Crown" because the corpses of those who violate the Wood Wards' laws are impaled upon them, their blood staining the roots red.

Blood dripping from the crown puts a considerable crimp in Brazzer's business — in fact, some tables and spots on the floor are permanently stained as a result.

He has repeatedly asked the Wood Wards to consider hanging criminals from the tower's exterior walls, but they refuse, claiming the blood soaking the tree's roots helps to keep it alive.

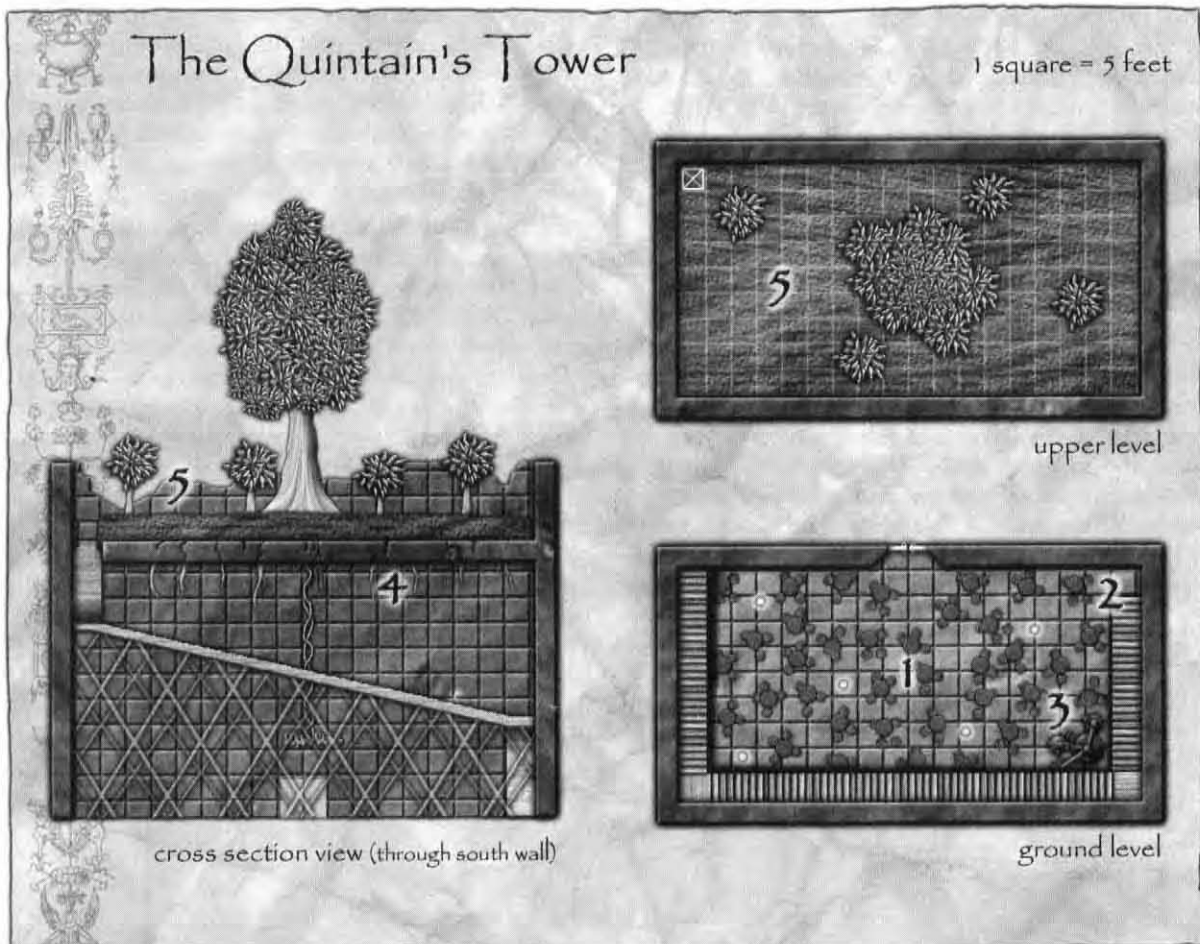
5. The Solar

The stairs of Goblin Villa end at a hole in the second story of the great tower that opens into this room. Once it was the Lady Dunaven's solar. While it still retains the name, it has become the Wood Wards' home. Growing out of four feet of the blackest imported dirt available is a 60-foot high tree they call St. Sophia and her four saplings. There is no roof, so the trees and the room are exposed to the elements. When the Wood Wards are not out wandering, hunting, or taking watch duties, they can be found here, worshipping at the tree's base during their waking hours. They keep no huts or houses: just the ground, the tree, and the open sky.

At any given time, 2d6 Wood Wards are in the room. Outsiders, including the resident ogres and goblins, are explicitly not welcome unless invited. A trapdoor can be closed over the stairs. The floor itself is a good 4 feet thick and has been enchanted to support the weight and life of the trees growing atop it. Despite the enchantment, the trees' roots have somehow managed to grow through the floor seams.

Floor: 4 ft. thick; Hardness 7; hp 576; Break (DC 25). A variant of the *ironwood* spell permanently enchants it.

Trapdoor: 2 in. thick; Hardness 5; hp 20; Break (DC 23).



The Quintain's Tower Menu

Ale & Mead	Cost
<i>Bøtte Av Harsk</i>	1 cp
Cracked Claw	2 cp
Goblin Mead	1 cp
Knuckle Bones	4 cp
Lord Fern's Bitter	4 cp
Spruce Ale	1 cp
Food	
Bailey rat stew	2 cp
Beef stew	3 cp

Black bear steaks	1 sp
Black bear stew	6 cp
Fire beetle crunch	1 cp
Grilled orc	2 sp
Steamed giant spider legs	3 cp
Zombie cow steaks	1 cp
Other Services	
Goblin nest, per night	2 cp
Goblin courtesan, per night	1 sp
Wood Ward guide, per day	5 gp
Wood Ward hunter, per day	12 gp

St. Sophia

This oak tree constitutes the center of the Wood Wards' world — they firmly believe she (not "it") is the reincarnation of the Lady Sophia Dunaven, otherwise known as St. Sophia. For all intents and purposes, the tree is as ordinary as ordinary can be, other than the fact she grows on top of a tower. The dirt in the solar nourishes her, as does rain from the sky and blood from the criminals soaking her roots. The Wood Wards constantly recycle the dirt, carting in fresh shipments every two or three months. Acorns harvested from the tree are given to Brazzer for the tavern, which the ogre mage uses to make acorn coffee (a Wood Ward favorite).

Four times a day, the Wood Wards present in the solar hold prayer ceremonies at St. Sophia's base. They leave offerings and ask for blessings at a small, primitive-looking altar erected there.

Goods & Services

The Quintain's Tower offers more to drink than anything else. Food is served on the basis of availability, the most common dishes being beef-based or those made by the Villa goblins using whatever they get from the sapper's tunnel. The tavern has no rooms, though patrons are welcome to sleep on the floors and tables if they wish. Rafter nests may be rented from King Freesifoot's brewmasters, which are slightly more comfortable than the alternative.

Adventure Seeds

The following ideas can be used as seeds for adventures set in or around The Quintain's Tower:

- A section of the sapper's tunnel collapses one day, revealing a hole that leads to an underground network of rooms and corridors beneath the castle ruins. The musty odor of death wafts

from it, as does an almost palpable sense of dread. Brazzer offers a reward for anyone who descends into the dungeon and returns alive to tell about it. Why he does not go himself is unknown. Perhaps an ancient, powerful evil awaits the curious, one that even Brazzer fears despite his formidable magic. Or, maybe he does not care what lies down there and just wants to see if anyone takes him up on the offer.

- Lord Dragul's descendants return to the castle to claim it as their own. Surprised to find it inhabited by barbaric beasts such as ogres, goblins, and wild humans, they give the order that everyone — and everything — must vacate the castle before sundown the next day. When the deadline arrives, the Dragul soldiers find the ogres, humans, and goblins united in their stand against them. Thus begins a replay of events from 500 years earlier. Can the castle denizens hold out inside a ruined fortress against a professional army?

- During the trademeet, a small army of treants emerges from the surrounding wood to gather at the base of The Quintain's Tower. For three days they do nothing, just stand there silently in vigil. The Wood Wards take their presence and behavior for an omen and similarly gather to kneel, pray, and attempt to pry information and blessings from the silent tree people. The ogres, always suspicious of the humans, keep careful watch on them for signs of treachery. As the trademeet winds down, the treants start singing a deep, throaty hymn that reverberates through stone, steel, wood, and bone alike. This lasts for three days, and then something wonderful happens.

- Every autumn a flock of rocs migrates south from their roost 300 miles away, always stopping for a couple of days at the castle to rest and feed in its demesne. This year, they arrive earlier and in fewer numbers. Something is clearly wrong. After a week, they still have not left, and their alpha male has fallen gravely ill. A dark cloud gathers on the northern horizon. The rocs are obviously afraid of it, and each day it comes closer and closer to the castle. When it arrives, can the patrons, the Wood Wards, or the ogre tribes stop it? More importantly, are they willing?

The Horse Lord

Just outside of town is an inn and a corral all built into one establishment: The Horse Lord. It is rustic and quaint, despite the rough clientele to whom it caters, namely the wranglers and herd masters driving their horses to market. At one time, it achieved more fame than it probably deserved, with its proprietor Rosalind Gray engaged in a torrid public affair with a local centaur chieftain. Life has quieted down in the years since the centaur's untimely death. Nonetheless, townsfolk and wrangler alike seem to enjoy The Horse Lord quite a lot. On any given night of the week, the common room is packed with patrons and its stables are filled with horses.

Background

The Horse Lord is a relatively new establishment. Rosalind Gray built it just under a decade ago using money she inherited from her late husband just after he passed away. An adventurer in his younger days, he was forced to retire when he came down with *blacklung* while exploring ancient Dwarven ruins with his comrades, a disease that ultimately killed him. Raised on a farm, Rosalind had absolutely loved horses for as long as she could remember, so nobody was surprised when she chose to open The Horse Lord on the outskirts of town. In the early days, the tavern had a hard go at it, mainly due to the competition on the opposite side of town. The Greendale Corrals had served as the main holding area for arriving horse herds since the town's early days. Soon after Rosalind opened her place, a series of mysterious "accidents" were visited upon her. Fires repeatedly broke out late at night in the stables, freshly tapped ale barrels were discovered to contain vinegar, and horses corralled out back more often than not came down with *bloodhoof*, *shivertail*, and *mossbone*. Everyone could see that the Greendales would stop at nothing to drive Rosalind out of

Dwarf Oil

Dwarf oil is made by mixing rare herbs and spices together and casting a *heal* and *regenerate* spell on the mixture. It is used to cure *blacklung*. It has no other known application.

Caster Level: 13th; Prerequisites: Craft Wondrous Item, *heal*, *regenerate*; Market Price: 3,300 gp.

business. Yet she refused to give up. The Horse Lord was everything to her, and she would fight to the death to keep it alive if need be.

Two years later, business still suffered. The herd masters held no special fondness for the Greendales, and many would have preferred to corral up at The Horse Lord, but they could not risk their horses coming down with sickness. Everybody knew the Greendales were responsible, but nobody could prove it. One day, a bright-eyed young man named Edgar Spence showed up at Rosalind's place. He told her he was an apprentice healer and asked if he could ply his trade in her stables. Rosalind agreed gratefully and in short order the cause of the diseases was revealed — contaminated well water. Using his magic, Edgar removed the curse and soon business returned. The Greendale family finally resorted to outright intimidation tactics, but the herd masters and wranglers did not stand for it, sometimes reinforcing their opinions with their swords. Today, almost the only business the Greendales get is overflow from The Horse Lord during the bi-annual rendezvous as well as the occasional, inexplicably spiteful herd master who prefers to take his or her business anywhere but The Horse Lord.

Sickness and Disease

The diseases detailed follow the standard rules for disease (see Disease, Chapter 3 in the *DMG*). Each new disease is summarized in the table below. A description of each follows the table.

Disease	Infection	DC	Incubation	Damage
Blacklung*	Inhaled	15	1 month	1/2 Con†
Bloodhoof	Contact	13	1d4 days	1d3 Con††
Mossbone	Ingested	13	1d3 days	1d2 Con, 1d2 Dex
Shivertail	Contact/Ingested	15	1 day	1d8 Con

*Special steps must be taken to cure this disease.

†Blacklung deals 1 point of permanent Constitution drain every other month.

††If the creature suffers 2 or more points of temporary damage, he must immediately make succeed at another Fortitude save or lose 1 ability point permanently.

Blacklung: Spread by inhaling coal, rock, steel, or mithral dust (such as found in mines, blacksmith shops, etc.). Symptoms include a hacking cough and exhaustion. This disease can only be cured through the successful casting of a *wish* or *miracle* spell or by the application of dwarf oil (see below).

Bloodhoof: This disease only affects equines (horses, pegasus, for example) or equine-like creatures (centaurs, for example). Symptoms include the cracking of skin and bleeding around the joints.

Mossbone: Another equine or equine-like only disease, symptoms of mossbone include the victim's teeth turning a dark green, pink discoloration in the urine, brittle bones, and thin blood.

Shivertail: Another equine or equine-like only disease, symptoms of shivertail include muscle or heart spasms, cramps, and localized swelling and pain in the muscular parts of the body.

Four years ago, centaurs from the Bright Feather tribe began coming to The Horse Lord for Edgar Spence's healing services after their own druid succumbed to *shivertail*. Their chieftain, a large, intelligent fellow named Standing Tall, caught Rosalind's eye. He returned more frequently, using any excuse in his arsenal, and she took to visiting the chieftain in the south barn where Edgar worked on the centaurs. As Rosalind's love for Standing Tall grew, so too did the rumors. The centaur reciprocated her feelings, but was bound by duty to his tribe not to act on them. Nevertheless, they took turns visiting one another. For the first time since her husband's death, Rosalind felt truly happy. The herd masters, unsettled by her feelings for the centaur, began taking their business back to the Greendales. Before The Horse Lord could fall once again into financial straits, however, Standing Tall died in an orc ambush. Devastated, Rosalind withdrew socially, emotionally, and often times physically from those around her. Edgar Spence ran The Horse Lord in her stead, and business gradually returned to its former steady levels. She recovered in good time, though she really has not seemed the same since Standing Tall's death.

Dramatis Personae

Rosalind Gray is the tavern's proprietor, a gentle, soft-spoken woman who pines for her lost love. Her best friend, **Edgar Spence**, is the resident healer. He cares for the animals when he is not looking after her. The kitchen belongs to the culinary artiste named **Durpho the Gastro-nome**, a roly-poly gnome with a penchant for eating just about anything placed in front of him. Numerous **stablehands**

and **flagonfists** also work in the tavern, consisting mostly of young townsfolk. Finally, there are the countless **wranglers** and **herd masters** who regularly come to the tavern driving their huge horse herds before them and salivating for a real, honest-to-goodness home cooked meal.

Rosalind Gray

Rosalind is a tall, gangly woman with short, auburn hair, pale green eyes, and lightly freckled skin. She was raised on a farm as a child and is a natural at caring for horses. As such, owning and operating The Horse Lord is the perfect life for her.

She met her late husband Stephan Thorne when she was 18 and worked as a flagonfist in town at a small tavern that no longer exists and that no one remembers. He and his friends, adventurers all, were celebrating after returning alive from the fabled *Durgam's Folly* and considerably wealthier than when they started out. For whatever reason, Stephan became infatuated with Rosalind, returning each night for the next three weeks to woo her. At first she resisted, as any proper lady should, but he finally wore away her defenses and she found herself loving him. They wed, and the very next day he disappeared, along with his companions, to seek adventure, fame, and glory... and wealth, lots of wealth. Over the course of a decade, Stephan returned once, maybe twice a year, still as in love with her as on the day they married, but he could not stand the thought of settling down. Rosalind resented him for the longest time. As the years passed, though, she realized she enjoyed the freedom their arrangement afforded. While she would never cuckold him, she did make many male friends. Similarly, on his wanderings Stephan met many a



beautiful lass, yet he too stayed faithful to his wife. For the next 15 years they lived this way — she working at various jobs around town, once even taking a job at the hated Greendales' ranch (to this day, they deny ever having employed the "cozening wench," as they call her) while he acquired and lost numerous fortunes.

The last time he returned from abroad, Stephan told her he was retiring. The Dwarven depths of *Rebelskald* were unkind to him, infecting his lungs with the corrosive black soot left over from centuries of mithral mining. Rosalind was saddened, naturally, that he would die within a few short years, but in her heart she felt glad to have him back after so much time spent apart. When he died, her heart broke. The wealth he left her, which proved considerable, she used to fund the construction of The Horse Lord. The first few years were decidedly unpleasant, with the Greendales sabotaging her at every turn; fortunately, the appearance of Edgar Spence turned everything around for her. The tavern, inn, and public corral began to prosper, and her life assumed a comfortable routine.

Four years ago, she fell in love for the second — and in her opinion, last — time. Standing Tall was a beautiful creature, half-man and half-horse and everything a woman could ever want in a lover, a companion, and a friend. Sadly, he was consumed, rightly so, with his duty to his tribe, just as she was dedicated to The Horse Lord. Practically speaking, she also knew a love affair with someone as... alien... as him could never work. Despite such reservations, Rosalind continued their liaisons. In many respects, Standing Tall and her late husband were very similar, both possessed of a deeply romantic nature, both loyal to death, and both more kindly and gentle than their gruff, scarred exteriors belied. Like her husband, he too left her. Ambushed by orc archers, he died alone in a place many weeks' journey from The Horse Lord. She never saw his body again, nor could she attend his funeral. The Bright Feather tribe buried their dead on the ground where they fell, leaving their spirits to remain behind and forever haunt the enemies that killed them.

Today, Rosalind is quiet and unassuming. She realizes she has received more fortune in a single lifetime than most people know in two or three, finding the love of her life not once but twice. On the other hand, the loss she has endured is so awful, so heart-wrenching that at times she wishes she could just lie down and go to sleep forever, putting it all behind her and succumbing to the gentle respite death offers. Regardless, she manages somehow to get through each day. The Greendales remain a pain in her neck, but that situation is not entirely unmanageable. Fortunately, she can turn to Edgar Spence, her best friend in the whole world and without whom both she and the tavern would collapse.

Rosalind Gray, Female Human Exp4: CR 3; SZ M (5 ft. 11 in. tall); HD 4d6+2; hp 14; Init +1; Spd 30 ft.; AC 11 (+1 Dex); Atk +2 melee (1d4-1, dagger, 19-20) or +4 ranged; AL CG; SV Fort +0, Ref +2, Will +4; Str 9, Dex 12, Con 8, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 15.

Skills: Animal Empathy +7, Craft (blacksmithing) +5, Craft (leatherworking) +4, Diplomacy +6, Gather Information +6, Handle Animal +8 (+10 with animals), Heal +5, Listen +5, Move Silently +5, Profession (innkeeper) +9.

Feats: Skill Focus Endurance, (Profession [innkeeper]), Toughness.

Languages: Common.

Possessions: Dagger, gold bracelet (50 gp), gold earrings (4 gp), and 46 gp.

Edgar Spence

Unusual for a druid, Edgar Spence prefers a somewhat sedentary life caring for horses and other animals, unlike his brethren who tend to spend the vast majority of their time in the hinterlands. He wears his long, flowing, straw-colored hair tied back in a pony tail and sports a wicked, jagged scar on the left side of his face. The scar was a gift from Samuel Greendale a year earlier, when they had a "run-in" at the autumn rendezvous.

Edgar was raised by Callista Pallin, a quirky elf druid (or a "fey woodhag," as she often referred to herself), in the forests just beyond range of the centaur tribes. His parents were her best friends in the whole world. Edgar was three years old when they died in an accidental fire started by a stray hearth spark. Callista took him in to raise as her own. The years passed, and Edgar's affinity for nature's spirit became increasingly evident. He slipped into the druidic arts as naturally as a hand slips into a kid glove, making Callista a proud stepmother indeed. Something was missing, however, something he could not articulate in words. This urge grew into an insatiable wanderlust, and he took his leave of Callista at the age of 18 to travel the world and learn more.

His journeys eventually brought him to The Horse Lord. For the first time he could recall, he truly felt at home. Eight years of wandering had culminated in his arrival here, and he knew with absolute certainty that this was where he belonged. Rosalind allowed him to stay in the south barn in exchange for his veterinary services. He soon discovered the source of the mysterious horse plagues that was driving business away, in the process making an enemy out of the Greendale family while proving himself invaluable to Rosalind. When she fell for the centaur chieftain, he took over management of the establishment for a time, and when Standing Tall died he continued to run The Horse Lord in Rosalind's stead.

He is content now to share management duties with Rosalind since she rejoined the world of the living, no longer mired in hopelessness and memory. Caring for the horses in the corral and stables is his primary duty. He oversees the stablehands, and when not preoccupied with healing animals (and wranglers, once in a while), he enjoys working in the south barn's smithy, honing his blacksmithing and leatherworking skills by repairing saddles, stirrups, and other equipment.

Edgar Spence, Male Human Drd5: CR 5; SZ M (5 ft. 9 in. tall); HD 5d8+10; hp 32; Init +1; Spd 30 ft.; AC 13 (+1 Dex, +2 armor); Atk +5 melee (1d6+2 plus 1d6 fire, +1 flaming club) or +4 ranged (1d4+1, dagger, 19-20/x2, range 10 ft.); SA spells; SQ nature sense, woodland stride, trackless step, resist nature's lure, wild shape (1/day); AL NG; SV Fort +6, Ref +2, Will +8; Str 12, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 12, Wis 19, Cha 12.

Skills: Animal Empathy +9, Craft (blacksmithing) +5, Craft (leatherworking) +3, Concentration +6, Handle Animal +5 (+7 with animals), Heal +8, Knowledge (nature) +5, Profession (innkeeper) +10, Spellcraft +5, Wilderness Lore +12.

Feats: Enlarge Spell, Extend Spell, Scribe Scroll.



Languages: Common, Druidic, Giant.

Druid Spells Prepared (5/4/3/2; base DC 14 + spell level): 0—create water, detect poison, guidance, know direction, mending; 1st—calm animals, cure light wounds, detect animals or plants, magic fang; 2nd—charm person or animal, delay poison, hold animal; 3rd—cure moderate wounds, remove disease.

Possessions: +1 flaming club, dagger, leather armor, 2 scrolls of remove disease, 1 scroll of cure moderate wounds, 2 potions of neutralize poison, and 512 gp.

Durpho the Gastronomer

Durpho loves food. His entire life revolves around it. Judging by his girth, his eventual death will likely be caused by it. He is like a huge grape, seemingly perfectly round with a chubby little head and chubby little hands and feet sticking out of it. To say he is fat would be an understatement and a tremendous disservice to his obsession.

As the tavern cook, Durpho is extremely competent. In fact, some rumors floating around claim that he was once the royal chef to a gnome emperor, but was exiled for offending the empress. Apparently, she did not enjoy the giant birthday cake that Durpho baked for her husband—perhaps owing to the twin halfling courtesans inside, who jumped out and not only scared the empress witless but seduced the pants off her husband. Of course, that is just a rumor; few know if it really holds truth. (If asked, Edgar Spence will readily testify that it does. It was he who introduced the gnome to Rosalind in the first place, having befriended him years earlier on his travels.)

Durpho lives in the kitchen, beneath the stairs actually. He loves his job, enjoys the compliments brought back to

Meat Cleaver

The meat cleaver is a small bladed weapon found most often in butcher and meat shops. Its hardened blade allows it to easily cut through bone and tissue. It isn't made for combat, but can prove to be an effective weapon in a pinch.

Meat Cleaver: small simple weapon; 3 gp; 1d4; crit x2; 3 lb.; slashing.

him by the flagonists on duty who serve his incredible dishes to the patrons in the common room, and really finds the humans of this town to be good fun all around. He even enjoys friendship with the Greendales, of all people, who appreciate immensely his bawdier creations, more so than either Rosalind or Edgar. Not that he would ever complain about those two, not at all. He just finds them a little bit too straight-laced for his tastes.

Durpho the Gastronomer, Male Gnome Exp4: CR 3; SZ S [Gnome]; HD 4d6+12; hp 30; Init +1; Spd 20 ft.; AC 12 (+1 size, +1 Dex); Atk +4 melee (1d4+1, meat cleaver); SQ Gnome traits; AL NE; SV Fort +3, Ref +2, Will +4; Str 13, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 12, Wis 11, Cha 12.

Skills: Alchemy +6, Craft (brewing) +10, Craft (cooking) +10, Hide +8, Innuendo +5, Listen +4, Perform (poetry, storytelling) +3, Profession (cook) +7, Spot +4, Wilderness Lore +5.

Feats: Skill Focus (Craft [brewing]), Skill Focus (Craft [cooking]).

Languages: Common, Dwarven, Gnome.

Possessions: Meat cleaver, ring of sustenance, and 25 gp.

Stablehands & Flagonfists

Rosalind has 18 young men and women working the stables and corrals, with six on duty at any given time. She pays them 1 sp a week for their work, gives them free meals and drink, and lets a few of them live out of the backroom on the first floor. The *flagonfists*, as servers tend to be called in this region, are mostly women, but a few men are among their numbers. They work the common room, clean the upstairs rooms, wash linens, and generally do the mundane house work. On nights when the common room is packed, they also pull double duty in the kitchen. As with the *stablehands*, Rosalind pays them 1 sp a week and gives them the same fringe benefits.

Stablehands, Male or Female Com1 (10): CR 1/2; SZ M; HD 1d4; hp 4; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 10; Atk +0 melee (1d4, dagger, 19-20/x2) or +0 ranged (1d4, dagger, 19-20/x2, range 10 ft.); AL NG; SV Fort +0, Ref +0, Will +0; Str 11, Dex 10, Con 10, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10.

Skills: Handle Animal +6, Profession (stablehand) +6, Ride (horse) +2, Use Rope +2.

Feats: Skill Focus (Handle Animal, Profession [stablehand]).

Languages: Common.

Possessions: Dagger, pouch with 1d4 gp.

Flagonfists, Male or Female Com1 (6): CR 1/2; SZ M; HD 1d4; hp 4; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 10; Atk +0 melee (1d4, dagger, 19-20/x2); AL NG; SV Fort +0, Ref +0, Will +2; Str 11, Dex 10, Con 10, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10.

Skills: Craft (cooking) +2, Listen +3, Profession (innkeeper) +6, Spot +3.

Feats: Iron Will, Skill Focus (Profession [innkeeper]).

Languages: Common.

Possessions: Dagger, pouch with 1d4 gp.

Herd Masters & Wranglers

Those who drive the horse herds into town are a particular breed — rustic, rough around the edges, and to the point with their opinion. They thrive in the hinterlands where they keep their pastures, despite the ever-present dangers surrounding them, and they love even more coming into the civilized world twice a year for the rendezvous. The rendezvous is one the largest horse markets in the region, where horse flesh is both a commodity and a currency.

Herd masters are the ranch overseers — they do not own the herds themselves, they simply manage them and the wranglers working for them.

Wranglers are hired hands that usually migrate between ranches each season, though if they find a ranch they really like, they might stay on for an extended length of time. Reliable wranglers eventually become herd masters, and some herd masters eventually become ranch owners, though this is the exception and not the rule. Owners generally never come to a rendezvous since they have other, more important tasks.

Herd Master, Male Human Exp4: CR 3; SZ M; HD 4d6+4; hp 18; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 10; Atk +5 melee (1d6+1, masterwork short sword, 19-20/x2) or +4 melee (1d4+1, dagger, 19-20/x2); AL CG; SV Fort +2, Ref +1, Will +4; Str 12, Dex 11, Con 12, Int 12, Wis 11, Cha 10.

Skills: Animal Empathy +6, Craft (leatherworking) +7, Handle Animal +7 (+9 with animals), Heal +4, Intuit Direction +7, Listen +7, Profession (herd master) +7, Ride (horse) +5, Spot +7, Wilderness Lore +4.

Feats: Alertness, Martial Weapon Proficiency (short sword), Skill Focus (Profession [herd master]).

Languages: Common, Sylvan.

Possessions: Masterwork short sword, backpack filled with miscellaneous items, and 450 gp.

Wranglers, Male Human Com2: CR 1; SZ M; HD 2d4; hp 6; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 10; Atk +1 melee (1d4, dagger, 19-20/x2), or +1 ranged (1d2, whip); SV Fort +0, Ref +0, Will +0; Str 11, Dex 10, Con 10, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10.

Skills: Handle Animal +4, Profession (rancher) +6, Ride (horse) +4, Use Rope +3.

Feats: Exotic Weapon Proficiency (whip), Skill Focus (Profession [rancher]).

Languages: Common.

Possessions: Whip, dagger, pouch with 2d4 gp.

Environs

The Horse Lord is more than just a simple tavern and inn — it also contains a large corral, a smaller private corral, extensive stables, and two tall barns. Because so many horses pass through, the forests have been cut back at least 1000 feet in all directions, and the land around the establishment has been pounded utterly flat, completely devoid of even the tiniest plant life. The stench of horse manure and sweat is overpowering, noticeable from nearly a mile away, as is the sound of the animals' braying, whinnying, and gallivanting about. The tavern's common room is also quite noisy on most nights, filled to capacity with patrons coming in from town as well as with the typical assortment of wranglers and herd masters.

1. Tavern & Inn

This building houses The Horse Lord tavern and inn, where herd masters, wranglers, and other patrons eat, sleep, and get drunkenly merry. For detailed information, see **The Establishment** section, below.

2. Stables

A long row of stables extend north and south of the tavern proper. They are roofed and shingled, with floors and stall walls built from sturdy, dark-stained hardwoods, which Rosalind replaces once every two years because of accumulated daily wear and tear. The floors are covered with small mounds of fresh hay for every new occupant. Each row can comfortably house approximately 40 average-sized horses, or 20 work and war horses, or 80 light riding horses. Iron safety lanterns mounted on support beams and stable walls illuminate the stables at night. They are designed so that they cannot accidentally be knocked over by a stray hoof, a wandering drunkard, or a careless stablehand.

3. Common Corral

This wide open space can comfortably receive 400-600 horses, though not without some strain on The

Horse Lord's grain and water resources. In a pinch, it can hold an additional 100-200 animals, but only for an extremely short period of time. As might be expected, not a single blade of grass appears anywhere within sight, the ground being nothing but dirt and mud (mostly mud, though, thanks to all the rain water, trough water, and horse urine). Rain barrels are kept along the fence in various places to collect fresh water. Additional water may be had from the long, wide troughs interspersed down the corral's center stretch or from the well sunk just outside the south row of stables. The north barn sports a wide skirt of hay and grain dumped from its upper windows so that the horses may feed. Twice daily, stablehands pitch fresh bales out into the corral from the barn loft. The south barn supplies food to the animals in the private corral, though enough spills out into the common corral to make it worth the other horses' while to congregate at that end.

Corral gates: 1 in. thick; Hardness 5; hp 10; Break (DC 13).

4. Private Corral

The private corral, south of the stables, most often sees use for mares in heat. Every once in a while, however, wranglers put particularly aggressive studs here, or especially prized stallions that they do not want associating with the animals in the common corral. The south barn supplies the private corral with its hay and grain.

Corral gates: 1 in. thick; Hardness 5; hp 10; Break (DC 13).

5. Barn

The Horse Lord has two huge barns. The north barn is where the majority of the hay and feed is stored and distributed, while the south barn contains extra hay and feed for the private corral as well as some for the horses in the corral's south end. The first floor of the south barn holds a smithy and leatherworking shop used to make or repair wrangling gear such as horseshoes, saddles, saddlebags, bits, reins, and so on. Edgar Spence pretty much lives here, paying for room and board by providing blacksmithing, leatherworking, and veterinary services for The Horse Lord.

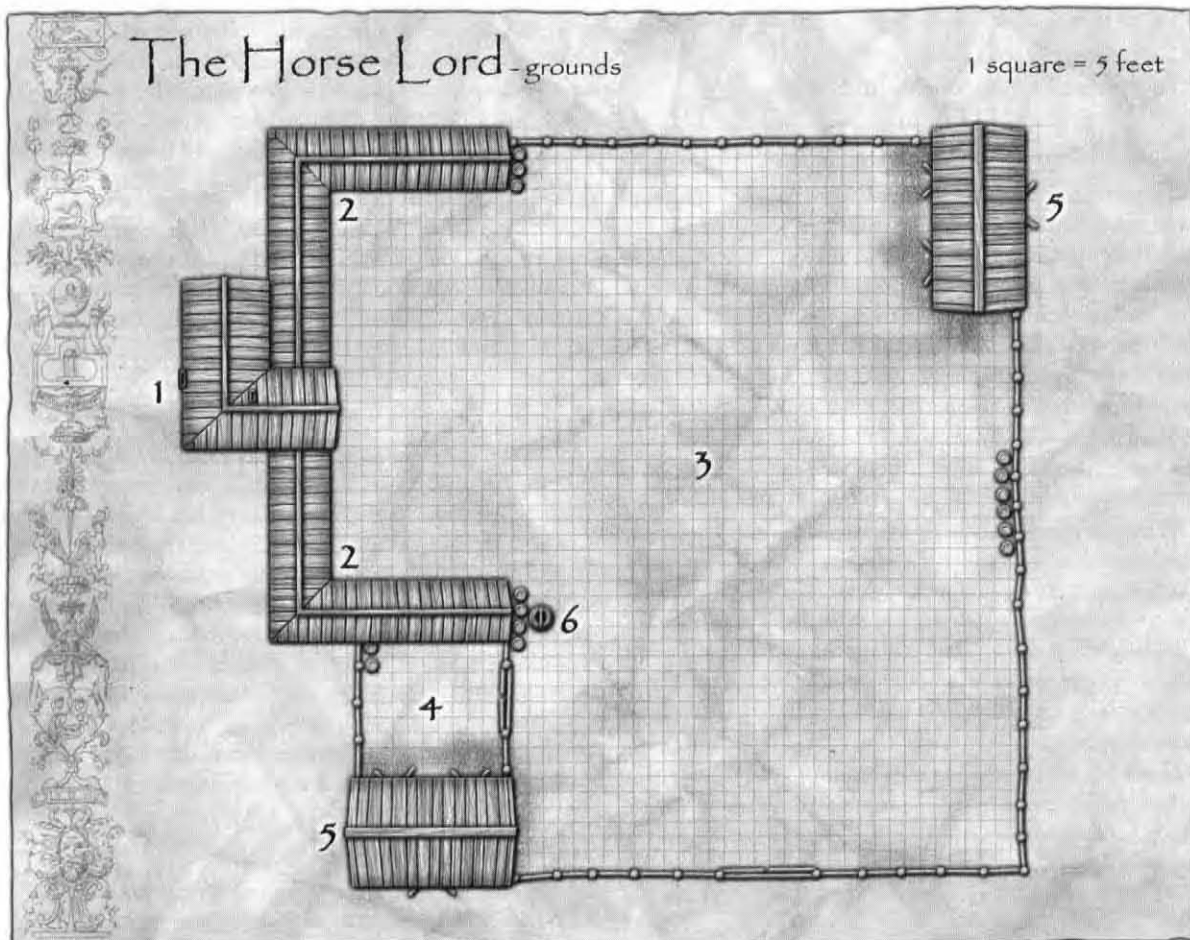
Patrons are often allowed to sleep in both barns' hay lofts for a miniscule fee, either because they cannot afford a bed in the inn or the inn's rooms are filled to capacity. Stablehands frequent the lofts when business is slow because they provide some much sought after privacy.

Sallywags and trespassers are categorically not welcome in the barns. When discovered, they are usually run off with two or three pitchfork-wielding stablehands in pursuit.

Barn doors: 2 in. thick; Hardness 5; hp 20; Break (DC 23).

6. Well (EL1)

This is a masonry shaft sunken 60 feet into the ground, tapping into a natural underground reservoir. Its wooden roof supports a pulley, bucket, and rope for collecting



water. Barrels behind it collect rainwater and store well water for imminent use (such as in the tavern kitchen, for refilling troughs, or for bathing.)

In recent months, the water coming up has possessed a slight metallic taste. Some fear the Greendale curse again, but the horses have so far been unaffected by the well water. No one knows it yet, but a baby rust monster somehow found its way into the well and lives off the copper and silver coins tossed down there by people making wishes.

Baby Rust Monster: CR 1; SZ S Aberration; 2d8; hp 9; Init +1; AC 14 (+1 Dex, +2 natural); Atk +0 melee (rust, antennae touch) and —5 melee (1d2-1, bite); SA rust (Ref DC 15); SQ scent; Fort +0, Ref +0, Will +4; AL N; Str 8, Dex 13, Con 11, Int 2, Wis 13, Cha 8.

Skills: Listen +3, Spot +3.

The Establishment

The Horse Lord is an L-shaped, two-story building made of faded oak and cedar wood with actual glass windows, a rarity in most areas due to their prohibitive cost. Hanging from its front entrance is a large shingle depicting a stylized horse head and a curled whip. Its back entrance opens into the corral behind it and is used by stablehands, wranglers, and patrons alike. The overall architecture of The Horse Lord is that of a simple country manor. At night, when the two hearths burn brightly in the common room, its windows exude an inviting warmth.

Unless otherwise noted, The Horse Lord's stats are as follows:

Doors: 1 in. thick; Hardness 5; hp 10; Break (DC 13);

Walls (Outer and Inner): 6 in. thick; Hardness 5; hp 60; Break (DC 23).

1. Foyer

This is The Horse Lord's front entrance. Set on either side of it are old, cracked barrels that may have once contained dry goods or ale but which now see use solely for holding walking sticks and gear. The north and south walls have three rows of pegs upon which patrons may hang their travel cloaks. To the east is a wood counter. Most nights, Rosalind or one of the flagonfists can be seen sitting behind it, usually knitting. Atop the counter is a thin register, an ink well, and two feathered quills. Behind the counter, hidden on a shelf filled with thin vellum folios and knickknacks, is a tiny lock box used for keeping money (Open Lock DC 20; contains 3d10 gp plus 3d20 sp at any given time). Patrons may hire out beds for the night here, while those who are interested solely in good company, food, and drink head south for the common room. South along the back wall, a staircase ascends to the second level.

Front door: 1 1/2 in. thick; Hardness 5; hp 15; Break (DC 18).

2. Common Room

The common room is fairly large, with enough space in it to serve thirty or forty patrons easily. Twin hearths burn bright with fires, keeping the room cozy and the stew pots simmering. The east hearth is double-sided, sharing its coals with the kitchen behind it. Time-worn tables, chairs, and stools crowd the floor, while wrangling equipment

hangs from the wall as décor — saddlebags from famous herd masters, bits and reins, silver-plated stirrups, and many other items unique to the profession.

At least five flagonfists work between the common room and the kitchen every night. During festivals and the bi-annual rendezvous, Rosalind hires two times as many young men and women to handle the crowd. The tavern serves two kinds of ale: *Lightning Hoof*, a golden, easy-to-swallow pilsner brewed in town; and *Kraken's Black Charger*, a dense, dark ale heavy with an aftertaste of cinnamon and which is imported from the east. In addition to other beverages such as *buttermilk* and *elderberry wine*, the tavern is perhaps most famous for its *vitae equus*. This is a common and nutritious trail drink made from fresh mare's milk mixed with blood taken from a punctured artery. The mare from which the ingredients come is not killed, just slightly wounded in the process. *Vitae equus* is available only when sufficient numbers of mares are in the stables or corral. One instance of bleeding and milking a mare makes enough of the concoction for 10 people. This may be done to a mare a maximum of once per day.

Back door: 1 1/2 in. thick; Hardness 5; hp 15; Break (DC 18).

3. Kitchen/Taproom

This area is Durpho's private kingdom. It is absolutely stuffed with tables, cupboards, pots, pans, hooks, handles, dry goods, fresh meat and vegetables, spices, jams, jellies, custards, and whatever else a master cook needs to prepare his dishes. Three huge ale barrels and numerous smaller ones filled with other potables occupy the space by the east wall.

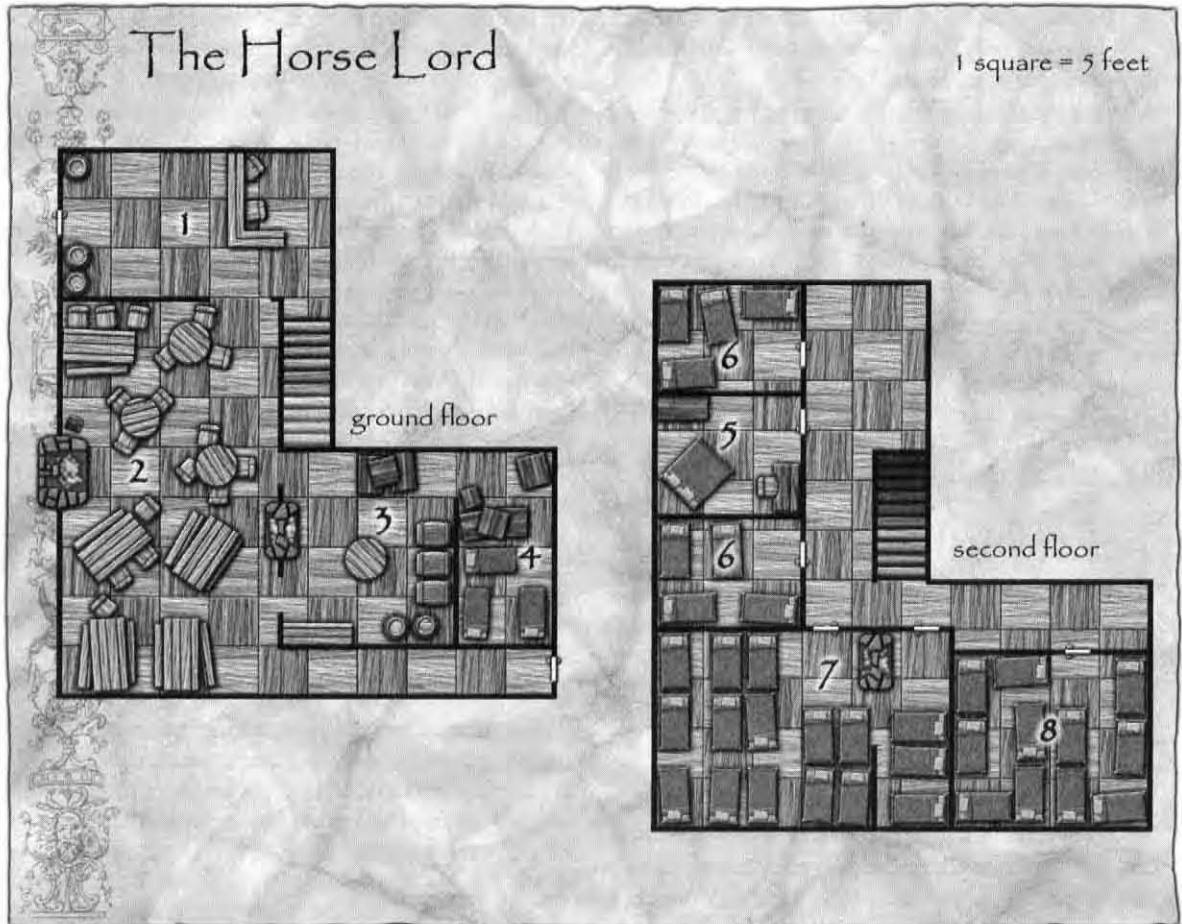
Located in the north wall behind the stairs is a secret panel (Search DC 25). It opens into the space beneath the stairs, where Durpho "lives" — inside, one may discover a flattened gnome-sized mattress, a candle, and shelves containing old scrolls and folios inscribed with recipes. His stuffed teddy bear, Elesster Growley, hides beneath his pillow until evening, when Durpho pulls him out for a little pre-slumber cuddling and gossip.

