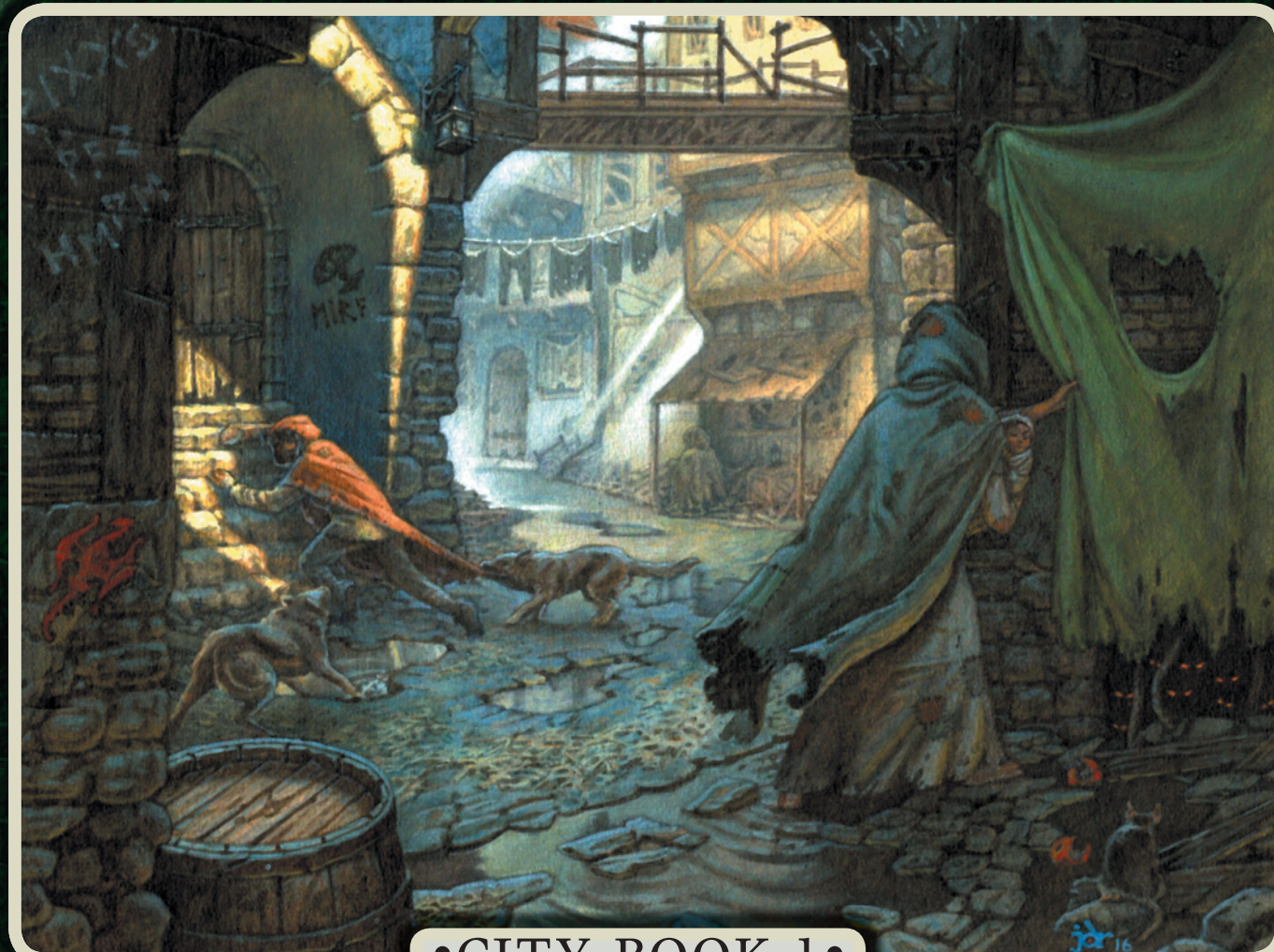


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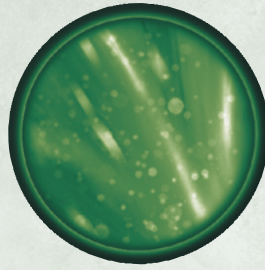
HELLFROST

•CITIES OF THE FREELANDS•



•CITY BOOK 1•





CITY BOOK 1

CITIES OF THE FREELANDS

BY PAUL "WIGGY" WADE-WILLIAMS

EDITOR: HANS BOTHE

COVER & GRAPHIC DESIGN: ROBIN ELLIOTT

COVER ILLUSTRATION: JUSTIN DAVID RUSSELL

CARTOGRAPHY: ROBIN ELLIOTT

TYPESETTING: PAUL WADE-WILLIAMS



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ASLOV



● HISTORY ●

Aslov's history dates back to the days before the Blizzard War. Founded around -400 by the Anari, it marked their most northerly settlement of any size in the Hearthlands. In these halcyon days it was known as Great Beckbury ("the great fortification by the stream"). Part trading hub, part bureaucratic center, and part military base, its walls covered an area many times that of the modern city.

During the long war against the Liche-Priest, Beckbury was a major center of resistance, its army guarding the sole pass through the Icebarrier Mountains. As the conflict turned against the dark lord, companies of stout warriors marched north beneath fluttering banners to help deliver the final blow (and capture new land in the name of the emperor).

Its armies also marched east and south, conquering the lands now called Nordmark and Royalmark. Countless slaves passed through the city's gates on their way to Alantaris Isle, and Beckbury, the hub of Anari dominance, became a Saxa watchword for oppression and all that was wrong with the empire.

Its walls were a mighty barrier, and the Hellfrost army spared no expense in reducing it to rubble as they poured through and over the mountains like a raging storm. The defenders fought valiantly and long, but they were outnumbered and their ultimate doom was fated. No records tell how many died that dark day, but it is believed its population exceeded that of modern Drakeport at least twice over.

With the war finally over, settlers slowly drifted back. Some were seeking to rebuild old lives, others looking for a new start away from the warlords that had risen in the south. Beckbury's position in the fertile farmland made it an ideal choice for rebuilding. Some of the rubble was used to construct new walls, but much of the old city was simply built over, Aslov rising from the ashes.

Aslov remained very much a provincial town until

the formation of the Crystalflow Confederacy in 246 IR. Suddenly new traders were heading north in search of unusual goods for the southern markets, and Aslov's location made it an ideal stopping point. The city's ruler quickly saw the potential in trade and ordered the building of new warehouses and gates. Within a few short years Aslov had become the Cogelund of the north, its infrastructure devoted to catering for merchants.

An increase in orc and goblin activities north of the Icebarrier over the last decade has caused many to give up their homes in search of a safer and more prosperous life in the Hearthlands. Many headed to Aslov, knowing it to be a wealthy city, and perhaps believing traders' stories that the streets really were paved with gold and silver. Unfortunately the rapid expansion of the population led to inflation. Refugees were forced to sell their possessions to survive, and quickly found themselves trapped, too poor or sick to move on to better pastures.

Aslov remains a trading city, but much of its wealth now disappears in trying to stave off disaster. The recent loss of Dunross, a major milling village that supplied Aslov with flour, has only exacerbated the problems the city faces.

Perhaps the streets were once lined with gold and silver, at least metaphorically, but today they are lined with the destitute, starving, sick and dying. Aslov's streets are still said to run with something, but it is not sanitary.

● SOCIAL HIERARCHY ●

Aslov has always been ruled by a baron. The title is hereditary, passing to the eldest child regardless of gender. By tradition, the baron's children are awarded the title knight. While nobles with higher titles may reside in the city if they so chose, they must acknowledge the authority of the baron.

Wealth and influence matters in Aslov, as does the illusion of wealth. The upper class, who reside in the

RULES OF THE REALM

These setting rules apply in Aslov.

* **Disease:** Outbreaks of sickness are common, especially in summer. During such times characters must make a Vigor roll each week spent in the city to avoid contracting a generic Short-Term, Debilitating disease. On a critical failure, they contract a more serious Long-Term Chronic, Minorly Debilitating disease.

* **Food Shortages:** The price of cheap and average meals and dry rations is quadrupled. Expensive meals cannot be purchased legally.

* **Trade Center:** The markets are full of goods from across Rassilon. Special availability goods can be purchased outside the usual places, but cost double. Village Availability items except food cost 50% of normal, Town items 75% (again, excluding food), and City items 90%. Heroes selling goods in Aslov have +2 to Streetwise rolls to find a buyer.

High Quarter, is made up of wealthy merchants, senior courtiers and bureaucrats (though rarely council members), senior clerics, powerful mages, rich or influential guildmasters and businessmen, and the like.