One recipe scroll actually contains instructions on how to make magic fudge brownies that may be imbued with spells. This process is equivalent to using the Brew Potion feat to make potions. A spellcasting character that makes a successful Decipher Script check (DC 20) may henceforth use the Brew Potion feat to manufacture magical brownies containing spells of up to 3rd level. Manufacturing these brownies follows the normal rules for brewing potions using the Brew Potions feat.

4. Back Room

The back room used to be a store room. Now, it is half occupied by hay-stuffed mattress for the flagonfists and stablehands to sleep upon. While most of them come from neighboring farms or even town, a few actually live on the premises. The other half of the room is still used for storing crates, barrels, and sacks.

Jenni Betti, a young stablehand, keeps a sack filled with her most valuable possessions hidden behind an old barrel of pickled sardines (Search DC 20). Inside the sack are 6 gp, a tin dagger worth 1 sp, a rock-candy necklace (it is really a *necklace of fireballs* given to her last year by a herd



witch; 3 charges remain), and a pyrite ring given to her by one of the boys as a birthday gift.

Berd Hanson, a flagonfist, hides his valuables beneath a loose floorboard only he seems to know about (Search DC 20). There, one may find a raggedy doll; 12 sp; a glass jar filled with aniseed powder stolen from the kitchen, worth approximately 16 gp; a leather pouch filled with crushed bluebonnet flowers worth 28 gp; and a homemade shiv (treat as a knife).

5. Rosalind's Quarters

One of the largest private rooms in The Horse Lord, Rosalind Gray resides here. Rather plain, its contents include an inexpensive double bed (consisting simply of a down-stuffed mattress and unstained oak boards); a writing desk; a wardrobe filled with utilitarian clothes; three tin chamber pots; and a fat, heavy chest bound with thick iron straps (Open Lock DC 25). The chest contains 3 small bolts of silk worth 120 gp, 1 bolt of wax-dyed cotton worth 45 gp, sewing materials worth 10 gp (needles, thread, and the like), 6 square feet of lace worth 70 gp, and a hide sack with 2,367 gp in coin and 546 gp in gems. A beautiful tapestry hangs from the north wall, depicting a handsome centaur in a verdant forest surrounded by all kinds of animals.

When Rosalind is not downstairs at the entrance counter or in the corral helping the stablehands and wranglers, she can be found in her room pining for her lost love.

Heavy Chest: Hardness 5; hp 15; Break (DC 23); Open Lock (DC 25).

6. Herd Master Quarters

These two rooms are used as dormitories for herd masters. The beds are very comfortable, made from fine materials and stuffed with down. Each room can house up to 12 people.

7. Wrangler Quarters, Large

This very large corner room is filled with cheap bunk beds and linens. It is used primarily for housing the wranglers who come in with the herds. The east side of the room is split by the hearth, which ascends up through the floor from the kitchen and common room, and a thin wall. Those herd masters who do not want to stay in better quarters sleep on the east side of the wall to have a modicum of privacy and to take advantage of the hearth.

8. Wrangler Quarters, Small

The smaller wrangler quarters are used for overflow from the large dormitory as well as to house other patrons, such as adventurers, soldiers, and mercenaries who are passing through. Like its larger counterpart, the room's beds are bunk style and very low quality. The room can sleep thirty people.

THE HORSE LORD MENU

Ale & Mead	Cost	Steak & potatoes	1 sp
Lightning Hoof	1 cp	Vegetable stew	2 cp
Kraken's Black Charger	2 cp	Other Services	
Other Beverages		Barn loft, per night	1 cp
Buttermilk	3 cp	Corral, per 5 horses, per week	2 gp
Cow milk	1 cp	Corral, per horse, per night	2 sp
Elderberry wine	7 cp	Herd master quarters, per night	5 sp
Vitae equus	2 sp	Laundry, per person	1 sp
Food		Private corral, per horse, per night	5 sp
Bread, day-old	2 cp	Shoeing, per horse	4 cp
Bread, fresh	4 cp	Stables, per 5 horses, per week	10 gp
Cobbler, peach	4 cp	Stables, per horse, per night	5 sp
Cobbler, shirecherry	4 cp	Tack & saddle repair	Variable
Minced meat pie	5 cp	Trough bath, per person	1 cp
Oat cakes	1 cp	Veterinary services	Variable
Seed cakes	3 cp	Wrangler quarters, large, per night	2 cp
		Wrangler quarters, small, per night	5 cp

Goods & Services

The Horse Lord's ale selection is pretty limited, considering the sheer number of people patronizing the place during the week, but its food selection and livery services are quite extensive. Rooms are also available, all of them dormitory-style housing with no private rooms other than Rosalind's personal quarters, which do not get rented out. Quality of the goods and services offered is average, overall.

Adventure Seeds

The following ideas can be used as seeds for adventures set in or around The Horse Lord:

- A famous adventuring warrior has captured a live nightmare. He and his six companions bring the beast to The Horse Lord while *en route* to the capital city to sell her to powerful wizard. She is bound with mystical chains and unable to use her formidable powers to defend herself or escape. Rosalind's heart goes out to the beast, unaware of just how demonic she really is. Late one night, she and Edgar, against his better judgment, manage to free the nightmare from her shackles. She goes on a rampage, threatening to destroy The Horse Lord and everyone inside. The warrior who captured her, and his companions, are nowhere to be found when the nightmare escapes, perhaps because they did not really capture her — they simply stole her from the people who did.

- When the characters arrive at the tavern, all the beds are already rented out, so they must stay in the south barn's

hay loft. A larger than normal band of rustlers shows up later that night (numbering approximately 100, an unheard of number since most rustlers in this region are intensely suspicious of one another). Half of them secure the tavern, ensuring that no one gets out, while the other half steals the horses from the corral and stables. Edgar is distraught: if the rustlers succeed, The Horse Lord's reputation will become severely tarnished (in fact, he suspects the Greendales put the rustlers up to committing the crime). He begs the characters to help him stop the rustlers, even if that means following them back to their lair in the forest.

- A platoon of elves returning home from war in distant lands overstays its welcome in The Horse Lord. They have rented every bed in the place and spend their days in the corral sporting and their nights in the common room drinking and whoring. Soon, their rowdy behavior drives away Rosalind's regulars. She hires the characters to find a way to encourage the elves to leave. In truth, they do not want to go. They were on the losing side of the war, from which they are fleeing — not returning home. Everywhere they go, they adopt new homes until people such as Rosalind drive them away. Well, they are sick of it; they will not leave. Nothing the human wench or her effete boyfriend can do will make them. This time, they are prepared to fight to the death for their home. With that kind of attitude, no wonder they lost the war. The elves are crazy now.

Vain Robert's Gibbet

Most nights, one can find all manner of sailors in the dock-side pub known as Vain Robert's Gibbet, named after the pirate whose body was strung from the eponymous gibbet just outside the pub's front entrance. This is a loud, seedy establishment catering to the lowest common denominator. Those who let their guard down during their visit quickly become the predator's prey, and those who can back their words with sufficiently impressive action get begrudgingly accepted into the pub's violent, dog-eat-dog microcosm. On the surface, the Gibbet seems to be a smuggler's outlet for stolen goods and property, with its owner, Elisabeth Talbot leading the fencing ring.

In truth, the Gibbet is actually much more than what it appears: it is home to a unit of elite seafarers dedicated to eradicating a growing evil out in the ocean's farthest reaches, deep below its surface.

Background

Fifty years before the pub was built, Vain Robert — the dread pirate of the seven seas, the scourge of common decency, and the terror of the ten tides — was hung by his neck for crimes committed and swung from the rope until he was good and dead. Two days it took him to die, they said. He supposedly had a bull's neck, thick with tendons and muscles that were impossible to snap even under his own formidable body weight. Two days of hanging there, and he eventually asphyxiated (though not for lack of trying — he fell asleep and inadvertently let his muscles relax, so the story goes). When the physicians confirmed the man indeed breathed no more, the city militia wrapped his body in iron chains and hoops, dragged him through the city streets to the docks, and strung him up from a gibbet, where he dangled until the ravens picked every scrap of flesh from his bones. He was a warning to others, visible to all ships entering the harbor: do not even consider following in Vain Robert's wake, or you will suffer the same fate.

Nearly six months from the day of Vain Robert's hanging, the dock wardens arrived to cut down his bones and give them a proper burial at sea (the man may have been an extraordinary scoundrel, but he was also a child of Mother Ocean). The pirate's shade materialized out of thin air, decrying his fate and commanding that they leave his bones alone. He vowed to get revenge, come hell or high water. The dock wardens fled. Afterwards, no one found the courage to risk their immortal souls by retrieving Robert's bones.

Late at night, sailors could hear Robert's groans and his chains clanging all the way out past the harbor walls, so the stories say. On nights when the fog rose so thickly it blinded a man, captains used the shade's agony to guide them into port. Some even claimed Robert's old ship, the *Lady Killer*, which had been scuttled after his hanging (in accordance with the law), patrolled the sea beyond the harbor walls, preying on those who participated in Robert's capture with blazing, ghostly catapult and harpoon. Finally, the harbormaster hired a famous cleric to come in from a

neighboring city and at last exorcise the pirate's ghost. The pirate's memory was turning the docks into a ghost town, driving away privateers and trade ships alike. Hell, even the pirates avoided them. The cleric, whom the stories name Harold the Sin-Eater, wrangled with the shade over the course of two weeks before he finally banished it to hell. The grateful harbor master took up a collection from the dock residents amounting to 10,000 gp, paid the man off, and from that day on the docks were no longer haunted. Vain Robert was gone for good, it seemed.

Naturally, no one knows if any of the story is remotely true beyond the fact that the pirate was hung and his body displayed from the gibbet. Nonetheless, the gibbet has stood for 50 years, and none among the harbormaster, the dock wardens, or the local residents have felt inclined to tear it down. Because dock space is at a premium, the lot on which the gibbet stood was eventually purchased by the grain merchant's guild. They built a tall silo in which to store incoming and outgoing grain, though they left the gibbet intact. A decade ago, the grain merchant's guild collapsed in the aftermath of a trade war with another city, and the silo was abandoned. Elisabeth Talbot later purchased it from the man whose name appeared on the lease — for a pittance, actually — and converted it into a popular dockside pub frequented by sailors. Despite being an extremely low-class establishment, the pub offers a very good place to go for information, since someone there is always bound to be "in the know" (albeit only in so far as said information concerns the docks, trade, or the high seas).

Dramatis Personae

Vain Robert's Gibbet is owned and operated by **Elisabeth Talbot**, a capable ex-navy captain who, for all intents and appearances, runs a large fencing operation out of the pub's third floor. She also lives on the third floor along with her twin daughters **Emma** and **Erin Talbot**, as well as frequently lets her mysterious and deadly friends (called the **Sea Dogs** by those in the know) stay there when they need a place. Three **serving wenches** work in the pub's common room every night, except during midweek when business is slow.

Elisabeth Talbot

In her youth, Elisabeth Talbot was the proverbial "terror of the high seas." A merchant, a privateer, and pirate, Elisabeth is a keen negotiator, a savvy diplomat, and a skillful swordswoman. Every sailor worth his salt in this region knows her name. Those who do not soon regret the oversight, for in her pub — Vain Robert's Gibbet — all manner of information can be obtained and all manner of goods can be fenced through her copious contacts.

Standing just under 5 feet tall in her stocking feet, Elisabeth prefers to wear high-heeled, knee-high boots to give herself more stature and, by virtue, more authority. Her black hair hangs down the length of her back to her waist, thick with natural curls, and her eyes are brown. While not a beauty queen, she is certainly not uncomely

(especially when compared to the courtesans working the common room each night — Elisbeth, at least, still has a full complement of teeth). She favors puffy silk shirts and tight, thigh-hugging pantaloons. On most nights, she is visibly unarmed, but she will strap on a rapier and a couple of hand crossbows as a warning if the patrons become too rowdy or obnoxious. Should a situation get utterly out of control in the pub, she especially feels no reticence to use said weapons... as many sailors have learned to their detriment. Gold bangles jangle around both her wrists, and numerous gold hoop earrings swing from each ear. All she really needs to complete the quintessential pirate's image is an eye patch and a peg leg. She even has a parrot — a late one nailed to the quarterdeck wall with its equally late owner's hook. Both serve as a signal to patrons, human and fowl alike, not to get fresh with the proprietor.

Elisbeth's background is typical for the town. Her father was a sailor and her mother worked in the dockside warehouses hauling cargo. She was a solid woman, stronger than the men with whom she worked, but her father liked his women husky — and bawdy. The city had never seen the likes of Elisbeth before. Curses flew from her lips in steady, unending streams of pure vitriol capable of shaming the foulest, most unrepentant criminals into red-faced embarrassment. Tall tales of ribald derring-do, both personal and second-hand hearsay, put many a fireside bard into early retirement. To her father, it was a match made in heaven. He was one of those immensely large human giants who stood well over seven feet in height. Like his wife, he enjoyed the courser side of life, though he was gentle in his own way. For instance, he would never knowingly hurt another man through deed or word unless he himself was slandered or injured first. When his hackles were raised, however, the entire dock district knew better than to get in his way. So, it came as a tremendous shock to their friends when Elisbeth's mother announced her pregnancy. Who would have thought *those* two had parenting in them, the sentiment ran. Well, they did, and Elisbeth, despite being raised a dock brat, grew into an articulate, intelligent woman.

Having spent her entire childhood on the docks, she learned everything she could about seafaring from the sailors, the shipwrights, the carpenters, and the sail makers. On her 12th birthday, she signed on with Captain Elijah Hood, a privateer in the king's employ famous for repeatedly routing the empire's enemies and stealing their bullion. Like every other dock brat who dreamt of someday captaining her own ship, she lied about her age and everyone knew it. No matter, for Hood took her on and sent her straight to the ship's bowels, to the kitchens. She expected no less. Years passed and she survived (a feat in and of itself, when the average lifespan of an apprentice shipman was two years). Not only that, she excelled, becoming a boatswain by her 18th year.

Ten more years on the high seas, and Elisbeth became the captain of the *HMS Fancy Merchant*, a dilapidated wreck with more battles than most ships her age. Elisbeth bought the ship and her letters of marque for next to nothing from its aging, infirm captain, Walter Silverhand. Within six months, she had the ship back in excellent condition and had managed to hire a relatively capable crew. Her second-



in-command was a wickedly scarred, heavily tattooed half-orc from the east named Sugo Ironclaw. Where Elisabeth tempered her anger with reason, he fueled his with hatred and loathing for everyone around him. Yet he made an excellent first mate, able to keep the men in line with a glance or well-timed sneer. He served his captain well. She learned to see past his seemingly unapologetic evil exterior, finding an iron-willed, bitterly determined man who managed to find the strength to survive the genocide wrought against his people by an enemy empire. As Elisabeth grew closer to Sugo, she coaxed out a less hateful side of him. He, on the other hand, taught her the virtue of backing her words with force — not indiscriminately, but strategically. Reason rarely works with the pathologically unreasonable, and so one must often resort to calculated violence to make an impression. Together, they ran a tight ship and ruled the high seas for almost a decade, running down the enemies of the empire and defeating pirates at every turn (sometimes becoming pirates themselves). Their personalities complemented one another well, balancing the two different extremes they leaned toward. In the end, while not becoming lovers exactly, they were best friends and, to hear some tell it, soul mates despite their refusal to commit fully to a relationship.

Elisabeth became pregnant with Sugo's twin girls two months before he fell overboard and disappeared from her life. More distraught than she believed could be possible, she sold the *HMCS Fancy Merchant* and her crew's work papers to a rival captain in the royal navy and retired to land. She bought an old grain silo — with the sole distinction of sitting on the spot where the corpse of Vain Robert was strung from a gibbet — and turned it into a pub. The girls were born, and Elisabeth told no one who their father was because in the end it never really mattered. Besides, it was no one's business. While not entirely suited to a boring land-locked lifestyle, she has managed to get by. Fortunately, the regional governor came to her two years ago with an offer she could not refuse and that made her life more interesting: to lead a group of ex-pirates, rangers, and rogues who informally call themselves the Sea Dogs and who are dedicated to tracking down the minions of the decidedly evil Witch-Queen of Hell Deep. She mostly coordinates the group's activities, though every once in a while she joins them on missions, leaving her children with their grandparents, who have retired to a quiet life in the aristocratic ward (much to the aristocrats' horror) using monies given to them by their daughter. As Elisabeth learns more about the Witch-Queen, an abiding sense of dread grows deeper within her, making her unusually quiet and morose lately.

Elisabeth Talbot, Female Human Exp8/Rog4: CR 11; SZ M (4 ft. 8 in. tall); HD 8d6+8 plus 4d6+4; hp 54; Init +6 (Dex, Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft.; AC 16 (+2 Dex, +4 armor); Atk +13/+8 melee (1d6+2, +1 rapier, 18-20/x2) or +13/+8 ranged (1d6+1, masterwork composite shortbow [+1 arrows], crit x3, range 70 ft.); SA sneak attack (+2d6); SQ evasion, uncanny dodge; AL CG; SV Fort +4, Ref +8, Will +8; Str 12, Dex 15, Con 13, Int 12, Wis 12, Cha 14.

Skills: Appraise +10, Balance +12, Bluff +10, Craft (shipbuilding) +7, Diplomacy +10, Escape Artist +7,

Forgery +6, Gather Information +11, Inuit Direction +7, Listen +9, Profession (innkeeper) +8, Profession (sailor) +12, Read Lips +9, Search +8, Spot +9, Swim +11, Use Rope +10.

Feats: Alertness, Blind-Fight, Improved Initiative, Skill Focus (Profession [sailor]), Weapon Finesse (rapier), Weapon Focus (rapier).

Languages: Common, Elven.

Possessions: +2 leather armor, +1 rapier, masterwork composite shortbow, 20 +1 arrows, 2 daggers, and a leather pouch containing 721 gp.

Emma & Erin Talbot

Elisabeth's twin daughters are six years old. While they share the same features, they could not possibly be more dissimilar in temperament. Emma is quiet and shy; Erin is obnoxious and needs constant attention. Of the two, Emma is more intelligent and cunning; yet because Erin is always the center of attention, she gets in trouble the most (usually as the result of Emma's pranks, some of which are incredibly clever).

Both girls have lustrous black hair and eyes, after their mother. The rest they inherited from their father, unfortunately (though not his surly disposition; or, if they have, it has not appeared yet).

Emma & Erin Talbot, Female Human, children (Com1): hp 2; **Skills:** Listen +3, Spot +3.

Feat: Run.

The Sea Dogs

Many years ago, the earth at the center of a deep ocean many months out of port rocked. Tsunamis formed, laying waste to all naval traffic in the region; the weather turned foul and black and remained so for almost a full year. No ships could get near the 1,000 square mile area without attracting giant, mutated sea creatures, which promptly capsized and swallowed the ships whole. Sailors dubbed this area the Black Sea and updated their maps with the notation, "Here be certain death."

Eventually, the Black Sea calmed. The weather returned to normal, the constant earthquakes and subsequent tsunamis ceased altogether, and the alien creatures inhabiting the region disappeared. It is widely thought that the famous privateer Jeremiah Blake led a small fleet to the eye of the storm and put its source, the Witch-Queen of Hell Deep, permanently to rest. She is stirring once again, however. Her formerly vast and glorious aquatic empire is in the midst of rebuilding, reclaiming the miles-deep canyon on the ocean floor where their capital city, Martyr's Rest, was originally built. The king, fearful of both the Witch-Queen's wrath and growing might, commissioned the formation of 16 elite units of sailors, rogues, and soldiers to intercept her minions at every turn, to sabotage her efforts at expansion and rebuilding, and generally to make life very difficult for her and her people. The units are collectively known as "The Sea Dogs," its members coming from all strata of seafarer society.

The unit under Elisabeth Talbot's control is the smallest, but also the best. Because the Witch-Queen's minions are expert infiltrators, Elisabeth's Sea Dogs operate in absolute secrecy and undercover, some working as pirates, others for the royal navy, and yet others as privateers. When they get furlough, they come to the Gibbet to report to her and receive new orders. Many patrons who have obviously noticed the comings and goings to and from the third floor think the woman and her "friends" are black marketeers, fences for stolen goods. Elisabeth does not dissuade such rumors, since they keep people from guessing the Dogs' true purpose. If word reaches those minions whom they are hunting (and those still unrevealed to them), then the Dogs have lost advantage in the shadow war against the Witch-Queen. In fact, Elisabeth does earn part of the unit's operating expenses by fencing goods, though truth be told she finds the practice both distasteful and dishonorable. The regional governor knows of the Dogs' mission, and so lets her black market activities go unpunished. He understands as well as she does the need for keeping their cover intact.

The members of her unit come primarily from the ranks of seafaring rangers and rogues. They tend to possess the knowledge and cunning required to wage a secret war, more so than fighters or spellcasters. Exceptions have been made in the past, and even today Elisabeth is not above making them, if the candidate is worthy enough. Some of her men were once thought to be the worst of the worst, but her exceptional leadership and discipline has managed not only to keep them solidly in line but also to make them unquestionably loyal to her. Their fundamental nature has

not changed, though, so when patrons encounter them in the pub downstairs, they get a clear berth.

This unit of Sea Dogs has two ships in its "fleet," the *Dark Warrior* and the *Queen Astrid*. Only one ship is used full-time, with the other in dry dock receiving repairs and improvements. Both ships operate under the pretense of being privateers, with letters of marque allowing them to engage the kingdom's enemies (which is mostly true — the ships are used exclusively in the Dogs' war against Hell Deep, though they can be used against the kingdom's more conventional enemies should the need arise).

Average Sea Dog (Rogue), Male Human Rog2: CR 2; SZ M; HD 2d6; hp 8; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; AC 14 (+2 Dex, +2 armor); Atk +3 melee (1d6+1, short sword, 19-20/x2) or +3 ranged (1d6, masterwork shortbow, x3, range 60 ft.); SA sneak attack (+1d6); SQ evasion; AL CG; SV Fort +2, Ref +5, Will +0; Str 13, Dex 14, Con 11, Int 10, Wis 11, Cha 10.

Skills: Climb +6, Disable Device +4, Disguise +5, Forgery +4, Hide +4, Listen +5, Move Silently +4, Open Lock +4, Profession (sailor) +7, Spot +5, Swim +6, Use Rope +4.

Feats: Great Fortitude, Skill Focus (Profession [sailor]).

Languages: Common.

Possessions: Leather armor, masterwork short sword, masterwork shortbow, 20 arrows, dagger, pouch containing 1d20 gp.

Average Sea Dog (Ranger), Male Human Rgr3: CR 3; SZ M; HD 3d10+9; hp 22; Init +3; Spd 30 ft.; AC 16 (+3 Dex, +3 armor); Atk +4 melee (1d8, longsword, 19-20/x2), or +6 ranged (1d8, longbow, crit x3, range 100 ft.);



SQ favored enemy (+1 goblins); AL CG; SV Fort +5, Ref +4, Will +3; Str 10, Dex 17, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 14, Cha 10.

Skills: Climb +6, Hide +7, Knowledge (nature) +2, Move Silently +6, Profession (sailor) +8, Swim +6, Wilderness Lore +4.

Feats: Point Blank Shot, Toughness, Track, Weapon Focus (longsword).

Languages: Common.

Possessions: Longsword, longbow, studded leather, sack, pouch containing 1d20+20 gps.

Elite Sea Dog (Rogue), Male Human Rog5: CR 5; SZ M; HD 5d6+5; hp 31; Init +3; Spd 30 ft.; AC 15 (+3 Dex, +2 armor); Atk +5 melee (1d6+1, masterwork short sword, 19-20/x2), or +7 ranged (1d8+1, masterwork light crossbow, crit 19-20/x2, range 80 ft.); AL CG; SV Fort +2, Ref +7, Will +4; Str 12, Dex 17, Con 13, Int 12, Wis 17, Cha 11.

Skills: Appraise +11, Balance +11, Diplomacy +2, Hide +7, Innuendo +7, Intimidate +2, Intuit Direction +7, Listen +7, Move Silently +7, Profession (sailor) +11, Search +5, Spot +7, Swim +9, Use Rope +11.

Feats: Point Blank Shot, Skill Focus (Move Silently), Track.

Languages: Common, Ogre.

Possessions: Masterwork short sword, masterwork light crossbow, 20 +1 bolts, leather armor, (4) masterwork daggers, pouch containing 210 sp, 75 gp.

Elite Sea Dog (Ranger), Male Human Rgr5: CR 5; SZ M; HD 5d10+10; hp 33; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; AC 15; Atk +8 melee (1d8+1, longsword, 19-20/x2), or +7 ranged (1d8, longbow, crit x3, range 100 ft.); SQ favored enemy (+2 giants, +1 goblins); AL CG; SV Fort +6, Ref +3, Will +2; Str 12, Dex 15, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 14, Cha 12.

Skills: Climb +5, Craft (shipbuilding) +4, Hide +4, Knowledge (nature) +4, Listen +6, Move Silently +4, Profession (sailor) +10, Spot +6, Swim +9, Wilderness Lore +6.

Feats: Alertness, Point Blank Shot, Track, Weapon Focus (longsword).

Spells Prepared (2; base DC 12 + spell level): 1st — entangle, resist elements.

Languages: Common.

Possessions: *Potion of cure serious wounds*, masterwork longsword, longbow, studded leather, sack containing 291 gp.

Serving Wenches

Three girls work the common room, serving ale and other alcohol and the occasional bowl of taupe-colored fish stew. They are all local, having grown up on the docks, and are not strangers to the gruff, rough demeanor most sailors exhibit. The sailors may call them "wenches," but the girls are a far cry from the typical image that word inspires. Anyone whose hand strays is prone to having it pinned to the table with a razor sharp dagger swiftly drawn from a girl's bodice laces. The serving wenches are savvy enough to know

when the sailors are just being themselves and when they are really being lecherous, so most of the banter directed at the girls is tolerated, unless it comes from outlanders, obvious land lovers, or both.

Men, especially inebriated men, think that buying drinks for the girls will earn their favor: they could not be more wrong. Yet Elisbeth gives the girls 30% of the price of drinks bought for them, sort of as a "tip." As such, the girls are more than happy to take drinks — particularly expensive liquors, not ales — from generous patrons, watering them down with tea and honey so as not to get so drunk they cannot work (which, of course, they never tell the patrons). When business is slight, the girls often resort to heavy flirting, stroking the men's egos in order to ply as many drinks from them as possible to earn greater tips.

Serving Wenches, Female Human Com1 (3): CR 1/2; SZ M; HD 1d4; hp 4; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 10; Atk +0 melee (1d4, dagger, 19-20/x2), or +0 ranged (1d4, dagger, 19-20/x2, range 10 ft.); SV Fort +0, Ref +0, Will +0; Str 11, Dex 11, Con 10, Int 11, Wis 10, Cha 10.

Skills: Craft (cooking) +6, Profession (server) +6, Listen +2, Spot +2.

Feats: Skill Focus (Profession [server]), Skill Focus (Craft [cooking]).

Languages: Common.

Possessions: Dagger, 1d10 gp.

The Establishment

Vain Robert's Gibbet is a three-story octagonal structure, the legacy of originally being a dockside grain silo. Windows are all shuttered and hollow, kept closed during all but the summer months to keep out the wind and chill drifting in from the harbor. Its slates and floorboards are severely weathered. The gibbet out front, with its jangling chains constantly swaying in the breeze, is well maintained, however, since it represents the establishment's claim to fame. The pub's location right on the docks makes it the ideal place for sailors to go when they get shore leave or some spare time. The clientele is therefore appropriately unpolished.

Unless otherwise noted, the pub's stats are as follows:

Doors: 1 in. thick; Hardness 5; hp 10; Break (DC 13).

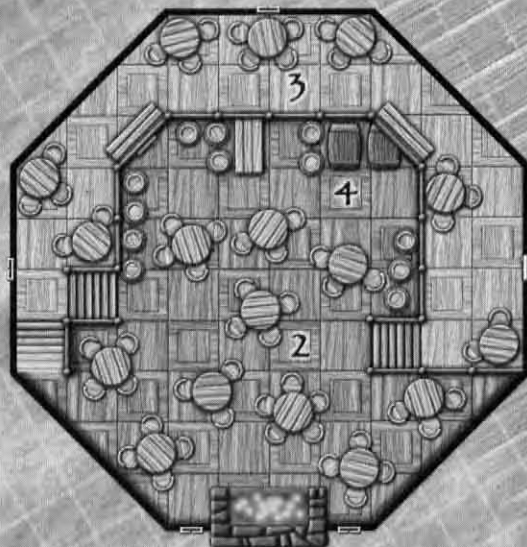
Walls (Outer and Inner): 6 in. thick; Hardness 5; hp 60; Break (DC 23).

i. Gibbet and Chains

This is a tall, inverted L-shaped pole and beam with chains dangling from it. Vain Robert the Pirate was strung up here after being hung to the death for his crimes as a warning to all who would follow in his footsteps. The gibbet and chains were placed here originally because they could be seen from the harbor mouth by incoming ships. Nowadays, the harbor break walls lie further out, and so the gibbet is no longer visible until the ships drift in closer. During the winter months when the fog rises like a thick blanket of wool, Elisbeth hangs bright orange lanterns from the gibbet, making it easier for her patrons to find the pub (and

Vain Robert's Gibbet - ground floor

1 square = 5 feet



keeping them from accidentally falling off the docks into the cold waters below, especially when they are drunk and doing the traditional, nightly wintertide pub crawl).

2. Common Room

Actually, the entire first floor is called the common room, but it is split into two parts: the ground floor and the quarterdeck. The ground floor is very large, crowded with numerous tables (most of which are nothing more than converted barrels), stools (again, converted barrels, albeit of the smaller variety), and chairs. Embedded in the south wall is a great hearth worthy of a king's parlor — the fire blazing within does an admirable job of warming the room, especially during the icy winter months. Stew pots hang from iron rods in the hearth corners. When she can manage it, Elisbeth hires bards and troubadours to perform here, giving them the prized hearthside spots. Her patrons tend to be a very rowdy bunch, so she won't begrudge the performers any concession. While the crowd is a tough one to please, those bards with the fortitude to withstand the verbal (and occasional physical) abuse can make good coin from Elisbeth.

The walls of the common room are decorated with trophy fish (and a few other strange sea creatures), tattered nets, a bent trident or two, whaling spears, pieces of masts taken (supposedly) from famous

ships, narwhale horns, and other similar "works of art" of interest solely to sea-faring folks.

3. Quarterdeck

The quarterdeck is the elevated section of the common room, built 4 feet off the floor. A railing runs the length of it, terminating at each step of stairs. At the far west end, steep stairs climb up to the second level, popularly known as the Crow's Nest (see below). As with the ground floor, tables and chairs crowd the quarterdeck. A plain door set in the short, waist-high wall supporting the floor opens into a hollow space beneath it, which is used strictly for storage. Spare ale barrels and goods are kept here.

4. Ale Magazine

This section of the common room contains all the ale barrels, liquor bottles, and miscellaneous bric-a-brac (such as empty stew pots, flagons, wooden bowls and spoons, and so on). To the west of the big barrels is a wobbly table on which ingredients for the stew are prepared. One serving wench always works in the ale magazine, tapping barrels, making fresh stew, and generally keeping the patrons from swiping free samples.

The pub favorite — though not by consensus as much by availability — is a brand of ale called *Forecastle*, brought in on the weekly trade ships and brewed by a former naval captain whose distinguished service to the throne brought him much fame and fortune. Both vari-

eties of the ale — the lighter, golden *pilsner* and the thicker, heartier *stout* — are always in stock. The other drinks are only intermittently available on any given night, depending on the whether the ale merchants supplying the pub received any that week from their brewers. *Gutochek's Blood Mead* originates from a drow recipe and is made, as its name implies, with blood (though whose blood is unknown); it has a very dense, coppery flavor. *Lusty Mermaid* is popular, selling out faster than the others, as it is inexpensive and very easy to drink. In fact, one patron claims it is the "brew with the taste for food," because people who drink it get really hungry afterwards. *Smuggler's Gold* is a rich *weisen* ale, more expensive than the others and well worth the price according to its aficionados. The pub also offers a nice selection of liquors, but they cost much more than the ales. As such, only the well-to-do or those trying to make an impression by showing off tend to order them. The sailors patronizing the pub usually view people who order such fancy drinks to be "hoity-toity," land-loving bluebloods — or naval officers. Of course, if the drink is intended for a beautiful lady-friend, then all is forgiven.

5. Crow's Nest

The "second-floor" consists of nothing more than a balcony overlooking the common room. The great hearth opens onto it, providing light and warmth. The Crow's Nest affords some privacy since the majority of the patrons prefer the ground floor. As

such, the majority of the courtesans ply their trade up here when not plying it at the nearby inns.

6. Ladder

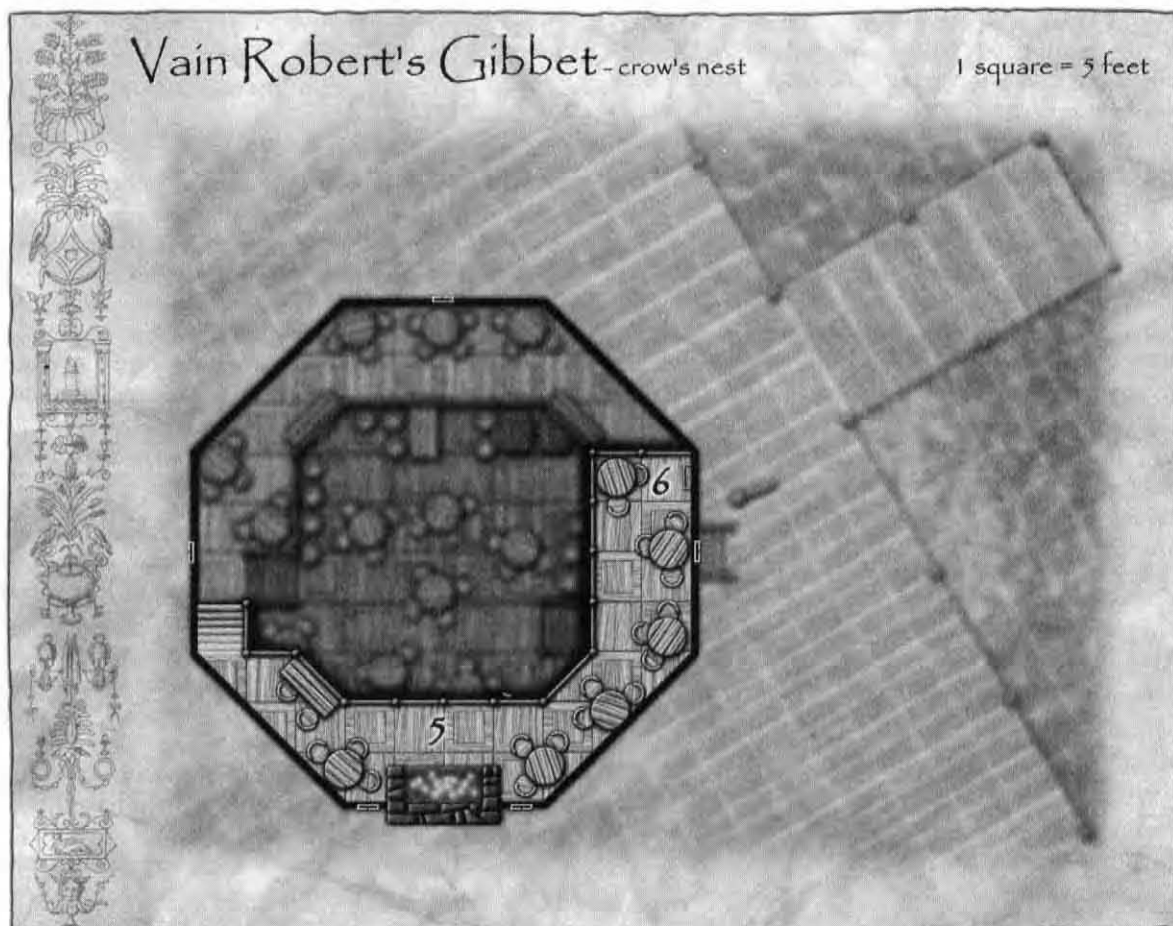
At the northeastern end of the Crow's Nest, this flimsy wood ladder ascends to the third floor through a narrow trap door in the ceiling above. Most times, the ladder is raised and the trapdoor shut, preventing access to the third floor. The average patron is categorically not welcome up there, so those who get the idea in their heads to climb the ladder find themselves tossed over the railing by those patrons in the know.

Trapdoor: 2 in. thick; Hardness 5; hp 20; Break (DC 23).

7. Poker Dogs' Quarters

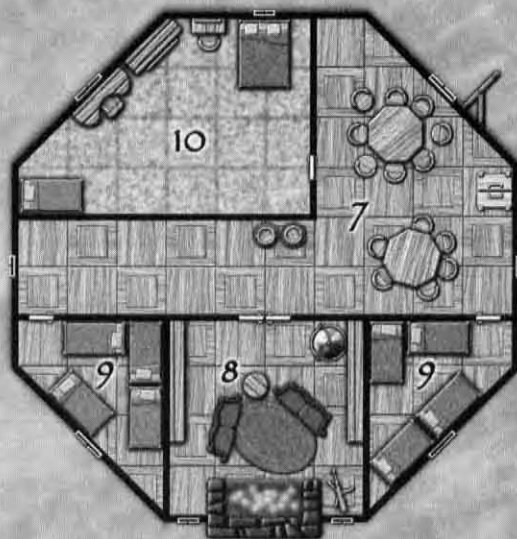
This open space used to serve as spare storage, but in recent years it has been converted into a gambling den, affectionately called the Poker Dogs' Quarters. Two octagonal poker tables and their chairs are placed up here. On most nights, pipe-smoking gamblers, all close friends of Elisbeth Talbot, occupy at least one of the tables. Uninvited guests who poke their heads up through the trapdoor in the floor get a swift kick and a stern warning: "Piss off and die, and we bloody well mean it, you sodding stupid bastard!" — or something similar.

The wide shuttered window in the northeastern wall also has a pulley, a winch, and three stories' worth of thick hemp



Vain Robert's Gibbet - third floor

1 square = 5 feet



rope, all of which are used for hauling furniture and other goods up from outside.

8. Hearth Room

This is a very comfortable room. Expensive embroidered rugs cover its floors. Fancy tapestries adorn its walls. The furniture is very opulent, made from exotic hardwoods, stained leathers riveted with polished brass tacks, and generously cushioned. Tall bookshelves stand on the east and west sides of the room, while a great hearth occupies the south wall. Books, scrolls, maps, brass compasses, an ancient telescope, and a globe displaying the known world may be found here.

Elisbeth uses the room as a private study as well as a meeting place when her Sea Dogs are in port. An ornate locked chest (Open Lock DC 25) sits next to the hearth, containing 6,000 gp, 735 gp in jewelry, 120 gp in gems, a tarnished silver hook, a pear-handled adamantite dagger, and 12 sheaves of encoded correspondence from the regional governor. A successful Decipher Script check (DC 25) reveals the truth about Elisbeth and the Sea Dogs as well as details about their most recent covert operations.

Door: 1 1/2 in. thick; Hardness 5; hp 15; Break (DC 18).

9. Sea Dogs' Quarters

These two rooms are empty except for four pairs of bunk beds, their associated linens, and chamber pots. The Sea Dogs use these rooms for their quarters when in port. Otherwise, they typically remain empty unless a close, trusted friend of Elisbeth's comes for a visit.

10. Talbot's Quarters

Elisbeth Talbot and her twin daughters reside here. Like the Hearth Room, it is very well appointed. She sleeps in a comfortable double bed, while her girls share a nice pair of bunk beds. A wardrobe contains all their clothes. On one side of it is a very ornate, gold-trimmed mahogany writing desk and chair, while on the other side is a dressing table and silver mirror. Toys are scattered about all over the floor, which is covered in a wall-to-wall rug custom tailored for the room. The relics from Elisbeth's days as captain of the *HMS Fancy Merchant* hang from the walls: a high quality rapier; two dwarven handaxes; an elven stiletto; her captain's hat and coat, the latter decorated with insignias of rank and medals for valor, courage, and conduct.

A lockbox (Open Lock DC 26) beneath the bed contains 48 letters written on fine parchment with black and gold ink and scented with expensive cologne. The last letter is dated two months ago. In addition, the chest also contains an elegant gold medallion and chain worth 82 gp, emblazoned with the royal seal on one side and her family crest on the other.

Door: 1 1/2 in. thick; Hardness 5; hp 15; Break (DC 18).

Goods & Services

Vain Robert's Gibbet is a pub and nothing more. It serves ale, mead, and other liquors but really is not equipped for serving food or hiring out rooms. If patrons want something other than the pub's meager comestible fare, then they can go outside and purchase it from the vendors and hawkers roaming the docks. Elisbeth allows some courtesans to work

Vain Robert's Gibbet Menu

Ale & Mead	Cost		
Forecastle Pilsner	1 cp	Harrington's 30-Year Whiskey	27 gp
Forecastle Stout	1 cp	One-Eyed George	5 sp
Gutochek's Blood Mead	3 cp	Spiced apple brandy	6 cp
Pegleg's Lusty Mermaid Pale Ale	2 cp	The Queen's White Bloomers	1 gp
Smuggler's Gold	4 cp	Food	
Other Beverages		Fish stew	1 cp
Five Stanzas of Lust & Beauty	2 sp	Bread, day-old	1 cp
Harrington's 10-Year Whiskey	3 gp	Other Services	
Harrington's 20-Year Whiskey	9 gp	Courtesan, low-ranking	3 sp
		Message running	5 sp

in the pub, collecting 70% of their take in exchange for use of the Crow's Nest and a warm place from which to work (walking the docks during most seasons can be very uncomfortable — and dangerous — to say the least). Higher-class courtesans would not be caught dead in the establishment, so patrons must go out and find them.

Adventure Seeds

The following ideas can be used as seeds for adventures set in or around Vain Robert's Gibbet:

- One night while the adventurers are in the Gibbet, someone reports hearing muffled thumps coming from the third floor. Elisbeth and her "friends" have been gone for the past week, with only three remaining behind to watch over the tavern (her children were sent to their grandparents' house across town). Upon investigating, the trap door entrance leading to the third floor is irreparably sealed with magic and the men stationed upstairs unresponsive. Should anyone manage to get in (perhaps through a window from the roof), they find a minion of the Witch-Queen named Razorfin Jackspike performing a horrid ritual of sacrifice on the last surviving Sea Dog. The priest intends to summon doppelgangers to replace the men. The other two Sea Dogs have already been eviscerated by the proto-doppelgangers clawing their way from the men's chest cavities as the adventurers arrive. Can they put a stop to Jackspike, or will they too become victims of his infernal magic?

- The latest shipment of *Gutochek's Blood Mead* arrives infected with a nefarious fungus known as *reaper moss*. Everyone in the pub who drinks the mead must make a Fortitude save (DC 20) or end up dead. The victims are not an everyday ordinary sort of dead, however, but rather their corpses slip into a kind of ice-cold torpor and their spirits become disassociated from them. In essence, they become ghosts. In the incorporeal world the ghosts now inhabit, the shade of Vain Robert still exists and still

craves vengeance. Once he discovers the new ghosts, he will stop at nothing to eradicate them, feeding on their souls (subsequently killing them for good) in order to gain more spiritual might. When Vain Robert feeds on at least five souls, he can manifest in the corporeal world and cause untold havoc. Reaper ghosts (those created by the reaper moss) are bound to the area immediately within 300 yards in all directions of the pub.

- The harbor master comes to the tavern to confer with Elisbeth Talbot about the fencing of smuggled goods. Ten dock wardens — burly, bull-necked young men eager for a fight — accompany him. During his and Elisbeth's conversation in the Crow's Nest, a bolt of blue flame materializes out of thin air and strikes the man dead. The chief dock warden, Gregor Zurdanov, orders the pub's doors sealed. No one may leave until he and his nine thugs find the murderer, and if this means cracking a few heads in the process, then they will be more than happy to do so. Their primary suspects are Elisbeth and her friends. In truth, Gregor hired a sorcerer named Jarlene Frostkell to kill the harbor master that night so he could pin the crime on Elisbeth, whom he absolutely detests, and inherit the job. He wants more than anything else to shut down her operation and hang her cold, dead corpse from the gibbet outside.

- Wererats have built a nest in the storage space below the pub's Quarterdeck. Late at night, when the pub is empty and locked up tight, they come out to steal food (such as it is) and drink. Elisbeth has neither the time nor the energy to deal with the vermin, so she hires the adventurers to take care of them, through hook or crook, bribery, force, she does not care. She just wants them gone. None of her Sea Dogs are in port; otherwise, she would assign them to the relatively simple task. Making an enemy of the wererats could conceivably be very bad for business — if their society in the city is fairly well developed and cohesive, killing those living under the Gibbet could inadvertently start a small war.

The Lion Rampant

The threads of fate wend their way through time and space, weaving destinies together while cutting others short. The Lion Rampant is at the nexus of two such fabled threads, a tall tavern and inn that caters to the city's nobles all the while sitting atop a mystery none have yet deciphered. The tavern's owner suffers from visions that impel him to stab in the back the very people responsible for his success, while a withered old man sits nightly before the hearth fire surrounded by eager, zealous young men and women dedicated to restoring his lost empire at any cost. Yet fate moves slowly, and so life goes on in the tavern. Business remains steady, with aristocrats filling the tables, bards taking the stage, and disguised thieves going about their jobs each night with little regard for anything but their own affairs.

Background

Twenty years ago, two grifters — Wallis of Hogshead Bend, a shifty-eyed gnome, and his partner Stuart the Weak, a handsome but gangly human — bilked an old, widowed aristocrat woman named Alyce Goody out of the building The Lion Rampant now occupies. Over the course of six months, Stuart managed to convince her that he was madly in love with her. He wooed her, made her feel young again, took her out on the town to visit friends who had very nearly forgotten she was alive, and in short gave her a taste of a youth long since expired. At first, Alyce was naturally suspicious, but Stuart was also a skillful mage and used his magic to ease her doubts and fears. Of course he held no interest in her estate, he told her, his words laced with infernal spells to make her believe he truly loved her for who she was now and for the woman she had been when she was younger.

The key to Stuart's seduction was the promise of not only restoring said youth, but also Alyce's former beauty. In fact, he whispered softly in her ear one night while basking in the afterglow of love making, he had an alchemist friend who knew the secret to the elixir of life, the fabled tonic that imparted rejuvenation, youth, and immortality upon the one who imbibed it. At first, Alyce balked; yet eventually Stuart's honeyed words won her over. She craved the elixir, she required it, and she would do anything in her power to become young again so she and her lover could live the perfect life together. Stuart told her that the elixir was expensive to concoct, more expensive than anything else in this world, perhaps. She vowed to find the money somehow. Over the following weeks, she sold off everything of value she owned, including the treasured artifacts acquired by her husband when he was alive. When all that remained was her city manor and the rats living in it, Stuart informed her that it was not quite enough. His friend was already taking a huge loss on making the elixir for her, but he still needed more money. Alyce, desperate for Stuart's love and approval, relented and told him to find a buyer for the house, signing the deeds over to him. He took his leave of her, returning a week later claiming a prominent magistrate from a neighboring city had bought the manor. They had the money, now they need only travel to the alchemist's lab and procure the magical elixir. Stuart hired a carriage for them, and they

traveled to a remote inn many days out from the city. There they met Wallis. That night, Stuart and Wallis asphyxiated the woman with the pillows her head lay upon, killing her. They disposed of the body in the forest, then celebrated the night away back in the inn's common room. The con had proved more successful than they imagined.

Wallis and Stuart returned to the city manor to find a real buyer for it this time, though they certainly were in no hurry — no one would miss the old cow since she had no family and her few so-called friends barely remembered anyway. At first, everything felt just perfect. They were both wealthy beyond belief, and the manor would make them more so. Each night they spent in a drunken stupor, celebrating their newly acquired wealth and their clever con; each day, they slept off the intoxications from the night before. This lifestyle persisted for many months. A few people expressed interest in the manor, but Wallis and Stuart always found a reason not to finalize the sale, sometimes taking offense at unspoken insults, other times not liking the way the buyer condescended to them. Wallis became more extravagant, spending thousands of gold pieces a day on clothes, horses, carriages, entertainment, and "rare and magical" artifacts from famous adventurers. Stuart became obsessed with increasing his mystical repertoire, spending his share of the wealth on magic items, artifacts, spells, rods, staffs, and anything else that radiated a *dweomer*. A year passed this way, at the end of which time they realized they had pissed away every coin they swindled from the withered old biddy. All they had left was the house and the junk they had accumulated. Most of the really valuable stuff had either been stolen (by the enterprising thieves' guild) or given away in failed attempts to impress would-be friends and women. Some were sold off again to pay for new expenses, endlessly recycled coin that diminished with each new return. They had nothing left. More astoundingly, they could not believe it.

Desperate and destitute, the Wallis and Stuart realized the game was once again afoot. They conspired to sell the house, take the money from it and move on to better pickings. The thieves' guild, which had made quite a considerable profit stealing from the two, sent a trickster of their own into the game to purchase the house for a song — a fiery-haired, taut-bodied lass named Belladonna. As predicted, Wallis and Stuart's wits abandoned them. Belladonna played them like a bard plays a fiddle — masterfully. Two weeks later, the thieves had secured legal ownership of the manor, and the boys ended up floating down river with a couple of hefty knives stuck in their backs.

The thieves' guild pondered briefly how best to use the building, in the end deciding to give it to a couple of normal people who lived only at the absolute periphery of the underworld: stooges who would cooperate with the guild representatives and not ask questions, remaining ignorant and uncaring of who really was in charge. Those people were Thomas and Becca Marlowe, and they were tasked with turning the manor into a high-class tavern designed to cater to nobles, aristocratic merchants, and royalty. Under such a pretense, the thieves' bargained they

would find the by-ways into noble society suddenly opened to them. The Marlowes took over, using seed money gifted to them by a senior member of the guild known only as Master Tallison, a curious fellow who only spoke in the lilting, rhyming cant of the back alleys and undergutters. Within two months, the Marlowes transformed the building and The Lion Rampant was born.

The tavern operated normally and strictly within the boundaries of the law for 10 years, attracting a large clientele from the strata of society's nobility. The thieves' guild sent in operatives each week to glean information and pickings from the patrons, guild members unknown to the Marlowes either visually or by reputation. Customers came and went; the tavern prospered. Then, five years ago, a strange little fellow, a wizard named Eruther Longshanks, arrived bearing a mysterious, wrapped parcel that contained *something* so magically potent it set everyone's neck hair to standing upright and their teeth to tingling. He asked the Marlowes to let him convert one of their spare larders into an icehouse where he could temporarily store the device in relative safety. They resisted, naturally suspicious, but when he dropped two sacks of gleaming foreign gold coin atop of the bar, they agreed. For that amount of money, they could buy two new buildings if something unfortunate happened to the Lion because of Longshanks' magic. Two months after the icehouse's construction, a sinkhole formed in its southeast corner, uncovering a network of tunnels beneath the tavern. When a haggard man speaking an alien language emerged from them, everyone, including Eruther, was astounded. No one knew where the strange man came from or how he found his way down into the tunnels, much less how he survived down there before they opened up. Eruther left, taking his strange package with him, before anyone could question him about this new turn of events.

So, the thieves sent a couple of worthless footpads down into their darkness to investigate. They found a throne, a magical mirror, and a column of black ice. Unable to decipher the mystery of either the mirror or the column after many weeks of trying, the guild finally hired the best wizards available. Unfortunately, none of them could solve the mystery either, claiming that the mirror was simply a fanciful but ultimately useless device enchanted to show one possible future. The throne, they said, did nothing (none of them, however, spent enough time actually sitting in the throne to be affected by its magic), and the column of black ice was maddeningly inert. The strange man, whom they learned was called King Jared, claimed to come from a time set far in the future, banished here by the pet-wizard of his jealous rival. At first, the thieves wanted Jared to leave the tunnels and get on with his life, but he refused. Becca felt sorry for him. She and Thomas agreed to let him have his tunnels just so long as he did not interfere with business. The thieves were ready simply to kill the man and be done with him once and for all. They wanted to seal the tunnels up in case something really wicked came back from the future, but Thomas and Becca managed to convince them that King Jared was harmless. Broken, Jared presented no threat, and as far as anyone could tell, the Well of Souls (as the column of black ice came to be known) was nonfunctional. Let him

have his memories and the mirror, they argued. Master Tallison finally agreed. Why not? he thought. Besides, keeping the old fart in the tunnels might eventually reactivate the column of black ice and reveal a choice tidbit of future knowledge in the mirror's infernal reflection — or bring someone else through whom the guild could potentially utilize. Of course, leaving the tunnels open might do more harm to the guild than good in the long run, but Master Tallison was willing to take that chance after considering the situation at length. One fact was certain, however: "Eruther Longshanks" has rapidly become the most wanted man in town. The guild, the Marlowes, and King Jared all have questions for him.

Dramatis Personae

Many intriguing people fill The Lion Rampant. **Thomas** and **Becca Marlowe** are its owners, each with a familial connection the city's thieves' guild, which more or less owns the tavern. **King Jared**, who claims to be a future king banished to the past by his adversary, and his knights, who call themselves the **Order of the Well of Souls**, attract a good deal of curiosity. Last but not least, numerous **squires** serve ale and food and **courtesans** serve pleasure.

Thomas & Becca Marlowe

The Marlowes come from a long a line of thieves, pickpockets, and other ne'er-do-wells. Thomas' family owns some fame for its thuggish strong-arm men and enforcers, while Becca's family, the Cookes, is known for its exceptionally skilled albeit criminally minded sorcerers and wizards. Both Thomas and Becca ultimately elected not to follow as closely in the family traditions as their parents desired, preferring simple lives — though their reasons for doing so are quite unusual. They fell in love when they were sixteen and from that point on have spent every waking moment with one another.

As a child, it seemed Thomas Marlowe would follow in the footsteps of his esteemed father, Henri "Basher" Marlowe. A tough youth, Thomas was always in and out of fights, never once loosing to his peers though he did take wounds every so often. By the age of nine, he had become the terror of Walker Alley and its adjacent streets, collecting "street taxes" from many of the neighborhood businesses on his father's behalf. That year, however, an event occurred that dramatically changed Thomas' life and sent it spinning in an entirely new and unexpected direction. One day, Basher was arrested on suspicion of murdering the ward's watch captain. His superiors in the guild used their influence, pulled a few strings, and greased a few palms with gold to get the accusation dropped and their best enforcer released. Thomas could not help but feel proud of his old man and of the guild he regarded as an extended family.

Yet that night the slain watch captain's wife used an ancient family heirloom to summon a powerful desert spirit — a djinni — and beg him to bring justice to the murderer. Hours later, 26 steel-armored horsemen glinting silver rode into town. The crest on their shields depicted a balance and scales, the universal symbol for justice. They dismounted outside the Marlowe house, smashed in the door, and

yanked a shaken, fearful Basher Marlowe from his bed. Thomas bore witness to the entire affair. The mysterious knights dragged the boy's father to the neighborhood square.

Over the following 12 hours, the avatars of justice summoned the shades of every person murdered by the man in his lifetime, either directly by his own hand or indirectly by orders given to lesser thugs. They tried Basher before the entire neighborhood, unmasking his wicked crimes and placing the burden of shame upon his shoulders. At first, Basher Marlowe stood defiant and proud, but as the night wore on the laments of the slain gradually wore him down, eroding his remorseless façade. The trial ended, and Basher wept openly for the pain wrought by his hands. He begged for absolution and forgiveness. Thomas could not believe his eyes or his ears. The spectacle had affected him too, perhaps more deeply than his father. The judges spoke, saying that Basher needed to make a choice: either die now and be received, for better or worse, by whatever god to which he prayed, or continue with his life and try to make amends here and now. Knowing the old man better than anyone except for perhaps his mother, Thomas recognized that his father's penance was not completely genuine, that a spark of his former cruelty still burned deep inside him and that it would again fan the flames of his hatred once the night ended. Thomas also knew without a shadow of a doubt the choice his father would make. Before the old man could speak, Thomas ran into the square, drew a judge's sword, and ran his father through. "Justice has been meted," the lead knight said, "so says the Guild of Judges." Thomas collapsed atop his father's corpse, sobbing. The knights rode off.

Thomas awoke the next day with great melancholy in his heart. When he heard his father's voice coming from the kitchen, berating his mother, as was the man's habit, a fundamental part of the boy's soul finally snapped. Nothing had changed, after all. His father was still alive; the judges were nothing but mere figments in his mind, actors in a dream. That day, feeling outraged, betrayed, and confused by his emotions, Thomas left home and took up residence with an aunt unassociated with the thieves' guild. He forsook the promise of greatness within the criminal empire for a life of simplicity and kindness. After his father's accidental death years later at the hands of the city watch, the guild reinitiated contact with him, hoping he would assume his father's mantle. Thomas refused, but that did not stop them from trying repeatedly over the years. Eventually, the guild realized Thomas would never become a loyal member in their ranks, yet he seemed not entirely to resent their contacts with him either. So, they decided to use him and his innocence to their advantage, bestowing The Lion Rampant as a gift upon him and his wife. Thomas understood that in accepting their gift he would become a minor pawn in their game to take control of the city, but that is actually what he wanted. A year before the guild gave him ownership of The Lion Rampant, powerfully compelling dreams of the Guild of Judges began plaguing his sleep each night. The Judges taught him their ways and encouraged him to do what he has always known he must, since that first dream came to him as a child: to bring down the thieves' guild and exact justice upon its members.

Becca's life has not been nearly as complicated. During the first part of her childhood, she looked forward to formally joining the thieves' guild. Unfortunately, she lacked the talent for which the Cooke family was renowned — its command of magic. She could not cast even the simplest cantrip; she was utterly blind to the flow of magical energies. In fact, her inability was so profound that she hindered spellcasting in others at times just by her presence in the same room. At the age of six, her family, at the guild's behest, decided she would never contribute fully to the cause and so shipped her off to live with friends of the family in Bard's Gate, where she spent the next 10 years working for a cartographer as a clerk and errand girl, sinking into a deep depression that appeared to know no limits. When she turned 16, the cartographer sent her back home because she had become useless. She was also on the verge of suicide. When she arrived home, she was welcomed but continued to be unhappy. Days passed, then months, during which she rarely set foot beyond the threshold of her room. Finally, the day came when her father could not tolerate her morose inactivity any longer. He packed up her few belongings, dragged her forcibly down the street to an inn, and hired out a room for her indefinitely. The inn master was Thomas' aunt, and the boy worked in the common room. When she made eye contact with him for the first time, she instantly fell in love, believing she had found her soul mate. Her depression lifted gradually, and she took to working downstairs in the common room just to be near him. As the years passed, they grew closer, he confiding in her that he too had fallen in love the first day they met. They married and have been living happily together ever since.

She is fully aware of the gift bestowed upon them by the thieves' guild. While she no longer bears the guild — or her family, really — any ill will, she still does not trust them completely. Nevertheless, they only that she and her husband simply run the inn and turn a blind eye toward their operations, which is easy to do since most of the guild operatives working in the tavern remain unknown to her. Her life is a simple one, and in retrospect she feels grateful that events turned out the way they did. She loves Thomas very much and is content to spend their lives this way, looking after the tavern. Deep down inside, though she will never admit it even to herself, a small part of her still secretly yearns for magic.

Thomas Marlowe, Male Human Com3/Pal6: CR 8; SZ M (6 ft., 4 in. tall); HD 3d4 plus 6d10; hp 34; Init +5 (Dex, Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft.; AC 16 (+1 Dex, +5 armor); Atk +9/+4 melee (1d6+2, rusty longsword) or +9/+4 melee (1d4+2, dagger, 19-20/x2); SA smite evil (+3 attack, +6 damage), spells, turn undead; SQ *detect evil*, divine grace, *lay on hands* (18 hp/day), divine health, aura of courage, smite evil, *remove disease* (2/week); AL LG; SV Fort +6, Ref +4, Will +8; Str 14, Dex 12, Con 11, Int 13, Wis 16, Cha 17.

Skills: Concentration +6, Craft (cooking) +7, Handle Animal +7, Knowledge (religion) +9, Listen +7, Profession (innkeeper) +10, Ride (horse) +8, Spot +7.

Feats: Alertness, Blind-Fight, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Leadership.

Languages: Common, Dwarven.

THE LION RAMPANT

Paladin Spells Prepared (2; base DC 13 + spell level): 1st — *bless weapon*, *protection from evil*.

Possessions: Rusty longsword, chainmail, dagger and 151 gp.

Becca Marlowe, Female Human Com5: CR 4; SZ M (5 ft., 5 in. tall); HD 5d4; hp 12; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 10; Atk +2 melee (1d4, dagger, 19-20/x2) or +2 ranged (1d4, dagger, 19-20/x2, range 10 ft.); SQ antimagic field; AL NG; SV Fort +1, Ref +1, Will +4; Str 10, Dex 10, Con 10, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 10.

Skills: Craft (cooking) +10, Listen +7, Profession (innkeeper) +9, Spot +7.

Feats: Alertness, Iron Will, Skill Focus (Cooking).

Languages: Common.

Antimagic Field (Su): As per the spell of the same name as cast by a 20th-level sorcerer. The field, however, randomly activates and so is not always in effect. To determine during any given day if it is active, roll 1d20. On a 1, 2, or 3, the field is active. A check is made once per hour each day to determine if the field is active or inactive. Once activated, the field stays active for 1 hour after which time a new check must be made.

Possessions: Dagger and 21 gp.

King Jared

Jared Steelheart ruled absolutely an empire that spanned all the continents. Unfortunately, while his memories of his rule are locked in his personal past, the rise of that empire comes twenty millennia hence. His name is not even Jared Steelheart; that is just a base translation of it from his native

tongue, and even then not a very good one. He ruled with a just, even hand. His subjects apparently loved and revered him. Yet as in any time with any ruling entity, one always finds those malcontents who can never be satisfied unless they hold the reigns of power in their own hands.

His rival, Prince Ramsel, had tried since they were children to depose Jared, and the prince eventually managed to secure the services of a *nanomagus* to get rid of the king. Years passed before this event happened, though. Then the black, icy claws of death suddenly materialized from the air and grabbed Jared, dragging him through a hellish afterlife for what felt like an eternity. When Jared came awake again, he found himself in the tunnels beneath The Lion Rampant. He did take long to realize that he was banished to the past — so far back, in fact, that he could never do anything to affect his reign in the future. The mirror was obviously put in the tunnels to torment him further, showing him glimpses of the new king's rule... of Ramsel's Empire. Oh, how he prays everyday Ramsel had just killed him and been done with it.

Today, Jared is a broken, enfeebled man. He will gladly tell his tale to anyone ready to listen, but most who do walk away from the conversation believing he has lost his wits. A tiny shred of hope still resides in his heart, though, the only thing that keeps him going, really. A few years ago, a bright-eyed youth heard his tale and somehow became inspired by it. Not long after, *they* began showing up: clad in armor stolen from their fathers or from the churches, vowing allegiance, swearing fealty, and otherwise giving him their undying service. At first, Jared was annoyed, but



ever since that one girl with the yellow hair and the falcon crest tattoo on her collar brought him a tome of arcane lore that may possibly describe how to reactivate the Well, he has warmed to his "Knights of the Well of Souls." If he can decipher the obtuse, cryptic language of the book and reopen the Well, they will be the first members of the glorious army he will use to reclaim his throne.

King Jared, Male Human Ari16: CR 15; SZ M (6 ft., 1 in. tall); HD 16d8+16; hp 79; Init +1; Spd 20 ft. (base 30 ft.); AC 22 (+1 Dex, +6 armor, +4 shield, *ring of protection* +1); Atk +17/+12/+7 melee (1d8+4 and life stealing, *sword of life stealing*, 19-20/x2) or +16/+11/+6 ranged (1d8, masterwork composite longbow, crit x3, range 110 ft.); AL LG; SV Fort +6, Ref +8, Will +11; Str 14, Dex 12, Con 12, Int 16, Wis 13, Cha 17.

Skills: Appraise +21, Diplomacy +19, Gather Information +15, Handle Animal +16, Intimidate +17, Knowledge (local history) +16, Knowledge (politics) +19, Ride (horse) +19, Sense Motive +17.

Feats: Leadership, Lightning Reflexes, Sill Focus (Appraise, Intimidate, Sense Motive), Weapon Focus (longsword, composite longbow).

Languages: Common, Dwarven, plus two regional dialects.

Possessions: +1 breastplate, lion's shield, *sword of life stealing* (+2 longsword), *ring of protection* +1, *figurine of wondrous power* (bronze griffon), dagger, masterwork composite longbow, 20 masterwork arrows, and 1,000 gp.

The Order of the Well of Souls

This collection of young men and women has dedicated itself to aiding King Jared reclaim his throne. They originated three years ago when their leader, Bullick Wobb, overheard Jared relating his tale to a new tavern squire. Wobb became inspired, drawn to the man's tale, knowing it to be true with utter certainty. After the squire left, he asked Jared to retell the story. The second time he heard it, Wobb knew without a shadow of a doubt the course of action he must take: assemble the finest men and women he could find in order to help Jared return to his time and reclaim that which was wrongfully stolen from him. The next day, he rode off with this newfound purpose in life swelling in his heart and soul.

Months later, the first recruits in the so-called Order of the Well of Souls began arriving at the Lion. Much to Jared's disgust, they introduced themselves and swore to stand by his side and do everything in their power to restore his sovereignty. He berated them for youthful fools, uncomprehending of the enormity of his adversary's might. They never faltered, though, and to this day maintain constant vigilance by his side, caring for him and always pressing him for additional information. During the weeks following the first group's arrival, more knights arrived. Their armor was old and worn, some of it stolen, some of it borrowed, and some of it legitimately purchased second-hand. Their weapons were as varied and quaint as their armor. Finally, Wobb returned with a small group of his own and a newly appointed second-in-command: a blond, tattooed girl named Clarissa Paetersong.

The group moved into the tunnels downstairs. Initially, the thieves' guild panicked. How could they cheat the

drunkards upstairs if they needed to keep a constant eye on the young dolts congregating around that old dolt always parked on his throne? Master Tallison was on the verge of ordering their extinction when Thomas convinced him otherwise, claiming the kids only wanted to help Jared get back to his own time. They also spent a considerable amount of coin each night, filling the tavern's coffers with much needed chink. Tallison had always liked Thomas, despite the boy's questionable loyalties, and so once again deferred to his judgment.

Today, the knights spend their evenings occupying the common room's back portion. Most wile away the hours by drinking, singing, or telling stories. Some sneak upstairs to whore when they think their comrades' eyes are turned away, while others attempt to recruit from the young aristocratic men and women who seem to own some small ability or martial prowess. Lately, Wobb is sending the higher-ranking knights out on secret missions. Apparently, he and Clarissa have finally tracked down vital clues about the Well, and now they are directing the knights on quests to retrieve them.

Knight Recruit, Male Human Pal1 (9): CR 1; SZ M; HD 1d10; hp 10; Init +0; Spd 20 ft. (base 30 ft.); AC 15 (+5 breastplate); Atk +2 melee (1d8+1, longsword, 19-20/x2); SA; SQ *detect evil*, divine grace, divine health, *lay on hands* (2 hp/day); AL LG; SV Fort +4, Ref +2, Will +4; Str 12, Dex 10, Con 11, Int 13, Wis 14, Cha 14.

Skills: Diplomacy +8, Heal +6, Knowledge (religion) +5, Ride (horse) +4.

Feats: Expertise, Skill Focus (Diplomacy).

Languages: Common, Dwarven.

Possessions: Breastplate, longsword, dagger, and 1d20 gp.

Knight, Man-At-Arms, Male Human Pal5 (5): CR 5; SZ M; HD 5d10+10; hp 38; Init +1; Spd 20 ft. (base 30 ft.); AC 16 (+1 Dex, +5 armor); Atk +9 melee (1d8+3, +1 longsword, 19-20/x2) or +8 ranged (1d6, masterwork shortbow, crit x3, range 60 ft.); SA *smite evil* (+3 attack, +5 damage), *turn undead*, spells; SQ *detect evil*, divine grace, *lay on hands* (15 hp/day), divine health, aura of courage, *remove disease* (1/week); AL LG; SV Fort +9, Ref +5, Will +7; Str 14, Dex 13, Con 15, Int 14, Wis 17, Cha 17.

Skills: Concentration +6, Craft (weaponsmithing) +6, Diplomacy +11, Handle Animal +7, Heal +11, Knowledge (religion) +6, Ride (horse) +9.

Feats: Combat Reflexes, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (longsword).

Languages: Common, Elven, plus one regional dialect.

Paladin Spells Prepared (1; base DC 13 + spell level): 1st — *divine favor*.

Possessions: Breastplate, +1 longsword, dagger, masterwork shortbow, 20 masterwork arrows, and 90 gp.

Bullick Wobb, Male Human Pal6: CR 6; SZ M (6 ft. tall); HD 6d10+12; hp 49; Init +0; Spd 20 ft.; AC 20 (+8 armor, +2 shield); Atk +10/+5 melee (1d8+3, +1 longsword, 19-20/x2), or +6/+1 ranged (1d8, light crossbow, 19-20/x2, range 80 ft.); SA *smite evil* (+3 attack, +6 damage), *turn undead*; SQ *detect evil*, divine grace, *lay on hands* (18 hp/day), divine health, aura of courage, *remove disease* (2/week); AL LG; SV Fort +10, Ref +7, Will +7; Str 14, Dex 10, Con 14, Int 11, Wis 14, Cha 17.



Skills: Concentration +9, Diplomacy +11, Knowledge (religion) +7, Ride (horse) +5.

Feats: Blind-Fight, Power Attack, Lightning Reflexes, Weapon Focus (long sword).

Languages: Common.

Spells Prepared (2; base DC 12 + spell level): 1st — *bless*, *divine favor*.

Possessions: Full plate armor, large wooden shield, +1 longsword, light crossbow, 20 bolts, *potion of cure light wounds*, 275 gp.

Clarissa Paetersong, Female Human Pal5: CR 5; SZ M (5 ft. tall); HD 5d10+5; hp 35; Init +1; Spd 20 ft. (base 30 ft.); AC 18 (+1 Dex, +6 armor, +1 shield); Atk +9 melee (1d8+4, +1 longsword, 19-20/x2) or +7 ranged (1d6, masterwork shortbow, crit x3, range 60 ft.); SA smite evil (+3 attack, +5 damage), turn undead, spells; SQ *detect evil*, *divine grace*, *lay on hands* (15 hp/day), *divine health*, aura of courage, *remove disease* (1/week); AL LG; SV Fort +8, Ref +5, Will +7; Str 16, Dex 13, Con 13, Int 12, Wis 16, Cha 17.

Skills: Concentration +7, Craft (armorsmithing) +7, Diplomacy +9, Handle Animal +8, Ride (horse) +9.

Feats: Combat Reflexes, Mounted Combat, Power Attack.

Languages: Common, plus one regional dialect.

Paladin Spells Prepared (1; base DC 13 + spell level): 1st — *divine favor*.

Possessions: +1 breastplate, small steel shield, +1 longsword, dagger, masterwork shortbow, 20 masterwork arrows, and 112 gp.

Squires & Courtesans

The Marlowes hire young boys and girls to work in the common room serving patrons and taking orders or to work in the kitchen helping the cook. These apprentice publicans, called squires, usually come straight off the streets. Many are allowed to sleep in the common room after the tavern closes or, in rare instances, in the Long Room if no patrons are renting beds in it. Mostly, they share rooms together in the poorer parts of town and walk to work each afternoon. The Marlowes treat them fairly, but can be hard on them when they make mistakes. Some of the kids are being groomed for possible entry into the thieves' guild as future footpads and cat burglars. The courtesans are all well-mannered and highly cultured young men and women in their late teens and early twenties that may be hired as companions, the bulk of their fees going to the house. They are, unsurprisingly, members of the thieves' guild.

Squire, Male or Female Human Com 1 (4): CR 1/2; SZ M; HD 1d4; hp 4; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 10; Atk +0 melee (1d4, dagger, 19-20/x2); AL N; SV Fort +0, Ref +0, Will +0; Str 11, Dex 10, Con 11, Int 10, Wis 11, Cha 11.

Skills: Listen +4, Profession (innkeeper) +4, Spot +4, Use Rope +4.

Feats: Skill Focus (Listen, Use Rope).

Languages: Common.

Possessions: Dagger and 1d4 gp.

Courtesan, Male or Female Human Com 1/Rog 1 (3): CR 1; SZ M; HD 4d4 plus 1d6; hp 13; Init +1; Spd 30 ft.; AC 11 (+1 Dex); Atk +0 melee (1d4, dagger, crit 19-20/x2) or +1 ranged (1d4, dagger, 19-20/x2, range 10 ft.); SA

THE BOOK OF TAVERNS

sneak attack (+1d6); AL CG; SV Fort +0, Ref +3, Will +0; Str 11, Dex 12, Con 10, Int 11, Wis 11, Cha 10.

Skills: Listen +9, Profession (courtesan) +5, Ride (horse) +5, Read Lips +2, Spot +6.

Feats: Alertness, Skill Focus (Listen).

Languages: Common.

Possessions: Dagger, 100 gp worth of jewelry, and 62 gp in coin.

The Establishment

The Lion Rampant is a towering building with space enough to contain three full floors, but it only actually has two. It is a solidly built wooden structure covered on the outside with white plaster daub, brown crossbeams, and expensive shuttered glass windows. Stained cedar shingles cover the roof. Hanging from a black iron rod next to the front entrance is a finely crafted plaque emblazoned with a heraldic lion rampant, painted red and gold. Atop the rod sits a thick wax candle, which indicates the tavern is open for business when lit. The back door to the tavern opens into an alley, where patrons relieve themselves or where the squires empty chamber pots. Two sets of stairs rise from the first floor to the second, the first set in the common room proper along the north wall, the second set at the back of the tavern, located discreetly behind the kitchen and larder.

Unless otherwise noted, The Lion Rampant's stats are as follows:

Doors: Locked; 1 1/2 in. thick; Hardness 5; hp 15; Break (DC 18); Open Lock (DC 20).

Walls (Outer and Inner): 1 ft. thick; Hardness 5; hp 60; Break (DC 23).

Secret Doors: 1 in. thick; Hardness 5; hp 10; Break (DC 13); Search (DC 25).

1. Common Room

The Lion Rampant's main gathering spot, this common room as a vaulted ceiling. Its walls are decorated with rusty weapons and armor allegedly taken from famous battlefields, wool tapestries depicting scenes from myth (and used to keep breezes from seeping in through the wall seams), and gilt-framed oil paintings bearing the visages of local notables. Colorful banners hang from the ceiling, proudly displaying the coats-of-arms of the most prominent aristocratic families in the region, past and present.

Extremely well built dragonwood tables and chairs occupy the room's floor space, each one painstakingly hand-crafted by the area's most famous carpenter. Every night, the room is filled with well-dressed merchants, knights, and nobles. On the nights a bard or two takes the stage, it becomes standing room only, and squires, two or three flagons gripped precariously in each hand, can barely wend their way through the packed-in crowd. Tobacco smoke typically thickens the air, along with the rich aromas of the housemaster's cooking.

The common room has two stone hearths that blaze with fire during business hours, regardless of the season. A wooden throne sits before the hearth along the east wall.



2. Bar

A long dragonwood counter runs along the exterior of the kitchen's east wall, from behind which the squires serve ale, mead, and other potables. On either side of the kitchen entrance, ornately carved cupboards and shelves hold leather, pewter, and wood flagons inside. Next to them squat the ale and mead barrels, freshly tapped each afternoon at the start of business. *Oberon's Amber Bock*, an ale famous for its skunky odor and flavor, and *Sir Philip's Black Barley*, an incredibly thick stout as black as tar pitch and with a heady taste that is easy to get really drunk on, are always in stock on any given day, coming as they do from local brewers. *Huntress Moon* comes from a neighboring village once a week and usually lasts no longer than two or three days, while *Uther Hill Bitter* arrives only with the monthly caravan and lasts about a week. The bar also serves wine, the most popular of the two vintages available being *Highmount Icewine*, a blindingly crisp white wine kept chilled in the kitchen's ice house. The other wine, a locally produced red wine called *Griffon's Feather*, is drunk primarily with meals. Both wines are served in ceramic carafes. Finally, a corn coffee and elder grog are available, the grog being a type of indigo-colored rum served hot and spiced and with roasted *homseeds* harvested from local lakebeds.

3. Stage

The stage at the north end of the common room is built partially beneath the towering stairs ascending to the second floor and rises about two feet off the floor. On good nights, five or six accomplished musicians can comfortably occupy the stage (unaccomplished musicians, on the other hand, are not even allowed through the front door, and those who manage to trick their way past the proprietors with sweet talk and tomfoolery are rapidly shown the alley gutters out back, face first). On the typical night, however, one or two musicians might be in attendance.

Along the north side of the stage, closest to the tavern wall, a secret panel is disguised as part of the fancily carved trim of the stage's baseboards. Only by pressing a series of similarly disguised buttons in the proper sequence will it open. The hollow stage is empty, though, containing nothing more than dust and rat turds.

Secret Panel: 1 1/2 in. thick; Hardness 5; hp 15; Break (DC 18); Search (DC 20).

4. Jared's Throne

This throne, carved from dragonwood like the other furniture in the common room, is ornately decorated with the symbols and motifs of an honored ruler, gilt with pyrite "gold" leaf and studded with glass gems worth absolutely nothing. Twin royal banners stand on either side of the hearth displaying the heraldic emblem of King Jared — a lion rampant on a green field bisected by an ascending white stripe.

Here, sadly, is where the broken, withered lord of an unknown kingdom sits most evenings, flanked by the young knights of the Order of the Well of Souls, adherents to his lineage and avowed to reclaim his once glorious holdings. Wrapped tight in blankets and quilts, Jared usually sleeps in the warm glow of the fire, muttering in his sleep while he dreams of future days past. Meanwhile, his sworn warriors intermittently look after him, wasting away the nighttime hours by drinking, eating, and carousing with members of the opposite sex (despite their self-inflicted vows of chastity and celibacy).

5. Kitchen

The kitchen is a large room more than adequately equipped to serve the many patrons the tavern receives each evening. It has its own hearth for cooking stews, roasting meat, and heating grog; a clay oven for baking fresh breads; plenty of table space for preparing dishes; and innumerable pots, pans, dishes, utensils, and any other tools that Becca might require as she works. Some squires spend as much time in the kitchen as they do in the common room, often helping to prepare dishes. One squire works here full time handling the minor cooking duties.

6. Icehouse

The icehouse is used for storing fresh food and drink, such as recently killed venison and icewine imported from Highmount. Originally, it served as a second larder, but when Eruther Longshanks asked if he could use it for two months' time in order to store something of immense import to him (paying the Marlowes quite handsomely for their trouble, naturally), he converted it into an insulated room and enchanted it with arcane magic to ensure the temperature remained a steady 0° degrees at all times. No one ever learned exactly what Longshanks stored in the icehouse. When he left, the Marlowes decided to leave the room undisturbed, taking advantage of it to keep food and drink fresh longer. Today, thick blocks of ice are stacked along the walls, frozen meat hangs from hooks attached to the ceiling, and crates of fresh frozen vegetables occupy the room's center.

In the room's southeastern corner, hidden behind a pillar of vegetable crates, a hole descends 30 feet to a rocky chamber below the tavern. A wooden ladder allows a fully armored, Medium-sized creature to climb up or down with little impediment.

Walls: 1 ft. thick; Hardness 8; hp 60; Break (DC 23).

7. Storage

This narrow room contains miscellaneous items such as pots and pans, spare flagons, and other tavern-related bric-a-brac. A small cleared out on the floor is covered with a tattered quilt and a dirty pillow, which weary squires sleep upon when they get a few minutes to themselves.

8. Larder

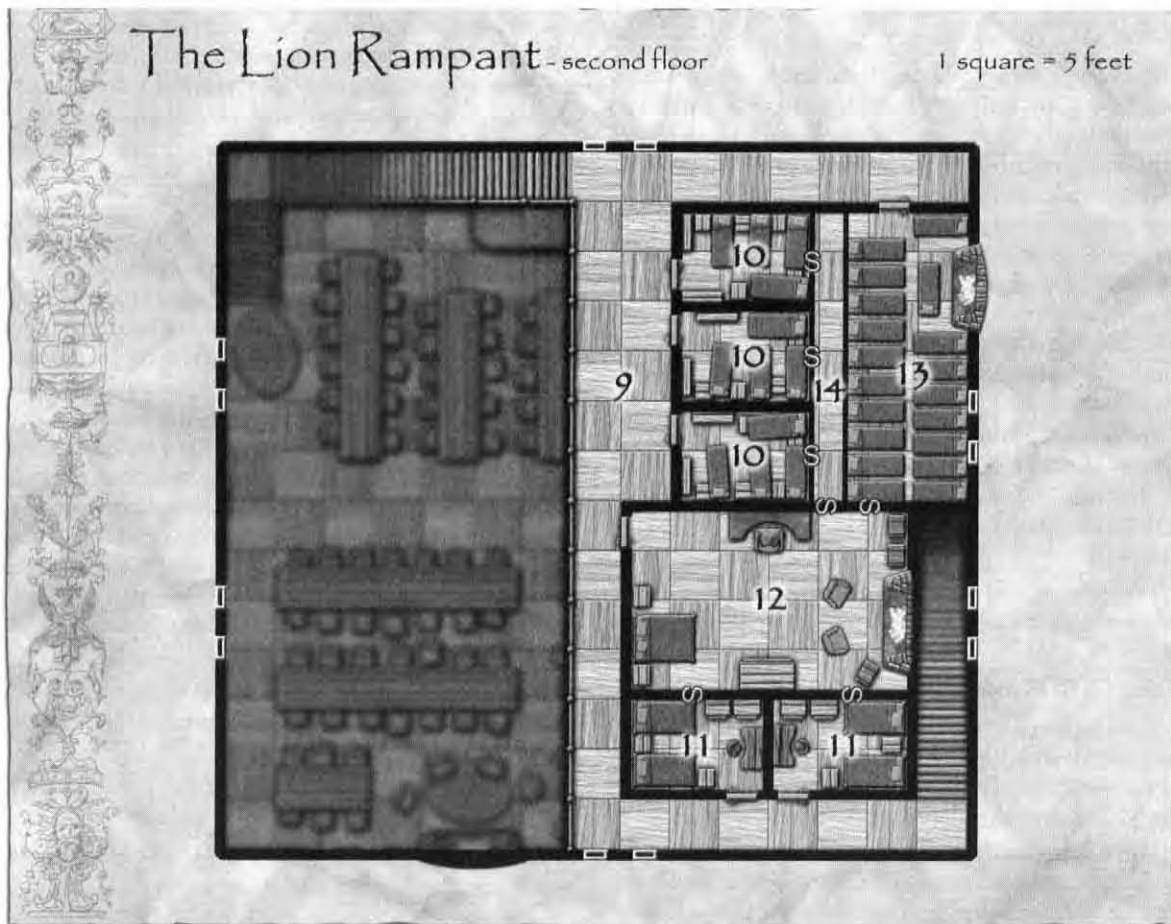
Dry goods such as sacks of grain, wheat, flour, and rice fill the shelves of this small room. The back wall contains jars of rare herbs, exotic spices, and jellied preserves worth approximately 120 gp; a 6 lb. barrel of salt worth 50 gp; and a cork-stoppered clay urn filled with 25 pounds of unrefined sugar worth 250 gp.

9. Balcony

The entire west side of the second floor is a railed balcony overlooking a large portion of the first floor common room below. Courtesans frequently loiter along the rails up here, calling out to patrons below and hoping to entice one or two.

10. Traveler's Rooms

These three rooms are standard rooms for hire. Each one is appointed with four utilitarian beds, six end tables, and two doorless wardrobes. Chamber pots are also hidden beneath the



beds, as are two sturdy, lockable strongboxes (the keys may be rented from Thomas for an additional fee). A secret door disguised as part of the wall opens from each room into a dark, dusty, tight-fitting corridor. The secret doors are also equipped with plug-able peepholes for spying on the room's inhabitants.

11. Guest Quarters

These rooms contain better furnishings than the traveler's quarters and are reserved for a better class of patron. Each one has two elegant beds with cotton linens and goose-down stuffed mattresses and pillows, two large wardrobes (with doors), four end tables, a writing desk, two strongboxes (the keys may be rented from Thomas for an additional fee) and, of course, chamber pots. Tapestries hang from the walls to minimize breezes, and loom-woven rugs cover the floors. As with the traveler's rooms, the guest quarters have secret doors and pluggable peepholes.

12. The Grande Chambers

Thomas and Becca live in this room. It is a large, well-appointed combination of a bedroom and a family room. It shares the hearth from the kitchen below, and its walls, like the guest quarters, support expensive tapestries that are each a part of a single, continuous tale told visually through the pictures woven into them. The carpet on the floor comes from the same craftsman as the tapestries and continues their tale. The king-sized bed is even more luxurious than the guest quarters; it is canopied and draped with translucent silk imported from exotic lands. A wardrobe large enough for two people's possessions; a gilt writing desk; long, waist-

high folio cases; trophy cases; and three carved chests are also be found in this room. A pair of luxurious stuffed, leather-bound chairs sits in front the hearth, often used by Thomas and Becca for reading before the fire as they relax with a cup of wine and enjoy one another's company.

The bookcases hold a total of 1,200 gp worth of bound vellum folios, parchment scrolls, and the odd book or two. They and the trophy cases contain approximately 2,345 gp worth of brass, silver, and gold utensils, candle holders, cups, flagons, religious icons and triptychs, and other valuable artwork. The three chests are securely locked (Open Lock DC 30) and contain the following items: +2 holy longsword, +2 half-plate, and a +1 shield.

13. The Long Room

This room, called the Long Room because it spans the length of all three traveler's rooms, shares a hearth with the first floor common room and contains 20 narrow camp beds. The door from the outside corridor does not lock. Each bed has its own chamber pot; otherwise the room contains nothing else, not even end tables.