Beneath them are the middle class, whose houses lie close to (and occasionally within) the High Quarter. They are clerics, mages, merchants, businessmen, master craftsmen, courtiers, and so on.

Then come the lower class, the apprentices, laborers, soldiers, junior clerics and wizards, common businessmen, bureaucrats, and tradesmen, the masses who keep the city functioning at its most fundamental level.

At the bottom of the social pile are the refugees. The "lucky" ones managed to enter the city before the order was given to prevent any more refugees clogging the streets. The earliest arrivals were given lodgings in disused buildings, but most are forced to sleep rough in the streets. Work is scarce, though some can find employment doing dangerous, filthy, or illegal jobs for a pittance. Slavery is illegal in Aslov, but indentured servitude, which is only step above slavery to most, is not. Those who arrived later are forced to reside in Tent Town. Since it is outside the walls, there is little opportunity for finding employment.

GOVERNMENT

Baroness Olivia may rule Aslov, but she is not an autocrat. She is aided by a council of advisors, but one with no power of veto or the right to create legislation. Members also serve a vital role in the city's bureaucracy.

The council is made up of eleven members. Nine of the council seats are filled by elected officials (the titles of Constable-at-Arms and Treasurer are appointed directly

by Aslov's ruler). Elections are held every five years (next one due in 502 IR), with by-elections held as required. Only adult citizens born in Aslov or who have been resident for ten years and taken an oath of allegiance may vote or stand for office. Citizens elect councilors, but the elected officials decide amongst themselves who will fill what seat. Councilors receive no stipend, though there is always opportunity for titleholders to make money (often through less than honest means).

The council sits in session every Endedaeg, though the baroness may call it to sit at any time. In recent times it has met daily. While the council members debate larger issues, a small army of civil servants ensures the baroness' decrees are carried out and the city runs as smoothly as is possible given the current problems.

The title of each seat, a brief summary of its duties, and the name of the incumbent title holder (with gender, race/culture, age, and any important personal details in parentheses) is given below.

Constable-at-Arms: Commander of the city guard. *Incumbent:* Botho ap-Arnvid (male, Anari, 43, disgraced Knight Hrafn using an assumed name).

Leader: Chairman of the council. Has almost unlimited access to the baroness. *Incumbent:* Hrothgar ap-Alaric (male, Anari/Saxa, 30).

Taxman: Collection of taxes and maintaining tax records. *Incumbent:* Gertrude the Unpopular (female, Anari, 26).

Treasurer: Responsible for the city treasury and the mint. *Postholder:* Eevin Oddsdohtor (female, Anari, 32).

Clerk: Oversees all city records, such as the census, and the register of births, marriages, and deaths. *Incumbent:* Govier ap-Evart (male, Anari, 39).

Lawspeaker: Responsible for dissemination of new laws and overseeing the court. *Incumbent:* Ninian Wise-Tongue (male, Anari, 63, priest of Hothar).

Market Leader: Responsible for the markets and the issuing of business licenses. *Incumbent:* Malvina Short-Fingers (female, Anari, 48, priestess of Var).

Steward: Responsible for promoting trade. *Incumbent:* Leofric Thorvoldsunu (male, Saxa, 42, priest of Var and head of the Bakers' and Butchers' guild).

Warder of the Gates: Upkeep of the city gates. *Incumbent:* Lyris ap-Vinclin (female, Anari, 46).

Warden of the Granaries: Ensures the granaries are stocked and brokers prices with the outlying settlements. Oversees food rationing. *Incumbent:* Poppy (female, engro, 35, priestess of Eostre Plantmother).

Warden of the Walls: Upkeep of the city walls and artillery pieces. *Incumbent:* Mungo ap-Tolbert (male, Anari, 31, master mason).

LAW AND ORDER

Rationing has led to a healthy growth in crime. Murder rates have doubled, with citizens killing each other for a crust of bread, and theft has risen by many times, as citizens rob each other to pawn goods so as to buy food. Dozens of citizens vanish each night. Many are simply

murdered for their few possessions, their bodies dumped in the overworked sewers, but some are sacrificed by the growing number of cultists or, more sickeningly, become part of the food chain.

Forging a ration document is punishable by 40 lashes plus one week in the stocks for the first offense, loss of the dominant hand, a further 50 lashes, and another week in the stocks for the second, and death by public torture followed by beheading for the third. Those found hoarding food are subject to confiscation of all food in the property plus a fine equal to a month's income. Selling black market food is a capital crime, while purchasing it results in a stiff fine (a month's wages) and 20 lashes.

The use of non-area effect offensive magic is a crime except in self-defense, though the guards often turn a blind eye if such magic is employed in catching a criminal. Area effect spells are not only illegal, but may bring court actions against the character for damage to property. Defensive spells with showy trappings (fiery auras, stone skin, swirling winds, and so on) are intensely disliked since they show a clear lack of trust toward the citizens, though they are not illegal. Those obviously subjected to magic suffer a -2 Charisma penalty while the spell is being Maintained.

Spellcasters working as guards are licensed (100 gs per year, paid to the council) to wield magic in the course of their duties, though this does not grant them immunity from prosecution if they misuse their abilities.

Weapons may be carried in the streets, but they must be displayed openly and placed in a scabbard or similar covering. Drawing a weapon is punishable by flogging.

THE COURTS

The council acts as the court for judging civil and criminal cases. A minimum of five members is required to judge a civil case and seven for a criminal matter. The Lawspeaker leads the proceedings.

Minor crimes committed by members of the guard while on duty (such as cowardice and refusing to obey orders) are handled solely by the Constable-at-Arms. For more serious crimes (desertion and mutiny), trials are overseen by the Constable and the Wardens of the Gates and Walls.

Religious crimes are dealt with by a special religious court. The highest ranking cleric of each faith who permanently resides in Aslov is granted an automatic seat on the tribunal. Given the rivalry and politicking between cults, a skilled advocate can usually ensure his client is acquitted by playing the clerics against each other. About the only time the court sees eye-to-eye on criminal matters is on the prosecution of crimes relating to the worship of Dargar, Hela, Niht, Thrym, and Vali.

Minor crimes carry punishments of fines, confiscation of goods, long periods in the stocks, and public flogging. More serious offenses can result in enforced servitude to the city, a form of legal slavery. Criminals are worked hard and fed subsistence level rations during their sentence.

Capital crimes are carried out in a variety of ways.

Desertion and mutiny, for example, carry a sentence of death by drowning in the Brown River. Murder was punishable by hanging, but after the dangling corpses, left on the gallows as a warning to others began to vanish, the punishment was changed to beheading. Arson, a serious crime in a city built mainly of wood, involves death by burning, while those found guilty of treason and rebellion are hung, drawn, and quartered.

EDUCATION

Aslov boasts a single academy. Run by the cult of Hoenir, it charges high fees, and is thus only open to scions of the wealthiest families. Most children are home schooled by parents and grandparents, learning the skills they will need in adult life; basic history, culture, folklore, and law, and the major tenets of their families' patron deities, but little else. Schooling tends to occur in the evening, for during the day children are expected to earn their keep performing chores around the house or working in the family business. Children still play outdoors in the day, but always under the watchful eye of a parent or trusted guardian.

Merchants bring news of the wider world and skalds tell tales of lands far beyond the city walls. Thus, while many Freelanders are limited in their knowledge of the lands outside their borders by dint of their distance from well-trodden roads, the citizens of Aslov are considerably more worldly-wise.

The official language of Aslov is Trader, and all children learn it from an early age. Anari is spoken more than Saxa, but both are official second languages. Both Classical Anari and Auld Saxa can be heard in the temples and places of learning. Engrosi isn't uncommon on the streets, as engro caravans are frequent visitors.

RELIGION

Desperate times can drive men into the temples of the benevolent gods in the hope of salvation, but it can also drive them toward fell cults who thrive on misery. Aslov is undergoing a boom in both.

Given Aslov's status as a major center of trade, it is hardly surprising that Var is well supported here. A good fifth of the population is directly employed in the trade service industry, with jobs covering everything from brokers to porters and guards to hostelry owners, not to mention the various trades required to keep merchant caravans on the road. The city boasts a single temple and three shrines to the god of trade.

Eostre's dual aspects have always been important to the city. Even though it is surrounded by good agricultural land, Aslov has always struggled to adequately feed its citizens. In these troubled times Eostre is treated with a mixture of praise, for she alone can bring salvation,

and fear, for the lack of food is surely a sign she is displeased.

Eira has a presence in Aslov, though the cult remains small and largely inconsequential in city politics. With unrest reaching epidemic levels, the cult's cries for peace, unity, and patience are falling on deaf ears. As with Eostre, there are those who fear Eira has forsaken the city's inhabitants.

Being at the center of three major trade roads, a great number of visitors pass through the gates every year. Shrines to Freo stand at each of the main gates, allowing merchants and travelers to make offerings and pray for a safe journey before departing into the wilds.

Tiw, god of war, is the last of the major gods honored in any large numbers. Aslov has never been aggressive, but it has a strong and well-trained army, for its people know that if Hellfrost Keep falls, Aslov is next in line. Although the city is far from the Withered Lands, it has made pacts with the cult of Scaetha to place soldiers under their banner.

Save for the Gutter Runners, a few criminal gangs, and gamblers hoping to make enough money to enable them to leave Aslov and start afresh, Nauthiz receives little worship, though there are so many acts of theft that he receives praise by deed rather than voice.

The other benevolent gods (Nauthiz being of questionable character but rarely truly dark intent) have representatives, but the cults are small. Most lack a temple of any size or influence.

Considered the chief of the evil deities, Vali's cult is growing stronger by the day. Ironically, the two aspects of the cult are bitter rivals in Aslov.

Servants of the god who favor his aspects of vermin and overindulgence seek nothing less than the obliteration of Aslov and its inhabitants through famine and disease. While priests plot to destroy the crops as they grow and poison the granaries, his paladins are breeding a vast army of rats in preparation for a full frontal assault.

His other aspect, that of corruption, wants to maintain the *status quo*. Misery and desperation are powerful weapons in the quest to lead others astray, for there are many who would willingly walk a dark path if it meant feeding their families.

A small cell of Hela's cultists lives in the crowded city, for corpses are plentiful without resorting to murder. Few question citizens hauling bodies away on carts, for it is a daily occurrence, and what happens to the dead once beyond the walls of Aslov is no concern of theirs.

FESTIVALS

The major festivals of all the benevolent gods are honored in one way or another, though city law states that these are not automatically public holidays.

At their coronation, each baron selects five religious ceremonies of their choice to count as general public holidays. Baroness Olivia chose Purification Day (first Sunnandaeg of Sowanmonan), Profit Day (first Marketdaeg of Plohmonan), Battle Dance Day (set on the third Milcdaeg

of Plohmonan with the agreement of the local temple of Tiw), Reaping Day (first Heafoddaeg of Hegmonan), and Tally Day (first Marketdaeg of Fogmonan). Swapping these for other holy days requires the blessing of the council, which speaks on behalf of the general population.

The worried council is pressing the baroness to drop one of the existing holidays and instigate Famine Day (Raesdaeg of Snaermonan) as a major holiday.

Aslov enjoys three civic public holidays. Two of these are static in the calendar, while one is movable.

Barons Day occurs on the fourth Healfdaeg of Snaermonan, creating a three-day end of month holiday. The festival is the official birthday of all of Aslov's barons, creating a reason to celebrate during the cold winter. Starting at dawn, the names of all of Aslov's barons since the city's founding are shouted out from atop the High Gate by the leader of the city council. The holiday technically only begins when the name of the incumbent is read out. Council leaders have been known to drag out proceedings as long as possible.

Founding Day is held on the third Waesdaeg of Werremonan. It marks the day the first baron was enthroned, and officially marks the day Aslov was founded.

The last holiday is moveable, as it marks the current ruler's birthday. Under Baroness Olivia, that day is the second Milcdaeg of Huntianmonan. Citizens feast as best they can in honor of the baroness, always leaving a vacant seat at the table in case she call round. This tradition actually dates back to the time of Baron Colix (r. 263-295 IR) the Mad, who called at random houses to make sure his birthday was being celebrated.

MILITARY

Aslov is defended by a permanent guard of 200 men and women. They are divided into ten watches, each comprising 20 soldiers. Treat these as typical watch, but equipped as an experienced watchmen. A Watch Sergeant commands each watch (treat as watch captain Extras). Each watch is sub-divided into a half-watch of ten guards led by a Watch Corporal (treat as an experienced watchman). An additional force of 20 artillerymen mans the ballistae mounted on the gate towers.

In overall command of Aslov's overworked military, albeit under the auspices of Baroness Olivia, is the Constable-at-Arms (treat as a Knight Hrafn of the Upper House) Botho ap-Arnvid.

Each watch currently works a grueling 12-hour shift. During a typical day there is one-half watch assigned to each of the three great gates, a watch and a half manning the gate leading to the High Quarter, and two full watches protecting the Food Market vendors.

At night, the pattern changes. While the gates and streets are manned as during daylight, the two watches patrolling the Food Market are not required. Their night shift counterparts instead man the walls overlooking the High Quarter.

Training is provided by Shields of Tiw, though the clerics are not officially part of the guard. Eight Swords are on permanent retainer. Each serves with one of the gate watches, adding magic to their steel.

AUXILIARIES

Manning the walls and helping protect the gates is a force of militia known as the auxiliary watch. A force 240 strong, they are poor combatants, and are hired merely to keep an eye on the approaches. The pay is atrocious, but at least it is work, and it is rarely ever taxing. The Auxiliary is divided into two branches.

The wall watch, which comprises of 80 men (40 per shift), is responsible for patrolling the walls. In order to avoid arming hundreds of citizens, they are given no weapons in times of peace. Typically, 30 men patrol the city's outer walls and ten the wall separating the High Quarter from the Old City.

The second branch is the gate watch. Armed with large shields and clubs, they are divided into four squads of 20 men each shift. One squad is stationed inside each of the city's four great gates (including the High Gate). When the gates open to let in traffic, the wall watch rush out to form a shieldwall around the lead wagon, allowing the guards to check the cargo and collect taxes without having to fend off crowds of refugees and other undesirables. When that wagon is cleared, they part to allow the next caravan through the cordon. By law, they are only allowed to use force in extreme circumstances, but the city watch ignores any act of brutality.

Technically the auxiliary watch falls under the command of the Constable-at-Arms, but he has appointed a paladin of Rigr to oversee day-to-day affairs in the Wall Watch. Like the city guard, their forces are divided between day and night shifts.

CONSTABLES

The last official military arm are the constables. Trained and equipped as village militia, this 200 strong force is responsible for patrolling the street and enforcing the law. They answer directly to the council leader. A small number of Hothar's clerics work with the constables as freelance agents. Despite the constables' very public presence, the crime rate is rising steadily. Even if a perpetrator is apprehended, the court requires witnesses, and witnesses rarely come forward voluntarily, especially if the victim is a refugee.

PRIVATE FORCES

Many merchants and well-to-do citizens have private security forces to protect their property, and each cult is entitled to maintain paladins. The city charter requires them to help defend Aslov should it ever be attacked. Recently, that decree also required them to help quell the food riot, the baroness declaring the city had been attacked from within.

TRADE & TRIBUTE

Aslov produces very little in terms of trade goods given its large population, but the city is the hub for three major trade networks. Merchants from the Winterlands rarely proceed much further south than Aslov, for here they can sell their wares to traders whose markets lie deep in the Hearthlands. The western trade road terminates in the Magocracy, while to the east the road feeds into the Crystalflow Confederacy. These three stretches of road and their branches form a web that connects much of eastern Rassilon.

The three roads leading into the city are simply named the North, West, and East Great Roads.

Aslov's traders purchase great quantities of foodstuffs from outlying steads, villages, and small towns, yet the contents of the constant stream of wagons that flow through the city gates each fall are not enough to feed the burgeoning population. A single poor harvest is all that stands between survival and disaster. In order to try and alleviate the problem, Baroness Olivia has recently introduced a system of strict rationing and imposed heavy penalties for food hoarding and profiteering.

As well as fresh produce grown locally, Aslov imports preserved foods from wherever there is surplus. However, individual caravans rarely carry enough to supply the city for more than a day or two, and unscrupulous merchants are raising their prices, knowing the inhabitants have no choice but to pay.

Feast spells are being employed to combat the food shortage, but among mages only druids know the spell, and Aslov has no resident druids. The clergy who know the miracle are simply too few to make much difference. Even if they could cast the spell continually, barely a quarter of it would be distributed to where it is most needed due to problems with the infrastructure, and the presence of free food would start a riot that would likely injure, maim, or kill, many citizens. Thus, while it helps, magic is not the answer.

Aslov's primary exports are clothing, woven from locally produced materials, and pottery, the clay from which is gathered along the banks of the Brown River, whose cold waters flow through the city. Clay pits line the river several miles southwest of the city.

The city's primary occupation is trade. Goods are sold to local merchants, who hold the goods in storage until they find a suitable buyer. Few visiting merchants ever deal with merchants from other realms, for they cannot wait around until a prospective buyer turns up.

TAXES

Tax levels are rising steadily as the city struggles to import the food it needs to survive. Even pragmatic citizens, who understand why the taxes are high, balk at having to pay them.