14. Secret Passage

The secret doors in the traveler's quarters and one in the Grande Chambers open into this cramped passageway. Peepholes in the walls, which may be plugged to mask their presence, allow a person to spy on the rooms' inhabitants. Normal conversations may be heard through the wall, though not without some difficulty (Listen DC 20).

15. Courtyard

The hole from the icehouse on the first floor leads to this rough-hewn, low-ceilinged chamber, colloquially called The Courtyard by the knights who live down here. Looking closely at the walls (Search DC 17) reveals timeworn skeletons embedded in it, so ancient and eroded that they look almost like the stone in which they are forever imprisoned. The temperature in this room is perpetually 10° degrees colder than the tavern up above, regardless of season, and a wispy layer of fog clings to the floor (many visitors incorrectly attribute this fog to the icehouse). Torches, candles, and other sources of non-magical illumination burn half as brightly down here. Frost from the icehouse lines the tunnel's upper half.

Spellcasters who utilize necromantic magic while in the Courtyard, the Throne Room, the Knight's Quarters, or the Well of Souls have their spells automatically augmented as if by the following feats: Extend Spell, Heighten Spell, and Maximize Spell.

The entire tunnel network is also under the effects of an *unhallow* spell with *cause fear* permanently affixed to it.

16. Throne Room

This chamber is empty and dark except for a terribly eroded stone throne and a highly polished silver mirror supported by adamantine posts. The mirror exudes a dim, flickering light barely strong enough to illuminate the throne before it.

This is King Jared's throne room, the last remnant of the glorious empire he will eventually rule over so many millennia hence. Every night when the tavern closes, he comes down here

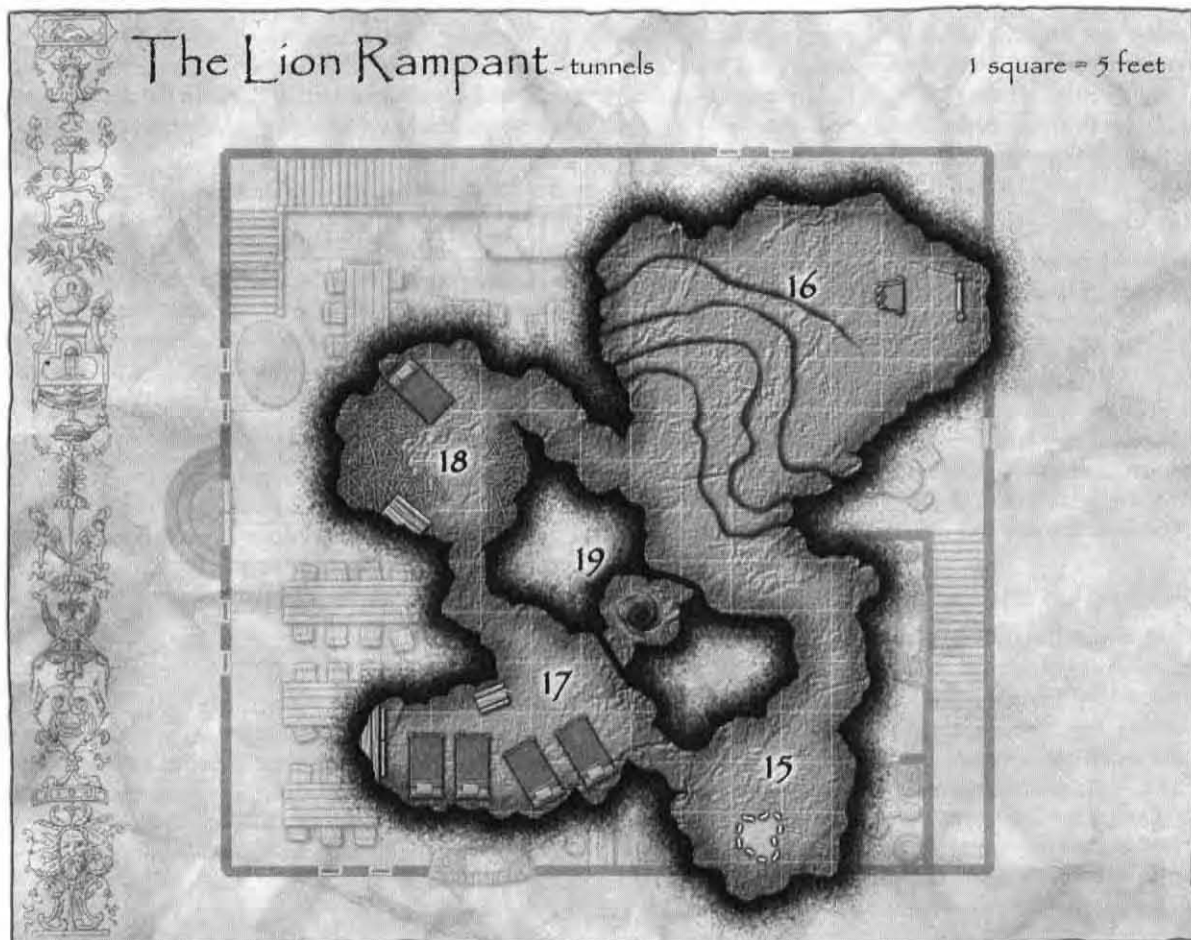
to sit in this royal seat (which itself is directly below the one in the common room) and stare into the mirror to remember. The cold chill of the tunnel network affects him deeply, and he cannot escape it even upstairs in the tavern by the fire.

Anyone who sits in the chair and stares at the mirror sees not the reflection of himself in the cavern but a glorious throne room crowded with petitioners, knights, and nobles of an era that will one day be. He will also see himself dressed in the regal garments of the day. Each cumulative four-hour period spent sitting on the throne gives a character 1 rank in Knowledge (history), specifically as it concerns the time from which King Jared hails. After 10 cumulative hours, the character will also gain Jared's native language as a bonus language if his Intelligence is 10 or higher. Unfortunately, having that knowledge will not allow the character to affect in any way the course of that future since it lies so many thousands of years away, and since he cannot be certain that the actions he takes will not actually assist that future in being realized. In addition, knowledge of that future time does not impart upon him knowledge of the events prior to it—the world then has become so alien and strange that tracing its antecedents is nearly impossible for the casual observer.

Should King Jared or his knights return from above while the characters are in the throne room, he or they will attack immediately, offended deeply by the presence of outsiders in their sacred throne room.

17. Knight's Quarters

Jared's followers reside in this chamber. Cheap, poorly constructed bunk beds, weapon and armor racks, clothing



The Lion Rampant Menu

Ale & Mead	Cost	Marchpan pastries	2 gp
Huntress Moon	5 cp	Marlowe's seasonal stew	5 cp
Oberon's Amber Bock	4 cp	Minced meat pie	7 sp
Sir Philip's Black Barley	3 cp	Shepard's pie	1 sp
Uther Hill Bitter	7 cp	Spotted dick	2 sp
Other Beverages		Sweetbreads	3 sp
Acorn coffee	2 cp	Other Services	
Eldran grog	5 sp	Bath, per person	2 cp
Griffon's Feather Red Wine	2 gp	Courtesan, per hour	2 gp
Highmount Icewine	8 gp	Guest quarters, per night	4 gp
Food		Strongbox key, per night	5 sp
Bread, fresh	4 cp	The Grande Chamber*, per night	12 gp
Buttered hen and potatoes	2 gp	The Long Room, per night	5 sp
Gnomish apple fritters	5 cp	Traveler's room, per night	2 gp
Hagus	7 cp		
Hearthfire boar	6 gp		
Hearthfire venison	8 gp		
Kidney pie	1 sp		

*The Marlowes will only rent out their private quarters under very specific circumstances, such as for visiting dignitaries and important nobility. When this situation occurs, they either take a guest room for themselves if one is available, or they sleep that night in the kitchen larder.

wardrobes, chamber pots, and lock boxes for personal artifacts are distributed around the room. Because of the chill and the ever-pervasive feeling of utter evil infecting the tunnel network, many knights cannot stand sleeping down here, instead choosing to remain upstairs in the common room, taking their rest on or under the long tables. Waste is deposited in a narrow gash at the west end of the chamber that descends to unknown depths.

The lockboxes are all secured with useless rusty locks (Open Lock DC 10; Break DC 12) and contain nothing of value (mostly sentimental possessions, such as letters from loved ones back home, a lock of hair from one's best girl, and so on). At any given time of day, at least four sets of full plate armor in poor condition, four longswords, four daggers, and four shields are on the racks. The knights to whom they belong can be found sleeping on the beds, playing cards, or just sitting around gossiping. The room is never left unattended. If characters come into the chamber when the knights are there, they will first be curtly asked to leave. If the characters refuse or hesitate, the knights attack. Characters are also gravely warned against entering the throne room.

18. Jared's Chambers

A lone camp bed and a travel wardrobe occupy this large chamber. Filthy, once fine clothes lay strewn about, as do pieces of rusted-through armor, broken weapons, broken flagons, and other odds and ends taken from the tavern. There are also piles of half-eaten food.

A Search check (DC 17) reveals two thickly bound tomes hidden beneath a particularly foul pile of dirty laundry. They are written in a foreign language (regardless of the languages the characters know, this one is unknown

to them). If select portions are decoded (Decipher Script DC 25), it gradually becomes evident that the book describes the Well of Souls and the myriad, sometimes conflicting theories on re-activating it. Jared has scribbled notes in the margins in his own language denoting which theories he has already tested and the subsequent results (some of which are quite surprising).

19. The Well of Souls

This small chamber contains the Well of Souls, a column of black energy rising out of the floor and ascending into the ceiling. It is as hard as steel and as slick as ice to touch. It is the source of the omnipresent chill and sense of evil infecting the tunnel network. Jared arrived in this time period through this channel. As of yet, no one knows how to re-activate it, nor whether this is even possible.

Goods & Services

The Lion Rampant serves high-quality ales and a similarly high-quality selection of food. Its most popular dishes are *hearthfire boar* and *venison*, which are savory flavorful racks of meat slowly cooked on iron spits in the common room's hearths and served with buttered potatoes, fresh chunks of bread, and thick gravy. *Hagus* and the *seasonal stew* are also favorites among the patrons, mainly because they are considerably less expensive than other dishes but also because they both use cow tripe, considered a delicacy in these parts.

Adventure Seeds

The following ideas can be used as seeds for adventures set in or around The Lion Rampant:

THE LION RAMPANT

• Alyce Goody's long lost relatives hire the adventures to reclaim The Lion Rampant on their family's behalf, using whatever means necessary. They will to pay well for the PCs' services. In truth, the relatives are members from a rival thieves' guild hoping to wrest the tavern away from the other guild in order to weaken their influence with the aristocracy as well as to secure the tunnels beneath it for their own use. Apparently, they have uncovered a book giving details on how to activate the Well of Souls (this is a copy of the book that can be found in Jared's chambers).

• One day, every secret door in the tavern becomes emblazoned with a brightly glowing red pentagram and the words "*Orcus' wrath is great and eternal. Be wary, ye who cross this portal.*" written in infernal runes. As soon as patrons realize every room in the establishment is accessible to thieves by means of the doors, they abandon The Lion Rampant for good. Days, then weeks pass and business becomes truly awful. The thieves' guild is at a complete loss as to the source of the runes. They hire wizards to trace and dispel the magic, but to no avail. Eventually, they come to the adventurers, whose reputations have preceded them, for assistance. Can they solve the mystery? Does anything happen when someone crosses the threshold of one of the secret doors? Is Orcus or the Well of Souls behind the dire warnings, and if so, why?

• A thieves' guild pickpocket gets caught lifting gold from one of Jared's knights, who takes exception and offense. Before the thief can escape, the knight cuts him in half. The next day, a gang of enforcers arrives to teach the knights — perceived as being still wet behind the ears —

a lesson. Instead, the knights kill them, beginning a war between the thieves' guild and the Order of the Well of Souls. Thomas tries to negotiate an end to the hostilities, but neither Master Tallison nor King Jared is interested. So, he turns to the adventurers for help. Can they put an end to the conflict before the tavern gets destroyed? Should the thieves' guild pull out all the stops, the knights do not stand a chance. Secretly, Thomas hopes the war will weaken the guild, but he must make a show of supporting them lest they suspect his treachery. As such, he will do what he can to sabotage the peace efforts covertly and bolster the knights and adventurers for an all-out assault on the guild headquarters. If he is about to be revealed, however, Thomas will turn the tables on the knights and the adventurers and help the thieves destroy them. His mission, after all, is ultimately more important than dying for the knights' insane cause.

• A famous nobleman or city magistrate frequents The Lion Rampant on a nightly basis to rendezvous with his mistress and her six courtesan friends. In fact, he is such a favored customer that one of the two Guest Rooms upstairs is perpetually reserved for his use. The night the adventurers are in the tavern, however, he dies in his room, in his sleep. Thomas is distraught. Should word get out that the man died in a courtesan's embrace in a common tavern, the king's men will shut him down so fast he will not know what hit him. He hires the adventurers to sneak the noble's body back to his manor in town, in order to make it appear that he died in his own bed of natural causes. The noble's wife, it turns out, is hosting a party that very same night for 150 of her closest friends.

Death & Taxes

At the heart of the merchant quarter is a tavern hidden beneath a cutler's shop. Its clientele consists of the local merchants, greedy fellows who care only for money. Its owner also maintains, with the blessing of the thieves' guild, a gambling and fencing ring in the establishment. Two feuding merchant families often use Death & Taxes as neutral ground, where they meet with one another for peace and trade negotiations. In fact, members from all of the city's independent merchant families frequent the place. Fights between the two feuding families are relatively common, and the tension spawned in their wake becomes palpable. Outsiders are generally not welcome, as they more often than not bring trouble with them. Yet, if such outsiders have sufficient coin to spend, the other patrons usually don't complain too loudly.

Background

A few years ago, Kurzen Roost and the others living and working in the merchant quarter banded together to form a union in order to compete better against the guilds, which continually encroached on their territory and sales. An informal merchant's league resulted from the meeting. Its most prominent members aside from Roost included Helkran Menavue and Wirgen Cortulay, the heads of the two largest, non-aristocratic and non-guild affiliated merchant families. Because both men's families have carried on a feud with one another for the last two centuries, neither could agree on a meeting place for the league. To solve this problem, Roost volunteered the basement beneath his cutlery shop. Once a month, like clockwork, the heads of the merchant families met to discuss pricing, shipping, and other policies that would give them an advantage against the monolithic guilds dominating the city's economy.

Eventually, merchants began showing up when meetings were not scheduled, just to hang out and share gossip. Soon, the first ale kegs rolled into the basement. At that point, Roost realized he could turn his hospitality to his financial advantage and converted the basement into a ratty little tavern that he called Death & Taxes. The baker behind his shop offered him use of her spare equipment and a portion of her own shop's basement (for a small fee, of course). Then, the pewter merchant next door offered his basement to expand the size of the tavern and give gamblers a place to play their dice and card games. Today, the tavern occupies the basements of these three buildings, connected to each other by tunnels dug through the walls.

Last year, the thieves' guild caught wind of Roost's gambling operation in the pewter merchant's basement and decided they wanted a piece of the action, as was their inalienable right. They sent Balthazar the Weasel, the local ward captain, to persuade Roost to do the sensible thing. A smart man, Roost had expected the guild to learn of his side business eventually. He accepted the guild's terms, though not without some grandstanding and complaint. Fortunately, the thieves' guild holds less interest in his business than others, giving Roost substantial leeway to run the tavern as he sees fit.

Dramatis Personae

Kurzen Roost, a wily elf merchant, owns and operates Death & Taxes when he is not minding the cutlery shop above it. A thieves' guild ward captain named **Balthazar the Weasel** — a shifty fellow known to cheat unwary gamblers at any given opportunity — works in the tavern's gambling den. Mostly merchants from the neighborhood frequent the place. Two merchant families in a particular come here: members of both the **Menavue** and the **Cortulay** families, engaged in a feud for centuries. They use the tavern as neutral ground where they can drink and eat in peace without needing constantly to watch their backs (though they do anyway, as fights still break out between them). Finally, Kurzen uses boys and girls from a nearby orphanage as his **apprentices**, letting them learn the "the merchants' way" while earning their keep by serving patrons.

Kurzen Roost

Kurzen is an immigrant from the Elven lands that came to this city half a hundred years earlier to find fame and fortune. While he has yet to find fame, he has acquired a considerable fortune in the cutlery business. Making knives, forks, and spoons for the populace at large may not seem to hold the promise of much wealth, but it does. Kurzen's wares are some of the finest in the city — of such high quality, in fact, that many of the nobility use him almost exclusively. The secret to his tremendous profits, however, is that he dilutes the precious ores his customers think they are getting (gold, silver, and platinum) with baser metals such as iron, bronze, and aluminum. Kurzen gets paid for making gold forks and silver spoons, but his customers actually receive garbage in return. None of them know as yet, for which Kurzen thanks the god of luck twice daily (usually during his morning and evening constitutions when nothing else occupies his mind). Not all of his customers receive the garbage cutlery — for especially influential nobles, he gives only the best. Kurzen expects his luck will abandon him one of these days, at which time he will need all the help he can get. Because he now spends much of his time running the tavern downstairs, he lets his number one apprentice, a moody young woman named Mikal Blu, maintain the shop in his absence. If a prospective customer is wealthy enough, Kurzen will arrange private afternoon appointments for them, letting the apprentices or a neighbor watch the tavern while he takes care of more profitable business.

Kurzen's relationship with the thieves' guild is a tenuous one. For obvious reasons, he resents the fact they take a significant cut of his hard earned money. They never worked for it, so why should they get it? Nevertheless, he fully realizes that he is simply paying them for not trashing his shop upstairs and the tavern below. Balthazar the Weasel, the ward captain assigned to Kurzen's street, is likeable enough, but about as honest as a fire merchant in a snowstorm. Still, matters could be worse. The thieves let Kurzen fence stolen property, a trade they normally monopolize, though they do take the lion's share of the profit from the venture. In his arrogance, Kurzen suspects the thieves of



grooming him for something great. Whatever it is, he wants no part of it — or so he protests to anyone whose ear he can bend for a minute or two. Truth is, the thieves hold no interest in him beyond their share of the profits.

Like every one else in the merchant's quarter, Kurzen is sick to death of the family feud between the Menavue and Cortulay families. Still, he does not deny them entry or service in his establishment as long as they maintain the unsteady truce he requires of them. Outside the tavern, he does not care what they do to one another; inside the tavern, they better not so much as even think about drawing steel or goading one another into a fighting frenzy. Those who break the truce are banned from the tavern, usually for a month although some for as long as a year (in instances when either a Menavue or Cortulay dies on the premises).

Kurzen Roost, Male Elf Exp6/Rog1: CR 6; SZ M (4 ft., 9 in. tall); HD 6d6+6 plus 1d6+1; hp 33; Init +4; Spd 30 ft.; AC 16 (+4 Dex, +2 armor); Atk +5 melee (1d4+1, +1 dagger, 19-20/x2) or +8 ranged (1d4+1, +1 dagger, 19-20/x2, range 10 ft.); SA sneak attack (+1d6); SQ Elven traits; AL N; SV Fort +3, Ref +8, Will +7; Str 11, Dex 19, Con 12, Int 13, Wis 14, Cha 11.

Skills: Alchemy +5, Appraise +11, Craft (engraving) +10, Craft (metalworking) +9, Forgery +6, Innuendo +9, Knowledge (politics) +10, Listen +8, Move Silently +4, Open Lock +8, Profession (cutler) +12, Search +5, Spot +6.

Feats: Alertness, Blind-Fight, Skill Focus (Appraise).

Languages: Common, Elven, Sylvan.

Possessions: +1 dagger, leather armor, thieves' tools, brooch of shielding, and 75 gp.

Balthazar the Weasel

A pudgy, dour ward captain for the thieves' guild, watches over the merchant's quarter. He would rather be assigned to a more interesting part of town, but what can he do? Absolutely nothing, and that's the pisser. When he signed on with the thieves' guild at the age of seven, he did not know what to expect, naturally; yet as he grew older, wiser, and more perceptive, he realized that he could achieve greatness within its ranks. Unfortunately, two higher-ranking lieutenants hate him and have made his life difficult for the last seven years. If only he had not tried conning the prostitution ring out from under their feet, he tells himself. That was a decidedly bad decision, and now he must pay the price — looking after double-talking, backstabbing merchants, none of whom would recognize good old-fashioned honesty and integrity if it bit them on their collectively fat rear ends. Never trust a merchant, Balthazar always says — not an ounce of honor among the entire lot.

Despite the circumstances of his current assignment, Balthazar does admit readily enough to liking Kurzen's company. While sneaky at times, he is generally a pretty stand-up guy... for a merchant. The tavern, too, could be a worse place to wile away one's evenings. The bread and pastries are to-die-for (and why he has gained so much weight in the last couple of months). Normally, Balthazar looks after the games in the gambling den, skimming as much as he can get away with and making sure the players refrain from any cheating of their own. On the nights when Colette Menavue comes in, though, he hovers in the common room, mooning obliquely over her profound beauty. He cannot seem to work up the courage to speak with her. Well, that and the fact that should he try, her bodyguards

would probably pound him flat. Even if he succeeded, he would also need to worry about that Cortulay brat, Willem, whose unrequited love for Colette is hardly the best-kept secret in town. That boy's bodyguards are as barbaric as Colette's. The two families must hire them from the same slave pens: if not for their family crests, Balthazar could not tell them apart if his life depended on it.

Balthazar the Weasel, Male Human Rog4: CR 4; SZ M (5 ft., 7 in. tall); HD 4d6; hp 17; Init +7 (Dex, Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft.; AC 14 (+3 Dex, +1 armor); Atk +5 melee (1d6+2, short sword, 19-20/x2) or +5 melee (1d4+2, dagger, 19-20/x2); SA sneak attack (+2d6); SQ evasion, uncanny dodge; AL LE; SV Fort +1, Ref +7, Will +4; Str 14, Dex 16, Con 11, Int 14, Wis 13, Cha 6.

Skills: Balance +10, Bluff +2, Climb +9, Decipher Script +8, Forgery +10, Hide +5, Intimidate +1, Jump +9, Listen +10, Move Silently +10, Pick Pocket +10, Search +8, Spot +10, Wilderness Lore +2.

Feats: Alertness, Improved Initiative, Iron Will.

Languages: Common, Elven, plus one regional dialect.

Possessions: Padded armor, short sword, dagger, *dust of tracelessness*, *bag of tricks* (gray), and 250 gp.

The Menavue Family

The Menavue family's monopoly on coin minting for the regional government makes it one of the wealthiest merchant families in not just the city but also in the outlying territories. The family patriarch is the corpulent Helkran Menavue, whose close ties to the nobility give him unprecedented influence and power in local politics. His wife Dilla spends her days taking tea with her noblewoman friends and collecting money owed for Menavue loans made to their families. Their beautiful daughter Colette, aged 16, is Helkran and Dilla's absolute pride and joy. The Menavues maintain a rivalry with the Cortulay family, the source of which is long forgotten; suffice to say that the rivalry began 200 years ago and has continued since.

Helkran recently acquired a powerful scrying device from a family that owed him a sizeable debt. He has used it over the last few months to send bandits in his employ after the Cortulay ore shipments. Soon, he expects the Cortulays' mining empire will collapse completely and his family will finally win their bitter war.

Helkran Menavue, Male Human Exp12: CR 11; SZ M (6 ft. 1 in. tall); HD 12d6+12; hp 51; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 13 (+2 armor, ring of protection +1); Atk +10 melee (1d6+1, short sword, 19-20/x2), +9 ranged (1d4+1, dagger, 19-20/x2, range 10 ft.); AL LE; SV Fort +5, Ref +4, Will +10; Str 12, Dex 11, Con 12, Int 14, Wis 14, Cha 13.

Skills: Appraise +17, Craft (coinsmithing) +17, Forgery +8, Gather Information +10, Innuendo +12, Knowledge (banking) +19, Knowledge (politics) +19, Listen +10, Scry +12, Search +13, Sense Motive +17, Spot +10.

Feats: Alertness, Leadership, Martial Weapon Proficiency (short sword), Skill Focus (Craft [coinsmithing], Knowledge [banking, politics]).

Languages: Common, Dwarven, Elven.

Possessions: Short sword, leather armor, dagger, diamond brooch (200 gp), gold necklace (230 gp), signet ring (50 gp), *ring of protection* +1, *crystal ball*, 500 gp.

Dilla Menavue, Female Human Exp8: CR 7; SZ M (5 ft. 4 in.); HD 8d6+8; hp 35; Init +4; Spd 30 ft.; AC 12 (+2 armor); Atk +6 melee (1d6, quarterstaff), +6 ranged (1d4, dagger, 19-20/x2, range 10 ft.); AL LE; SV Fort +3, Ref +2, Will +8; Str 11, Dex 10, Con 13, Int 16, Wis 14, Cha 15.

Skills: Appraise +13, Heal +12, Knowledge (banking) +16, Knowledge (politics) +16, Listen +14, Move Silently +10, Open Lock +6, Pick Pocket +11, Ride +9, Sense Motive +13, Spot +13.

Feats: Alertness, Improved Initiative, Skill Focus (Knowledge [banking, politics]).

Languages: Common, Dwarven, Elven, Sylvan.

Possessions: *Ring of mind shielding*, leather armor, quarterstaff, dagger, pearl earrings with diamond inlay (800 gp), silver bracelet (250 gp), silver anklet (400 gp), 175 gp.

Colette Menavue, Female Human Exp2: CR 1; SZ M (5 ft. 8 in.); HD 2d6; hp 9; Init +5; Spd 30 ft.; AC 11 (+1 Dex); Atk +1 melee (1d4, dagger, 19-20/x2), +2 ranged (1d4, dagger, 19-20/x2, range 10 ft.); AL NE; SV Fort +0, Ref +1, Will +4; Str 10, Dex 12, Con 11, Int 10, Wis 13, Cha 16.

Skills: Alchemy +7, Appraise +3, Heal +4, Hide +4, Knowledge (banking) +5, Knowledge (coinsmithing) +5, Listen +3, Ride +4, Spot +3, Tumble +4.

Feats: Improved Initiative, Skill Focus (Alchemy).

Languages: Common.

Possessions: Dagger, gold and ruby earrings (400 gp), gold bracelet (300 gp), signet ring (50 gp), 45 gp.

Menavue Merchant, Male Human Exp3: CR 2; SZ M; HD 3d6; hp 13; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 12 (+2 armor); Atk +2 melee (1d6, club), +2 ranged (1d4, dagger, 19-20/x2, range 10 ft.); AL CE; SV Fort +1, Ref +1, Will +4; Str 11, Dex 10, Con 11, Int 12, Wis 13, Cha 10.

Skills: Appraise +9, Bluff +4, Diplomacy +4, Hide +4, Knowledge (banking) +9, Listen +8, Profession (merchant) +7, Search +5, Spot +8, Tumble +4.

Feats: Alertness, Skill Focus (Appraise, Knowledge [banking]).

Languages: Common, plus one regional dialect.

Possessions: Dagger, club, leather armor, signet ring (25 gp), 100+5d20 gp.

Menavue Soldier, Male Human War4: CR 3; SZ M; HD 4d8+4; hp 24; Init +4; Spd 30 ft.; AC 17 (+6 armor, +1 shield); Atk +5 melee (1d6, scimitar, 18-20/x2), +4 ranged (1d4+1, dagger, 19-20/x2); AL CE; SV Fort +5, Ref +1, Will +1; Str 13, Dex 10, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 11, Cha 11.

Skills: Climb +1, Jump +1, Ride (horse) +9.

Feats: Endurance, Improved Initiative, Skill Focus (Ride).

Languages: Common.

Possessions: Splint mail, small wooden shield, signet ring (25 gp), scimitar, dagger, 50 gp.

The Cortulay Family

The Cortulays have controlled the region's precious metal and gem mines for as long as anyone can remember. They would be the wealthiest family hereabouts, if not for the accursed Menavues. Their ores find use in everything

from common cutlery to the Menavue minting presses to army and militia weapons and armor. The only reason, really, that the Menavues have as much money as they do is because of they are so indiscriminating when comes to making loans and the fact they charge so much interest. Such behavior is quite despicable and certainly not worthy of the "new aristocracy," as Wirgen Cortulay, the family patriarch, calls the merchant class. Meilissa Cortulay, his wife, manages the mining operations while he makes daily rounds among the ore merchants, foundries, and armor- and weapon-smiths, checking up on the demand, taking orders, and generally pressing the flesh.

Lately, the Menavues have attempted to buy out the independent mines beyond the Cortulays' influence. Bandits, whom Meilissa suspects are in the employ of Helkran Menavue, have also been waylaying the family's ore caravans with increasing frequency, costing the Cortulays a pretty penny to say the least. Meilissa now hires mercenaries to protect the caravans, but as of yet they have not managed to deter the bandits entirely, who seem always to strike when the Cortulay caravans are most unprepared.

Wirgen Cortulay, Male Human Exp10: CR 9; SZ M (6 ft. 1 in. tall); HD 10d6+3; hp 40; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 15 (+4 armor, *ring of protection* +1); Atk +8 melee (1d8, +1 *heavy mace*); AL LG; SV Fort +3, Ref +3, Will +7; Str 10, Dex 10, Con 10, Int 12, Wis 10, Cha 10.

Skills: Appraise +14, Diplomacy +8, Forgery +7, Heal +10, Hide +6, Knowledge (mining) +16, Listen +9, Ride (horse) +15, Spot +9, Use Rope +13.

Feats: Alertness, Skill Focus (Heal, Knowledge [mining], Ride [horse]), Toughness.

Languages: Common, plus one regional dialect.

Possessions: Chain shirt, +1 *heavy mace*, *ring of protection* +1, signet ring (200 gp), platinum boot buckles (150 gp), platinum belt buckle (100 gp), platinum medallion (200 gp), 200 gp.

Melissa Cortulay, Male Human Exp13: CR 12; SZ M; HD 13d6+3; hp 51; Init +5 (Dex, Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft.; AC 18 (+1 Dex, +7 armor); Atk +10 melee (1d8, masterwork battleaxe, crit x3); AL NG; SV Fort +4, Ref +5, Will +8; Str 10, Dex 12, Con 10, Int 11, Wis 10, Cha 10.

Skills: Appraise +8, Craft (carpentry) +14, Diplomacy +1, Disable Device +7, Hide +10, Intimidate +10, Intuit Direction +10, Knowledge (mining) +14, Listen +18, Perform (limerick, lute, storytelling) +4, Spot +18.

Feats: Alertness, Improved Initiative, Leadership, Martial Weapon Proficiency (battleaxe), Skill Focus (Knowledge [mining]), Toughness.

Languages: Common.

Possessions: +2 *breastplate*, masterwork battleaxe, signet ring, *ring of protection* +1, 53 gp.

Willem Cortulay, Male Human Exp3: CR 2; SZ M (5 ft. 6 in. tall); HD 3d6; hp 10; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 13 (+1 armor); Atk +3 melee (1d6+1, short sword, 19-20/x2); AL CG; SV Fort +1, Ref +1, Will +4; Str 13, Dex 11, Con 11, Int 11, Wis 12, Cha 14.

Skills: Appraise +7, Bluff +6, Gather Information +8, Heal +5, Hide +4, Listen +7, Ride (horse) +4, Spot +7.

Feats: Alertness, Skill Focus (Gather Information, Appraise).

Languages: Common.

Possessions: Padded armor, short sword, dagger, platinum ring (300 gp), *potion of cure light wounds*, 245 gp.

Cortulay Merchant, Male Human Exp3: CR 2; SZ M; HD 3d6; hp 13; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 12 (+2 armor); Atk +2 melee (1d6, club), +2 ranged (1d4, dagger, 19-20/x2, range 10 ft.); AL LG; SV Fort +1, Ref +1, Will +4; Str 11, Dex 10, Con 11, Int 12, Wis 13, Cha 10.

Skills: Appraise +9, Bluff +4, Diplomacy +4, Hide +4, Knowledge (mining) +9, Listen +8, Profession (merchant) +7, Search +5, Spot +8, Tumble +4.

Feats: Alertness, Skill Focus (Appraise, Knowledge [mining]).

Languages: Common, plus one regional dialect.

Possessions: Dagger, club, leather armor, signet ring (25 gp), 100+5d20 gp.

Cortulay Soldier, Male Human War4: CR 3; SZ M; HD 4d8+4; hp 24; Init +4; Spd 30 ft.; AC 17 (+6 armor, +1 shield); Atk +5 melee (1d6, scimitar, 18-20/x2, +4 ranged (1d4+1, dagger, 19-20/x2); AL LG; SV Fort +5, Ref +1, Will +1; Str 13, Dex 10, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 11, Cha 11.

Skills: Climb +1, Jump +1, Ride (horse) +9.

Feats: Endurance, Improved Initiative, Skill Focus (Ride).

Languages: Common.

Possessions: Splint mail, small wooden shield, signet ring (25 gp), scimitar, dagger, 50 gp.

Apprentices

Kurzen employs three young boys from a nearby orphanage to look after his patrons by taking orders, serving food and drink, and doing whatever else may be required of them (such as message running). As the boys get older, Kurzen hires them out to other merchants as apprentices to work in their shops, where they will eventually work full-time.

Apprentice, Male Human Com1 (3): CR 1/2; SZ M; HD 1d4; hp 4; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 10; Atk +0 melee (1d3, unarmed strike); AL N; SV Fort +0, Ref +0, Will +0; Str 11, Dex 11, Con 10, Int 11, Wis 10, Cha 10.

Skills: Craft (any one) +4, Profession (innkeeper) +4, Listen +2, Spot +2.

Feats: Skill Focus (Craft [any one], Profession [innkeeper]).

Languages: Common.

Possessions: 1d2 gp.

The Establishment

Death & Taxes is situated in the basement beneath a cutlery merchant's shop and residences. A non-descript door on the west corner of the building and down the narrow set of stairs behind the shop presents the most obvious way into the tavern. A tiny plaque set in the door depicts three stacks of gold coins superimposed over a razor-sharp sickle. Downstairs, the tavern actually occupies two and a half basement spaces from three different buildings.

Unless otherwise noted, Death & Taxes has the following stats:

Walls: 1 ft. thick; hardness 8; hp 90; Break (DC 35).

1. Common Room

This fairly spacious, low-ceilinged room contains a set of stairs in the southwest corner rising up to the street outside, a counter and wine racks in the northwest corner, three medium-sized ale barrels in the northeast corner, and plenty of tables and chairs. Its stone-tiled floor is deeply scuffed in places and cracked and broken in others. The furniture is all second and third hand, and it shows. Cheap, third-rate, starving-artist landscape paintings hang from the walls; ale and food have repeatedly stained most of them over the years, making them twice as unpleasant to look at as when they were first purchased and inflicted upon the patrons' aesthetic sensibilities. Because the common room resides in what used to be a basement, no windows look out on the street. As such, the tavern tends to be fairly dark.

The merchants who patronize the tavern are mostly local blokes and rather insular, suspicious of outsiders and downright unfriendly to those who work in an official capacity for the local government — unless, of course, said officials are in the merchants' pockets. Drink and food are plenty cheap in *Death & Taxes*, so on any given night fully two-thirds of the clientele are drunk off their feet by midnight. The favored ale is *Sister Mary's Red Mantle*, mainly because it is cheap but also because it is not too rough on the palette. It comes from a local distillery operated by an order of cloistered nuns known for their silence and celibacy. A barrel of *Bullfeather's Bock*, a brand of ale popular for its long-lasting, fruity aftertaste, arrives from a neighboring city once a week. *Geld Lane Gold*,

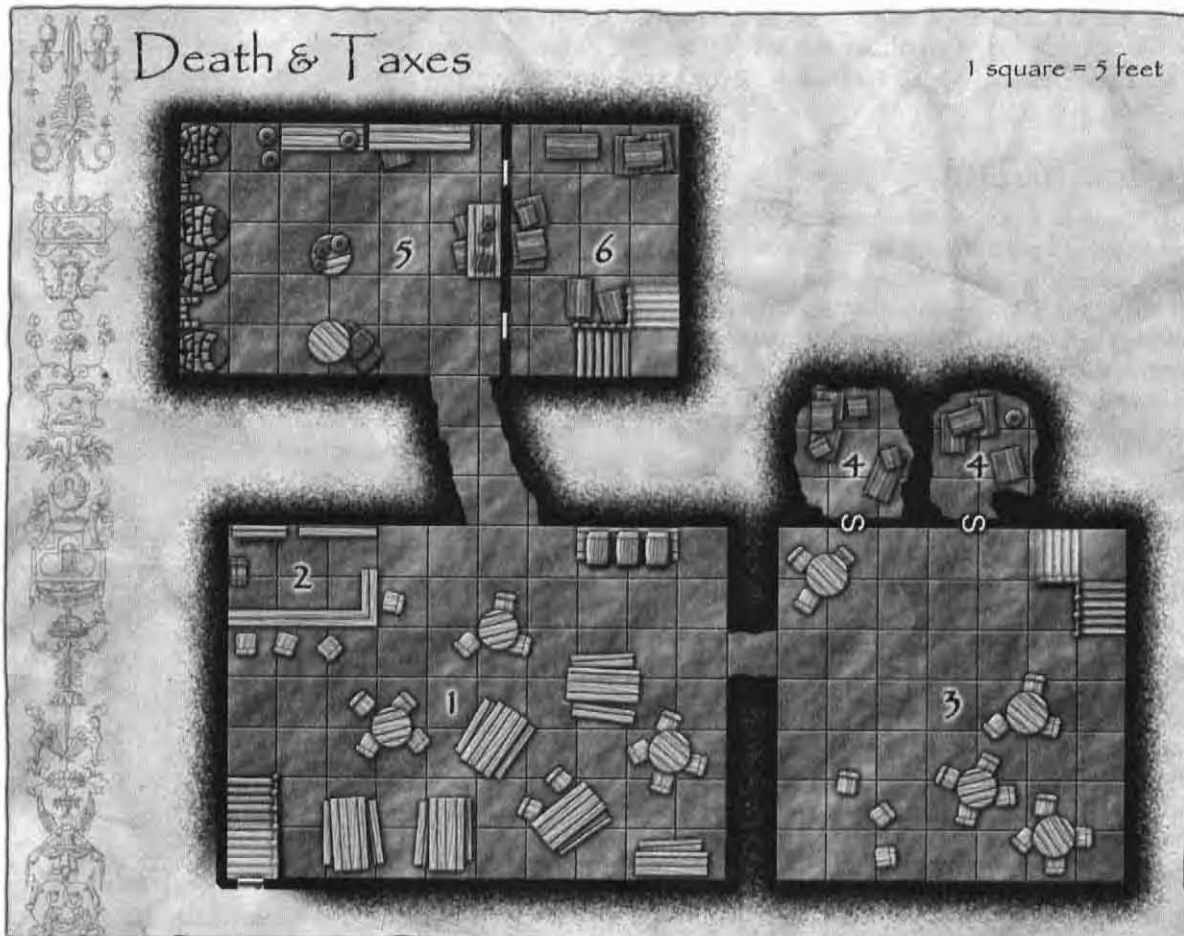
brewed over on Geld Lane by the ore merchants, is heavy and coppery. It is not the most popular drink by any stretch of the imagination, both because of its prohibitive price and its weirdly metallic flavor. Still, the merchants will drink it if nothing else is on tap. Other beverages are also available, namely wine imported from the elf lands and a curiously gray-colored whiskey made by the dwarves. *Fire and Ice* is an odd looking drink invented by a cooper from up the street a few years earlier that combines a heavy red alcoholic beverage named *dragon's breath* with half a glass of fresh milk. It tastes quite good, actually.

Two holes dug through the walls of the common room, one in the north wall and the other in the east wall, each lead to the basement of a different building. The north tunnel opens up in the tavern's kitchen and bakery, while the east tunnel leads to the gambling den and private meeting rooms in the basement of the pewter merchant's building.

2. Back Counter

In the northwest corner of the common room, Kurzen conducts business from behind a waist-high wooden counter. A wine rack and a bookcase stand along the north wall behind the counter, while a fat strongbox sits along the west wall.

The strongbox is securely locked (Open Lock DC 20), and only Kurzen holds the key that opens it. Inside, one may find the following items: 246 gp; a gold-plated writing quill; expensive scented ink worth approximately 20 gp; 10 receipts for ale and wine shipments; an obsidian spider-idol;



Death & Taxes Menu

Ale & Mead	Cost	Stuffed quail	8 sp
Bullfeather's Bock	2 cp	Other Services	
Geld Lane Gold	3 cp	Message running	2 cp
Sister Mary's Red Mantle	1 cp	Stolen property, fence*	special
Other Beverages		Stolen property, purchase†	special
Aelfwine, red or white	2 sp		
Coffee, cheap	1 cp		
Coffee, expensive	6 cp		
Dwarven Gray	8 cp		
Fire & Ice	4 sp		
Food			
Bangers and mash	3 cp		
Bread, day-old	1 cp		
Bread, fresh	2 cp		
Bread, fried	3 cp		
Bread, stuffed	5 cp		
Carrot and leek stew	1 cp		
Fruit tart	1 sp		
Roast pheasant	2 sp		

* Characters can "fence" property stolen from others through either Kurzen or Balthazar, receiving 20-40% of the item's normal cost. Unique, rare, or magical goods will probably not be fenced if thought to pose more trouble than they are worth to sell off.

† Stolen property can be purchased from either Kurzen or Balthazar. Any equipment that is normally available in your campaign, such as that listed in the *PHB*, has a 45% chance of being available here. Stolen equipment costs 60% of its original value. If Kurzen or Balthazar does not have an item, he can probably acquire it within 1d4 days, increasing the price by 15%. Some items may not be immediately available, depending on the nature of the item sought (horses, for example, are obviously kept elsewhere).

six circular jade coins worth 120 gp; and a tightly-fastened leather sack with 1 lb. of imported coffee worth 75 gp.

Strongbox: Hardness 5; hp 15; Break (DC 23); Open Lock (DC 20).

3. Gambling Den

The basement of the pewter merchant's building, this area serves as a gambling den for the patrons of Death & Taxes. Like the common room, plenty of tables and chairs fill the room, but not enough to crowd the floor space completely. Portions of the floor are reserved for dice games, while card games are played at the tables. A set of stairs in the northeast corner ascends up into the pewter merchant's shop. Balthazar the Weasel moderates the gambling here, taking 25% as his cut.

Secret Doors: Locked; 1 ft. thick; Hardness 8; hp 90; Break (DC 35); Open Lock (DC 25); Search (DC 25).

4. Secret Storage

These two rooms are cut from the bedrock. They have low-ceilings and no furnishings. Mostly, they function as storage for stolen property, though occasionally they are cleared out and used for holding private meetings between merchants or for extremely high-stakes gambling matches. Every once in a while, Balthazar or Kurzen might bring "special friends" in there with them in order to achieve a small amount of privacy.

At any given time, one can find 1,500 gp worth of mundane equipment in either room, 500 gp in master-

work weapons or armor, and 900 gp in stolen jewelry. Goods are usually removed from the rooms after the tavern closes, so anyone looking for cheap gear is always told to come back the next day.