Export Duty: Charging merchants a tax to transport

their goods out of the city is a major source of income. Baroness Olivia knows that without the income the city will die, but she cannot raise the tax level too high or merchants may decide to extend their journey north and use Hellfrost Keep as a trading hub. Because the amount of trade passing through the city remains high, the current export duty is 2%.

Food Tax: All citizens are required to pay 20% of their income to the city coffers. This money is used to purchase as much surplus food as possible. Unfortunately, that food is then rationed, and social status has no direct bearing on one's ration. The rich pay more than the poor, but receive exactly the same amount of food. This has earned the baroness no friends in Aslov's high society.

Gate Tax: A flat rate of 1 silver scield per leg or wheel applies to all persons, animals, and vehicles entering Aslov from dawn to dusk. From dusk to dawn, the rate increases to an extortionate 1 gold scield.

General Tax: One-tenth of a citizen's income goes to the city treasury. This money is used to pay and arm the guards, maintain the fortifications, and so on.

Hearth Tax: All property in Aslov is given a ratable value based on its size, regardless of the number of occupants. Currently the hearth tax stands at 2% of a property's value, paid annually. Temples pay just 1%.

Import Duty: Two separate import duties apply. Merchants who are bringing in goods purely to sell them to other merchants or to Aslov's government are charged a very reasonable 1%. Those who intend to sell their goods for distribution to the residents must pay 3%.

Sales Tax: All sales in Aslov are subject to a levy. Bulk trade deals between visiting merchants are charged at 1% to encourage trade, whereas local sales are charged at 10%. In game terms, all prices in Aslov except weapons (see below) are 10% higher than those in the *Player's Guide* equipment list. This additional to the Rules of the Realm notes.

Tithes: Donations to temples are voluntary. Despite the name, which relates to one-tenth of one's income, citizens are permitted to pay whatever they feel they can afford. Unfortunately for the temples, that often means very little. Temples without another source of income are struggling to survive as worried citizens cut back on their expenses.

Weapon Tax: With tensions running high, the baroness is keen to prevent the citizens arming themselves. All sales of weapons are charged a 20% levy.

MARKETS

Aslov has five marketplaces. Each is little more than a flat square with spaces for stalls and animal pens marked out on the ground. A typical stall measures some ten feet long and is covered with a colored awning to keep rain from spoiling the goods.

Unless stated otherwise in the Major Locales section, the markets are open from dusk to dawn every day of the week, though Marketdaeg is always the busiest day of the week. Generally, around one-quarter of the stallholders bother to set up on Heafoddaeg and Healfdaeg through

Endedaeg. Around half the traders open up on the other days of the week. The exception is Raestdaeg, which is treated like a Marketdaeg. On public holidays, the markets are open from dawn until noon, regardless of what day of the week it is.

In order to try and curb the black market, Baroness Olivia recently declared it a crime to purchase or sell goods except through a registered stallholder or business. Visiting adventurers may be unaware of this legislation, for most citizens ignore the decree if given an opportunity to buy items cheaply.

FOOD RATIONING

All foodstuffs are subject to enforced rationing. Each month, every household is given a piece of parchment detailing its monthly allowance. Rations are based on the number of occupants, not their social status. As food is purchased, items are crossed off the list. Typically, the calorific intake allowed by the restrictions is just enough to avoid starvation, so long as citizens are frugal with their meals and waste nothing.

This does not mean that food is free in the city. Far from it—citizens must still pay for every ounce of grain, bread, meat, and vegetables they consume. Thus, while employed citizens can just about cope, the refugees, many of whom have no source of income beyond selling their few remaining possessions, must resort to crime to feed their empty bellies.

THE BLACK MARKET

The resident thieves' guild, the Gutter Runners, has so far avoided becoming embroiled in black market food. It prefers to concentrate on its old habits, stealing goods which can be sold to visiting merchants in return for cold, hard cash, and focusing on crimes that don't carry an automatic death penalty. This vacancy in the criminal world has been filled by individuals, small gangs, and the cult of Vali, which is only too keen to help corrupt the desperate citizens.

ARCHITECTURE

The streets of Aslov, whether the main thoroughfares that cut through the city or the narrow alleys of the Old City, are crowded with pedestrians and carts day and night.

Despite the entire city being razed during the Blizzard War, the citizens have refused to expand their homes outside the city walls, trusting in the walls to protect them. While some houses retain fancy carvings, an indication of Aslov's former grandeur and wealth, most houses are in need of repairs and a lick of whitewash.

Most houses have two stories, a few have three, but in the Old City only families who run a business occupy multiple floors. Furnishings are minimal, most families

having sold off all but the essentials to guarantee they can afford food. Tallow candles light most homes, with only the rich being able to afford oil lamps.

In order to support the weight, lower floors are made of stone, with the upper floor wattle and daub. Due to the abundance of potters, roofs are covered with clay tiles.

Although Aslov has a primitive sewer system, the increased population means the streets are regularly inches deep in human and animal filth, at least until the rains wash it away down one of the drains. In warm summers, the stench is unbearable, forcing citizens to buy strongly scented herbs, which they carry around in small bags. Flies become a nuisance as the temperature increases. In winter, the dirt and muck form a frozen crust, making walking treacherous.

In the High Quarter, gloomy nights are broken by oil lanterns hung from tall poles at road intersections. In the Old City, the only street lights are those citizens hang outside their homes. Since the refugees began flocking in, that practice has largely stopped except outside the temples and buildings watched over by armed guards.

Aside from the High Quarter, which is centered on wealth rather than occupation, the city has no distinct quarters or wards. Traders and craftsmen open up shop on the ground floor of their homes, and similar crafts are thus scattered throughout the city.

THE SUN

As elsewhere, the inhabitants of Aslov base their working day on the rising and setting of Sigel's Hearth. Below are the local sunrise and sunset times and the hours of daylight for the first day of each month.

Month	Sunrise	Sunset	Daylight
Snaermonan	0749	1617	8h 28m
Frostmonan	0731	1655	9h 24m
Eostremonan	0646	1739	10h 53m
Plohmonan	0551	1819	12h 28m
Sowanmonan	0456	1900	14h 4m
Werremonan	0414	1938	15h 24m
Scerranmonan	0359	2002	16h 3m
Hegmonan	0416	1955	15h 39m
Haerfestmonan	0451	1918	14h 27m
Falmonan	0529	1825	12h 56m
Huntianmonan	0607	1727	11h 20m
Fogmonan	0649	1637	9h 48m
Wulfmonan	0730	1608	8h 38m

MAJOR LOCALES

Aslov is a major city focused on supporting the trade network it straddles. In addition to the locales detailed below, all the major crafts are represented. Although it may require a Streetwise roll to glean the address of a particular business, the characters should have little dif-

ficulty finding armorers, and weaponsmiths, herbalists, healers, glassblowers, potters, weavers, dyers, tanners, blacksmiths, farriers, parchment makers, carpenters, masons, wheelwrights, scholars, and so on.

Inns and taverns are plentiful. The quality of furnishings, entertainment, and service varies immensely from downright disgusting to luxurious. Due to rationing, few establishments can offer much beyond basic fare (porridge, soup, bread, cheese, and slivers of meat). "Special orders" can be arranged, but only for trusted customers with ready coin in their purse.

OUTSIDE THE WALLS

1. WALLS AND GATES

Aslov's outer walls are 30 feet (5") high and 18 feet (3") wide at the base, tapering gently to 12 feet (2") at the top. A crenelated parapet runs along the outside, with a lower wall on the inside.

The small towers stand 12 feet (2") higher than the wall. Entrances on both sides allow patrols to pass through the towers, while a tightly wound spiral stair provides access to the battlements from ground levels. The stairwell is blocked by a stout wooden door. Every Watch Corporal and Watch Sergeant has a key, as does the Constable-at-Arms.

Before the current problems, stores of crossbow bolts and arrows were kept here in case the city fell under attack. The ammunition was removed to the armory to ensure it did not fall into the hands of rioters.

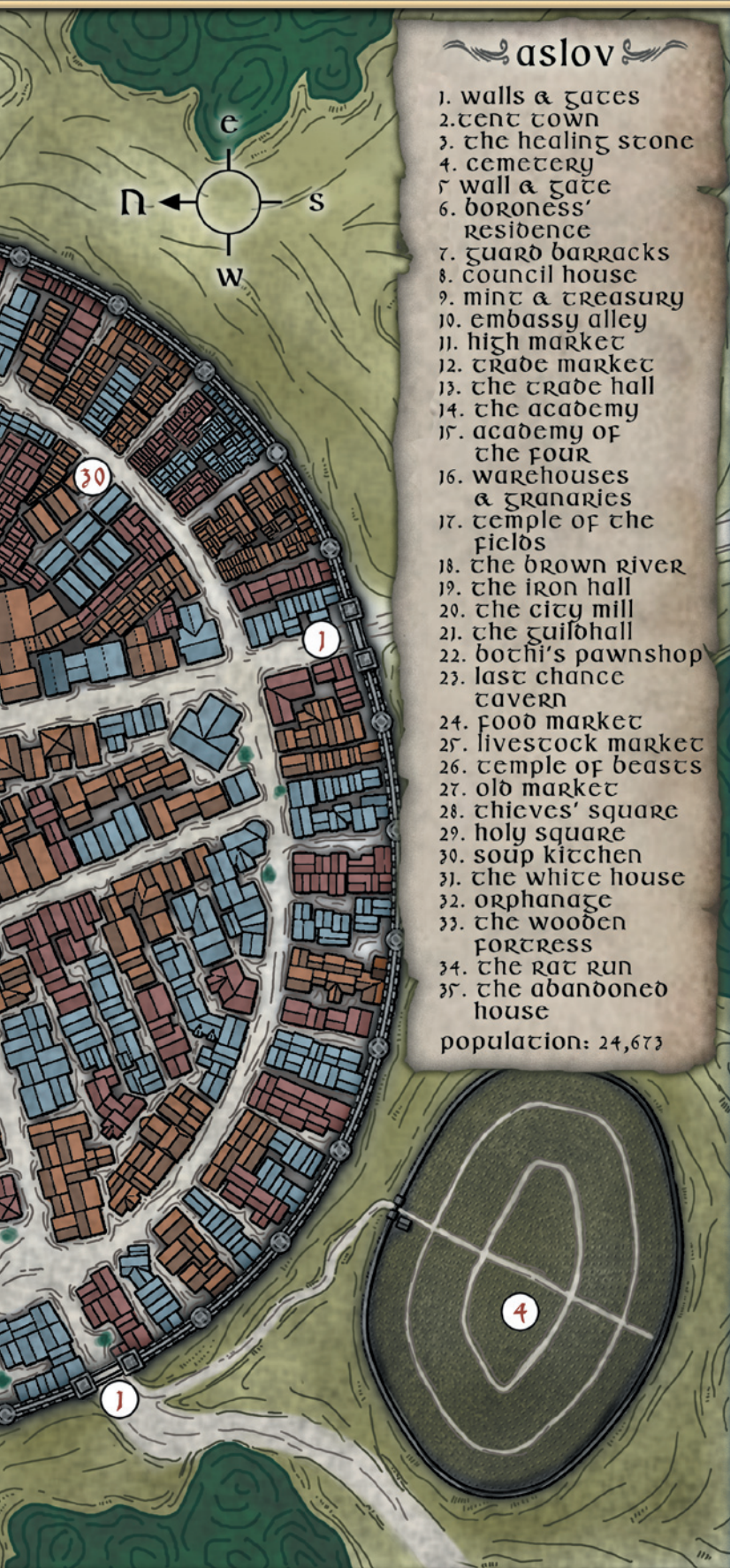
The walls are broken by three main gates, conveniently called the North, West, and East Gates after the roads that pass through them. Visitors quickly learn that the gates' names have little to do with their true geographic position, as both the West and East Gates are located to the south of the city center.

Each gate has two reinforced wooden portals, both 12 feet high (2"), six feet wide (1"), and a foot thick. Each gate is fronted and backed by an iron portcullis, the control mechanism for which resides in the upper gatehouse.

Each gate is protected by a rectangular gate house that stands 12 feet (2") higher than the surrounding wall. The upper level serves as a guardhouse, though due to the watch having to provide extra security in the Food Market it is rarely occupied except in emergencies. Murder holes in the floor allow defenders to fire arrows or pour boiling oil onto attackers. The roof is flat, with only a low crenelated wall. Positioned atop each one is a pair of ballistae.

The gates are "open" from dawn to dusk. Physically the gates and portcullises are kept closed to prevent refugees from storming into the city. They are only opened when caravans or legitimate visitors seek entrance. A half-watch of guards mans each gate during this time, standing between the gate and the outer portcullis. At night, the guards retreat to the warmth and safety of the gatehouse. Visitors arriving





after dark must call out if they want entrance. Although technically required to allow travelers in after dark, the guards rarely bother unless bribed.

Freo's Shrines: Each of the main gates has a shrine to Freo. These take the form of menhirs engraved with a compass pointing in the appropriate direction.

There are no boots or shoes at any of the shrines. Gangs of desperate refugees hang around the shrines hoping a passing cleric or pious traveler makes an offering. When one does, fights often break out as the needy scramble to grab the footwear. Quality footwear is sold for a few silver coins, enough to buy a crust of bread or bowl of thin soup. Poor quality items are, so many residents claim, boiled down and eaten.

2. TENT TOWN

For many refugees the closest they get to the city is Tent Town. A slum of poorly constructed wooden shacks, lean-tos, and tents, it is overcrowded and filthy. Crime is rampant, as is disease. The city guard never voluntarily enters the slum, and justice is a distant memory.

Unfortunately, Tent Town straddles the East Great Road. Caravans and travelers are routinely mobbed by hungry refugees, and violence is common as caravan guards struggle to stop the cargoes from being looted. Such is the desperation of the inhabitants that families shove their wretched and sickly children at visitors, begging them to take youngsters away to a better life.

3. THE HEALING HOUSE

The Sisterhood of Mercy maintains a small shack in Tent Town, where they provide free healing to the refugees. There are just four Sisters working here, protected by 20 Swords of Necessity. Unlike the paladins of Eira, who prefer to use threats to calm down troublemakers, the Swords use violence against those who would threaten the Sisters. Most refugees have learned to treat the healers with respect, and those who haven't sport injuries brought on by their ignorance or arrogance.

4. CEMETERY

Lack of space quickly forced the citizens of Aslov to bury their dead outside the city walls. The cemetery lies between the west and east roads. A high wall broken by a single large gate surrounds the cemetery. Inside, it is divided into three distinct areas.

The rich and powerful are interred beneath statues and elaborate grave markers in the center of the compound. The graves of commoners, which surround those of the rich, are marked by simple stones. The placement of expensive grave goods has ended due to the current troubles, though many of

the older graves and mausolea contain valuables. These days, poorly manufactured, low-quality goods are placed with the dead, symbolic of their status but with no intrinsic value. Paupers are buried in unmarked mass graves in the four corners.

As space became limited, the cult of Scaetha, which oversees the cemetery, began charging high rates for internment. As a result, most corpses are cremated, the ashes then placed in urns. Urns vary from plain clay bearing only the name of the deceased to elaborately decorated and colored vessels. These are either buried in family plots or placed in niches cut into the inner face of the wall. The ashes of paupers are scattered on the mass graves, since even the cost of a simple clay urn is beyond the very poorest members of society.

Just inside the gate is a small house occupied by two priests and one paladin of Scaetha. A shrine to Scaetha, a tall stone carved with the goddess standing atop a pile of skulls, stands outside the building.

THE HIGH QUARTER

The High Quarter is the abode of rich and influential citizens, as well as the main hub of trade and politics.

5. WALL & GATE

The High Quarter is separated from the Old City by a wall. It has the same dimensions as the main city walls. The sole gate, the High Gate, has heavily reinforced portals measuring only nine feet high (1.5"). Unlike the main city gates, the gatehouse has two flanking towers, each holding a single ballista. Two further ballistae sit on the flat roof of the central portion. The gates are kept locked and the portcullises down day and night. A half-watch of city guard maintains constant vigil from the gatehouse.

All citizens who live and work in the High Quarter carry an engraved wooden token stamped with a unique number. Presentation of a token does not grant instant access—if the guards do not know the holder by sight he is required to give his name, which is checked against a master list. Visiting merchants whose business takes them into the High Quarter do not need tokens—when a caravan destined for the warehouses or Trade Market enters, guards on the outer gate raise colored flags to alert the guards to the wagons' imminent arrival.

Other visitors to the High Quarter may be waved through with no more than a casual glance, while those of disreputable appearance or known through reputation to be troublemakers may be subjected to lengthy questioning and rough body searches before the guards grant access. They are then given a wooden token, which must be returned when they leave.

6. BARONESS' RESIDENCE

Baroness Olivia and her household live in a fortified manor. Much of the structure is dominated by the grand hall. This impressive chamber serves as the baroness'

court, as well as the feasting hall when entertaining honored guests. The citizens widely believe that a secret tunnel leads to the council house, allowing the baroness to visit her councilors without having to be seen in public. In this way, so the rumors go, the citizens are kept in the dark about the true extent of Aslov's problems, since they never know when their ruler is seeking advice.