5. Kitchen/Bakery

Behind the cutler's shop that hosts the tavern is a famous bakery. Its basement is split in half, with the east half used as storage for the shop upstairs and the west half converted into a kitchen and bakery for Death & Taxes. Four clay ovens line up along the kitchen's west wall, in addition to a pair of stone hearths that climb up through the ceiling to be shared with the bakery. Tables, cupboards, larders, and various pot and pan racks crowd the room. In the south wall, a tunnel dug to the tavern's common room allows for easy access to and from the kitchen. Apprentices constantly run back and forth delivering orders. Two bakers work here during the tavern's operating hours, taking 50% of the tavern's food profit as payment.

Baker (Average), Male Human Exp2 (2): CR 1; SZ M; HD 2d6+2; hp 10; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 10; Atk +1 melee (1d4, dagger, 19-20/x2); AL N; SV Fort +1, Ref +0, Will +3; Str 10, Dex 11, Con 13, Int 12, Wis 10, Cha 10.

Skills: Alchemy +6, Craft (cooking) +8, Knowledge (local) +6, Listen +5, Profession (baker) +7, Search +6, Spot +5, Swim +5.

Feats: Skill Focus (Craft [cooking], Profession [baker]).

Languages: Common, plus one regional dialect.

Possessions: Dagger, pouch containing 2d10 gp.

Goods & Services

The tavern offers an adequate selection of ales and a pretty decent selection of other beverages. It also provides a good food menu, courtesy of the neighboring bakery, but otherwise such services are rather limited. There are no courtesans, nor are any rooms available for rent; however, information is plentiful, for a price and if one knows with whom to talk, and stolen valuables may be both bought and fenced here.

Adventure Seeds

The following ideas can be used as seeds for adventures set in or around Death & Taxes:

- Balthazar wants to steal a valuable artifact from a prominent noble's manor, but he cannot do it himself and he does not have any men available for the job. He hires the characters to undertake the task for him. The noble is secretly a necromancer, and all kinds of undead creatures protect his manor. The artifact is *Muir's Blessing*, a minor holy relic with the ability to cast *mass heal* three times a day and *miracle* once a week (but only for temple hierophants who know the secret phrase required to activate it).
- The city militia wants to bust Kurzen and Balthazar's fencing operation, but its men are well known to the thieves' guild and the publican. So, they hire the characters to get into the men's good graces. When the characters gather the evidence the militia needs to put Kurzen and Balthazar away, they will be greatly rewarded. If Balthazar finds out about the infiltration mission from his own spies,

though, he will attempt to subvert the characters before the militia talks to them, turning them into double agents whom he can use to create chaos within the militia's ranks.

- A bounty hunter dies of a heart attack inside Death & Taxes while escorting his prey to a neighboring city. His prey, a vile half-orc serial killer calling himself Red Vengeance, is wanted in connection with the murders of more than forty elf noblemen. Now, the half-orc, who has chains on his feet and hands, pleads for release. Some of the patrons want to turn him over to the city militia, but Balthazar and Kurzen want to collect the bounty on his head. They make a deal with the adventurers that if they escort Kurzen and the murderer to their destination, they will receive a percentage of the sizeable reward offered. What none of them knows is that other bounty hunters are hot on their trail, literally within hours of catching up to them.

- A beautiful half-elf bard is hired one night to entertain the patrons. As she sings, a magical haze fills the air. Everyone in the tavern shortly becomes somnolent and thick-witted. They must make a successful Will save (DC 20) each round or succumb to sleep for 1d4 hours (this effect is as the sleep spell, but there is no limit to the number of HD it can affect. It can also affect creatures with 5 or more HD.). As soon as all of patrons in the place fall asleep, she robs them blind (including the characters), even going as far as to clear out the secret storage rooms. The bard works for a guild of criminal mages who operate out of a very nice house in one of the city's more affluent quarters and who get their kicks out of stealing from the other guilds, just because they can.

Malachai's Public House

The Public House can be heard long before it's seen, for the music, laughing, and sounds of revelry coming from it carry far on the wind. It is a hugely popular drinking establishment, known for having the best entertainment in the entire city. Its proprietor, a halfling musician named Malachai the Effusive, is one of the most famous personages in the region. People come from all over just to hear him play and sing. The tavern is also known for something else, though only among criminals and wizards with criminal connections: it is the place to go if someone wants to buy or fence magical goods. Rumors abound that Malachai can get his hands on literally any device known to the civilized world, including artifacts lost for thousands of years. While the latter is not exactly true, the diminutive bard is quite good at procuring magic items as long as a customer can pay his exorbitant fees.

Background

The Public House was built just over six years ago with funds acquired by Malachai during his long years of adventuring in distant, exotic lands. He intended to create a bard's haven where musicians, poets, storytellers, and other types of entertainers could perform for decent wages and for audiences who knew how to appreciate art (unlike audiences found in other taverns, who tend to tip poorly and who seem to like nothing more than harassing bards). At least, that was the story he told anyone who asked. His true motive was to create a convenient outlet for illicitly acquired or exceptionally rare magic items.

The first few weeks the local crafts guilds worked on the Public House's construction, everything went well. Then, things began to happen. Men fell mysteriously ill, timbers that appeared solid and sturdy one day were the next day discovered to be rotten to the core, usually at the most inopportune moments, such as when supporting the weight of three craftsmen hammering crossbeams into it. The guilds backed off, claiming that the building site was cursed, using the old fallback excuse that the land was obviously an ancient burial ground haunted by restless spirits unhappy with their intrusion. Of course, Malachai did not buy that excuse for a second. He had set foot on ancient burial grounds plenty of times; hell, he torn up a few of them himself, and he knew the "curse" had nothing to do with the undead. He did a little investigating and shortly came to the conclusion that wizards lay behind the troubles. Getting the names of the four most prominent wizards in town from his local contacts, Malachai paid them a visit.

The wizards called themselves the Council, a simple, inelegant name that belied their true strength and power. Their leader, a haughty half-elf woman named Jora Pimm, first congratulated Malachai on his resourcefulness, then told him to leave. They knew of his plans and were very familiar with his reputation. The last thing they wanted in town was someone to compete with them in the business

of making, selling, buying, and even stealing magical goods. That was their exclusive monopoly, and they would certainly not let him come out of nowhere and drive them out of business. Jora gave Malachai 24 hours to leave or the Council would kill him. Malachai laughed and with a courteous bow worthy of an imperial herald thanked them for their time. As he came up from his bow, he withdrew a glass rose from his sleeve and left it on the floor—a pitiful trinket for the incomparably beautiful Lady Pimm. The wizards reacted, eldritch magic crackling at their fingertips as they prepared to blast the halfling into oblivion. He whispered a single word. The rose flared. The wizards froze in place, and he took his leave.

The next day, construction resumed. In exchange for twice their previous wage, the craftsmen swore unfaltering reliability to Malachai in the coming months. The remaining wizards on the Council would not sit idly by while their four companions were perpetually imprisoned in the mysterious fugue state created by the bard's magical rose. Assaults were directed initially at the craftsmen building the Public House, killing many of them in process, but when Malachai turned one of the wizards responsible inside out, the Council backed off, focusing their energies directly at Malachai. Nothing they did seemed to affect him. While not the strongest spellcaster in town, he was extremely well protected by all manner of eldritch devices and artifacts. The Council tried everything, from all-out assault to infiltration and finally bribery, all to no avail. The halfling was resolute. After six months, the Public House was completed.

Word was put out on the street for people to stay away. If the wizards could not directly discourage Malachai to leave, perhaps they could put him out of business the old-fashioned way. Locals avoided the Public House, but so many of Malachai's friends from his adventuring days came by that the business prospered despite the Council's best efforts. Next, they commissioned the thieves' guild to steal everything they could find on the premises. They tried for two weeks to infiltrate the tavern, but Malachai was well prepared for them. Their heads arrived at their leader's doorstep, in the hands of three wickedly cunning demons. The infernal beasts left the guild leader alive, but what they did to his family and house is best left to the imagination. Needless to say, the thieves' guild quickly backed off. In fact, the guild leader sword undying loyalty to Malachai the following day and directed his infiltrators' efforts at the wizards, to steal their magic and deliver it to Malachai.

Influential members of the Council next turned to the city government. They agreed, for a tremendous fee, to send the city militia to arrest Malachai and raze the tavern. Instead, that night both the city militia and the thieves' guild united, attacking the wizards in their homes, labs, and lairs, decimating the Council for good. A friend of Malachai's, a wizard named Myrriden, took away the four imprisoned by Malachai's rose and were never seen again.

Malachai released the thieves' guild from its obligations to him, paid off the city government, and went on with his life. He holds no interest in running the city government or the thieves' guild, even though he wields enough magical power to do so easily. The thieves' guild leaves him and his tavern alone. Yet being who they are, this situation will not last forever. With the Council gone, the thieves think they can eventually topple Malachai. They will need a lot more firepower before that happens, though. Similarly, the city government does not like the idea that someone as powerful as Malachai is not beholden to anyone, especially them, and so they quietly seek the means to gain the upper hand over him. More than anything, they want to discover the identity of his supplier, thinking that by depriving him of his source he will weaken sufficiently to enable them to bring him down.

Dramatis Personae

Of all the people in and around the tavern on a daily basis, none are more colorful than **Malachai the Effusive**, a halfling bard of substantial fame. He is the Public House's owner, manager, and greatest entertainment draw. Other **entertainers** work here, popular in their own right but none more so than Malachai. Some of the **tappers**, who serve patrons and do the necessary chores required to keep the tavern running smoothly and in the black, are also apprentice musicians; when big name entertainment is not available, they take over, though their obvious lack of experience and finesse make them ripe targets for harassment. Finally, Malachai uses two burly **bouncers** to maintain the peace in the common room, which they do with ruthless efficiency.

Malachai the Effusive

Much has been written and spoken about Malachai Hammelstein, also known as Malachai the Effusive, most of which is entirely exaggerated and untrue. Well, so Malachai says — though many of the stories really are true. He is a notorious rascal, a ladies' man to the nth degree, a thief, a gentleman, a backstabbing conniver, a noble hero, a dastardly villain, and so on. In essence, he is what he needs to be according to the moment.

Malachai was born into a farmer's family in Farthingshire, just one of hundreds of obscure halfling communities that nobody outside their culture has ever heard about. His childhood was rather unexceptional until the day elf bandits raided the shire and burned it to the ground, killing most everyone in sight. He escaped by slipping into the stream and swimming away, ending up eventually in a human city. There, he was just another street urchin, stealing for his daily bread, getting arrested once or twice a week by the city militia, beaten, and

then discharged after spending the night in jail, and so on, day after day, for many years. A very poor pickpocket and tumbler, the thieves' guild wanted nothing to do with Malachai, viewing him as a severe liability waiting to happen. Malachai's survival on the streets, apparently, would not last long.

Yet his precarious position changed when he tried breaking into a carpenter's shop filled with musical instruments in all stages of construction. Fascinated, Malachai picked up a mandolin and began experimenting with the strings. For the next hour, he fiddled with the instrument, learning its chords and how to make music. He was a natural. Stuffing the mandolin into his sack, he turned to leave and stepped right into the shop owner, Jakob the Harper, who'd spent the previous 30 minutes observing the halfling boy. Malachai tried to flee, but Jakob punched him in the head, knocking him unconscious. When he awoke, he found Jakob staring down at him, grinning from ear to ear. The man told the boy not even to think about running, that he was a dirty little sneak thief who deserved punishment. Malachai whimpered, fearing his life had finally come to an end. The man continued, saying he wanted the boy to consider becoming his apprentice. He would give him room and board in exchange for eight hours a day of hard work in the shop. Malachai did not understand, but Jakob told him that he possessed a natural gift for music. It should not go unused. Malachai agreed, of course, thinking the man crazy — he would have agreed to anything if it helped him get away. Jakob grunted, hauling the boy to his feet. He shoved the mandolin into Malachai's hands, telling him to keep it. The man knew exactly what the boy was thinking and told him as much. "Come back," he said, "when you're ready to be civilized." The mandolin was a gift to help him decide. As soon as Jakob opened the door, Malachai fled.



A year passed and Malachai did not return to Jakob's shop. He kept the mandolin, though, playing it at every opportunity. It was his most prized possession, which he kept secreted away in an unused chimney atop a tavern in one of the better parts of town. He would sit atop the roof, listening to the songs drifting out into the night air from below, learning what he could through mimicry. Then the day came when the thieves' guild decided the halfling had worn out his welcome. Low-ranking footpads were sent to murder Malachai. They found his secret stash, smashed his instrument, and chased him through the city for six hours that night. Malachai escaped certain death by ducking into the Harper's workshop. Jakob was there, putting the finishing touches on a beautiful violin. When he saw the boy, he nodded without a word. Then the thugs burst in, hot on Malachai's heels. Jakob raised the violin to his chin and quickly played a haunting melody, infecting the thugs with a mystical madness that sent them running. Malachai collapsed from exhaustion; he would be Jakob's apprentice after all.

He spent 10 years working for Jakob, learning how to build every instrument known as well as how to play them. Jakob was a fair master but extremely demanding and hard on Malachai when he failed. On his 18th birthday, Jakob gave Malachai the violin he had used so many years before to drive off the thugs — a gift, Jakob said, to commemorate the end of Malachai's apprenticeship. The time had come for Malachai to go his own way. Malachai knew for a while that this day would come, and so he was not surprised. He thanked his teacher for everything, and then left, never to see the man again. Jakob's parting words were, "Be true to the music. That will be thanks enough."

That was 60 years ago. The time between saying farewell to his master and the opening of the Public House was filled with countless adventures, stories, and exploits, many of which Malachai describes on the few nights he performs in the common room. Malachai became fabulously wealthy five or six times, fortunes that were lost as soon as they were found. He also lost some best friends in those years, many falling at the hands of enemies with long memories and insatiable thirsts for vengeance. At least one dragon bears an eternal hatred for him, mistakenly believing the halfling to be imprisoned in the planes of Hell, where it currently searches for him. (Malachai doubts the dragon will survive the princes of Hell, but if it does, boy will it be angry when it eventually does find the bard.) Malachai has known true love only once in his life: for the halfling goddess of home and hearth. They met on her native plane when he and a few friends of his used it as a short cut while escaping from the Faerie realm. The king of Faerie was understandably angry with Malachai because the bard slept with his wife. During another adventure delving through the dungeon of Rappan Athuk, he permanently lost the sensation of taste. Then there is the matter of the kingdom whose entire existence was erased from memory. Only he knows it ever was, and he does not like talking about it or what he did to write it out of history.

Malachai's renown is widespread. Kings request his presence in their courts all the time, while their queens request his presence in their bedchambers. In fact, the halfling claims to have spent more time in the beds of queens than on the road seeking adventure. While he will

happily give a noblewoman pleasure, he will never give her his heart, for that belongs to his goddess. Yet after so many years, Malachai is content to stay in his tavern and lead a simple life. Because he has made so many friends and connections over the years, he uses the Public House as a cover for a fencing operation that annually moves millions of gold pieces worth of magical items, trading and selling equipment and gear that others spend lifetimes seeking. He enjoys entertaining as well, something he neglected for far too long. Being true to the music, as his master once said. He really cares only about music now. Not even the magic hidden away in the secret room upstairs can offer him the same feeling that comes from the music — and, more importantly, from the patrons who become a part of it through their attention and appreciation.

Malachai the Effusive, Male Halfling Brd17: CR 17; SZ S; HD 17d6+17; hp 84; Init +6 (Dex, Improved Initiative); Spd 20; AC 24 (+1 size, +2 Dex, bracers +5, amulet +3, ring of protection +3); Atk +15/+10/+5 melee (1d6+1, +2 short sword, 19-20/x2) or +16 ranged (1d8, masterwork light crossbow, 19-20/x2, range 80 ft.); SQ Halfling traits; AL CG; SV Fort +7, Ref +13, Will +10; Str 8, Dex 15, Con 12, Int 14, Wis 8, Cha 23.

Skills: Bluff +26, Climb +1, Diplomacy +28, Hide +6, Jump +1, Listen +1, Move Silently +4, Perform (ballad, buffoonery, chant, comedy, dance, drama, drums, epic, flute, juggling, limericks, lute, mandolin, melody, mime, ode, pan pipes, recorder, storytelling, violin) +28, Sense Motive +19, Spellcraft +24, Tumble +22.

Feats: Dodge, Improved Initiative, Skill Focus (Diplomacy, Perform, Spellcraft), Weapon Focus (short sword).

Bard Spells Known (Cast Per Day 4/6/6/5/4/4/2; base DC 16 + spell level): 0 — *dancing lights*, *daze*, *detect magic*, *ghost sound*, *mage hand*, *read magic*; 1st — *expeditious retreat*, *feather fall*, *hypnotism*, *identify*, *magic weapon*; 2nd — *bull's strength*, *detect thoughts*, *minor image*, *suggestion*, *Tashaa's hideous laughter*; 3rd — *emotion*, *greater magic weapon*, *haste*, *summon monster III*; 4th — *break enchantment*, *legend lore*, *modify memory*, *neutralize poison*; 5th — *contact other plane*, *greater dispelling*, *mind fog*, *summon monster V*; 6th — *control weather*, *mass suggestion*, *repulsion*.

Possessions: +2 short sword, bracers of armor +5, horn of blasting, potion of Charisma, 2 potions of cure serious wounds, amulet of natural armor +3, Cloak of Charisma +4, wand of polymorph self (19 charges), ring of protection +3, bag of holding (type 2), chrysalis wood violin (hold person, sleep, slow; see sidebar for details), 750 gp.

Entertainers

Malachai hires bards to play in the common room every night. Often they are apprentice bards looking to gain experience before a crowd, so they come cheap, but a few well known bards in town grace the tavern with their presence one or two nights a week. Even though the big names do not come cheap, Malachai still pulls in a sizeable profit on such nights. Sometimes, he lets a few of his more musically inclined tappers entertain, though he does not pay them any more than they normally get for serving food and drink to patrons.

Chrysalis Wood

Chrysalis wood is somewhat of a misnomer; it isn't really a type of wood, rather, it is the end result of a piece of normal wood (used in the construction of magical musical instruments) being treated with a specially mixed paste made from the *pupa* of various insects, sap from a maple tree, crushed marigold or cumin seed, and powdered jade (totaling at least 100 gp).

A successful Alchemy (DC 20) check is required to make the paste. Use the rules for the Craft skill (see Chapter 4 in the *PHB*) to determine time and cost. Wood treated with this paste becomes known as chrysalis wood.

Chrysalis Wood Magical Instruments

A chrysalis wood instrument contains up to six levels of spells that the possessor can cast. Each spell has a caster level equal to the minimum level needed to cast that spell. As with a wand (see the Wands section in the *DMG*), the user need not provide any material components or focus, or pay an XP cost to cast the spell, and there is no arcane spell failure chance for wearing armor (since the ring user need not gesture). To successfully cast a stored spell, the possessor must make a successful Perform check (DC 10). If the check fails, the spell simply fizzles without effect.

For a randomly generated chrysalis wood instrument, treat it as a scroll to determine what spells are stored in it. If you roll a spell that would put the ring over the six-level limit, ignore that roll; the instrument has no more spells in it. (Not every newly discovered instrument need be fully charged.)

A spellcaster can cast any spells into the ring, so long as the total spell levels do not add up to more than six. This can include spells the possessor could not normally cast. The instrument magically imparts to the possessor the names of all spells currently stored within it.

A chrysalis wood instrument can be "recharged" by simply casting additional spells into the instrument. This requires each caster to succeed at a Perform check (DC 10 + spell level) to store the spell. If the check fails, the spell fizzles away. Note that the instrument can never hold more than six total spell levels.

Caster Level: Varies (minimum needed to cast each stored spell); **Prerequisites:** Craft Wondrous Item, *imbue with spell ability*, musical instrument constructed of chrysalis wood; **Market Price:** 52,000 gp; **Weight:** Varies by instrument.

The most notorious of the big names is **Rocki Murtan**, a handsome dwarf bard whose music is famous for being risqué and almost uncomfortably up-tempo. He has a large following of young halfling and dwarf girls that comes in on the nights he plays. **Thea the Chanteuse**, on the other hand, is a gorgeous elf maiden with a voice like the finest ambrosia and songs so romantic they can make even a hardened criminal weep. **Rodger Gilmore** is more of an

actor than a singer or a poet; he interacts heavily with the audience, which affords him ample opportunity to pick patrons' pockets and lighten their coin purses. Finally, there is **Sara Brighthelm**, a former adept who left the church behind in order to pursue a life playing the lute and singing ballads of famous adventurers. A bawdy storyteller popular with the older crowd, Sara is known best for her wicked sense of humor and her razor sharp wit.

Rocki Murtan, Male Dwarf Brd4: CR 4; SZ M (4 ft., 4 in. tall); HD 4d6+8; hp 27; Init +2; Spd 20 ft.; AC 13 (+2 Dex, +1 armor); Atk +4 melee (1d4+1, +1 dagger, 19-20/x2); AL CN; SQ bardic music, bardic knowledge, Dwarf traits; SV Fort +3, Ref +6, Will +6; Str 11, Dex 14, Con 14, Int 16, Wis 15, Cha 17.

Skills: Appraise +5, Balance +5, Bluff +10, Climb +5, Craft (woodworking) +6, Hide +9, Knowledge (religion) +6, Listen +4, Move Silently +3, Perform (chant, Drama, epic, limericks, lute, lyre, storytelling) +10, Sense Motive +9, Spot +4.

Feats: Dodge, Spell Focus (Enchantment).

Languages: Common, Dwarven, Gnome, Terran, Undercommon.

Bard Spells Known (Cast Per Day: 3/3/1; base DC 13 + spell level [base DC 15 + spell level for Enchantment spells]): 0 — *dancing lights*, *daze*, *detect magic*, *light*, *open/close*, *read magic*; 1st — *charm person*, *mage armor*, *sleep*; 2nd — *hold person*, *Tashaa's hideous laughter*.

Possessions: Padded armor, +1 dagger, masterwork lyre (+2 to Perform checks; not included in statistics block), and 62 gp.

Thea the Chanteuse, Female Elf Brd10: CR 10; SZ M (5 ft., 2 in. tall); HD 10d6+20; hp 57; Init +3; Spd 30 ft.; AC 15 (+3 Dex, +2 armor); Atk +7/+2 and +7 melee (1d6+1/1d6+1, quarterstaff); SQ bardic music, bardic knowledge; AL NG; SV Fort +7, Ref +10, Will +8; Str 13, Dex 16, Con 14, Int 14, Wis 12, Cha 18.

Skills: Bluff +14, Concentration +8, Escape Artist +16, Hide +14, Knowledge (nature) +8, Listen +7, Move Silently +6, Perform (ballad, chant, comedy, dance, drums, epic, juggling, limericks, lute, melody, mime, ode, storytelling) +17, Scry +8, Search +7, Spot +7.

Feats: Ambidexterity, Great Fortitude, Two-Weapon Fighting, Weapon Focus (quarterstaff).

Languages: Common, Dwarven, Elven, Gnoll, Gnome.

Bard Spells Known (Cast Per Day: 3/4/4/3/1; base DC 14 + spell level): 0 — *detect magic*, *mage hand*, *mending*, *open/close*, *prestidigitation*, *resistance*; 1st — *charm person*, *identify*, *protection from chaos*, *sleep*; 2nd — *animal trance*, *blur*, *cure moderate wounds*, *detect thoughts*; 3rd — *blink*, *charm monster*, *greater magic weapon*, *major image*; 4th — *hallucinatory terrain*, *hold monster*.

Possessions: Staff of charming (39 charges), ring of counterspells (*charm person*), quarterstaff, leather armor, masterwork lute (+2 to Perform checks; not included in statistics block), and 101 gp.

Rodger Gilmore, Male Human, Brd3/Rog3: CR 6; SZ M (5 ft., 7 in. tall); HD 3d6-3 plus 3d6-3; hp 18; Init +3; Spd 30 ft.; AC 15 (+3 Dex, +2 armor); Atk +2 melee (1d4+1, +1 dagger, 19-20/x2) and +2 melee (1d4, dagger, 19-20/x2); SQ bardic music, bardic knowledge; AL CE; SV Fort +1, Ref +9, Will +6; Str 11, Dex 17, Con 8, Int 13, Wis 14, Cha 14.



Skills: Appraise +7, Decipher Script +6, Diplomacy +8, Forgery +5, Hide +8, Intimidate +4, Knowledge (nature) +2, Knowledge (religion) +7, Listen +7, Move Silently +6, Open Lock +8, Perform (ballad, drama, epic, mandolin, mime, ode) +8, Pick Pocket +7, Search +6, Spot +7.

Feats: Alertness, Ambidexterity, Combat Casting, Two-Weapon Fighting.

Languages: Common, Dwarven.

Bard Spells Known (Cast Per Day: 3/2; base DC 12 + spell level): 0 — dancing lights, daze, detect magic, open/close, prestidigitation, resistance; 1st — cure light wounds, identify, protection from good.

Possessions: Goggles of minute seeing, vest of escape, +1 dagger, dagger, leather armor, masterwork mandolin (+2 to Perform checks; not included in statistics block), and 65 gp.

Sara Brighthelm, Female Human Adp2/Brd6: CR 7; SZ M; HD 2d6 plus 6d6; hp 30; Init +4; Spd 30 ft.; AC 12 (+2 armor); Atk +5 melee (1d6+1, +1 short sword, 19-20/x2), +5 ranged (1d4, dagger, 19-20/x2, range 10 ft.); AL CG; SV Fort +2, Ref +5, Will +10; Str 10, Dex 11, Con 11, Int 14, Wis 15, Cha 14.

Skills: Alchemy +6, Appraise +7, Balance +5, Bluff +4, Concentration +6, Diplomacy +9, Handle Animal +3, Heal +8, Listen +8, Perform (ballad, chant, comedy, epic, flute, juggling, limericks, lute, melody, mime, ode) +13, Scry +5, Spellcraft +7, Wilderness Lore +8.

Feats: Combat Casting, Craft Wondrous Item, Improved Initiative, Quick Draw.

Adept Spells Prepared (3/2; base DC 12 + spell level): 0 — create water, cure minor wounds, ghost sound; 1st — bless, burning hands.

Bard Spells Known (Cast Per Day 3/4/3; base DC 12 + spell level): 0 — dancing lights, daze, ghost sound, mage hand, read magic; 1st — cure light wounds, erase, hypnotism, magic weapon; 2nd — blur, hold person, silence.

Possessions: Masterwork lute, leather armor, +1 short sword, 3 potions of cure moderate wounds, dagger, 125 gp.

Ale Tappers

While they concentrate primarily on serving ale, the ale tappers—called “tappers” for short—are really Malachai’s jacks-of-all-trades. They work in the kitchen helping the chef or upstairs keeping the guest rooms clean and vermin-free or even as apprentice musicians when Malachai is short on real entertainers. All the tappers come from local families. One can do worse in life than apprenticing under one of the most prominent musicians in the land, so the tapper positions are both highly sought after and viciously fought over when they become available. Entire families have gone to “war” with one another over the right to put a child in Malachai’s service.

Tapper, Male Human Com1 (5): CR 1/2; SZ M; HD 1d4; hp 4; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 10; Atk +0 melee (1d3, unarmed strike); AL NG; SV Fort +0, Ref +0, Will +0; Str 11, Dex 10, Con 11, Int 10, Wis 11, Cha 10.

Skills: Disable Device +1, Profession (innkeeper) +6, Search +1, Spot +4.

Feats: Run, Skill Focus (Profession [innkeeper]).

Language: Common.

Possessions: 2 gp.

Tapper (Apprentice Musician), Male Human Com3/Brd1 (4): CR 3; SZ M; HD 3d4-3 plus 1d6-1; hp 11; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 11 (+1 padded); Atk +3 melee (1d3+2, dagger, 19-20/x2); AL N; SV Fort +2, Ref +3, Will +3; Str 14, Dex 11, Con 9, Int 12, Wis 11, Cha 12.

Skills: Listen +6, Move Silently +2, Perform (ballad, dance, mime, storytelling) +7, Profession (innkeeper) +8, Ride (horse) +6, Swim +8.

Feats: Great Fortitude, Skill Focus (Perform), Skill Focus (Profession [innkeeper]).

Languages: Common, Dwarven.

Bard Spells Known (Cast Per Day: 2; base DC 11 + spell level): 0—*dancing lights*, *ghost sound*, *mage hand*, *prestidigitation*.

Possessions: Lute, dagger, padded armor, and 29 gp.

Bouncers

Franz Castellan and Stubert Uwan have served as Malachai's bouncers since the tavern's inception. Both are extremely good at what they do. Today, just about everyone who knows of them gives them wide berth, especially Franz. Stubert is the smarter of the duo, so when needing to reason with the bouncers, most people appeal to him. Unfortunately, this tactic rarely works.

Franz is insane. Not figuratively, either: he is really insane, believing himself possessed by an infinite number of fey "little people." He hears them talking to him all the time, and the buggers apparently never shut the hell up. No one, not even Stubert his best friend, understands where he picked up this particular mental affliction. Franz claims he became possessed during the time he served in the legions of the Sand King many decades ago.

Stubert is probably the smartest person in the tavern on any given night, and that includes patrons who are wizards. He knows more about history, religion, and literature than just about any other person alive, and that is no exaggeration. This wealth of knowledge is made even stranger since he grew up in the forests with his rather simple father and mother; learning the ways of nature and training to one day become a ranger. While he makes an adequate woodsman, he truly lives for books and information. When not pounding unruly patrons into the dirt, Stubert can usually be found sitting in a well-lit corner reading a rare book or scroll and taking notes in a thick tome he calls his "education." Stubert is congenial enough, but only when approached during his off hours. On duty, he is all business.

Franz Castellan, Male Human Ftr12: CR 12; SZ M (5 ft. 4 in. tall); HD 12d10+24; hp 91; Init +5 (Dex, Improved Initiative); Spd 20; AC 20 (+1 Dex, +8 armor, *ring of protection* +1); Atk +19/+14/+9 melee (1d10+10, +2 *greatclub*, 19-20/x2), +15/+10/+5 ranged (1d8+6, +1 composite longbow [+1 arrows], crit x3, range 110 ft.); AL CN; SV Fort +12, Ref +7, Will +7; Str 18, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 8, Wis 12, Cha 10.

Skills: Climb +10, Craft (weaponsmithing) +9, Jump +10.

Feats: Blind-Fight, Cleave, Dodge, Great Cleave, Improved Critical (*greatclub*), Improved Initiative, Point Blank Shot, Power Attack, Precise Shot, Weapon Focus (composite longbow), Weapon Focus (*greatclub*), Weapon Specialization (*greatclub*).

Possessions: +3 *breastplate*, +2 *greatclub*, +1 *mighty composite longbow*, 20 +1 arrows, 3 *potions of endurance*, *potions of cure moderate wounds*, *ring of protection* +1, *cloak of resistance* +2, and 534 gp.

Stubert Uwan, Male Elf, High Rgr2/Exp12: CR 13; SZ M (5 ft. 5 in. tall); HD 2d10+2 plus 12d6+12+3; hp 68; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; AC 20 (+2 Dex, +7 armor, *ring of protection* +1); Atk +15 melee (1d6+4, +2 *short sword*, 19-20/x2); SQ: Elven traits; AL LN; SV Fort +8, Ref +6, Will +13; Str 14, Dex 15, Con 12, Int 17, Wis 16, Cha 15.

Skills: Climb +9, Concentration +11, Disable Device +7, Gather Information +19, Intimidate +8, Jump +8, Knowledge (history) +20, Knowledge (philosophy) +20, Knowledge (religion) +20, Listen +5, Scry +9, Search +5, Sense Motive +16, Spot +5, Use Magic Device +6, Wilderness Lore +20.

Feats: Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Expertise, Iron Will, Toughness, Track.

Possessions: +3 *Elven chain shirt*, *ring of protection* +1, +2 *short sword*, 1d6 *musty tomes* ranging from ancient philosophy to modern warfare, and 369 gp.

The Establishment

Malachai's Public House is an oddly built, two-story structure with entrances at both the front and back. While the second floor only occupies half as much space as the first, plenty of room remains for guests. The walls are well crafted, made from masonry and wood. At one time, they were white washed; now, the paint has faded, giving the building an old, gray appearance. The roof's shingles are faded cedar, warped and bent from time and weather. At the back of the tavern is a hitching yard where patrons may tie up their mounts. A wood plaque hanging from a lamppost in front of the tavern depicts a stylized halfling troubadour playing a violin. That halfling would be Malachai, the one who lends his name to the establishment. A similar plaque once hung in the hitching yard, but a sentient horse destroyed it in a fit of pique a few months ago and Malachai has yet to replace it. The building's windows are all narrow, shuttered and lockable.

Unless otherwise noted, the Public House has the following stats:

Doors (Locked): 1 1/2 in. thick; Hardness 5; hp 15; Break (DC 18); Open Lock (DC 25).

Outer walls: 1 ft. thick; Hardness 8; hp 90; Break (DC 35).

Inner walls: 6 in. thick; Hardness 5; hp 60; Break (DC 18).

i. Entryway

This is the front entrance to Malachai's Public House, a long, wide hallway bordered on one side by wood pegs embedded in the wall for hanging travel cloaks and on the other side by stacked ale barrels for use in the common room when the ones there run empty. A counter occupies the east end of the entryway, as does a staircase ascending to the

MALACHAI'S PUBLIC HOUSE

second floor. The stairs have not been repaired in many years so are very rickety and noisy when tread upon. Regardless of the time of day or night, a tapper sits behind the counter, typically looking bored and idly picking her nails clean with a small dagger or, if an apprentice musician, perhaps composing a song or sonnet. Rooms may be rented here. If no one is present at the counter, the small brass bell sitting atop it can be rung to summon someone. The door in the east wall behind the counter leads to the tavern office.

Malachai keeps a locked strongbox (Open Lock DC 20) beneath the counter. It contains the following: 5d20 gold pieces, 3d8 silver pieces, 10d20 copper pieces, expensive ink worth 8 gp, an expensive gold-plated feather quill worth 12 gp, and 23 sheets of fine writing parchment worth 6 gp.

The lock on the office door, shaped like a gold ear surrounded by a wreath of gold ivy, is magical and trapped; the doorknob above the lock is standard. No key opens the lock. Rather, whispering the password into the lock is the only way to bypass the trap successfully and open the door. If the incorrect password is spoken or the lock is tampered with (such as a rogue attempting to use his Open Lock skill) then the trap is triggered (see below). On the open market, the lock is worth approximately 324,000 gp, but only if its password is known.

Office Door (Locked): 2 in. thick; Hardness 5; hp 15; Break (DC 18); Open Lock (DC 25). This door is trapped.

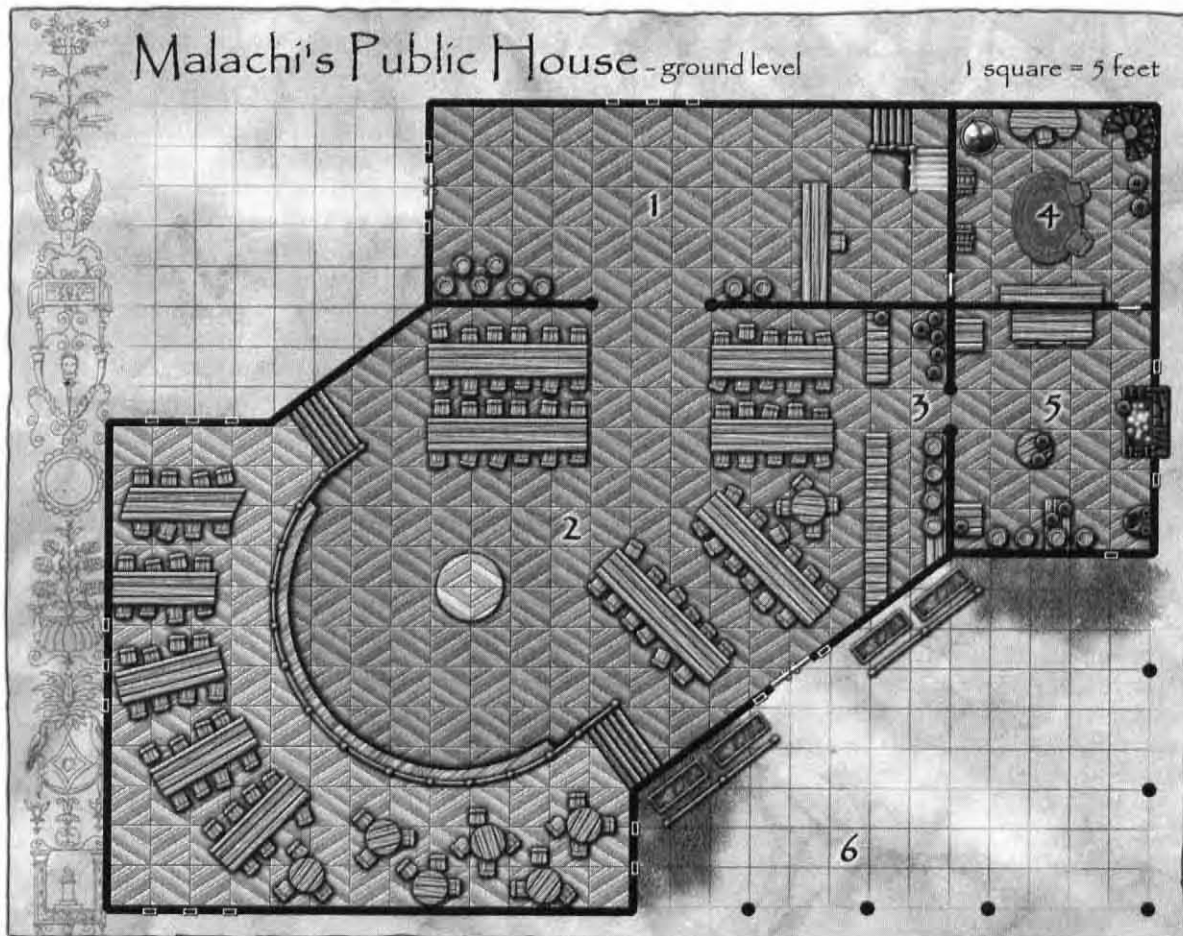
Malachai's Binding Lock: CR 8; Creature becomes imprisoned within a gold coin located near the lock, as per the *minimus containment* version of the *binding* spell cast by

an 18th-level sorcerer; Will save (DC 22) negates; Search (DC 33); Disable Device (DC 33). *Note:* The condition for the creature's release is that the coin must be spent on a good deed, such as giving a donation to a temple. Malachai keeps the coin in which the creature is imprisoned in the strongbox.

2. Common Room

The main room of the tavern, the common room is large and multi-leveled with enough open space and furniture to accommodate almost 100 patrons on the busiest of nights. On certain holidays, it is standing room only, with twice that number crowded in between its walls.

At its southwest end, the common room rises 4 feet above the rest of the floor, creating an elevated tier from which patrons may look down on the half-moon shaped "singer's circle," sitting on the tier's long, curving bench as well as on stools and chairs, and getting warmed by a blazing fire. At the common room's east end is a "tapper's galley" where tavern employees serve ale, mead, and other delicious drinks to patrons too impatient to wait for the tappers to serve them at their table (especially on nights when the place is packed). In between the elevated section and tapper's galley is an army of comfortably worn hickory tables and chairs. A pair of double doors opens onto the hitching yard behind the tavern. Shuttered windows inset at regular intervals in the walls let patrons watch the surrounding streets and alleys.



Without exception, every night of the week offers musicians, poets, and actors plying their trade on the common room floor. Especially honored entertainers are allowed to work from the singer's circle, where the tips are the greatest and the patrons the most enthusiastic. At least once a week, Malachai himself takes center circle, drawing in the largest crowds. A single night with Malachai singing or storytelling brings in more money than three or four nights with the other bards combined.

The two bouncers, Franz and Stubert, spend the vast majority of their time in the common room, where, unsurprisingly, most of the trouble tends to break out. They do not tolerate patrons harassing the tappers or entertainers, showing no mercy for the ones who do and usually throwing them out into the hitching yard face first and aimed for the largest pile of fresh road apples they can spot (after first giving the offender a resounding beating). Regulars know this and accordingly leave the staff alone. Outsiders, patrons, and adventuring parties new to the tavern are warned just once for the first offense, after which they receive the same treatment as everyone else.

While courtesans are not explicitly allowed to ply their trade in the tavern, many do under the pretense of being "unescorted ladies." Those who are too bawdy, low-class, or obvious about it are politely asked to leave. Those who are subtle about their business interactions with patrons are more or less left to their own devices. Malachai has no interest in taking a cut of their profits, which is unusual among publicans. He figures, rightly, that the amount of money the courtesans could generate for him would not amount to even a tenth of his average nightly take. As such, he is content to let them keep their hard-earned money. This philosophy, of course, has raised the courtesans' estimation of him greatly, and at the end of the day they actually improve his business by bringing in patrons that they pick up in the street or in other taverns. Not hassling the courtesans definitely brings its advantages.

Courtesan, Male Human Com3: CR 2; SZ M; HD 3d4; hp 7; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 10; Atk +1 melee (1d4, dagger, 19-20/x2) or +1 ranged (1d4, dagger, 19-20/x2, range 10 ft.); AL N; SV Fort +1, Ref +1, Will +3; Str 11, Dex 11, Con 10, Int 10, Wis 11, Cha 11.

Skills: Craft (sewing) +5, Innuendo +3, Listen +1, Profession (courtesan) +8.

Feats: Iron Will, Run, Skill Focus (Profession [courtesan]).

Language: Common.

Possessions: 2d6 gp.

3. Tapper's Galley

The east part of the common room, this area is cordoned off by a long, bifurcated counter. Racks containing wine bottles, leather-bound wooden flagons, pewter mugs, porcelain steins, and other assorted items lean up against the room's east wall, while tapped ale and mead kegs are propped up on tables. Empty kegs are rolled out back to the hitching yard, where they are stored until ale merchants making their daily deliveries can transport them away for recycling. Fresh, untapped kegs can be found in the front entryway. During the tavern's normal operating hours, two

tappers work behind the counter, serving patrons or helping the tappers working the floor to fill orders.

By far, the most popular ale is *Shire Weisen*, a crisp "white" ale characterized by a nutty flavor reminiscent of hazel. *Annya's Amber Bock* is another tavern favorite; patrons often put drops of hard, dried honey in the ale to augment its already sweet flavor. Two other ales, not as common because they are delivered on a weekly instead of a daily schedule, are *Troll Flail Pale Ale*, known for its dry and almost dusty flavor, and *Unicorn & Ram*, a maple mead imported from a neighboring city to the north. Other, drinks besides ale may also be had, the most notorious of which is *Wizard Giggie*, a type of sparkly champagne brought in from distant lands that gets its name from the fact that its intoxicating effects are twice as potent when imbibed by spellcasters.

The tapper's galley also handles food orders for the kitchen. Despite the tavern's seemingly impressive menu, the food here is awful. Few regular patrons willingly order it. Malachai fancies himself an amateur chef. When he has time to spare, he will spend it in the kitchen concocting new recipes or trying to improve upon old ones. When he offers free samples to the common room, wise patrons bury their faces and do what they can not to draw attention to themselves. Many a patron has required the services of a priest or healer after partaking of Malachai's so-called "high cuisine."