7. GUARD BARRACKS

This stone building houses the barracks, mess hall, and kitchen for the city guard. The watches share barracks, with one day watch and one night watch assigned the same quarters. Although guards keep their own weapons by their sides, Aslov's armory is located in the council house (see #8).

In the main assembly room hangs Aslov's war banner, a long, dark green standard with the city's symbol—three gates arranged in triangular fashion, picked out in gold thread. Despite being called the war banner, it has never been carried in battle, and the citizens hope this remains true in their lifetime.

8. COUNCIL HOUSE

The center of Aslov's bureaucracy is the fortified council house. As well as the council chamber, which doubles as the law court, it contains offices for each councilor, the records office (in the basement), and a shrine to Hothar, god of justice.

One of the more paranoid barons, who feared his soldiers might try to dethrone him, had the city armory moved here. A single heavy door provides the only access, and only the baroness, the Master-at-Arms, and the Treasurer have keys. Stored inside are suits of leather armor, long bows, and crossbows for 200 men, 50 long and short swords, 100 medium shields, 25 large shields, and thousands of arrows and bolts.

Behind a second door, this one made of solid iron and, lies the city's alchemical arsenal—50 crossbow bolts enchanted with *blast*, 10 staves containing *barrier* spells (each creates 3" of *barrier*), and 10 *blast* devices enchanted into ballista bolts.

9. MINT & TREASURY

Aslov's mint, the only official one in the Freelands, produces gold and silver scields stamped on the "tails" side with the city's symbol and the "heads" side with a stylized image of the current ruler.

The treasury is protected by expensive alchemical *glyphs*, as well as a variety of mundane traps. Aside from the baroness and the Treasurer, exactly who else may pass the glyphs safely is kept a closely guarded secret.

Additional security is provided by a squad of 20 guards hired through the temple of Var. None are known clerics, but all have been carefully chosen for their honesty and integrity. Treat them as veteran mercenary infantry led by two mercenary infantry captains.

10. EMBASSY ALLEY

Aslov may be a small city-state, but size does not always equate to power. Thanks to its location more than anything else, the city is a major artery in the great trade network, and that means it, and the decisions of its ruler, are important to others.

Embassy Alley, a nickname, contains the residences of emissaries from the Crystallflow Confederacy, Heligioland (elected every five years), Coglelund, the Magocracy, Angmark, Nordmark, and Royalmark. Due to its strategic location and military resources, both the Hearth Knights and the cult of Scaetha have a representative stationed here permanently. It is widely rumored the Reliquary has an emissary here, though if this is true his identity is unknown to the other ambassadors.

Each ambassador has a visible bodyguard that watches over their property and person around the clock, but it is likely there are many magical wards in place as well.

As emissaries of foreign nations, major organizations, and respected cults, these dignitaries deal directly with the baroness, circumventing the council.

11. HIGH MARKET

Catering to wealthier citizens, the market sells expensive and fine quality goods. It is also the only market that sells weapons. Traders may not sell live animals or food (hot or cold) here.

Var's Shrines: Standing in the center of the Food (#24), High, and Old (#27) Markets are shrines to Var. Each takes the form of a carved wooden column depicting a scowling Thieftaker. Carved beneath the image are the penalties for theft, as well as a warning that market guards are authorized to use deadly force.

12. TRADE MARKET

Common citizens rarely ever visit the Trade Market, for it is concerned with the buying and selling of bulk cargoes between merchants. There are no stalls here, only places where visiting merchants may park their wagons while waiting to negotiate a deal. The market is open 24 hours a day, much to the annoyance of the rich citizens of the High Quarter.

13. THE TRADE HALL

Facing the Trade Market is the great temple of Var, the true center of trade in Aslov. It is the clergy of Var who broker most deals between local and visiting merchants. They use their extensive contacts and knowledge to link buyers with sellers, and then arrange the best deal possible for their clients.

Although many citizens suspect collusion between brokers, what with them all serving the same temple, there is very little underhanded behavior—each cleric's profits are his personal income, and he has a greedy god to appease. Thus, competition between brokers to ensure their client goes away a richer man than his opposite is intense.

Typically, a broker demands a fee of 0.5% of the price of any cargo bought or sold, though skilled brokers with plentiful contacts can get away with charging more—the quicker a cargo is sold, the sooner the seller can purchase new wares to transport home.

The paladins of the cult hire their services as guards to local merchants and businessmen, as well as to visiting caravans during their stay in the city. Thieftakers charge a non-negotiable rate of 5 gold scields per point of Faith and Notice per day (discerned by regular cult testing and backed up with a letter signed by the high priest). An average Thieftaker with d6 in both skills thus costs 20 gold scields a day. This is considerably higher than that of regular guards (which varies from 1-3 gs per days), but those watchmen do not have access to miracles designed specifically to prevent theft. Given the high crime rate, only the most frugal of merchants fails to hire at least one Thieftaker to protect his wares.

The cult is also responsible for collecting export, import, and sales tax on behalf of the city. In return for providing this service, the temple takes a 1% cut. Such duties, which can involve being threatened and beaten, are usually given to junior clerics. The cult can call the city guard to help enforce the baroness' tax policies.

14. THE ACADEMY

Aslov's sole center of traditional formal education is located in the High Quarter. Here the children of the rich learn from clerics of Hoenir and skalds. Young children learn literacy and numeracy, the history, laws and customs of their city, and the basic tenets of the gods. This early learning lasts from the age of five to 12, whereupon the child may leave to take up an apprenticeship or enroll in advanced courses.

Knowledge of other languages, lands, customs, folklore, and religions, military strategy, the wonders of the arcane, heraldry, and other knowledge are available to those with money to spend on educating their children. Regardless of wealth, no student may stay on at the academy beyond the age of 21.

The Academy contains Aslov's largest library. It is open to students and faculty members free of charge. Non-students must apply in writing for permission to peruse the books and scrolls. The process usually takes around a week (1d8+4 days), and there is an administration fee of 10 gs per day or part thereof.

15. ACADEMY OF THE FOUR

Even before the influx of refugees, Aslov already had a sizeable population. Sensing an opportunity, the Convocation purchased a house in the High Quarter and converted it into a school. Currently there are four tutors, one for each element, but just six students. Magus Havelock Beet-Nose, so named for his huge, misshapen ruddy nose, is head of the academy. The school specializes in alchemy, and sells alchemical devices at the High Market. A small annex serves as a shrine to Maera. There is no charge for praying here on

Monandaeg and the days of festivals to Maera, as the shrine is opened to the public for 24 hours. A 5 gs fee applies on other days, 10 gs between dusk and dawn.

Visiting elementalists may stay at the academy free of charge, though food is subject to rationing as elsewhere in the city. Visiting alchemists may exchange time spent working in the laboratory for free accommodation. The small library is open only to members of the Convocation except by prior arrangement.

16. WAREHOUSES & GRANARIES

The rulers of Aslov had the warehouses and granaries moved to the High Quarter long ago. Since the High Quarter has long been the last redoubt of the population in the event of an attack, it made sense to keep the city's storage facilities here. It also increased the power of the baron, since he or she could now control the distribution of food and tax merchants more easily.

The warehouses and granaries were all once held by independent merchants or consortia. Today, the granaries are monitored by the state, with city officials placed to keep a carefully tally of food going in and out. The warehouses have been guarded day and night following the recent food riots. Most of these guards are mercenaries, little more than well-armed thugs well rewarded for standing around all day, but the richest merchants have long-term security agreements with the cult of Var.

The two favorite rumors regarding the granaries are they are already empty (the guards merely maintaining the illusion of normality to prevent further riots) and they are packed full to the brim with food, but only for those living in the High Quarter. Neither is quite true.

17. TEMPLE OF THE FIELDS

Constructed of wood and decorated with carvings of grains and vegetables, this temple to Eostre Plantmother stands among the city's granaries. While the four priests spend their time blessing the granaries and driving out vermin, the dozen paladins most often operate beyond the city limits, safeguarding the outlying farms and escorting food shipments.

Part of the main temple is dedicated to Veth, protector of granaries. The resident paladin and sole cleric, Milada Four-Lives, is more concerned with ending the trade in cats as food animals than combating the escalating rat problem. (Visitors to Aslov quickly notice a distinct lack of cats and dogs—the citizens ate them early on in the crisis.) She is often seen at the Livestock Market berating both sellers and buyers. The raising of cats for food is not exactly widespread, and Milada is making a mountain out of a molehill.

Like their Animalmother brethren, the clerics operate a separate business. In this instance, it is a herbalist shop in the High Quarter.

THE OLD CITY

18. THE BROWN RIVER

On most maps, the narrow river that flows through

Aslov—a lesser tributary of the Crystalflow—is labeled the Upper Stream. Barely thirty feet wide, it is spanned by three single arch bridges.

The water is not drinkable in the city or for several miles downstream due to the effluence that enters from the sewers, the corpses frequently found bobbing in the cold water, the out spill from several tanneries and potters, and the general garbage thrown in by citizens. Many citizens use it as a lavatory, squatting at the banks or standing on the bridges to relieve themselves. Falling in the river is a surefire way to catch a vile disease, and drinking the water is almost always fatal.

The cult of Eira has made countless attempts to stop the inhabitants from using the river as a dump, but all have failed to achieve even minimal results.

19. THE IRON HALL

Located close to the High Quarter gate, the Iron Hall is operated by the Iron Guild. It serves both as a hiring hall for merchants in need of caravan guards and as barracks for Guild members seeking employment.

The guild maintains a force of 50 heavy infantry and 50 cavalry. Aside from five administrators, the Guild has no other support personnel in Aslov. This stems from a deal cut with a previous baron, who wanted local craftsmen and workers to benefit from the Guild's presence. In return for employing locals, the Guild pays a reduced tax. The guildmaster, Gauntlet-General Aelwynn Far-Traveled, is a former merchant. While many of her peers elsewhere play up the dangers of territory surrounding their offices in order to hire out more guards, and thus increase the Guild's profits, Aelwynn bases her advice on the route, season, value of the cargo, and good intelligence, only offering the guards she feels the merchant actually needs. As a result of her honesty, not to mention her astute ability to offer the right number and composition of guards, trade is brisk.

The guild has recently gone into competition with the cult of Var, offering local merchants and businesses the protection of the guild. Rather than watching caravans, the Guild extends its gauntlet to warehouses and property. Although its members lack miraculous powers, the Guild's rates are highly competitive.

20. THE CITY MILL

Powered by teams of mules and fed by teams of millers, the mill operates around the clock, transforming supplies of grain into coarse flour for sale to the bakeries or on behalf of outlying villages and steads. State-owned, rates for grinding flour are set by the council annually. Security is provided by a squad of 20 mercenaries paid for out of city funds.

21. THE GUILDHALL

Aslov's craftsmen have formed primitive guilds. The guilds have no authority to impose any laws or restric-

tions on their members, though membership costs 0.5% of annual income. The guilds exist to give the craftsmen a voice in local politics. Each recognized guild, regardless of size, appoints a spokesman to speak on behalf of its members. The spokesman is always a craftsman of the appropriate sort. He is entitled to a small stipend for taking on extra duties, but is not a full-time bureaucrat.

The spokesmen, who form the Guild Council, collectively appoint a single guildmaster each year. The guildmaster belongs to no guild, nor by guild by-laws can he be a craftsman or trader. His role is purely political and bureaucratic. His salary is covered by members' dues. Most often the role is awarded to a cleric.

Disputes between members of the same guild or a citizen and a guild member are often settled by the guild's spokesman, since going to court costs money. If an amicable settlement cannot be reached, the guildmaster becomes involved. The guildmaster is also responsible for bringing affairs concerning the guilds, individually or collectively, to the city council.

Aslov's guilds are the Architects and Stonemasons, the Apothecaries (healers, herbalists, and alchemists), the Carpenters, the Butchers and Bakers (actually covers all food related trades in the modern era), the Clothiers (leatherworking, tailors, weavers, and all associated crafts), the Metalworkers (all forms of metalworking), the Laborers (stevedores, dung collectors, lantern lighters, and other such roles), the Scribes (including related crafts, such as ink and parchment making, bookbinding, and so on), and the illustriously named Unified Guild of Aslov (everyone else).

22. BOTHI'S PAWNSHOP

A seemingly innocuous junk shop, Bothi's pawnshop is crammed full of furniture, clothes, and knickknacks. A well-protected vault contains jewelry, armor, weapons, and other objects of value. A second vault, cunningly hidden and protected by magic, contains alchemical devices, books of lore and learning, and other expensive items.

Citizens in need of hard currency sell their goods to the owner, Bothi the Handsome. Payments are low, and vary on the length of time the object is to remain in his charge. If the owner does not return and buy back his possessions (with a 15% interest per month charge included), they become the legal property of Bothi.

Given that most citizens are looking to sell possessions, Bothi mainly sells mundane objects to outsiders attending the markets or merchants looking for something either for personal use or for a particular client back home. Every year during the summer he packs up his shop onto several carts and tours the outlying villages and farms, spending a month or two hawking his wares before returning.

Bothi has no trouble from the Gutter Runners. Little surprising really, as he is a senior member. He has little skill with locks or picking pockets, but he is an excellent fence, his contacts spread across the city's social strata and extend to neighboring lands.

23. LAST CHANCE TAVERN

Situated just inside the city walls, the Last Chance is a favorite watering hole of adventurers heading to Hellfrost Pass. The owner, a retired Hearth Knight named Jorg Nader, entertains the patrons at night with tales of the horrors which lie beyond the mountains. He also doubles as a recruiter for the Knights.

24. FOOD MARKET

Vendors in the Food Market sell only foodstuffs, whether that is raw vegetables or cooked delights, such as rat on a stick. Most stalls are barely half stocked on a good day, and much of the produce is past its best.

Although the Constable-at-Arms has recently ordered two full watches to guard the market, the stallholders band together to hire Thieftakers to watch the crowds and protect their stalls. It eats into their profits, but less so than having stock stolen by hungry citizens. Both the guard and cult of Var are permitted to use lethal force in the enforcement of the law.

25. LIVESTOCK MARKET

This market holds dozens of livestock pens. Farmers from the outlying settlements drive their animals here every week. Although it is possible to buy an individual animal, most sales are bulk lots of livestock destined to become food. Cattle, goats, sheep, geese, ducks, chickens, pigs, and even cats and dogs can be found for sale every Marketdaeg, the only day the market is open.

26. TEMPLE OF BEASTS

The main part of the temple to Eostre Animalmother is a long wooden hall containing a dozen animal pens. These are used to hold sick animals, which the clerics tend using herbs and, when the owner is rich enough, magic. A small annex contains the clerics' living quarters, as well as storerooms and a herbalist workshop.

The temple currently houses two priests, three paladins, and 20 support staff. None of the staff have taken holy vows. As part of their duties, the clergy check all animals brought to the Livestock Market to ensure they are not carrying diseases. Those found to be sick and incurable, or infected with a contagious ailment, are ritually slain and their carcasses hauled outside the city walls to be burned. At least, that is the theory. Unscrupulous workers responsible for transporting the carcasses to the pyre have been selling the diseased meat on the black market, from where it enters the food chain.

The cult tries its best to help alleviate the food shortage with *feast* spells, but only one cleric of the cult (including the Plantmother aspect) now knows the miracle—of the three others who did, two disappeared under very mysterious circumstances and one was found murdered in a backstreet of the Old City.

The cult owns a stable in the Old City where riding

and draft horses can be purchased, as well as a saddlers' shop and a farrier shop next door. In order to prevent citizens from purchasing the mounts for food, the clerics doubled their prices. They will reduce prices to normal rates, but only if they can be convinced the mount is being purchased to ride or pull carts. Although not physically joined to the main building, they are considered part of the temple, and so pay only 1% hearth tax, giving them an advantage over their competitors.

27. OLD MARKET

A bustling hive of activity, the Old Market caters to average citizens. Many of the wares focus on daily life and functional goods, such as clothes, cutlery, lanterns, lamp oil, candles, furniture, and pottery. Traders are forbidden from selling food (raw or cooked), live animals, and weapons here.

A bear pit stands in the northeast corner. Entertainment used to take the form of animal fights, much to the disgust of the resident clerics of Eostre Animalmother. These days animals of all types are more valued as food. In place of animal fights, bare-knuckle boxing and, more rarely, licensed armed combat have met the citizens' need for entertainment.

Armed duels are usually faked, though two rivals may seek the permission of the court to settle their dispute with blood. Killing a rival in a court-sanctioned fight is not murder—it is justice. Bare-knuckle boxing has become big business. Common citizens can pay a small fee for the chance to strike it rich by taking on one of the pit champions, and rival champions duke it out to the cheers of the crowd, their managers taking bets from the eager audience.

28. THIEVES' SQUARE

Beside the old market is another open square. Nomadic engro, who are frequent visitors to the city, pay a small fee to park their caravans here. Naturally wary of cities and little liked by the inhabitants, the engro arrange their caravans into concentric squares for protection.

Reports of thefts and burglaries invariably rise dramatically whenever the engros gather in any numbers, hence the square's popular name. It is true that engros are naturally light-fingered, but most of the crimes are perpetrated by the Gutter Runners, who use the travelers' presence to shift the blame.