4. Office

Malachai manages the tavern and inn here. It is a well-appointed room with an expensive teakwood writing desk, a cushioned wood bench, a couple of cushioned chairs, cabinets, bookcases, and chests. An ornate woven rug covers the floor. The walls sport a wide array of musical instruments, faux magical weapons and armor, artifacts, and other trophies that he supposedly acquired during his years spent adventuring around the world seeking fame and glory; all of these items are replicas of the originals, however. A globe of displaying the known world sits in one corner of the room. In the other corner, spiral stairs rise up into the ceiling, leading to Malachai's room on the second floor. This room has no windows.

To the unwitting, the replicas are worth a total of 76,000 gp. Connoisseurs and antiquarians who know better would place their composite value at approximately 365 gp—the worth of the equipment's raw materials and nothing else. Characters can detect that the equipment is fake by making an Appraise check (DC 20). The fake weapons and armor feel like the real deal, but when used in combat the first time, they will break apart like porcelain.

5. Kitchen

The kitchen is large and well-stocked. A hearth in the east wall provides a steady cook fire for the stew pots, while a small clay and brick oven beside it lets the chef make fresh breads and other baked dishes. Tables, ladders, barrels, shelves, and hooks hold stacks of ingredients and cooking implements. This room is so well stocked, in fact, that a competent chef could prepare a meal worthy of royalty. Unfortunately, the chefs working here are all trained by Malachai and must follow his recipes exactly or

risk his ire and even, perhaps, banishment from the tavern. Fresh food and ingredients are delivered in the afternoon.

The door in the north wall leads to Malachai's office. It is magically trapped and locked. As with the lock on the door for the tavern's office (see Area 1, above), this lock is shaped like an ear and surrounded by ivy leaves, all gilt with gold. On either side of the hearth is a shuttered window.

Office Door (Locked): 2 1/2 in. thick; Hardness 5; hp 25; Break (DC 23); Open Lock (DC 25). This door is trapped (see below).

Malachai's Binding Lock: CR 8; Creature becomes imprisoned within a gold coin located near the lock, as per the *minimus containment* version of the *binding* spell cast by an 18th-level sorcerer; Will save (DC 22) negates; Search (DC 33); Disable Device (DC 33). *Note:* The condition for the creature's release is that the coin must be spent on a good deed, such as giving a donation to a temple. Malachai keeps the coin in which the creature is imprisoned in the strongbox.

Chef (Average), Male Human Exp2 (2): CR 1; SZ M; HD 2d6+2; hp 10; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 10; Atk +1 melee (1d4, dagger, 19-20/x2); AL N; SV Fort +1, Ref +0, Will +3; Str 10, Dex 11, Con 13, Int 12, Wis 10, Cha 10.

Skills: Alchemy +6, Craft (cooking) +8, Knowledge (local) +6, Listen +5, Profession (cook) +7, Search +6, Spot +5, Swim +5.

Feats: Skill Focus (Craft [cooking], Profession [cook]).

Languages: Common, plus one regional dialect.

Possessions: Dagger, pouch containing 2d10 gp.

6. Hitching Yard

Out back beneath the overhanging second floor is this open space, used by patrons for hitching their horses. Two hitching posts, driven into the ground on either side of the makeshift path, lead away from the tavern's back door. Behind them are water troughs from which the horses may drink. Hay bales are stacked against the north and west walls, used as both feed for the horses and to dry up the mud around the hitching posts created by shuffling hooves and copious amounts of animal excrement. A heavy, pervasive stables odor hangs in the air here. Once a day, the lowest-ranking tapper cleans up the hitching yard, a rather unpleasant job.

Hay is kept above the hitching yard in a room on the second floor that hangs over the yard's west end. The hatch leading to it can be opened only from inside. When open, it is large enough to pull a small platform weighed down with 6 or 7 bales of hay up and down through it using the sturdy pulley-and-rope system built into the storeroom's ceiling.

Hay Hatch: 1 1/2 in. thick; Hardness 5; hp 15; Break (DC 18).

A second trapdoor is built into the overhang on the east end, but it is very well disguised. It leads to a different kind of storeroom: the one used by Malachai to hide stolen magical property. The secret hatch is trapped to keep interlopers from forcing their way into the room.

The secret hatch may only be opened if a person knows the proper rhyme, which is spoken aloud into a tiny, spiral shell enchanted specifically for this purpose. As soon as the rhyme is properly uttered, the hatch opens and whoever

stands directly below it is levitated into the room above using a variant of the *fly* spell. This limited fly effect functions in the space above and below the hatch for as long as the hatch remains open. If the hatch is forced or if a character fails a Disable Device check while opening it, then the trap goes off. Similarly, speaking the incorrect password sets off the trap. *Dispel magic* cancels the fly effect temporarily for 1d4 hours, as does disabling the lock device in which the enchantment resides.

Secret Hatch (Magical Lock): 2 in. thick; Hardness 5; hp 15; Break (DC 18); Search (DC 20). The magical lock may not be opened using the Open Lock skill, see text above. This door is trapped.

Chain Lightning Trap: CR 6; no attack roll necessary; 18th-level wizard; Reflex (DC 19) half damage; 18d6 electricity damage to creature directly in front of trap (and 9d6 points of electricity damage to up to 18 other targets within 30 ft. of the primary target); Search (DC 31); Disable Device (DC 31).

7. Hallway

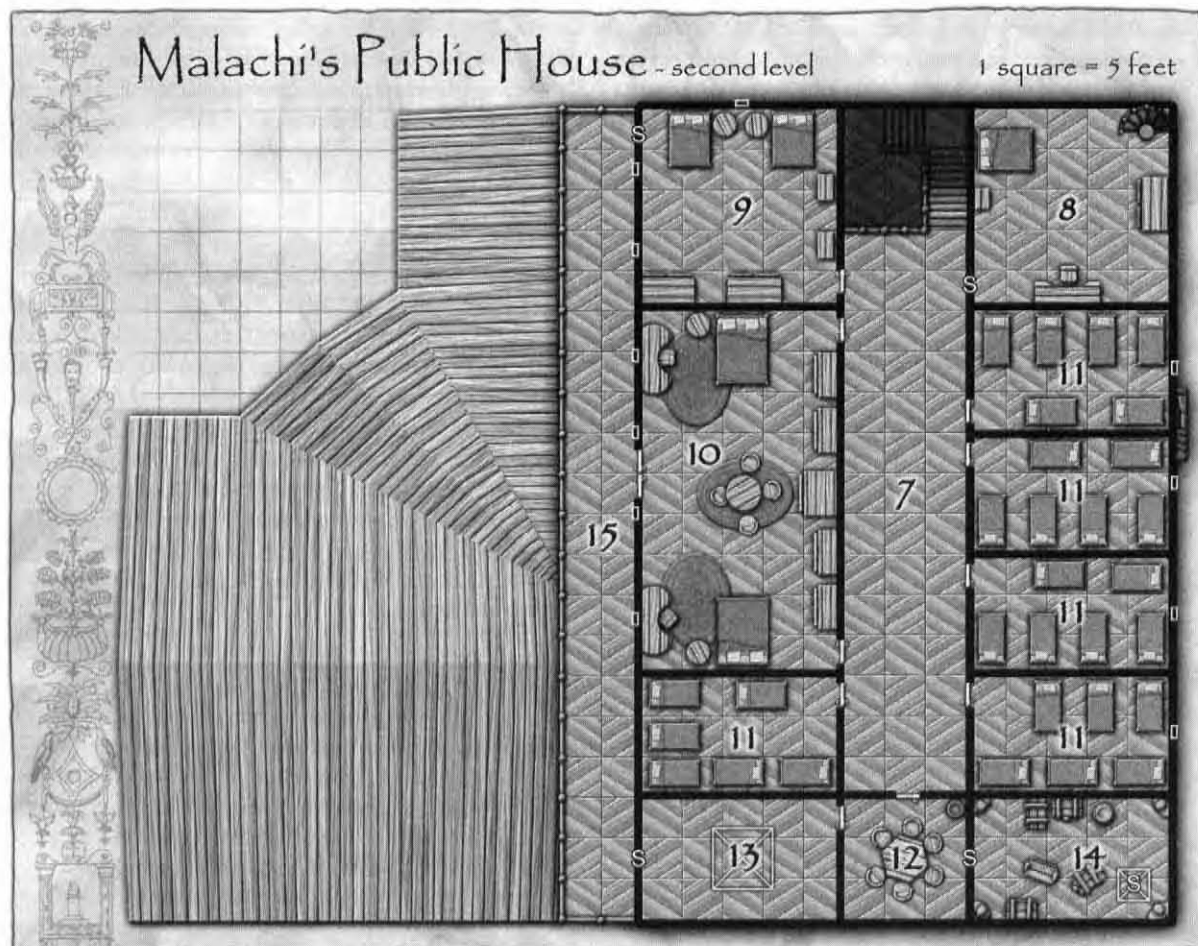
Also known among the regulars as "the mendicant's guest room," the hallway running down the center of the second floor is twice as wide as the average corridor in other inns. Those who cannot find a bed for the night or cannot afford one are allowed to sleep here as long as they do not interfere with paying patrons and keep themselves and their gear pressed up against the wall. Patrons who sleep here are definitely taking their chances with thieves and other ne'er-do-wells. A secret door immediately atop the stairs leads into Malachai's personal chambers.

Secret Door: 1 in. thick; Hardness 5; hp 10; Break (DC 13).

8. Malachai's Room (EL 15)

Two ways lead into this room, which is where Malachai the Effusive resides: either by the spiral staircase originating in the office downstairs or through the secret door in the room's west wall. The room's décor is as nice as that of the room below it. Stained teakwood is the material of choice for the impressive wardrobe, the four-poster, down-stuffed bed, and gold-inlaid writing desk. The walls are adorned with more artifacts of the type found in the office, appearing expensive and rare when in fact they could not be farther from it. Standing on either side of the writing desk is a beautiful, highly polished iron statue of woman in flowing robes with one breast exposed and a whimsical expression on her face. A very large travel chest sits across the room opposite the writing desk. Both it and the desk are locked with devices apparently made by the same locksmith. This room has no windows.

The replicas of magical artifacts, weapons, armor, instruments, and other assorted loot presumably acquired through years of adventuring appear to be worth somewhere in the neighborhood of 100,000 gp. A successful Appraise check (DC 30) indicates that the gear is not worth much more than 500 gp in raw materials. The weapons and armor, while looking impressive, are of such inferior quality that they will shatter the first time they see use in real combat.



The desk (Open Lock DC 28) contains the following items: hand-drawn, parchment maps of the first eight levels of the legendary dungeon Rappan Athuk (see the **Necromancer Games** modules *R1: Rappan Athuk 1 — The Dungeon of Graves: The Upper Levels* and *R2: Rappan Athuk 2 — The Dungeon of Graves: The Middle Levels*), altogether worth approximately 3,000 gp on the adventurer's market (the maps are 50% accurate); a leather-bound book containing 60 vellum pages inscribed with arcane spells (10 1st-level, 8 2nd-level, 6 3rd-level, and 4 4th-level), worth 6,500 gp; and *cursed pipes of haunting* worth 5,000 gp. The pipes function as per the normal magical item of the same name except that each time a character uses them, he loses 2 points of Charisma permanently; his Charisma may be restored only through the use of a *remove curse*, *greater restoration*, or *wish* spell.

The travel chest (Open Lock DC 28) contains 3,765 gp, a pair of Large size cotton female bloomers, a *bag of devouring*, +2 chainmail, and a *wand of fireballs* (1 charge).

If anyone but Malachai opens the writing desk or the travel chest, the two statues come to life. They are iron golems and heed only Malachai's commands.

Iron Golem (2): CR 13; SZ L Construct; HD 18d10; 99 hp; Init -1 (Dex); Spd 20 ft. (can't run); AC 30; Atk +23 melee (2d10+11 [x2], slam); SA breath weapon (10-ft. cube, Fort DC 17; 1d4 Con/death; once per 1d4+1 rds); SQ construct, magic immunity, damage reduction (50/+3), rust vulnerability; Fort +6, Ref +5, Will +6; AL N; Str 33, Dex 9, Con —, Int —, Wis 11, Cha 1.

9. Royal Quarters

This guest room is reserved for nobles, aristocrats, and wealthy merchants or adventurers. Quite large, it contains two queen-sized, four-poster beds made from stained rosewood; two similar wardrobes; two sizeable chests (Open Lock DC 24) and associated keys; and an end table for each bed. A nice but inexpensive carpet covers the wood slates of the floor, while mundane landscape paintings and portraits hang on the walls. The room has a slightly unpleasant odor, left over from a *cloudkill* spell cast in it over a year earlier by wizard defending himself from thieves. Each day, the tapper assigned to cleaning the second floor places fresh incense sticks on the end tables for patrons to use.

The second floor balcony may be accessed by means of a secret door in the north part of the outside-facing wall. The windows are all booby-trapped to discourage thieves from attempting to sneak in through them.

Secret Door: 1 in. thick; Hardness 5; hp 10; Break (DC 13); Search (DC 20).

Morden's Faithful Hound Trap: CR 5; no attack roll necessary; triggers Morden's faithful hound spell as cast by a 10th-level sorcerer; Search (DC 30); Disable Device (DC 30); *Note:* The summoned hound spends the first round barking an alarm that can be heard by all within 100 feet. The next round the hound attacks the intruder. The hound pursues the intruder but not more than 100 feet from the window.

The room's windows may only be opened from inside the building. Anyone who attempts to open them from outside becomes subject to the window trap. Such activities include

forcing a locked window open or failing a Disable Device check when attempting to defuse the trap. Patrons who hire out the room are warned in advance against opening windows from the other side of the wall.

10. Imperial Quarters

This is the largest private room in the establishment, reserved exclusively for those who can afford it. The furniture is the finest money can buy, the carpets and tapestries are exquisite and cost more apiece than the total annual royal income in many lands. Two rosewood king-sized beds with posts and silk canopies, four wardrobes, two large writing desks, four large strongboxes (Open DC 26) and their associated keys, iron braziers for generating heat in the winter, an actual garderobe (which deposits waste material in the gutters by means of a subtle network of pipes), bookcases filled with rare but mundane tomes, and a private dining table occupy the room. Two doors open on the hallway and another two onto the balcony. As with the Royal Quarters next door, the windows in this room are booby-trapped.

It is said that the king and queen herself once spent a week living here in *cognito* for reasons unknown. Malachai claims they were taking a second honeymoon in the hope of reinvigorating their marriage, but his is just one opinion on the subject. Of course, if anyone would know the real story behind their visit, it would most likely be Malachai. Then again, he is also the biggest liar in the establishment, and a professional one at that.

Morden's Faithful Hound Trap: CR 5; no attack roll necessary; triggers Morden's faithful hound spell as cast by a 10th-level sorcerer; Search (DC 30); Disable Device (DC 30); *Note:* The summoned hound spends the first round barking an alarm that can be heard by all within 100 feet. The next round the hound attacks the intruder. The hound pursues the intruder but not more than 100 feet from the window.

11. Wanderers' Quarters

These are simple dormitory rooms with utilitarian furniture, namely bunk beds and the occasional end table. Each room can sleep up to twelve people comfortably and up to twice that number if the residents are not averse to sharing their beds. The room's doors are not lockable.

12. Private Room

Tappers use this room to take their breaks during the daylight hours. At night, many of Malachai's "friends" use it for private gambling and card games. A six-sided wooden table with six ramshackle chairs fills the room's center. Every square inch of the room's walls is grooved with graffiti. A tiny brass brazier occupies one corner, used in the winter or on especially chilly nights for providing warmth. The door in the west wall leads to the hay storeroom; it is usually kept locked, as is the door leading to this room. The east wall has a secret door that opens into the magic storeroom (see Area 14, below). This room has no windows.

Casting *legend lore* on the graffiti or walls in general triggers a variation of the *hallucinatory terrain* spell, which turns the room into a replica of the private bedchambers of an extremely hefty, human-appearing woman named Asythylsana, who was once the high priestess of an ancient reptilian deity unknown in these lands. As the spell plays out, an image of the woman enters the room, going about her business as she normally would. Eventually, she summons three consorts to the room for a "private

meeting." As she and the consorts interact, clothes are gradually peeled away followed, astoundingly, by their flesh, revealing themselves to be reptilian humanoids similar to lizardfolk except without the tails. No sound is associated with the spell. It lasts for 1d3 hours but may be dispelled sooner by normal methods.

Secret Door (Locked): 2 in. thick; Hardness 5; hp 25; Break (DC 23); Open Lock (DC 25); Search (DC 25). This door is trapped (see below).

Chain Lightning Trap: CR 6; no attack roll necessary; 18th-level wizard; Reflex (DC 19) half damage; 18d6 electricity damage to creature directly in front of trap (and 9d6 points of electricity damage to up to 18 other targets within 30 ft. of the primary target); Search (DC 31); Disable Device (DC 31).

The secret door has the same key as the secret hatch leading to the magic storeroom (see Area 14, below) from the hitching yard. The door may only be opened if a person knows the proper rhyme, which is spoken aloud into a tiny, spiral shell enchanted specifically for this purpose. As soon as the rhyme is uttered properly, the door opens. The conditions for triggering the trap are the same, as well.

13. Hay Storeroom

This room contains bales of fresh hay for use in the hitching yard below. In the room's center is a wide hatch, which may be opened to let tavern employees bring up fresh bales or push hay into the yard. A pulley and rope hang over the hatch from the ceiling, with one end of the rope split into a "Y" and attached to a makeshift platform. This platform, sitting beside the hatch, is used for moving heavy loads. One set of windows looks out into the alley from the room's south wall. In the west wall is a secret door opening on to the balcony. Many tappers sleep here at night after the tavern has closed its doors to customers.

Secret Door (Locked): 1 in. thick; Hardness 5; hp 10; Break (DC 13); Open Lock (DC 20); Search (DC 20).

14. Magic Storeroom (EL 22)

Malachai keeps his wares stored here. Only two entrances provide access to the room, both of which are disguised and magically locked to keep thieves away. The first entrance is the hatch in the southeast corner of the room, while the second is the secret door in the west wall. Only by using the proper magical key can a person open the doors from the outside without risking the traps built into them. From inside, the doors open normally.

The room is otherwise quite exceptional in and of itself. As a security precaution, there are no windows. Hanging over the hatch is a pulley-and-rope system for moving heavy objects up and down, though it sees little use often as the *fly* spell variant enchanting the hatch allows people and objects to move freely up and down through it as long as the hatch remains open. Standing in each corner of the room are what appear to be fleshy mannequins composed of body parts from multiple sources and wearing the kind of raggedy clothes one might expect a wizard or sorcerer to don. These are actually *enslaved liches* who used to be the four leaders of the wizards' Council. They will awaken should anybody but Malachai merely touch the items in this room, responding with deadly force against whoever committed the offense.

This room contains stacks of magical goods, most of them stolen either by Malachai or friends of his. The following magic items may

THE BOOK OF TAVERNS

be found here at any given time: 2d10 minor magic items, 1d6 medium magic items, and 1 major magic item. To determine the nature of the magic items, refer to Random Magic Item Generation in the *DMG*.

A locked strongbox (Open Lock DC 30) near the secret door contains Malachai's personal wealth and most prized possessions: 16,459 gp, a +2 mace of thundering, *scale of the troubadour*, *flute sword*, *harp of charming*, *ring of wizardry* (IV), *staff of healing* (34 charges), *carpet of flying*, and an *amulet of the planes*.

Scale of the Troubadour: A suit of intricately patterned and embroidered +2 *scale mail*, *scale of the troubadour* uses powerful glamers to enhance the Charisma score of anyone who dons it by +2 (enhancement bonus) and the Perform bonus by +6.

Caster Level: 6th; **Prerequisites:** Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *enthrall*; **Market Price:** 8,920 gp; **Cost to Create:** 4,560 gp + 349 XP.

Flute Sword: This unusual creation appears to be some kind of magical flute. If used by someone proficient with flutes, it provides a +5 enhancement bonus to Perform checks. If a command word is spoken, two blades spring out from the sides of the flute and slide forward to form the equivalent of a +2 *longsword*, with the flute as its hilt. When twirled and spun around by a bard who is not engaging in combat, the musical notes generated act as an *enthrall* spell as cast by an 8th-level spellcaster. When used by any other class in combat, the flute makes pleasing music, but produces no magical effect. A separate command word transforms the sword back into a flute.

Caster Level: 8th; **Prerequisites:** Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *charm person*, *enthrall*; **Market Price:** 21,130 gp; **Cost to Create:** 11,180 gp + 840 XP.

Note: *Scale of the troubadour* and *flute sword* are Open Game Content from Bastion Press's *Arms & Armor* and are used with permission.

Enslaved Liches, Male Lich Wiz 16 (4): CR 18; SZM Undead; HD 16d12+3; hp 107; Init +7 (Dex, Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft.; AC 25 (+3 Dex, +5 natural, *amulet* +2, *ring of protection* +2, *bracers* +3); Atk +9 melee (1d6+1, +1 *quarterstaff*) or +8 melee (1d8+5 negative energy, touch); SA negative energy touch (Will DC 18 half), *fear aura* (Will DC 18), *paralyzing touch* (Fort DC 18, *pervaparalysis*), spells; SQ turn resistance (+4), damage reduction (15/+1), immunities (cold, electricity, polymorph, mind-affecting attacks), undead; AL NE; SV Fort +6, Ref +10, Will +12; Str 10, Dex 16, Con —, Int 25, Wis 14, Cha 10.

Skills: Alchemy +24, Concentration +20, Hide +11, Knowledge (arcana) +26, Knowledge (history) +26, Listen +10, Move Silently +11, Scry +8, Search +15, Sense Motive +10, Spellcraft +26, Spot +10.

Feats: Brew Potion, Combat Casting, Craft Wondrous Item, Heighten Spell, Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes, Maximize Spell, Quicken Spell, Scribe Scroll, Toughness.

Spells Prepared (4/6/6/6/5/5/4/4/2; base DC 17 + spell level): 0 — *dancing lights*, *daze*, *detect magic*, *light*; 1st — *burning hands*, *charm person*, *feather fall*, *mage armor*, *magic missile*, *summon monster I*; 2nd — *blur* (x2), *cat's grace*, *flaming sphere* (x2), *invisibility*; 3rd — *fireball* (x2), *flame arrow*, *fly*, *haste*, *sleet storm*; 4th — *minor globe of invulnerability*, *polymorph self*, *stoneskin* (x2), *summon monster IV*; 5th — *animate dead*, *cloudkill*, *cone of cold*, *wall of force*, *wall of stone*; 6th — *analyze dweomer*, *circle of death*,



MALACHAI'S PUBLIC HOUSE MENU

Ale & Mead	Cost	Triple-stewed pig knuckles	3 sp
Annya's Amber Bock	1 cp	Unleavened bread, day-old	1 cp
Shire Weisen	1 cp	Unleavened bread, fresh	2 cp
Troll Flail Pale Ale	2 cp	Wanderers' stew	2 cp
Unicorn & Ram	1 cp	Other Services	
Other Beverages		Composition, ballad	10 gp
Buttermilk	3 cp	Composition, epic	20-100 gp
Dancing Mind Flayer	2 sp	Composition, song	5 gp
Harmonic Dissonance	3 sp	Composition, sonnet	2 sp
Melodic Rhyme	1 sp	Imperial quarters, per night	30 gp
Unrequited Love	1 gp	Letter writing	5 cp
Wizard Giggle	6 sp	Magical goods, fence†	Special
Food*		Magical goods, purchase†	Special
Baked duck with rosehip gravy	1 sp	Mendicant's guest room, per night	1 cp
Black pudding and breadmash	9 cp	Message running	2 cp
Oatbread, fresh	2 cp	Royal quarters, per night	10 gp
Oatbread, nutpaste and jelly	3 cp	Serenade	5 gp
Steak and eggs, shire-style	4 cp	Wanderers' quarters, per night	2 sp

* Any character who consumes food coming from Malachai's kitchen must make a successful Fortitude save (DC 15) or come down with a mild case of food poisoning. Affected characters lose 1 temporary point of Constitution for 24 hours and experience mild nausea, fever, and diarrhea. On a critical failure, the food poisoning is quite severe, and the affected character loses 4 temporary points of Constitution for the next 3 days and experiences severe vomiting, diarrhea, and the inability to hold down even the smallest morsel of food. In both cases, healing magic will cure a person completely.

† Any magical item (except artifacts) in the **DMG** may potentially be procured through Malachai. If such items are sold through Malachai, then the seller receives 65% of the price listed in the **DMG** for the item, with Malachai taking the remaining profit. (Especially rare or valuable items may fetch 150-200% of their market price, so Malachai's profit margin could increase significantly, but the characters' probably will not unless they can convince him to share more of it.) Malachai's current inventory is determined by the method described above in Area 14: Magic Storeroom. If a character has a specific request, however, find the table the magic item appears on in the **DMG** and roll d100. If the result matches the number listed for the item in the table, Malachai can get it within seven days after the request. If the roll does not match, Malachai must seek out the item (usually by checking with his contacts). The character may check in once each week that follows to see if Malachai has found the item. The character gets +10 to a new die roll each week. This bonus is cumulative and may be used to modify the roll up or down on the table. Additionally, each week Malachai spends seeking the item increases its price by 15%.

globe of invulnerability, legend lore; 7th—forcecage, limited wish, mass invisibility, prismatic spray; 8th—horrid wilting, prismatic wall.

Possessions: +1 quarterstaff, amulet of natural armor +2, ring of protection +2, bracers of armor +3, scroll of 2 arcane spells (wail of the banshee, shapechange), headband of intellect +4, wand of stoneskin (25 charges; caster level 8th), pearl of power (3rd).

15. Balcony

The balcony runs the length of the second floor and overlooks the first floor roof. The only room with legitimate access to it is the imperial quarters, though both the hay storeroom and the royal quarters have secret doors to it. When the imperial quarters has guests staying in it, the balcony is usually the place where they and all their friends gather to drink and carouse, enjoying the night air and haranguing the passers-by on the street below.

It is rumored, among the regulars, that if an especially skilled musician woos a lover upon the balcony, he or she is guaranteed to win said lover's heart before the night is finished.

Goods & Services

The Public House offers a wide variety of goods and services, ranging from some of the region's best ales at the cheapest prices to fine guest suites literally worthy of royalty. Other, non-ale beverages are also available and plentiful, ranging from the bitter, purple ichor known as *dancing mind flayer* to the lovely, golden *melodic rhyme*. The food, despite the impressive names many of the dishes bear, is pretty atrocious, however. Finally, many of the hired entertainers, as well as some of the apprentice

musicians working as tappers, are available for hire if someone wants a sonnet or love ballad composed.

Adventure Seeds

The following ideas can be used as seeds for adventures set in or around Malachai's Public House:

- The enslaved liches guarding the magic storeroom somehow regain their freedom from Malachai's command. They thirst for revenge. Arming themselves with equipment they once defended from thieves and intruders, the liches go on a rampage in the tavern. Malachai locks himself in his quarters while he works fervently to summon his friend Myriden, who originally enslaved them. Can the adventurers hold the liches at bay until the wizard arrives? Malachai, communicating telepathically with them, offers them unimaginable wealth in exchange for their services.
- The halfling goddess who loves Malachai has grown impatient waiting for him to decide whether he wants to marry her or not. (Malachai is not ready yet, because in doing so he would need to transcend mortal existence forever and become a demi-god in her eternal service.) She transports the tavern and all of its current inhabitants to her home plane. They will get married within 48 hours, and nothing Malachai can say or do will change the goddess' mind. The goddess brings her mortal love to her residence so that they might adequately prepare. Meanwhile, the tavern and its patrons are stuck in a realm very alien and dangerous to them should they do the wrong thing, effectively imprisoning them within their small island from the Material Plane. Malachai gets word to the patrons that the only way to get back to their world is to find the pixie lord who shares this realm with the halfling goddess and ask him to restore them. Finding him is a task not lightly undertaken, though, for he is very distrustful of outsiders and his portion of the plane is rather well defended.
- A bard named Eurideus the Gray comes to the tavern one night to perform. His music possesses a haunting, ethereal quality to it that quickly mesmerizes the patrons. He sings of his lost love, begging someone to aid him in his quest to bring her back from the depths of Hell where she has been imprisoned for millennia. Many volunteer to go, entranced by Eurideus' plight. The large fire pit in the singer's circle flares, becoming a vortex that apparently leads to Hell. As patrons begin jumping in, their bodies burn to ash in the blink of an eye and their souls are visibly consumed by Eurideus. Obviously, he is not whom he claim to be. Rather, he is a demonic siren who entices mortals to sacrifice themselves in his name. Can the adventurers stop him before everyone in the tavern dies? Malachai is not around for this adventure, perhaps drawn away from the city on business.
- Malachai's secret stash of magic items is stolen one night. The tappers are all wizards in disguise, polymorphed into young men and women and magically shielded to prevent detection. They bypassed all of Malachai's security measures using a one-shot magical device specifically constructed at great cost for such a purpose. Malachai hires the adventurers to find out where the wizards from this new, upstart guild took his stuff. If the PCs kill the wizards in retribution, Malachai offers them an additional fee, but he is fully aware that this may not be entirely possible. As such, he has a contingency of his own planned once the PCs track down the wizards.

The Dagger & Rose

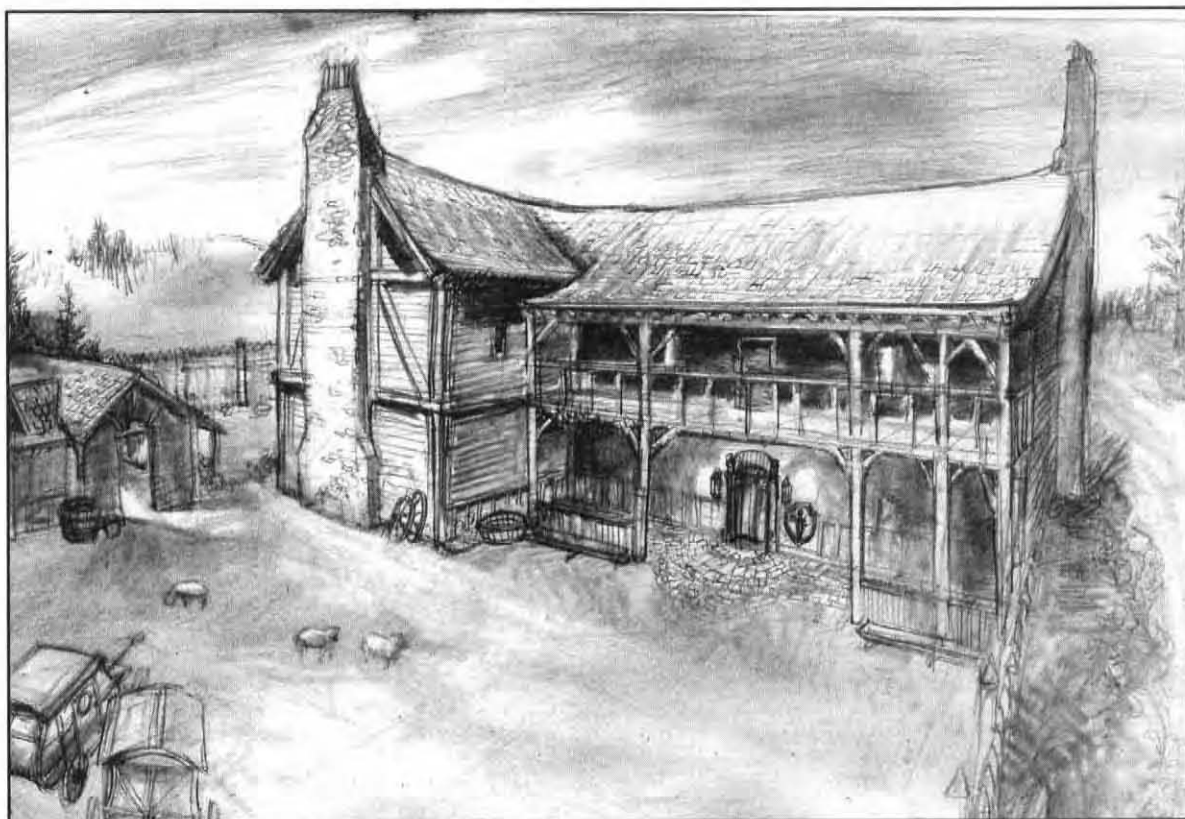
This establishment is both a traveler's inn and a tavern situated alongside a major road stretching between two large cities. The Dagger & Rose marks the halfway point and is frequented by wealthy travelers who can afford its steep rates. It also bears the unfortunate distinction of sitting right in the middle of wild, untamed lands dominated by a small army of bandits known simply as "The Highwaymen." Travelers do not often arrive at the Dagger unmolested by the woodland thieves. Fortunately, the inn's proprietor employs a group of competent and trustworthy mercenaries to protect her establishment from assault. For some small consideration of wealth from her noble patrons, she quite happily hires some of them out to escort those in need.

Background

The Dagger & Rose was opened 60 years ago by Tamalaine of Portia, an enigmatic elf woman renowned in this region for her noble heritage, grace, and elegance. The money used to finance the inn's construction came from the remainder of her inheritance, according to the tales. The Monfrad clan, woodsmen and rangers who have lived in these parts for hundreds of years, built the tavern for her and then later sent family members to work there. The wages were excellent and well worth it. The Monfrad patriarch, Jean-Paul, even took over kitchen duties when his eyesight became too poor for him to continue hunting. Tamalaine has always enjoyed the Monfrad family and has treated them just like members of her own. They, in turn, have more or less adopted her into their clan.

Throughout its history, the Dagger has seen all manner of traveler come through its gates, ranging from humble young aristocrats with barely a gold sovereign to their names to princes fleeing *incognito* to escape death at the hands of assassins. It has come close to burning down numerous times, accidentally nearly every incident. At almost the same as the tavern's founding, bandits moved into the region to prey upon wealthy travelers. Business suffered at first. As soon as traffic along the road became negligible, the bandits adopted Tamalaine's inn for their own, much to her annoyance. They took what they wanted, abusing her and the Monfrads verbally, and, though they never laid a hand upon "her royal highness," they occasionally beat Claude, Alois, and Pierre. A week after the bandits arrived, Tamalaine could take no more. The king's men obviously would not put an end to the bandits, who numbered in the hundreds and seemed to know the land better than just about anyone else except for the Monfrads, so she decided to put a stop to them herself.

She snuck out one night and disappeared for 10 days. When she returned, she led half a hundred hardened mercenaries. The bandits in the tavern fled, outnumbered, but she and her men gave chase. She hung the bandits' heads from the courtyard wall as a warning to the others. From that point on, the bandits left her alone. A smaller group of mercenaries stayed on under contract, to this day defend the inn against bandit incursions. As of yet, the bandits have not returned, though they still plague the highway. Traffic has gradually returned to what its former level, with travelers hiring armed escorts to bring them



safely through the bandit lands. Often, they can deter the bandits; unfortunately, however, the bandits are quite good and are apparently making an excellent living off their chosen prey. The king's men at last recognize the situation and now try to bring the bandits to justice, yet all to no avail. Rewards are offered for the heads of any bandits, and nowadays travelers are left to their own devices.

Tamalaine's mercenaries constantly come and go. Few can say what they do when they make their excursions out into the wilds. Presumably, they are running off bandits. On more than one occasion, they have arrived in the nick of time to save some hapless aristocrat from losing his shirt and wealth. Other times, the bandits rout them resoundingly. Still, the travelers appreciate Tamalaine's mercenaries and their work since obviously the king's men cannot defend them. Some travelers hire the mercenaries as escorts once arriving at the inn, using them to discourage further attempts at robbery when they continue on their journeys.

Dramatis Personae

The tavern's proprietor, **Tamalaine of Portia**, is a gentle appearing, soft-spoken elven noblewoman who keeps the establishment in tip-top condition. Beneath that façade, however, lurks someone her regular customers would be hard pressed to recognize: the notorious Black Jack Cutter. As Cutter, her followers are the bandits who call themselves **The Highwaymen**, vicious thieves and rapscallions who masquerade as Tamalaine's mercenary guards while on the tavern's premises, but who are also infamous under their *nom de guerre* for waylaying innocent travelers. Finally, there is **Famille Monfrad**, loyal retainers who have served their mistress for two generations and yet still do not know her dark secret.

Tamalaine of Portia

To the world, Tamalaine is an elegant elven woman of noble birth, one whose family no longer appears in the royal registers and whose name is long forgotten. She claims to be the last Portia descendent, the final heir upon whose death the family becomes extinct. She runs a classy establishment, a comfortable tavern and inn that traveling aristocrats love to patronize. She is charming, winning the hearts of many a man and lady alike with her witty conversation and pleasing good looks. The tavern provides her last chance to rub shoulders with nobility, she often says, and she would not trade this job for the world.

Tamalaine, however, is hardly the person she presents to the world at large. Her noble heritage is a fraud, though not entirely so. While she really does come from wealth and prestige, she left her family of her own volition, bored to tears with life circulating among the nobles and their vapourish balls, grand affairs, pointless politicking, and morose machinations. She desired more than that life offered, something much more visceral and truthful. Packing up her brother's prized weapons and armor, she snuck away late one night under cover of darkness, never again to be seen by anyone in her homeland. For many years, she wandered the world, adventuring briefly but not exactly

becoming enamored with that life. Dungeons were filthy affairs that held little appeal for her. Instead, she found her thrills in robbing the wealthy of everything they owned. This was an excitement worth living for — circumventing the security measures instituted by paranoid nobles fearful of losing their family inheritances. Yet when the pressure from the militias seeking justice and retribution on behalf of their aristocratic masters — and from the thieves' guilds hunting her for encroaching on their territories — became too intense, she fled to seek new opportunities. She spent decades in this manner, constantly moving from one city to the next. Sixty years ago, after a very close call with a handsome dwarf bounty hunter named Pistol Nym, Tamalaine concluded that cat burglary no longer interested her. She took her wealth and moved out to the countryside, commissioning the construction of The Dagger & Rose from a clan of friendly forest wardens, the Monfrads. It was time, Tamalaine told herself, to move on to a bigger and more exciting profession: highway robbery.

With the inn as her cover, Tamalaine began secretly recruiting men and women to be a part of her bandit gang. She sent them against travelers at first, using them to test the limits of the king's patience and how long he would wait before sending in his soldiers. Apparently, his men were busy elsewhere and he could not be bothered with bandits, which played right into her plans. Next, she made a show of hiring mercenaries to rebuff the bandit threat. They, too, were members of her gang. The original bandits faded in the woodwork and Tamalaine earned the praise and trust of the nobles who frequented the highway. Now, she hires out her Highwaymen to act as escorts to the fearful, while at the same time sending them against other nobles to relieve them of their accursed riches. Once or twice a year, the king's men come to the region looking to put the bandit scourge down. Each time, the Highwaymen disappear and Tamalaine's mercenaries suddenly grow in numbers. Travelers do not suspect the truth because they never stay around long enough to notice the patterns. If the Monfrads suspect, then obviously the truth does not bother them a great deal. Tamalaine takes care of them quite well financially, and she cannot imagine why they would want to take issue with her chosen profession.

While not of the adventuring mindset, Tamalaine does indeed crave excitement and thrills. In her mind, the greatest adventure is thievery — and not the backbreaking skullduggery in which most city thieves engage or the dirty, grub-eating lifestyle the typical country bandit leads. Rather, she thrives on glory and romanticism, on living the kind of mercenary, criminal life described in the penny novels sold in the back alleys and book lanes of the larger cities; it's this swashbuckling life that she has claimed for herself.

Tall for a female elf, Tamalaine stands 5 feet 4 inches in height. Her hair is auburn and curled, which she wears shoulder length; her eyes are a light green, and her skin is pale white. When working in the Dagger or mingling with guests, she maintains her "last of the line" noblewoman façade, wearing expensive, stylish dresses worthy of her fictional station. When out on the road with her bandits, though, she dresses in gender-neutral black leathers and silks, hiding her face behind a broad-rimmed hat and a silk

kerchief covering her nose and mouth. As the leader of the Highwaymen, the world at large knows her as "Black Jack Cutter," the terror of the traveler's way. Her favored weapon is a magical silver rapier that improves her combat prowess considerably.

Tamalaine of Portia, Female Elf, High Ari2/Rog4: CR 5; SZ M (5 ft. 4 in. tall); HD 2d8 plus 4d6; hp 24; Init +4; Spd 30 ft.; AC 17 (+4 Dex, +3 armor); Atk +9 melee (1d6+1, +1 rapier, 18-20/x2) or +8 ranged (1d4, dagger, 19-20/x2, range 10 ft.); SQ Elven traits; AL CE; SV Fort +3, Ref +8, Will +6; Str 10, Dex 18, Con 10, Int 12, Wis 14, Cha 12.

Skills: Appraise +4, Decipher Script +10, Diplomacy +6, Disable Device +8, Disguise +5, Intimidate +6, Jump +4, Listen +4, Pick Pocket +9, Profession (Innkeeper) +8, Search +3, Spot +7.

Feats: Great Fortitude, Leadership, Weapon Finesse (rapier).

Languages: Common, Elven, Goblin.

Possessions: +1 rapier, studded leather, dust of tracelessness, dagger, gold necklace with ruby pendant (300 gp), and 75 gp.

The Highwaymen

The men and women who constitute the rank and file of the "The Highwaymen" represent some of the most disciplined bandits in the region. Tamalaine keeps them in line through her own martial prowess, intimidation, and the promise of great reward should they perform their duties well. The Highwaymen may not like her, but they do bear a begrudging respect for her abilities, especially her keen sense of strategy and tactics. They are also glad to use The Dagger & Rose as a safe haven. The "escort" scam through which Tamalaine hires them out as mercenary escorts to protect wealthy patrons is a clever one in their eyes, one they would probably never get away with on their own. The Highwaymen receive a large cut of the profits from their robberies, and Tamalaine insists that they wear only the finest clothes and remain clean and well groomed at all times. After all, nothing screams "Bandit!" like a bandit who fits the stereotypical image. So, she expects her followers to look and act better than their natural station in life. Those who do not comply typically wind up dead.

Her right-hand man and second command is a wickedly scarred human named **Garret Dauphin**. Before Tamalaine showed up in the region, he was the "bandit king," leading a rag-tag, barely organized group of rogues and cutthroats against travelers. More often than not, he and his men were sent running away with their tails between their legs. While Garret is a very competent bandit in his own right, he could never govern his men with any sense of true authority. The authority he lacked then, however, he more than makes up for now with Tamalaine backing him up. The members of the gang still think of him as a tosser, but no one has the courage to depose him. Even if someone did, Tamalaine would most likely not approve of such... initiative.

Highwayman Recruit, Male or Female Human War3 (40): CR 2; SZ M; HD 3d8+3; hp 10; Init +5 (Dex, Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft.; AC 15 (+1 Dex, +4

armor); Atk +6 melee (1d6, rapier, 18-20/x2) +4 ranged (1d8, longbow, crit x3, range 100 ft.); AL LE; SV Fort +4, Ref +2, Will +1; Str 14, Dex 12, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 11, Cha 10.

Skills: Disguise +1, Hide +4, Intimidate +6, Move Silently +3, Ride (horse) +7.

Feats: Blind-Fight, Improved Initiative, Weapon Focus (rapier).

Languages: Common.

Possessions: Chain shirt, rapier, dagger, longbow, 20 arrows, and 5d20 gp.

Highwayman Sergeant, Male Human War2/Rog3 (5): CR 4; SZ M; HD 2d8+2 plus 3d6+3; hp 26; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; AC 16 (+2 Dex, +4 armor); Atk +7 melee (1d6+2, rapier, 18-20/x2) or +6 ranged (1d8, light crossbow, 18-20/x2, range 80 ft.); SA sneak attack (+2d6); SQ evasion, uncanny dodge; AL LE; SV Fort +5, Ref +5, Will +1; Str 15, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 12, Wis 10, Cha 15.

Skills: Bluff +5, Disable Device +2, Disguise +6, Hide +4, Intimidate +7, Listen +5, Move Silently +4, Ride (horse) +7, Sense Motive +4, Spot +5.

Feats: Alertness, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (rapier).

Languages: Common, plus one regional dialect.

Possessions: Rapier, dagger, light crossbow, 20 bolts, masterwork thieves' kit, chain shirt, and 5d20 (x2) gp.

Garrett Dauphin, Male Human Ftr4/Rog2: CR 6; SZ M 6 ft. tall; HD 4d10+4 plus 2d6+2; hp 37; Init +3; Spd 30; AC 17 (+1 Dex, +4 armor); Atk +8/+3 melee (1d6+2, +1 rapier, 18-20/x2) or +8/+3 ranged (1d8, longbow, crit x3, range 100 ft.); SA sneak attack (+1d6); SQ evasion; AL CE; SV Fort +5, Ref +7, Will +2; Str 13, Dex 16, Con 12, Int 13, Wis 12, Cha 10.

Skills: Climb +7, Decipher Script +4, Diplomacy +5, Escape Artist +4, Handle Animal +5, Hide +4, Jump +7, Listen +3, Move Silently +4, Ride (horse) +10, Spot +3, Tumble +4.

Feats: Alertness, Combat Reflexes, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (rapier).

Languages: Common, Orc.

Possessions: +1 rapier, longbow, 20 arrows, chain shirt, masterwork thieves' kit, and 300 gp.

Famille Monfrad

The Monfrad family has served Tamalaine since Pierre's father's time. Their life is simple and Tamalaine is a kind mistress who pays well. Once, they lived nearby in a house, but a few months ago it burned to the ground, leaving the Monfrads homeless. Tamalaine currently lets them stay in the Dagger until such time as their house is rebuilt. **Pierre** and **Sabine** sleep in the stables and smithy, while Isabelle and the two boys sleep in the kitchen. Currently, Pierre and **Alois** spend two, sometimes three, days a week at the old property working on the new house. It is roughly two-thirds complete. Pierre wishes **Claude** would take more interest in the family home, but the boy cannot be bothered, so focused as he is on becoming a gourmet chef. To his credit, Claude is quite talented and dreams of one day cooking for the king. Tamalaine fills the boy's heads with titillating promises, claiming she knows someone who



knows a scullery maid in the royal kitchens and that she can perhaps get him hired there one day. Isabelle, Pierre's wife, is a lovely half-elf woman whom he met while in his twenties. He courted her for some time before asking for her hand in marriage. Although initially quite reluctant, Isabelle eventually agreed to his proposal; she never expected much out of life and so she settled for Pierre. She knows that he is a good man, but he misses that crucial, intangible element that she always reads about in the romances Tamalaine lets her borrow from the tavern's private collection. Isabelle does not really believe in love; she married Pierre basically because she had no one else.

While taking care of Tamalaine's laundry one day, Alois inadvertently discovered the secret panel in his mistress' wardrobe. He is not quite sure what to make of her highwayman's regalia. Everyone knows — and fears — Black Jack Cutter, but Alois would never in his lifetime have suspected she could be one of that man's dread bandits. Alois hopes desperately that the clothes belong to a secret lover of hers. Meanwhile, Sabine pines for the day she can run away from home and join the Highwaymen. She yearns for a life filled with danger and adventure. As such, when she spends time in the common room eating or relaxing, she will press anyone who even remotely resembles an adventurer for advice and stories. As soon as she turns 16, she vows she will run away and make a name for herself. Perhaps, she tells herself in quiet consolation, she will head for Bard's Gate, the city where dreams are made.

Pierre Monfrad, Male Human Exp3: CR 2; SZ M (5 ft., 6 in. tall); HD 3d6; hp 10; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 11 (+1 armor); Atk +2 melee (1d4, dagger, 19-20/x2) or +2

ranged (1d4, dagger, 19-20/x2, range 10 ft.); AL NG; SV Fort +1, Ref +1, Will +3; Str 10, Dex 11, Con 11, Int 11, Wis 11, Cha 11.

Skills: Craft (blacksmithing) +6, Craft (leatherworking) +6, Handle Animal +6, Knowledge (nature) +2, Listen +3, Profession (innkeeper) +6, Search +3, Speak Language (4 regional dialects), Spot +3, Wilderness Lore +3.

Feats: Alertness, Skill Focus (Craft, [blacksmithing, leatherworking]).

Languages: Common plus four regional dialects.

Possessions: Masterwork blacksmith tools, padded armor, dagger, gold wedding band (75 gp), and 212 gp in coin.

Isabelle Monfrad, Female Half-Elf Exp3: CR 2; SZ M (5 ft. 3 in. tall); HD 3d6; hp 13; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 10; Atk +2 melee (1d3, unarmed strike); ; SQ: Half-elf traits; AL N; SV Fort +1, Ref +1, Will +6; Str 10, Dex 10, Con 11, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 12.

Skills: Craft (cooking) +7, Craft (sewing) +5, Craft (weaving) +4, Diplomacy +3, Hide +2, Innuendo +3, Listen +2, Profession (Innkeeper) +6, Search +1, Speak Language (one regional dialect), Spot +2, Wilderness Lore +2.

Feats: Skill Focus (Craft [cooking]), Iron Will.

Languages: Common, Elven, plus one regional dialect.

Possessions: Masterwork sewing kit, gold earrings (25 gp), gold wedding band (75 gp), and 22 gp.

Sabine Monfrad, Female Human Com1: CR 1/2; SZ M (5 ft., 2 in. tall); HD 1d4; hp 4; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 10; Atk +0 melee (1d3, unarmed strike); AL CG; SV Fort +2, Ref +0, Will +2; Str 11, Dex 10, Con 11, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10.

Skills: Handle Animal +4, Ride (horse) +4, Spot +4, Swim +2.

Feats: Iron Will, Skill Focus (Handle Animal).

Languages: Common.

Possessions: 1 gp.

Claude Monfrad, Male Human Exp1: CR 1/2; SZ M (4 ft., 7 in. tall); HD 1d6; hp 6; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 10; Atk +0 melee (1d3, unarmed strike); SV Fort +0, Ref +0, Will +2; AL NG; Str 10, Dex 10, Con 10, Int 11, Wis 11, Cha 10.

Skills: Alchemy +2, Craft (cooking) +6, Knowledge (nature) +4, Listen +2, Profession (cook) +6, Profession (innkeeper) +4, Search +2, Sense Motive +4, Spot +2, Wilderness Lore +4.

Feats: Skill Focus (Craft [cooking], Profession [cook]).

Languages: Common.

Possessions: 1 gp.

Alois Monfrad, Male Human Com1: CR 1/2; SZ M (5 ft., 1 in. tall); HD 1d4; hp 4; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 10; Atk +0 melee; AL NG; SV Fort +0, Ref +2, Will +0; Str 11, Dex 10, Con 10, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 11.

Skills: Handle Animal +4, Listen +4, Profession (innkeeper) +6.

Feats: Lightning Reflexes, Skill Focus (Profession [innkeeper]).

Languages: Common.

Possessions: 4 gp.

The Establishment

The Dagger & Rose is a large wayside inn and tavern enclosed within a walled courtyard to make it easily defensible against highwaymen, bandits, and roustabouts. It is a two-story structure made from local wood, with shuttered windows and a balcony overlooking the courtyard. Stables and a small smithy are located northwest of the inn proper. Above the stables is a low-ceilinged hayloft. Next to the inn is a wood yard, where wood for the numerous stoves is kept and cut; this area also includes hen houses and a small pen for the pigs. Sheep are left to their own devices, wandering as they will in and around the courtyard and stables. Painted next to each of the establishment's four entrances is a simple dagger entwined by a blossoming rose. A cryptic symbol marks the dagger blade; what it means is anybody's best guess.

Unless otherwise noted, the Dagger's stats are as follows:

Doors: 1 1/2 in. thick; Hardness 5; hp 15; Break (DC 18).

Walls (Outer and Inner): 6 in. thick; Hardness 5; hp 60; Break (DC 23).

1. Courtyard

This spacious enclosure is where patrons may park their carriages and tie up their horses if no stable stalls are available. The ground is deeply trodden, with nary a blade of grass poking through the soil anywhere. Sheep and the occasional chicken can be found milling about, minding their own business. Water troughs are spaced around the courtyard at intervals, from which animals may drink or people may bathe (though some of the more expensive rooms do include bath tubs).

On either side of the inn's entrance, beneath the second-floor balcony, are spare ale barrels that will eventually be rolled inside to the ale galley.

2. Stables

The stables have eight stalls, each one large enough to keep two work horses or three riding horses comfortably. The floor is packed dirt and covered with hay. During the day, Sabine Monfrad, the youngest of the Monfrad clan, tends to the animals. She usually sleeps in the hayloft above or in her father's workshop next door. When not used for patrons' animals, the Highwaymen keep their impressive steeds here. Glass and tin lanterns are used for illumination because they are safer than either candles or torches, albeit more expensive.

Servants to the aristocratic patrons staying in the inn often come here to sleep if the inn's beds are all hired out, or to drink, eat, and play games of chance in any available empty stalls. During inclement weather, they will happily share the stalls with horses if they have no other choice. What's a pile of horse dung when compared to sleeping in the rain?

3. Smithy

This is a fairly typical shoeing smithy. It is also used for repairing tools and forging miscellaneous odds and ends for the establishment, such as door knobs, hanging hooks for the kitchen, cutlery, and so on. The anvil, bellows, and forge are all of masterwork quality, providing a +2 circumstance bonus to Craft (blacksmithing) checks. This room also contains tools for doing simple leatherwork. Pierre Monfrad lives here, his room being the small crawl space above the workroom. His children occasionally sleep up there as well.

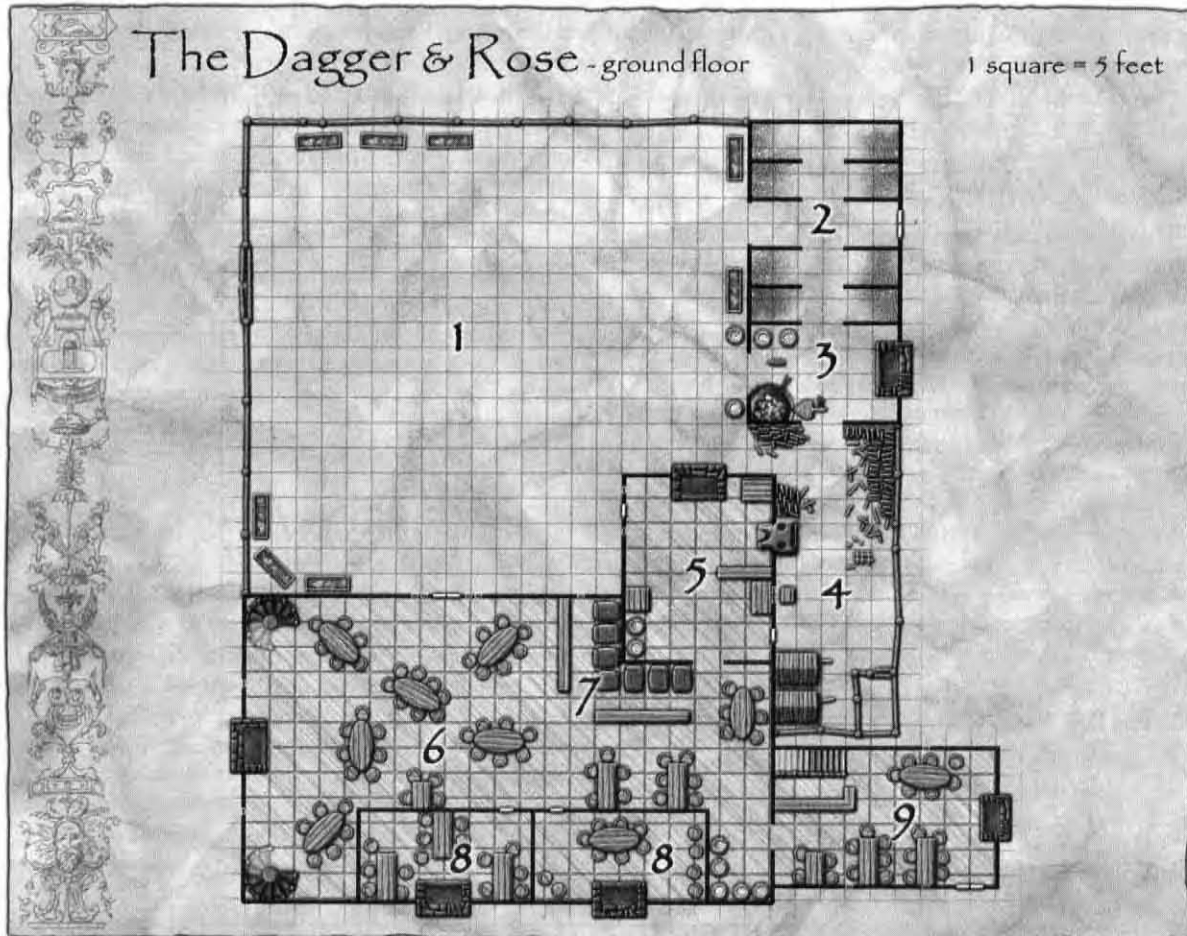
4. Wood Yard

Piles of freshly cut timber surround the smithy's south entrance, giving this open space next to the kitchen its name. In addition to storing wood for the hearths, forge, and cook fires, the wood yard provides space for keeping chickens, pigs, and sheep. Along the kitchen's east wall are a very large adobe oven used for baking fresh bread and a butcher block used for killing animals intended for the dinner pot. Opposite the butcher block is a stone well. At the wood yard's south end are two hen houses for keeping egg-laying chickens, as well as a pigpen where small pigs are kept until slaughter. Like the courtyard, sheep can usually be found here, loitering mindlessly about.

On the other side of the outer wall and north of the small common room, the cook maintains a rather sizeable and complete herb garden. A short, thorn-covered fence designed to keep out grazers surrounds it.

5. Kitchen

The kitchen is very large and very well stocked. It has two large hearths for cooking, with the one in the east wall actually forming part of the large adobe oven outside in the wood yard, and numerous cupboards, larders, braziers, and racks for hanging cooking implements. Isabelle Monfrad and her eldest son Claude work here preparing food for guests. When the inn's business is light, she lets the boy work alone while she takes a rest. One corner of the room contains sleeping mats and chests for belongings, as Isabelle and the two boys live here.



One the patrons' favorite dishes is *bird quenelle*, which consists of tiny birds with their feathers plucked, wrapped in bacon and cracklings, battered, and then deep-fried to create wonderfully delectable and crunchy "bird rolls." *Setaille quiche* is also popular, though expensive. It is a regional variation on river-eel pie cooked with an amazing array of local herbs, vegetables, and eggs. Isabelle is a very skilled baker, and her breads are another famous item from her kitchen. *Panforte bread* is made with pepper and honey, while *wastel bread* is a fine wheat bread often served with fresh milk or as a gravy sop for the spit-roasted dishes. The food served in The Dagger & Rose is worthy of the aristocrats and nobles who frequent the establishment.

6. Large Common Room

Nicely crafted wood furniture fills the large common room. Comfortable stuffed leather chairs sit before the stone hearth in the west wall, premium space usually reserved for select regulars. The room's walls are decorated with paintings of dead nobles. Tamalaine claims that they are Portia ancestors, but since no one has ever heard of her lineage, such a claim means little. Alois Monfrad works in this room serving patrons food from the kitchen or ale from the galley.

The tavern portion of The Dagger & Rose caters to the aristocratic clientele and their servants. They are mostly well-to-do travelers en route to one of the two cities on whose road the establishment sits. Servants are not expected to drink or eat in the common room, though no rules explicitly say they may not. Rather, out of duty, they often take their meals

outside in the courtyard near the stables, sitting on logs from the wood yard or hastily constructed benches.

7. Ale Galley

The common room's fat ale barrels are kept here behind an L-shaped bar. Ale is delivered once every two weeks, with shipments coming from the two cities on whose route the establishment lies. Spare ale barrels are stored outside beneath the balcony.

The Dagger's best selling ale is *Leather Whip*, a rather simple brew with few notable qualities. The reason for its name is a mystery. *Le Zombi Blanc* and *Num & Chapel* are two "white" ales that possess crisp, spruce-like flavors, while *Adamus et Fils* is a heavy brown bitter thick with the taste of cedar and other brewer's wood. *Peleuse Cosette* is another dark ale, thicker and blacker than Adamus. Most patrons avoid it if they can, its taste just a couple of shades too bitter for them. Tamalaine drinks it like water, on the other hand; as such, it is always in stock but only delivered once a month.

8. Private Rooms

These two rooms are used by groups of patrons who want privacy. They have much more opulent furniture than the common room and very expensive pieces of art on the walls or resting atop pedestals in the corners. The doors to these rooms lock. In recent months, nobles from both cities along the trade route have taken to coming to the tavern and using its private rooms for gambling as well as

THE DAGGER & ROSE

for conducting their important meetings in secret away from the prying eyes of city spies.

Door (Locked): 1 1/2 in. thick; Hardness 5; hp 15; Break (DC 18); Open Lock (DC 20).

9. Small Common Room

This room was built two years ago when the number of travelers along the main road increased and brought their business with them. It is similar in furnishings and décor to the large common room, but instead of an ale galley a wooden bar runs beside the ascending staircase. A pair of doors opens out onto the main road, and a stone hearth is set in the east wall. The tavern's employees almost never use the counter except on nights when soldiers pass through, and then only to handle room rental or to serve other beverages besides ale. Lately, the Highwaymen, under the guise of members of Tamalaine's mercenary protectors, have taken to using this room in lieu of the large common room or the private rooms. Outsiders are not necessarily run off when they come to this room, but they are not made to feel welcome either.

10. King's Room

Aside from Tamalaine's personal chambers, this room is the both the largest and the most expensively appointed. It is not often rented out, reserved for truly important royalty such as the immediate relatives to the king and queen or especially influential dukes, duchesses, barons,

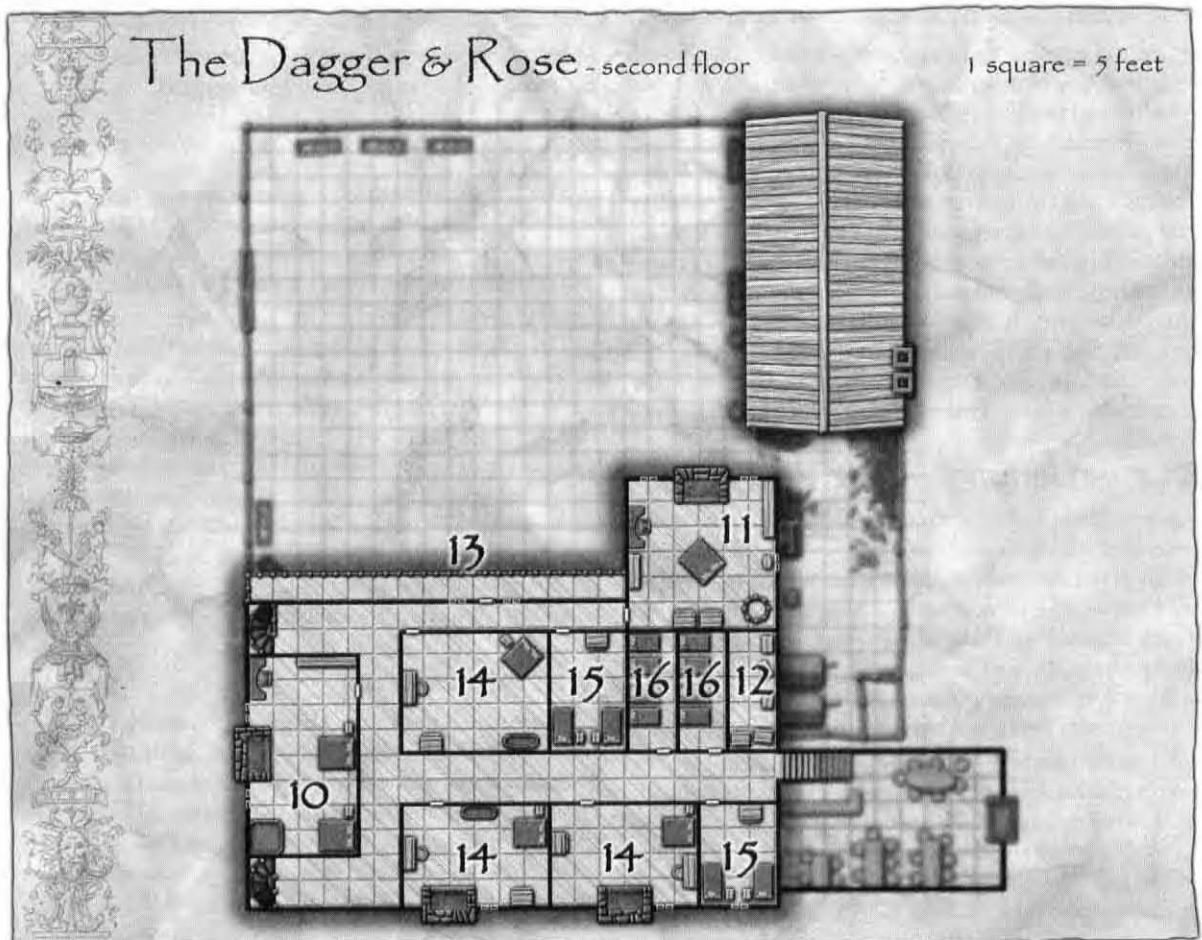
and baronesses. Rumors suggest that the prince stays here quite often.

The stone hearth is shared with one from the first floor, providing ample heat and light for the room. Tapestries adorn the walls. The furniture is built from the most expensive imported woods available. A bathtub crafted from scented willow wood is available for bathing in just so long as Isabelle Monfrad receives an hour's notice so she can heat the water and have her boys carry it up. Beside the hearth is a gilt writing desk. The two king-sized beds provide space enough to sleep four people comfortably. If a patron needs her bodyguards in the room with her, then additional beds can be brought in from other rooms.

Door (Locked): 1 1/2 in. thick; Hardness 5; hp 15; Break (DC 18); Open Lock (DC 22).

11. Tamalaine's Quarters

This room, directly above the kitchen, is where Tamalaine of Portia resides. It is quite large, considering that just one person lives in it, and just about every item in it is stolen property. Tamalaine's bed is an elaborate silk-canopied four-poster built from deeply stained rosewood. A 6-foot tall freestanding mirror stands across the room from the bed, its frame made from solid gold and carved to resemble an army of angels flying toward heaven, all intertwined within one another in the ascent to the skies. The mirror is made from highly polished silver, reflecting back a nearly perfect image of the room and the person looking in it. Other furniture in the room



includes tall bookcases laden with unopened tomes and books, a wardrobe, a bathtub, and a writing desk as expensive and fancy as the one in the king's quarters. An exquisitely woven rug depicting images from the hagiography of the goddess Muir covers the floor. The paintings on the walls are of a similar, semi-holy nature, with various interpretations of heaven and the different angel lords protecting humanity. A tailor's dummy next to the mirror bears a leather facemask, straps, chains, and a mildly studded cat-o-nine-tails.

In the southeast corner, an intricate birdcage 4 feet in height hangs from a bronze rod. It contains one very moody **ice mephit**. Tamalaine's wardrobe is almost a foot smaller inside than its exterior would suggest, though this is difficult to notice (Spot DC 25) due to all the clothes hanging in it. The back wall is a removable panel (Search DC 15), behind which she keeps the clothes for her "Black Jack Cutter" persona, including her rapier.

Door (Locked): 1 1/2 in. thick; Hardness 5; hp 15; Break (DC 18); Open Lock (DC 24).

Secret Door: 1 in. thick; Hardness 5; hp 10; Break (DC 13).

Ice Mephit: CR 3; SZ S Outsider [Air, Cold]; HD 3d8; 13 hp; Init +7 (Dex, Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft., fly 50 ft. (perfect); AC 18; Atk +4 melee (1d3 plus 2 cold [x2], claws); SA breath weapon (cone of ice, 10 ft., Ref DC 12 half, 1d4 plus frostbite; -4 AC and -2 attacks for 3 rds), spell-like abilities, summon mephit; SQ cold subtype, fast healing (2), damage reduction (5/+1); AL N; Fort +3, Ref +6, Will +3; Str 10, Dex 17, Con 10, Int 12, Wis 11, Cha 15.

Skills: Bluff +6, Hide +12, Listen +6, Move Silently +9, Spot +6.

Feat: Improved Initiative.

Possessions: Penny-novel romance entitled *Les Liasons Dangereuse*.

12. Secret Room

Property stolen by Tamalaine and the Highwaymen is kept here until it can be taken to the cities and fenced. The room is roughly the same size as the barony guestrooms, and it is dark, dusty, and draughty. A peephole drilled through the west wall allows one to spy on the room next door.

This room contains five bolts of exquisite silk cloth worth 1,200 gp, four large traveler's wardrobes filled with fine aristocratic clothing worth approximately 2,400 gp, and five small size marble statues worth a total of 900 gp. In addition to the stolen property, a very well locked chest (Open Lock DC 30) contains 3,710 gp, a *ring of jumping*, *eyes of the eagle*, and a *hat of disguise*.

13. Balcony

The balcony runs along the length of the tavern's north wall, overhanging the front entrance and giving patrons an unobstructed view of the courtyard, stables, and smithy.

14. Royal Guestrooms

Two of these three spacious rooms contain hearths shared with the first floor. They each have a queen-sized bed, a plain writing desk, an end table, a wardrobe, an unlocked chest, and a very narrow, single-person bathtub. For those wishing to bathe, one hour's notice must be given to Isabelle

Monfrad so she can heat the water and have her boys bring it up. Inexpensive portraits adorn the walls.

15. Duchy Guestrooms

Smaller, less fancy, and less expensive than the royal guestrooms, the duchy guestrooms are just one step above dormitory rooms. Two double bunk beds are in each of these rooms, as are wardrobes, chamber pots, and two utilitarian end tables.

16. Barony Guestrooms

These are the inn's cheap "dormitory" rooms. They contain nothing but four pairs of bunk beds. The doors to these rooms do not lock.

The east room has a disguised peephole in the wall it shares with the secret room, which perceptive visitors may notice (Spot DC 20).

Goods & Services

The Dagger's services are what one might expect from a tavern and inn of its nature. Rooms, stables, food, and drink are all that it offers, the quality of which ranges from average to exceptional. Entertainment is random at best and dependent upon the coming and going of travelers. If a bard shows up one night and wants play, for example, Tamalaine is usually more than happy to pay him for his services.

Adventure Seeds

The following ideas can be used as seeds for adventures set in or around The Dagger & Rose:

- While Tamalaine and her mercenaries are away defending the lands from the scourge of the Highwaymen, Sabine Monfrad is apparently caught red handed stealing from the room of a prominent local noble. He intends to put her to death in the courtyard. As a peasant, Sabine is not worthy in his eyes of a proper hearing before a magistrate or lawgiver. Pierre and Isabelle Monfrad appeal to anyone whose ear they can bend to rescue their only daughter from such an ignoble fate. They cannot offer much, except perhaps the keys to Madame Tamalaine's private quarters to steal what they please. While they are loyal to the death to their mistress, they would also do anything to keep their daughter from being hung.

- Once each year, a rough-riding battle mage leads a hunt into griffon country that lasts two weeks and only includes his most prestigious (and wealthy) friends. It is a grand old adventure, the goal of which is to come back with a live griffon young. Failing that, returning with as many griffon wings as possible is the next best result. This year, the battle mage and his cohorts come to The Dagger & Rose while returning to their home city with many griffon wings but no live griffon young. The battle mage's helm sports a pair of fresh wings harvested from a griffon baby. That night, a pride of griffons assaults the tavern, seeking retribution. Can the adventurers and the battle mage's party keep them at bay long enough for Tamalaine to return from the wilds with her men to aid them?

The Dagger & Rose Menu



Ale & Mead	Cost	Egg rose	3 cp
Adamus et Fils	5 cp	Grilled capon	2 sp
Le Zombi Blanc	3 cp	Grilled mutton	7 cp
Leather Whip	2 cp	Harvest cheese	3 cp
Nun & Chapel	6 cp	Knot biscuits	1 cp
Peleuse Cosette	1 sp	Setaille quiche	3 gp
Other Beverages		Spit-roasted fowl	1 gp
Acorn coffee	2 cp	Spit-roasted red-deer	8 sp
Brandy	3 sp	Other Services	
Cognac	6 sp	Barony guestroom, per night	5 sp
Wine, average	1 sp	Duchy guestroom, per night	1 gp
Wine, excellent	2 gp	Escort, per ten mercenaries, per day	75 gp
Wine, good	4 sp	King's room, per night	12 gp
Yellow rum	2 sp	Laundry, per person	2 sp
Food		Private rooms, per night	1 sp
Bird quenelle	3 sp	Royal guestroom, per night	3 gp
Black bean soup	2 cp	Shoeing, per horse	4 cp
Bread, panforte	1 sp	Stables loft, per night	1 cp
Bread, wastel	1 cp	Stables, per horse, per night	7 sp
Bread, white	1 cp	Tack & saddle repair	Variable

• The king's men bust in on the tavern one night while everyone in the common room is listening to tales of high adventure as recited by one of Tamalaine's men, the resident musician. The soldiers seek Black Jack Cutter and have tracked him to The Dagger & Rose using information given to them by an anonymous informant. Tamalaine, stunned by the soldiers' sudden arrival, points out one of the adventurers, claiming he is Cutter. The soldiers attempt to make an arrest, while Tamalaine orders her mercenaries to aid them. Can the adventurers clear their name and find out why Tamalaine framed them?

• Alois Monfrad is bit one night by a wereboar while returning to the tavern from the family estate some miles away. Within weeks of the incident, he begins to transform uncontrollably on a nightly basis, going on a rampage and killing patrons. The third night this transformation occurs, four Highwaymen sleeping in a barony guestroom intervene. Alois, possessed by his newfound bestial nature, flees through the east stairs and the Highwaymen give chase. Unfortunately, the beast escapes. The next day, a low-ranking Highwayman sergeant is tasked with forming a hunting party to track the wereboar down and kill it. The adventurers are asked to join in the hunt.

The Four Winds

Found in the space between thought and action, The Four Winds is an interplanar tavern maintained by an enigmatic god of travelers. It is infinite in scope, with patrons coming from more planes than mortal scholars have ever catalogued. Powerful adventurers may come here by accident, but most come here of their own free will once they discover the secret to gaining admittance. In a universe where death awaits a person around every corner, The Four Winds offers a much needed respite. Nevertheless, the tavern is not an absolute safe haven. When so many conflicting personalities and ideologies gather in one place, death and danger will surely follow.

Background

As might be expected, nobody really knows the tavern's history. It is as old as time, a product of a god present since the beginning, apparently. The dragons — who are nearly as old as the gods — believe the tavern was founded originally on a Material Plane and that the Whiskey Man was once a human or giant. The giants claim no prior knowledge of him, and the humans are so flighty and short-lived that they would not know if he was once one of them or not. In the end, it does not really matter. The tavern exists. It always has and always will.

As far as anyone knows, every plane in existence has a portal to The Four Winds. Usually, this entrance is disguised as a door that will not open or allow itself to be broken down. Only those with the "key" are granted entry, and no two keys are the same. Once a person has entered the tavern, she may come and go at will through any known entrance and exit. The tavern is an interplanar nexus, allowing patrons to come from one plane and go to any other. Finding the desired door, however, is another matter entirely.

Because the tavern is unending, the various regions in it have their own unique histories depending on the planar doors they contain and the patrons coming through them. In some areas, humans may be the dominant race, while in others orcs and ogres might rule. If a race exists and its members have access to planar travel, then somewhere in the tavern will be a region dominated by it. This is guaranteed. While the Whiskey Man is quite tolerant of his patrons and their beliefs, however, the one act he categorically forbids is for them to use his plane as a short cut for armies bent on conquering other worlds.

Dramatis Personae

The cast of characters in The Four Winds tavern is potentially as vast as the plane itself. Of course, a few names stand out above the rest. **The Whiskey Man**, whose existence defines the plane, and **Zeus**

Golden, his right-hand man and the tavern's cook extraordinaire, run the place. Every patron also knows the **Hunters**, the tavern's resident "bouncers" who spend most of their time hunting down pests and troublemakers. **Elias Manzoiplodoc** may not be as well known as he should be, but his maps of the tavern are so widespread that everyone claims a least a passing familiarity with him. Finally, patrons know very well the **Shades of Gray**, those ethereal, ghostly servants who wait on patrons in their god's name.

The Whiskey Man

He is the god of travelers, existing in infinite incarnations across the entire, equally infinite span of the multiverse. The names by which he is known are multitudinous, yet everyone who comes to The Four Winds simply calls him the Whiskey Man, for whiskey is his absolute favorite drink.

The Whiskey Man stands well over seven feet in height and has a thick gray and white beard and matching hair, which he wears tied back in a long braid that hangs to his waist. His cotton tunic is loose fitting and faded salmon in color. The thin leather laces in the front always remain unfastened. His pants are made from sturdy denim, and he wears them tucked into his water-stained, shin-high leather boots. Hide suspenders keep his pants from falling to his ankles. Sometimes, he can be seen wearing a wide-brimmed leather traveler's hat and a matching, floor-length duster, and wielding a sturdy oaken walking staff in one hand. Feathers, shells, and other bits and pieces of primitive, tribal decoration adorn his hat and duster. A thick miasma of whiskey odor clings to him, threatening to intoxicate anyone who comes within arm's reach.

A very congenial god, the Whiskey Man spends much of his time mingling with patrons in the myriad rooms of The Four Winds. When time permits, he even tutors a small army of dwarves in the fine art of ale brewing. Tolerance is a virtue in his tavern, so he lets the patrons do what they will as long as they do not get too carried away, such as warring on rivals, murder, assassination, and other ill mannered acts of violence. While fighting and killing do occur, he is willing to overlook much of it if it is not premeditated and widespread. "A good brawl's good for the soul," he is fond of saying. So, he often lets patrons release their pent up aggressions on one another when he believes such activity necessary. Fortunately, patrons know that they take their chances coming here and so act accordingly. Few are stupid enough to swagger through the tavern's countless rooms filled with the "fear me" piss-and-vinegar attitude.

Despite his relaxed attitude, the Whiskey Man with whom should trifle. Because he lets patrons do as they will, many of them think they can get away

The Whiskey Man, God of Travelers

Alignment: Any

Domains: Hospitality, Knowledge, Protection, Travel

Typical Worshippers: Travelers, bards, merchants, innkeepers

Favored Weapon: Quarterstaff

with anything. Such is not the case, and those who earn the god's ire soon learn to regret it deeply. The tavern is his house; he is its absolute master. He requires little from his patrons other than respect for his laws. The lightest penalty is eternal banishment, enforced by the Hunters or Zeus Golden; one of the worst penalties, to hear tell, is to have the Whiskey Man deal personally with the offender.

Zeus Golden

Every respectable tavern needs a chef worth his weight in gold. The Four Winds' chef is Zeus Golden, once the founding father of a pantheon of gods on a world that let its natural capacity for magic fade away to nothing. Zeus was clever, though, and saw that tragedy coming long before it happened, so he took his leave and wandered the multiverse seeking new worlds to dominate. As the millennia passed, his power waned. Without worshippers, he was no longer worthy of the mantle of divinity, and so the fates regulating the weft and weave of existence stripped him of it. Losing his godhood devastated him. He found a bottle of whiskey one day in a remote countryside inn and for

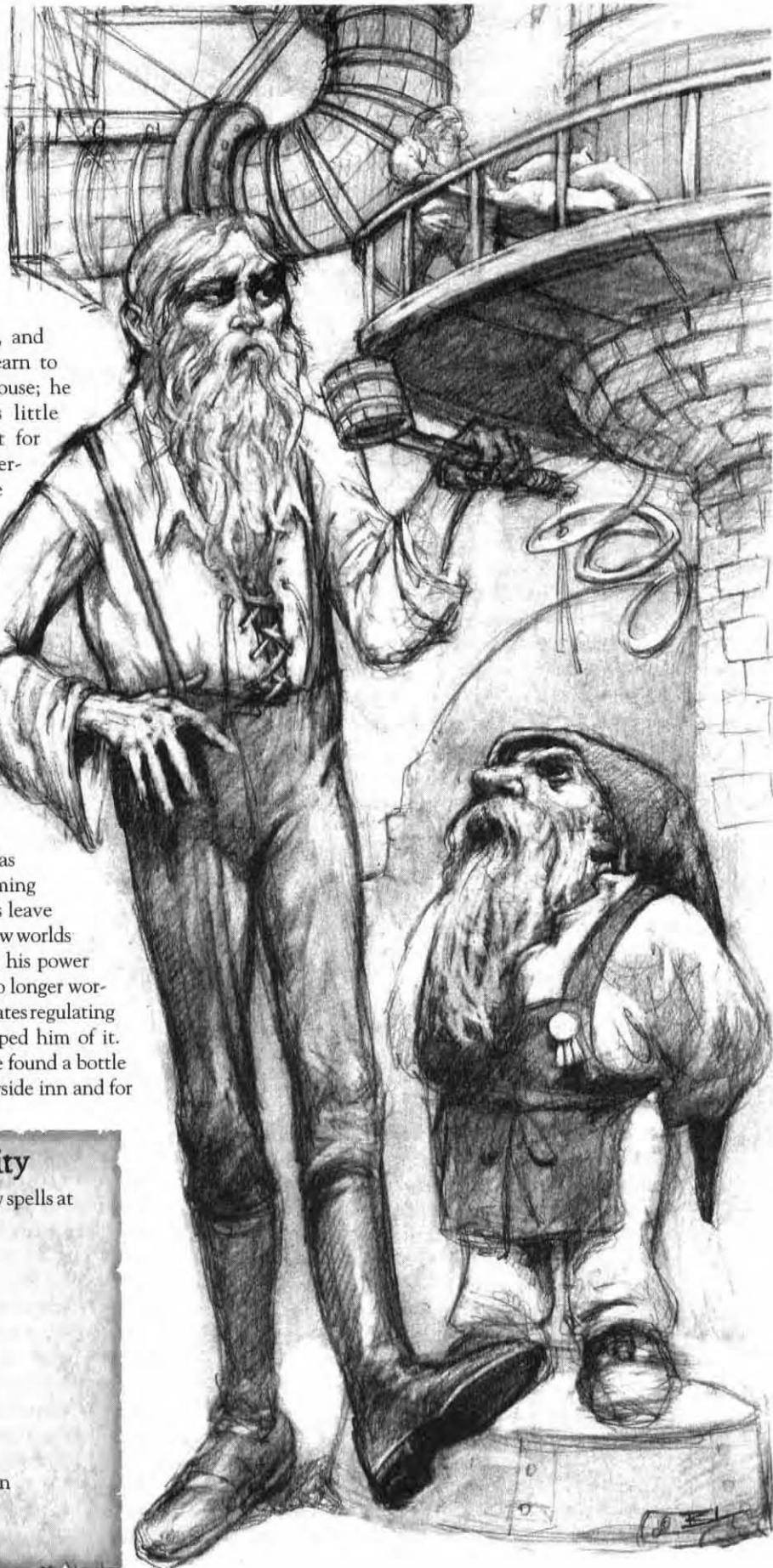
New Domain: Hospitality

Granted Power: You cast hospitality spells at +1 caster level.

Hospitality Domain Spells

1. Goodberry
2. Unseen Servant
3. Leomand's Tiny Hut
4. Leomand's Secure Shelter
5. Healing Circle
6. Heroes' Feast
7. Refuge
8. Morden's Magnificent Mansion
9. Ambrosia*

*New spell (see above right)



New Spells

Ambrosia

Evocation

Level: Clr 9, Drd 9, Hospitality 9

Components: V, S, DF

Casting Time: 10 minutes

Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft/2 levels)

Effect: Feast for one creature/level

Duration: 1 hour + 12 hours (see text)

Saving Throw: None

Spell Resistance: Yes (harmless)

This spell functions as the *heroes' feast* spell. In addition, each person consuming the feast gains damage reduction 5/- and a +2 enhancement bonus to Strength and Constitution. The damage reduction and enhancement bonuses to ability scores last for 12 hours.

the longest time could not crawl out of it. Only when the Whiskey Man showed up and took Zeus into his care did he find a renewed purpose to his existence. The Whiskey Man recognized Zeus and took pity upon him. He offered the fallen god not true divinity but a weaker power between it and true mortality. In return, Zeus would oversee part of the Whiskey Man's personal realm. Zeus agreed. Since that day, countless generations past, he has served as the head cook and tavern overseer in The Four Winds.

Zeus is, indeed, worth his weight in gold. Originally, his cooking skills were atrocious, but with centuries to hone

them, no mortal chef can now even come close to his ability. Granted, pretty much every hearth god and goddess seriously outranks him in that regard. Fortunately for him, none of the tavern's patrons care. The demi-god's cuisine is the perfect companion to the Whiskey Man's brews, which he is also in charge of making and which use some of the oldest recipes known in the multiverse.

While grateful to the Whiskey Man for giving him renewed purpose and strength, as well as several special abilities above and beyond mere mortals, Zeus yearns for the old days when he was a god. He has plotted for the last few thousand years or so with a couple of roguish gods who visit the tavern quite often to overthrow the Whiskey Man and claim that god's power for his own. He does this not out of malice, far from it, in fact. The Whiskey Man is one of his best friends. Yet Zeus cannot deny his basic nature; he craves absolute power. And playing second fiddle to another god, especially one whose portfolio is so damn insignificant, bothers him to no end. He is determined to reclaim his mantle, and he cares not who or what he destroys in the process, including his best friend.

Zeus Golden, Male Human Bbn10/Ftr10: CR 22; SZ M; HD 10d12+40 plus 10d10+40; hp 300; Init +6 (Dex, Improved Initiative); Spd 40; AC 30 (+2 Dex, *bracers* +8, *ring of protection* +5, +5 shield); Atk +33/+28/+23/+18 melee (1d8+14 and 1d6 electricity, +5 *brilliant energy shock shortspear*, crit x3) or +27 ranged (1d8+14 and 1d6 electricity, +5 *brilliant energy shock shortspear*, crit x3, range 20 ft.); SA spell-like abilities, frightful presence (Will DC 24 or flee in fear 1d6 rounds); SQ rage (3/day), uncanny dodge, damage reduction (30/+3), tongues, immortality; AL CG; SV Fort +18, Ref +8, Will +9; Str 24, Dex 14, Con 18, Int 14, Wis 16, Cha 18.



Skills: Climb +8, Craft (brewing) +23, Craft (cooking) +23, Handle Animal +11, Jump +15, Listen +15, Profession (innkeeper) +14, Ride (horse) +14, Spot +5, Swim +11.

Feats: Alertness, Blind-Fight, Cleave, Combat Casting, Improved Initiative, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (shortspear), Weapon Specialization (shortspear).

Languages: Special (see spell-like abilities below).

SA — Spell-Like Abilities: At will — *continual flame*, *dispel magic*, *holy smite*, *improved invisibility* (self only), *lesser restoration*, *remove curse*, *remove disease*, *remove fear*, *speak with dead*, *teleport without error* (self plus 50 pounds of objects only and only to a location within the Four Winds); 3/day — *flame strike*, *raise dead*; 1/day — *earthquake*, *greater restoration*, *shapechange*, *symbol* (any). These abilities are as the spells cast by a 20th-level sorcerer (save DC 14 + spell level).

Zeus Golden has a constant *tongues* effect on him at all times. This effect can be dispelled, but he can restart it as a free action on his next turn.

SQ — Immortality (Su): Zeus does not age while in the Four Winds. In addition, if he is slain, his body reforms completely healed and restored in 24 hours in the Understairs.

Possessions: +5 brilliant energy shocking shortspear, bracers of armor +8, +5 reflection large steel shield, ring of protection +5.

The Hunters

These fellows are the only form of law enforcement the tavern possesses. Most of their time, however, is spent hunting down flying monkeys and stray beasts that inadvertently wander in with the patrons. The vast majority of the Hunters are human rangers, though of course plenty of Hunters come from the other races and classes (on this plane, *anything* is possible). Hunters earn 10 gp per flying monkey head they turn into the shades, and 1,000 gp for each unwanted, non-sentient creature. In times of strife, such as when one common room makes war against another, the Hunters are called in to restore order and remove the offenders, one way or another. They are the most elite bouncers in the universe, and few will eagerly go toe-to-toe with them.

The Hunters are organized into tribes, each of which is responsible for 20 common rooms. Each tribe has a chieftain, and those below her are further sub-divided as she sees fit. Ultimately, the chieftains report to the Whiskey Mañ, but because their orders are so unambiguous and they are so efficient, such audiences are rarely necessary.

Four Winds Hunter, Male Human Rgr18: CR 18; SZ M; HD 18d10+18; hp 113; Init +6 (Dex, Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft.; AC 23 (+2 Dex, +9 armor, +2 shield); Atk +24/+19/+14/+9 melee (1d8+4, +2 vorpal longsword, 17-20/x2), +24/+19/+14/+9 ranged (1d8+5, +2 composite longbow [+1 arrows], crit x3, range 110 ft.); SA favored enemy (+4 giants, +3 orcs, +2 goblins, +1 beasts); AL LN; SV Fort +12, Ref +8, Will +8; Str 17, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 12, Wis 15, Cha 13.

Skills: Animal Empathy +22, Knowledge (nature) +22, Knowledge (the planes) +12, Listen +10, Ride (horse) +13, Search +13, Spot +10, Wilderness Lore +23.

Feats: Alertness, Improved Critical (longsword), Improved Initiative, Point Blank Shot, Quick Draw, Run, Track, Weapon Focus (composite longbow, longsword).

Languages: Common, Celestial.

Spells Prepared (4/3/2/1; base DC 12 + spell level): 1st — *alarm*, *animal friendship*, *detect animals or plants*, *detect snares and pits*; 2nd — *cure light wounds*, *detect evil*, *hold animal*; 3rd — *control plants*, *summon nature's ally III*; 4th — *tree stride*.

Possessions: +2 vorpal longsword, +5 chain shirt, +2 small shield, +2 mighty composite longbow (Str +3), 20 +1 arrows, and 5d20 (x10) gp.

Four Winds Hunter Chieftain, Male Human Rgr20: CR 20; SZ M; HD 20d10+20; hp 125; Init +6 (Dex, Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft.; AC 23 (+2 Dex, +9 armor, +2 shield); Atk +30/+25/+25/+20 melee (1d8+9, +4 vorpal longsword, 19-20/x2), +28/+23/+18/+13 ranged (1d8+10, +3 mighty composite longbow [+2 arrows], crit x3, range 165 ft.); SQ favored enemy (+5 giants, +4 orcs, +3 goblins, +2 beasts, magical beasts); AL LN; SV Fort +13, Ref +8, Will +8; Str 21, Dex 15, Con 12, Int 13, Wis 15, Cha 13.

Skills: Animal Empathy +24, Concentration +11, Handle Animal +11 (+13 with animals), Heal +12, Hide +10, Jump +13, Listen +14, Move Silently +8, Ride (horse) +16, Spot +14, Wilderness Lore +25.

Feats: Alertness, Far Shot, Improved Initiative, Leadership, Point Blank Shot, Quick Draw, Track, Weapon Focus (composite longbow, longsword).

Languages: Common, Celestial.

Spells Prepared (4/4/3/3; base DC 12 + spell level): 1st — *delay poison*, *entangle*, *magic fang*, *pass without trace*; 2nd — *animal messenger*, *hold animal*, *protection from elements*, *sleep*; 3rd — *control plants*, *greater magic fang*, *water walk*; 4th — *cure serious wounds*, *polymorph self*, *summon nature's ally IV*.

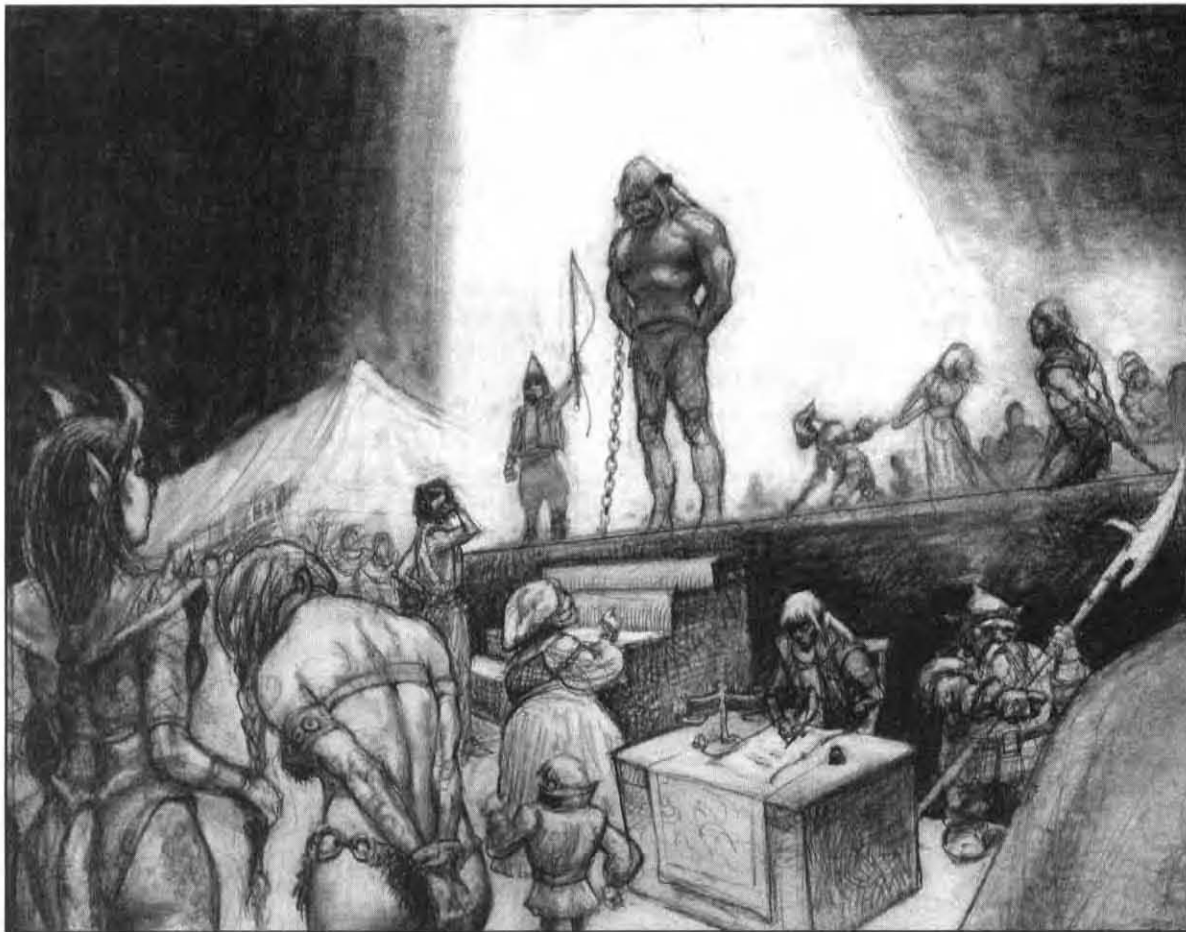
Possessions: +4 vorpal longsword, +3 mighty composite longbow (Str +5), 20 +2 arrows, ring of spell resistance (SR 15), +5 chain shirt, +2 small shield, and 5d20 (x20) gp.

Elias Manzoziplodoc

Elias comes from a world that unwittingly became the battlefield in a war between demons and angels. For millennia, they ravaged his people and harvested his world's resources for their own selfish purposes. By the time the world was the verge on the Apocalypse, Elias was running for his life from a pack of bloodthirsty glabrezus. He ducked through a door hidden behind some old crates in a narrow alley and found himself in The Four Winds.

While grateful that he escaped what was certain death, but the cloud giant is saddened to this day at the loss of his home world. Originally, he had intended to raise army and going back, but that hope was cut short within hours of his arrival. The door through which he had arrived burst into flames, leaving behind just a blackened scorch on the wall of the common room. Days later, a new door materialized in its place, one that led to a world where giants had never existed in the first place.

For the last 10 years, Elias has preoccupied himself with mapping The Four Winds' rooms. So far, he has mapped



over 5,000 rooms. He lives in a room of his own north of the common room formerly connected to his home land, and a small army of humanoid assistants protect his original maps and make duplicates for patrons to purchase.

Ring of Spell Resistance

This small silver ring grants the wearer spell resistance when worn. The spell resistance can be SR 13, SR 15, SR 18, or SR 21.

Caster Level: 15th; **Prerequisites:** Forge Ring, *spell resistance*; **Market Price:** 10,000 gp (SR 13), 30,000 gp (SR 15), 60,000 gp (SR 18), 90,000 gp (SR 21).

Quill of the Magister

This item appears to be an ordinary feather quill with a gold-plated mithral tip. When used by a character to write or draw, however, it confers a +10 circumstance bonus to the relevant skill. For example, a character creating a map with the *quill* gains +10 to his Craft (mapmaking) check. For arcane or divine spellcasters, scribing a spell with the quill reduces the required time by half and increases the Spellcraft DC for others to decipher the script by +10.

Caster Level: 5th; **Prerequisites:** Craft Wondrous Item, *illusory script*; **Market Price:** 10,000 gp; **Weight:** —.

Elias Manzoiplodoc Male Cloud Giant Exp3: CR 14; SZ H Giant [Air]; HD 17d8+102 plus 3d6+18; hp 209; Init +1; Spd 50; AC 21; Atk +23/+18/+13 melee (4d6+19, Gargantuan +1 *morningstar*); +14/+9/+4 ranged (2d8+18, rock, range 140 ft.); SA rock throwing, spell-like abilities; SQ scent, rock catching; AL NG; SV Fort +12, Ref +7, Will +9; Str 35, Dex 13, Con 23, Int 12, Wis 13, Cha 13.

Skills: Concentration +14, Craft (mapmaking) +36, Decipher Script +9, Diplomacy +7, Intimidate +9, Jump +15, Knowledge (the planes) +9, Listen +8, Spot +8.

Feats: Alertness, Cleave, Great Cleave, Power Attack, Skill Focus (Craft (mapmaking), Knowledge [the planes]).

Languages: Common, Celestial.

Possessions: *Quill of the magister* (+10 circumstance bonus to Craft [mapmaking]; already included in statistics block), *bag of holding* (type 3, filled with inkbottles, parchment, maps, food, 3 wineskins), Gargantuan +1 *morningstar*.

Shades of Gray

These are the souls of once-living adherents to the Whiskey Man's faith who now spend eternity in his service. They appear whenever and wherever patrons need them, materializing out of nothing to become a translucent, gray, vaguely humanoid ghost. Regardless of the form they had in life, when they appear anywhere in the tavern outside of the Understairs, they have the same generic form and shape. They speak with hollow voices.

When a patron makes a food or drink request from a shade of gray, the spirit can instantly summon the desired items, but only if they are on the tavern's menu.

Shades of Gray, Male Ghost Exp18: CR 20; SZ M Undead [Incorporeal]; HD 18d12; hp 93; Init +2; Spd fly 30 ft. (perfect); AC 15 (+2 Dex, +3 deflection) or AC 12 (+2 Dex) against ethereal creatures; Atk +15/+10/+5 melee (1d4 corruption, incorporeal touch) or +13/+8/+3 melee [ethereal] (1d6, shortspear); SA spell-like abilities, manifestation, corrupting touch, horrific appearance (Fort DC 22); SQ undead, rejuvenation, turn resistance (+4); AL N; SV Fort +10, Ref +8, Will +12; Str — (10, ethereal), Dex 15, Con —, Int 13, Wis 12, Cha 16.

Skills: Animal Empathy +16, Appraise +14, Gather Information +18, Hide +10, Intimidate +20, Knowledge (the planes) +24, Listen +29, Profession (innkeeper) +24, Search +27, Sense Motive +17, Spot +29.

Feats: Alertness, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Expertise, Great Fortitude, Skill Focus (Gather Information, Knowledge [the planes], Profession [innkeeper]).

Languages: Common, Celestial.

SA — Spell-Like Abilities: At will — *telekinesis*, *teleport without error* (self plus 50 pounds of objects only and only to a location within the Four Winds). These abilities are as the spells cast by a 18th-level sorcerer.

Possessions: Shortspear (when attacking ethereal creatures)

The Establishment

The Four Winds exists in the space between realities, the backstage area of the universe's theater that no mortal is ever normally allowed to witness. Theoretically, it is infinite in scope. On the "outside," all that indicates its presence is an ugly, cracked door, usually placed in a wall of an infrequently traveled alley. Experienced adventurers claim that the broken door can be found in any city on any plane of existence; others say that there is only one true door and that it moves every day. The wise, however, simply claim that the door is where it needs to be when it needs to be there. Those who are meant to open it are allowed; those who are not will never get the door open, no matter how hard or long they try.

Opened, the door reveals a pitch-black hole darker than the darkest caves on the darkest nights on a world with no sun. Passage through the door happens in the blink of an eye, and then the person finds herself in the tavern's great common room. It is large and highly variable, depending on through which door the person entered. Some common rooms are so large that their far walls are lost in a thick haze of smoke, and some are much smaller. As with anything in The Four Winds tavern, the rooms are as large as they need to be. All rooms are interconnected through the four sets of stairs in each common room, so getting truly lost in the tavern is impossible as long as one simply returns the way from which one came.

To enter the plane, one must come through the broken door found on another plane. One may exit using any method at her disposal, however, including returning to one's original world using the same door. A character may also exit through any door that is not locked or by using

magic of her own such as a *plane shift* spell or an *amulet of the planes*, and so on — just so long as the method is legitimate and allowed by the DM. The requirements for entering the tavern ultimately rest with the DM, of course, but a few rules should be kept in mind. Characters cannot be lower than 15th-level, and they must earn the "key" to the door. The key need not necessarily be a physical object, either; rather, it can be something decidedly insubstantial, such as "achieving enlightenment" or finding the answer to a particularly difficult riddle. Whatever key the DM ultimately decides upon, though, it should require a significant effort on the part of the character (or characters) to acquire.

No single set of stats is used to define the tavern, for each permutation of the common room, the north rooms, and the bazaar has its own properties. The DM should determine them. Some of the rooms are built from solid stone, while others from ancient timber logs, and so on. One of the few constants between rooms is the presence of waste gutters, where patrons may deposit table scraps, stale drinks, and their own waste (such as urine and vomit). Water flows through the gutters to carry away deposited material. Other constants are that each permutation always bears the same basic layout and the same exits and entrances. In this regard, there are never any exceptions. Patrons can make modifications to the rooms, within reason. Major damage is gradually regenerated unless said damage was done with the express purpose to "improve" the room. All of these features are extremely subjective, depending more on the outlook of the patrons than that of the Whiskey Man. Damage to one race might be viewed as an improvement by another.

The tavern boasts its own flora and fauna, which can be found in most rooms. Flying monkeys live in the ceiling rafters, feeding on table scraps when they can. They are quite annoying — so much so, in fact, that the Whiskey Man employs the Hunters to keep their populations to a minimum. Unfortunately, the monkeys breed faster than they can be killed off. Another type of creature living in the tavern is the guttertrout, a fish that get fat on the waste flowing through the gutters in which they live. A species of pigeon allegedly lives on the tavern's roof, which no one has ever seen much less discovered. Yet roof pigeon is a popular dish among the patrons, especially baked with thyme and other herbs. Fungus grows in the wall seams of many a common room, producing "stones" that taste a lot like tree nuts, and a peculiar species of vine grows only on the tavern doors. Berries are said to grow on the roofs, which the pigeons supposedly feed on, but again, no one has ever seen them in their native habitat.

I. Common Room

This room is figuratively the heart of The Four Winds tavern. All doors ultimately lead to this large, circular, two-tiered room. As mentioned earlier, its size is variable, but generally it is just large enough to hold about 500 Medium-size patrons. The ceiling is typically 12 feet from the floor, sloping up to rise the same distance above the slightly elevated second level, the floor of which stands 4 feet higher than the room's lower half. A solid, waist-high rail runs the length of the second tier's edge, broken only

by the stairs in the middle. Torches, braziers, fire-pits, and other sources of mundane and magical illumination keep the common room lit, though not always especially well. Some rooms host creatures that cannot abide light and are so kept dark, but such common rooms are few and far between. Wooden tables and chairs are designed to handle the generic humanoid shape. Again, some rooms are more specialized due to the physical nature of their patrons. Flitting around the room serving the patrons are the shades of gray, and entertainers are usually performing here. Though no obvious source for food and drink seems to exist, everything is prepared and brought from one central, intra-planar location called the Understairs, though no living patron has ever seen it.

Four sets of stairs exit the room, one positioned at each compass direction. Between the stairs are the planar doors, always six between each pair of stairs, never more, never less. The northeastern doors lead to the planes of Law, the northwestern doors to the planes of Good, the southwestern doors to the planes of Chaos, and the southeastern doors to the planes of Evil. The myriad Material Planes fall into one of these four classifications.

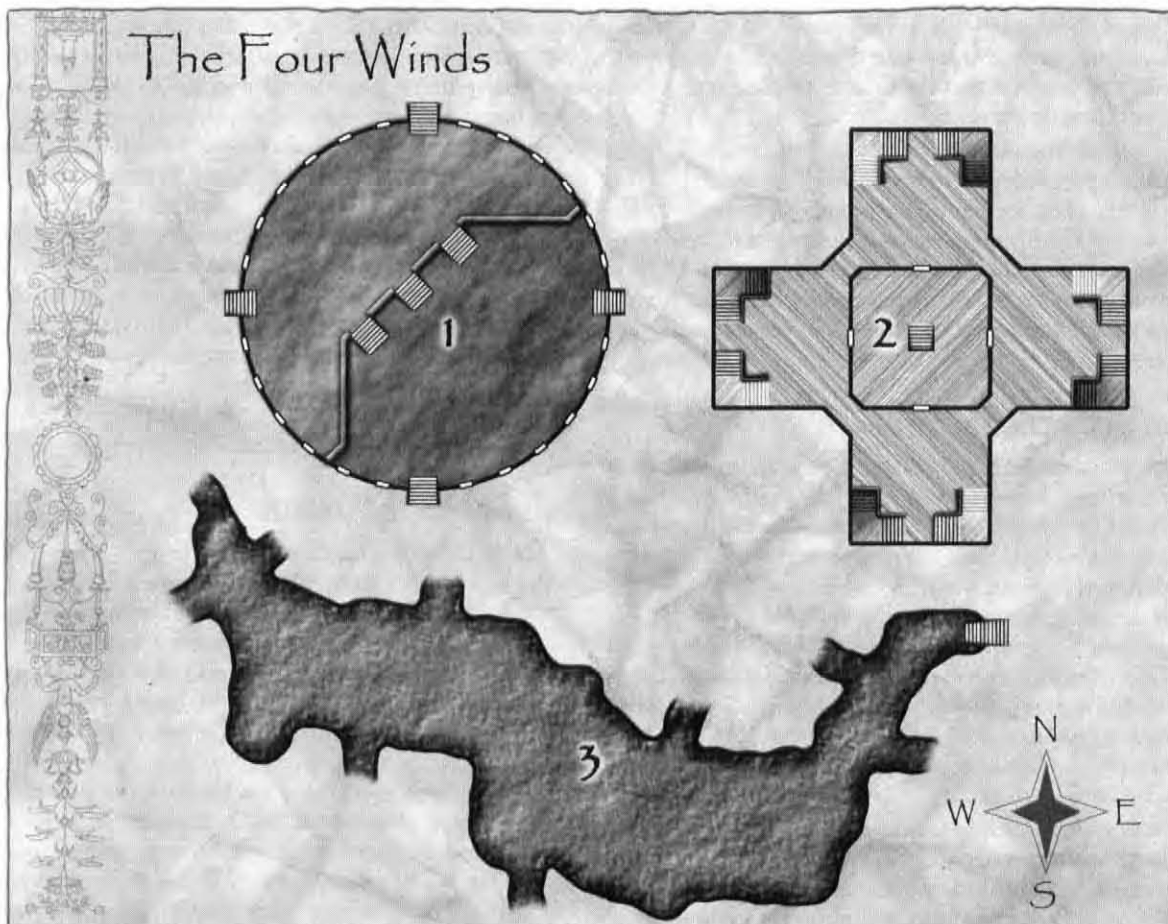
The north staircase ascends to the North Rooms. The east staircase goes to a different Common Room, becoming in the process that new room's south staircase, and vice versa, with the south staircase leading to yet another Common Room and becoming that room's east staircase. In this way, all common rooms are connected somewhat logically, if confusingly. Finally, the west staircase always

leads to and from that particular room's Bazaar of the Bizarre.

Each room has its own personality, depending on the creatures patronizing it, which are, in turn, determined by the doors that open into the room. Some planes open into multiple common rooms, but not at random. The doors between planes have a one-to-one correspondence and are more or less permanent. Contrary to myth, very few "floating" entry doors randomly wander the planes. Listed below are some sample common rooms that have conformed to the personalities of their base clientele.

1a. The Tin Trencher

This common room is patronized primarily by the humans from a rugged world embraced for the last 500 generations by the icy grip of winter. Their society is feudal, and so in their domination of the common room they have assigned local "lords" to whom new patrons must swear oaths of fealty; otherwise, patrons are sent packing to a new room via the east and south staircases. Each "lord" in the Tin Trencher (as the room is called) dominates a portion of the room. These lords have no real influence, even though they represent the varied socio-political interests of their home world. Generally, the Trenchers are so deep into their ales that they are really all just talk and bluster. Occasionally, some of them sober up enough to "lay siege" to other sections of the room, but such assaults quickly devolve into grand brawls in which the



primary participants wind up lying unconscious in puddles of their own puke and blood.

The room's décor is quite barbaric, with the furs and tusks of many a strange winter beast adorning the walls and huge fire pits sunk into the floor so that the Trenchers can cook up proper food such as boar, venison, moose, and occasionally dragon meat. A small alcohol still has been built along the western wall, where the Trenchers brew a type of honey mead they call *Eddasong*. For some inexplicable reason, a thick oak tree grows out of the room's center, rising half way to the high ceiling above. The tree, which often gets knocked over in the constant brawling, is rooted in a very large ceramic pot. Other races are welcome here as long as they do not cause trouble and they swear fealty when and where appropriate.

1b. Sleep Well

Very few places in the tavern allow patrons to catch a break from the perpetual revelry and take a nap. This common room, though, is dedicated to just that — sleep. Patrons come here to sleep on the floor, every square inch of which is covered in a comfortable type of bedding known by the local patrons as *tatami*. Guests are welcome, but violence is not. Soliciting carnal pleasure is also not allowed here. A group called the Sleepwardens manages the room. The Sleepwardens ensure that no one speaks above a whisper and that no lights are ignited. If patrons need to find their way through the sea of sleeping bodies, the Sleepwardens will happily guide them, using their innate ability to see in the dark. Anyone who violates the Sleepwardens' rules ends up teleported into a common room very, very far away, one dominated by an aquatic species of predator that does not appreciate unexpected visitors into its watery tavern.

No one knows how it is done, but the local flying monkey population no longer exists in this room. Usually, flying monkeys are impossible to eradicate completely, but somehow the Sleepwardens have managed it. Suspicious guests pass rumors that the Sleepwardens use infernal dream magic to control the pest population. If they do, no one has yet discovered how that kind of magic works or if it is even real.

1c. Blackened Scar

A thousand years ago, something so evil came through one of the Chaos doors that the Whiskey Man himself needed to put it down. During the battle, the common room was burned black. The doors entering this room from other worlds do not work, now opening only to reveal the blackened stone masonry of the walls behind them. The four staircases are seriously dilapidated, barely stable enough to allow transit across them. No tables, no chairs, not even a second tier are here. Only one shade of gray inhabits this common room, and he is so grumpy that should anyone truly wish to drink or eat in this room he will probably refuse to serve them.

Once every fortnight, yuan-ti come from other Common Rooms to congregate here and pray to the god who was slain by the Whiskey Man, offering him sacrifices of humanoid flesh brought from their home worlds (killing

other patrons for used in rituals such as this is one of the fastest ways to earn Whiskey Man's ire, so they refrain from doing so). They hope one day their god will return, though not necessarily to go after the Whiskey Man. Honestly, they have no idea what their deity was thinking when he entered The Four Winds. Guards stationed at the entrances run off interlopers. Most patrons and inhabitants from the neighboring rooms have better ways to occupy their time than to intrude, knowing full well that if they get "marked" by the yuan-ti priests, they will end up dead sooner rather than later.

1d. The Zoo

This variant of the common room caters primarily to non-humanoid races. Outsiders call it "The Zoo," while the room's regulars just call it the Meadgrove. The room has ceilings three or four times as high as normal and with no recognizable furniture. Instead, tree and rock formations growing out of the floor provide places for the patrons to relax. There are also many watering holes, to drink from or swim in.

Three non-humanoid races patronize the Zoo in greater numbers than any other: the feline Hairsplitters, a hyper-logical race of philosophers and mathematicians; the sentient, panda-like Mao Xiong, whose communities are very open and gregarious; and the avian Squawkers, a race of natural magic users capable of mimicking any spell they witness being cast. All three races manage to co-exist peacefully in this common room, though the occasional interspecies brawl does break out. Each of the three species comes from their own home worlds. The Squawkers, however, are secretly plotting an invasion of the Hairsplitters' home world. For the last three years, they have quietly moved troops from their world into the Hairsplitters' world when they sleep (which they do all the time). Soon, the Squawkers will launch an all-out assault against the Hairsplitter capital and claim the cat world for their own, as well as claim vengeance for all avians against the evil cat people. Meanwhile, the Mao Xiong are trying to work out a trade agreement with a race of bovines called the Lowbrows, who do not often frequent the tavern and whose home world contains vast supplies of fresh bamboo, something the Mao Xiong's world has been running short on for many decades since a plague killed off most of its bamboo groves.

2. The North Rooms

The stairs leading north out of the common room open into a plain, square room with four doors in it, one in each wall. This is the entry chamber to the North Rooms, as they are commonly called. These rooms are smaller, specialized rooms in which patrons may drink in relative peace, host gambling tournaments, engage courtesans with some modicum of privacy, and so on. Those patrons coming from the common room to the south typically adopt the north rooms and modify them to suit their cultural tastes. Because there are an infinite number of common rooms, there are also an infinite number of north room clusters (they always come in fives: one entry chamber and four branch rooms). Each branch room has two sets

of stairs, one ascending and one descending, all connecting to the North Rooms in other parts of the tavern.

The Whiskey Man does not allow patrons to convert the entry chambers for their own purposes, though the walls may be marked to indicate to patrons their general location. In some instances, full-fledged maps are posted to the chamber walls. As with the common rooms, the north rooms all display their own personalities. Generally, they are all the same size, though some are smaller or larger than the norm. Additionally, a few north rooms have exits in their out-facing walls that open to specific locations on other planes. These exits are the exception and not the norm and may be "purchased" from the Whiskey Man by those who can afford them. Needless to say, such exits are quite rare. For more information on purchasing private doors, see the Goods & Services section later in this chapter. Listed below are some sample north rooms that conform to the personalities of their base clientele.

2a. The Brüniversity

This room is larger than other north rooms by a factor of 10. It is also noisy. The ceaseless sounds of complex machinery rumbling, cranking, choking, coughing, bubbling, hissing, spitting, and whirring fill the area, along with copious quantities of smoke and steam. Dwarf technicians, outfitted in the latest machinist fashions, swarm in, around, atop, and beneath the machines as they make their corrections and improvements. The room's sole purpose is to serve as a learning ground for the finest minds the multi-planar dwarf empires can offer. Here, dwarf brewmasters learn their trade directly from the Whiskey Man himself. At the back of the room, between the stairs, are the ale and mead receptacles that hold the "daily lab." They are experimental beverages, the products of exacting dwarf learning. One drinks the daily lab at his or her own risk.

Free tours of the room are available, at the end of which one may partake of samples of the ales of in progress. The Brüniversity occupies five floors above the main one, and fourteen floors beneath it. Those floors are off-limits to outsiders because all the secret learning happens there — stuff that the dwarves do not want to share with potential competition. The stench of hops and barley emanating from the Brüniversity is so strong that one can smell it up to a hundred rooms away. Every room except for the public one has at least one private door opening on one of the innumerable dwarf homelands.

2b. Dragon Poker

This room has been extensively modified to resemble an opulent sultan's harem. At the center sits a gold, gem-encrusted table and matching seats with plush velvet cushions. Silk curtains hang from the walls, and silk cushions cover the floor. Bejeweled urns, vases, and other ornamentation litter the room. A beautiful crystal chandelier hangs from the frescoed ceiling, providing a comfortable amount of illumination.

At any given time, at least five dragons in humanoid form are playing poker here. The game has continued for the last 20,000 years, and any dragon is welcome pro-

vided she can ante up. The dragons come from all worlds and represent all philosophies and outlooks. Accordingly, this room is a *de facto* neutral ground for them, allowing them to come here to play poker and catch up on all the gossip in relative peace. Human, elf, and half-elf servants wait hand and foot on the dragons, usually dressed in wispy, translucent clothing that reveals their best features for all to see.

2c. The Trophy Room

An informal collective of soul-stealing mages has adopted this room for its own purposes. The décor is not bad, with utilitarian furniture scattered about and ceiling-high bookcases stacked along the walls, every shelf of which is crammed with tomes, folios, and scroll cases. A faded, threadbare tapestry lies on the floor, claiming to be a rug to anyone who asks (it talks, though infrequently). A large, four-sided hearth with a perpetually burning fire sits at the room's center, providing both light and warmth. Hanging from the ceiling are hundreds of multi-hued crystalline gems. These gems are the room's trophies: *prison prisms*, used by the mages to imprison other creatures. Each time one of the wizards returns to the hall, she usually carries five or six new gems, which are promptly strung from the ceiling. The gems sway in the slight breezes filtering through the room, tinkling gently.

The shades of gray avoid this room, disturbed by the multitude of imprisoned souls in the gems. As such, the wizards have hired gnomes from another room to act as their servers; all the little fellows are required to do is run into the neighboring room, collect orders from the shades working there, and bring them back to their employers.

2d. Drums & Mud

Pulse pounding primal rhythms emanating from this room are felt and heard long before a person gets to the room itself. In fact, the cacophony is so loud that the rooms above and below it are permanently empty. The room is very large, with a flat, muddy floor and a high cavernous ceiling thickly laden with stalagmites. At the room's center burns a massive bonfire. Surrounding this fire are hundreds of drummers. They come from every culture imaginable, most of them primitive and dressed in feathers, leathers, and shells. The syncopations generated by their drums stir the primordial memories of all who observe. Soon, those affected by the music join in, dancing around the flames and becoming lost in pure, unbridled, unadulterated emotion. If there are hundreds of drummers, then there are hundreds more dancers. It is an orgy of motion and sound.

Every six hours or so, the drummers stop for an hour to rest up, eat, drink, and perhaps catch a little sleep. Like other rooms in The Four Winds, the patrons here are constantly coming and going. One person, though, is always here: Agraza Pearl, a half-orc shaman whose rhythms are so powerful and compelling that they generate waves of enchantment that ripple through the room, blessing all with whom they make contact. It is said, reverently, that Agraza can cure whole armies with her mystical music. Bards come from many a world to study the music made in this room.

3. Bazaar of the Bizarre

Every common room has an associated bazaar in the basement contained in a long stretch of stone tunnel. Branching tunnels lead to other bazaars, which are in turn connected to their own common rooms. The typical length of the bazaar tunnel is 1,500 feet, though this can vary depending on the needs of any given tunnel's dominant population.

The bazaars are filled with tents, stalls, small buildings, miniature general stores, taverns, and whatever else the inhabitants decide to build in them. They are primarily dedicated to serving as market grounds where goods from the myriad planes of the multiverse may be bought and sold with impunity. Some specialized bazaars also exist. Some are slave markets, while others have been converted into gaming or combat arenas. As with the other portions of the tavern, the bazaars have their own personalities depending on their particular inhabitants. Listed below are some sample bazaars that have conformed to the personalities of their base clientele.

3a. The Night Market

This bazaar is normal in that it contains a long avenue of vendors, tents, stalls, and pavilions. The normalcy ends there, however. The Night Market's primary inhabitants are vampires, liches, and other intelligent undead — including a zombie considered a genius among its kind, a moldy chap by the name of Braxton Gruber, the former merchant lord of Thrake. No illumination brighter than a candle flame is permitted in the bazaar due to the sensitivity of its inhabitants' eyes. Violators must deal with the Night Watch, a group of rather high-strung lycanthropes who bear little patience for anyone, especially the uncursed living.

While the bazaar does indeed sell mundane equipment, food, and drink (mostly for the benefit of the living who enter the bazaar out of curiosity or unwittingly), it is famous for the unusual items only the undead can dream up, acquire, or otherwise steal from their victims. Antique shops and pawn stores are quite common in the market's back alleys and side tunnels. Food for the undead is also available, though in accordance with the Whiskey Man's few rules it must be imported from outside the plane and not hunted locally. Nevertheless, many a victim of alcohol poisoning or pub brawling still finds his way into the bazaar morgues.

3b. Chain Street

The rattle of chains fills the air of this bazaar, which sells just one product: slaves. The tunnel is dry and dusty, illuminated with a facsimile of harsh, natural sunlight. Wood platforms are set up along the tunnel's entire length, supporting the weight of slaves in every shape and color. All slaves come from other planes and may not be taken from the patrons of The Four Winds. Still, many patrons wake up from a drunken stupor only

to find themselves in slave chains despite the Whiskey Man's rules. Fortunately, those slave masters who make a habit of taking such slaves cannot long escape the Whiskey Man's justice or that of his Hunters.

The wealthiest and most influential slaver on Chain Street is Jelka Swag of Freeport, a formidable ex-pirate who decided she had seen enough of her home city when demons moved into it. She is semi-retired, spending her days organizing the three largest slaving rings and giving them the benefit of her knowledge, wisdom, and advice — all for a fee, of course. Occasionally, she will take a raiding party back to Freeport to capture higher quality slaves to sell off in the bazaar to her more demanding customers.

3c. The Swamp

Trolls are generally pretty stupid, but every so often they gain the upper hand over natural (and magical) evolution and come out pretty smart. The trolls who dominate this bazaar come from a world where they are surprisingly one of the highest forms of intelligent life. All the same, compared to other races such as elves, dwarves, and humans, these "smart" trolls still occupy the bottom rung of the evolutionary ladder. They inhabit the bazaar known as "the Swamp," growing their wares rather than making them.

This bazaar is a fetid, underground swamp illuminated by phosphorescent fungus and swamp gas. Every item sold here is natural, grown, and shaped exclusively from plant life. The sounds of nature fill the bazaar, ranging from the birds and insects hidden behind damp, green fronds to the groans of giant, eight-legged sloths seeking mates. There are no forges, smithies, craft shops, or anything else that requires unnatural modifications to the natural resources gifted to all life by the Green Gods. The trolls residing here are pacifists, offering herbal medicines and remedies, plant-sculpted clothing and accessories, and vegetarian foods that rival the finest carnivore cuisines from other worlds. The bazaar's leader is a troll lord name Stuv Benteleaf, a rail-thin individual standing nearly 13 feet tall and with tiny, leaf-bearing branches growing from abscesses in his skin. His lifemate is a female treant named Thwllwrthpzk (most people just call her "Zookie," though, since her name is fairly unpronounceable for humanoid mouths). Because the fauna from the troll home world is so prolific, it is beginning to subsume a neighboring bazaar maintained by a clan of humans obsessed with killing dragons.

3d. Ghrazutu Mordun

The orcs from a world in the midst of a technological revolution occupy this tunnel. Their buildings are soot-covered tin, iron, and wood structures that belch unending clouds of steam into the air. Steam-powered machinery is everywhere and used for practically everything. Forges create steel weapons and armor of exceptional quality, while looms produce vast quantities of cotton, wool, and silk textiles for a fraction of the cost at which others produce them. There are even non-

THE FOUR WINDS MENU

Ale & Mead*	Cost
Abyssal Rainfire	14 gp
Aliyak Barzoot	22 gp
Bacchanalian Delight	13 gp
Brüniversity Daily Lab	10 gp
Celestial Wingfeather	26 gp
Dead Titan	18 gp
Droghastivorak	12 gp
Frenzied Dog Pale Ale	32 gp
Hollowfaustian Graveblack	37 gp
Lemagister's Faire Rune Brew	15 gp
Merlin's Magical Mead	16 gp
Purple Tuber Stout	15 gp
Urthwurd Bitter Bock	23 gp
Zwei Schweine Tanzen	44 gp
Other Beverages	
Brandy	33 gp
Moonshine	56 gp
Rice wine	24 gp
Schnapps	21 gp
Whiskey	25 gp
Wine	13 gp
Food	
Chanko	1 sp
Doorvine salad	1 gp
Flying monkey, grilled	4 gp

Flying monkey, stewed	3 gp
Fungal stones	2 gp
Guttertrout, grilled	6 gp
Guttertrout, stewed	5 gp
Roof pigeon	5 gp
Shingleberry muffins	3 gp

Other Services

Private entrance†	special
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* Any ale, mead, or wine in existence is available somewhere in The Four Winds. The problem is finding the person or people making whatever is desired. The beverages listed here are just the ones served by the shades of gray. They are available in every incarnation of the common and north rooms. Food and other services also operate under the same principle.

† A private entrance is a door built into the out-facing wall of a north room that leads to a specific destination on some other plane. People who "adopt" rooms (perhaps as extensions for taverns on their native plane) may petition the Whiskey Man for a private entrance. The cost of this entrance varies according to each individual, usually requiring the completion of some insane task seemingly chosen at random by the Whiskey Man to kill petitioners. Less than 0.5% of those who petition ever succeed. The conditions for entering the tavern through a private entrance are identical to those for entering through a public entrance.

magical weapons for sale that use a volatile black powder to project iron slugs with deadly force at one's enemies. These weapons are very expensive and often do not work so well when taken back to a person's home world, however. Compared to items available in other bazaars, everything sold here is of *masterwork* quality. It is also more expensive.

The orcs do not answer to a single leader in the bazaar but are instead organized into merchant clans, each of which is ruled by a leading male and female (though not required, these two are often married, siblings, or both). These leading pairs collectively constitute the Merchant Council, which makes all the decisions regarding the bazaar. Back on their home world, the orcs are second-class citizens barely a step above slave labor and employed in all of the factories. For unknown reasons, they are the only natives of their plane capable of entering The Four Winds. The Merchant Council here does what it can to skim funds from the money going back home, an easy enough task when no overseers are present to prevent them from doing so. When they generate enough money, they plan on raising an army back home and deposing the current government that dominates their world. Orcs will one day take their rightful place in society. Of this, they are sure.

4. The Understairs

No living patron has ever seen the Understairs, but it does in fact exist. All the tavern's dirty work is carried out here; it is where all the food is made and all the ale brewed. The Understairs is an infinite kitchen, brewery, bakery, and butcher shop in one. Armies of shades of gray work here. This is the only place in the tavern where they can become corporeal and as real as they were in life. If a patron were to see the Understairs, she would say it looks like a fairly typical royal kitchen located in a similarly typical palace somewhere.

Zeus Golden is the master of this domain, and all shades, corporeal and incorporeal alike, do his bidding here.

Goods & Services

The Four Winds offers three basic services for patrons: food, drink, and places to enjoy them. The long-term inhabitants of the plane generally provide other services on a room-by-room basis. All the ales and meads except for the *Brüniversity Daily Lab* come from the stills in the Understairs. The pub favorites are *Droghastivorak*, a wickedly potent brown ale derived from an ancient minotaur recipe, and *Celestial Wingfeather*, a milky white ale that

charges the imbibor with an almost holy energy. Available foods come primarily from local flora and fauna, leaving much to be desired regardless of how well prepared they are. *Chanko* is the least expensive dish a person may order; it is a simple stew made up primarily of leftovers from other dishes. Those who subsist solely on chanko tend to become extraordinarily fat. Again, the denizens of each particular room may offer different dishes from their own cultures and prepared according to their own palettes.

Adventure Seeds

The following ideas can be used as seeds for adventures set in or around The Four Winds:

- An avatar of the Whiskey Man from a distant world has gained enough personal strength to challenge the god for ownership of his portfolio. The Whiskey Man and the avatar find an empty common room in which to "battle" and patrons gather by the thousands to witness the contest of wills. The battle takes the form of an arm wrestling contest. While the Whiskey Man is preoccupied, the drow begin moving their troops through the plane in order to invade their enemies. Zeus Golden asks the adventurers to help put a stop to the elves' plans. Other patrons are asked to assist the adventurers if necessary.

- Elias Manzoiplodoc's maps are being magically mass reproduced by a ruthless, morally bankrupt wizard named Tançias Le Noir and sold at a fraction of the cost, threat-

ening to drive Elias out of business. He hires the adventurers to put a stop to the piracy. Tançias has dozens of elite goblin minions in his employ and spies everywhere. Getting to him will require cunning and not brute force.

- The demons and angels that devastated Elias' home world have done it again with a world called *Da Qiu*. Hundreds of thousands of refugees begin moving into the tavern from that world, somehow able to go through the doors *en masse*. Samurai warriors, ninjas, martial fighters, monks, and others begin taking over common rooms, north rooms, and bazaars by the hundreds. The Whiskey Man does nothing, despite the patrons' complaints, because he claims that if those people have the ability to get through the doors then they have as much right as anyone to be in The Four Winds. The leading patrons in the subsumed portions of the tavern form a council and decide that the only thing they can do is find a new world for the *qiu ren* (as they are called). They hire the adventurers, among others, to go to specifically designated planes and see if they are suitable for the refugees. The plane the adventurers are sent to investigate has an entire continent filled with non-sentient life and no civilization whatsoever, but the locals on that world's other continent want to keep it that way. Apparently, some dark magic is imprisoned on said continent and should anyone move there it would not only corrupt the new inhabitants, but also give them the means to take over the rest of the world. This situation has already happened once in that world's history, and so the locals will do everything they can to

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