29. HOLY SQUARE

Aslov has only a handful of temples. Citizens looking to worship a deity with no formal building gather at this square. Twenty-four wooden pillars, each carved to resemble one of the greater gods, line the edge of this square. Even the evil deities are represented, for to ignore them would invite punishment. None of the pillars are technically shrines—they are just a convenient way of providing a focus for worship.

30. SOUP KITCHEN

Operating out of the slums is a soup kitchen. Free soup (watery but edible), and hard, black bread are handed out each day to the refugees and inhabitants of the slum district by surly looking brutes.

The kitchen is actually the headquarters for the Gutter Runners. Customers are expected to act as the eyes and ears for the guild around town as payment for the free food. The food is largely bought legally—the thieves know how to stretch the rations to their limit by bulk-ing out meals with sawdust and vermin, and the cost involved is trivial compared to the valuable information they are gathering.

The guild's strength currently stands at one guildmaster, three master thieves, eight thieves (one of whom is Bothi the Handsome from #22), and 15 apprentices.

31. THE WHITE HOUSE

While the city boasts its share of apothecaries, herbalists, doctors and quacks, there is only a single hospital. Run by the cult of Eira, it provides a wide range of mundane and magical healing. The six resident clerics and ten mundane healers charge for their services, which has forced many refugees to seek medical aid from the Sisters of Mercy operating out of Tent Town. While the two hospitaler factions have never come to blows, there is certainly no love lost between them.

The hospital has a total of thirty beds, all of which are full. Such is the demand for medical aid that the sick and injured must lie on the floor while awaiting treatment. Sanitation is poor, simply because the clerics are too hard-pressed to regularly sweep the floors and change the bed linen.

The hospital also doubles as a small temple to Eira. A gaggle of refugees flocks here daily to pray for salvation though worshippers must step over bodies and sometimes corpses to reach the altar. Security is maintained by ten paladins.

32. ORPHANAGE

Aslov has always had an orphanage, and it has always been a privately funded enterprise. No one remembers who founded the orphanage or when, but each year a cowed messenger arrives in the city with a coffer full of gold coins to support it for another year. Alas, the number of orphans left on their doorstep grows each month, but the finances they receive remain constant.

The orphanage is run by an order of women calling themselves the Matrons of Eira. None of them are clerics, few are competent healers, and they have no allegiance to the cult beyond being laity. There are six matrons working here, barely enough to care for their charges.

Those placed here sleep in simple cots and have no possessions save for the rags they wear, but they receive basic rations and the orphanage is at least shelter from the weather and the dark cults always in search of sacri-

fices. The orphanage takes children up to the age of 12, at which time they must earn their keep by begging for alms, sweeping hearths, collecting and selling dung, and other mundane tasks. Once a child reaches 14 (give or take a few years, since not all can recall their birth date), he must leave the orphanage for good.

Perhaps because of their charitable nature, the Matrons have been accused of everything from fattening up orphans to sell as meat, to being fell cultists who bleed their charges dry, to being slave traders. It is true that several orphans have disappeared in recent weeks.

33. THE WOODEN FORTRESS

From the outside, the temple of Tiw resembles a Saxa longhouse, albeit one of great size. Inside, it becomes obvious the walls are heavily reinforced, making it as strong as any fortified manor house. The inner walls of the central hall, which serves as the temple, are lined with shields, swords, and spears, positioned not only for display, but for easy access.

Here dwell 40 clerics of the war god. Fifteen are Shields, who make their living training the city guard and as bodyguards to the rich and powerful. Baroness Olivia has three female Shields at her side. Other known clients are Hrothgar ap-Alaric (Council Leader), Eevin Oddsdohtor (City Treasurer), and Magus Havelock of the Convocation. Of the 25 paladins registered in Aslov, eight are on permanent retainer to the city. The remainder are hired out to local settlements, providing security for the farming villages and steads. There are also ten novices undergoing training.

34. THE RAT RUN

Located in the southeast of the city, the Rat Run is a notorious slum. Tightly packed rows of multistory houses divided by narrow alleys form a miniature, claustrophobic labyrinth.

Conditions are unsanitary. No sewers run beneath the alleys, leaving citizens no choice but to dispose of their waste into the nearest gutter. Disease-ridden citizens clad in dirty rags sit outside their filthy hovels, glaring suspiciously at strangers. Flea-ridden dogs, too mangy even for the desperate citizens to bother chasing down and eating, roam the streets, snarling and snapping at anyone who crosses their path.

By day the area is dark and dingy, the sun rarely penetrating down to street level due to the height of the buildings and the narrowness of the gaps between them. Treat the lighting as Dim (-1) during daylight hours unless the sky is blanketed in thick cloud, during which times it is Dark (-2). At night, it is pitch black (-4), for no lanterns hang in the streets. Even if they did, few are brave enough to venture into the maze to light them.

The citizens who dwell here have few possessions and crime is rife. Merely being smartly dressed is enough to invite a violent mugging, while actually displaying wealth is enough to warrant one's murder. The constables rarely

step foot into the district even in daylight, and do so only in force when orders trickle down from on high to crack down on the larcenous denizens.

35. THE ABANDONED HOUSE

There is a chronic shortage of housing in Aslov. Despite this, one spacious house has been mostly abandoned for several years. Nothing unusual was ever reported concerning the house until shortly after the death of its former owner, a reclusive and elderly sage.

Since that time several occupants have tried to settle in the house, drawn to it by its large rooms. Few have lasted more than a week before fleeing, leaving behind their possessions in their rush to vacate the property.

In each case, the occupants reported a highly offensive odor that not only assailed their noses but also caused the hairs on their necks to rise in fear. Oddly, not one witness has been able to provide a more accurate description of the aroma other than vague terms, such as "nauseating" and "unnatural."

Wary that demons or undead might be behind the phenomenon, the cults of Sigel and Scaetha have launched cursory investigations. Nothing untoward has ever been discovered. Despite the clerics' findings, or lack of, the house has remained utterly deserted for the past five months.

Where knowledge has failed, idle gossip has been born. Stories abound the sage dabbled in forbidden lore, summoning some vile entity and binding it into his service; that his shade, which has some unspecified task to complete, haunts his former abode; that the odor is the work of thieves, who have taken possession of the building to use as their headquarters; and of a wraith, possibly victims of cruel experiments, that lurks within the house's fabric.

BENEATH THE CITY

SEWERS

Although referred to as sewers, the dank, excrement-filled passageways beneath the city were not purpose-built for that intent. The narrow, stone-built, mold-lined tunnels and chambers are actually the remains of the streets and buildings of the city destroyed during the Blizzard War. Drain covers and gutters were built into the new streets to carry waste away when it rained.

What nobody realizes, save perhaps the Gutter Runners, is that beneath these ancient streets lie yet more tunnels and chambers. In the days of Beckbury, the Anari created a network of cramped tunnels to ensure the streets were never crowded. Every house and shop had a basement with an entrance leading to the subterranean road network. Unlike the "sewers," which open into the stream, these lower tunnels go under the river. Thus, it is possible to travel across the entire city without ever seeing the light of day.

SPYRE



● HISTORY ●

Spyre's original purpose is a mystery. While its position makes it almost impossible to assault, constructing a fortress atop the plateau makes little strategic sense. Its elevated position certainly provides a commanding view of the neighboring land, but the path up the mountainside ends at the city, and thus Spyre does not guard a pass. Similarly, the city's mineral wealth lies in the surrounding Lesser Hills, not the stone of the tall peak's upper slopes. Until the Blizzard War, Spyre was largely unpopulated. Instead, small settlements were clustered at the base of the lofty peak.

There are two commonly held theories as to the city's existence. First, the plateau was a sacred site to Thunor dating back to the days long before the Anari conquest of the region. As shall be seen momentarily, there may be some truth in this. Second, the original castle, of which only the old wall remains today, was raised by a reclusive, and some insist mad, nobleman. Outsiders sometimes hint at sinister and secretive cults inhabiting the plateau, but the denizens of Spyre dismiss such talk out of hand.

Despite its strategically poor position, the expanding Anari were not going to ignore Spyre's existence. The site was annexed in -415 and placed under the authority of a military governor. Used as a bastion in case of an attack, the walls were extended to encompass a larger part of the available space.

Whatever its early origin, modern Spyre came into being only during the Blizzard War. As word of the advancing Hellfrost armies spread south, fearful citizens migrated to the plateau for safety, seeking shelter within what is now the Old City. During this tumultuous time a myth developed.

According to local folklore, a flight of Hellfrost dragons attempted to assault the citadel but was driven back by either a single huge storm dragon or a myriad of smaller dragons. While skalds still repeat this tale verbatim as

the ever-popular song *Storm Over Spyre*, scholars argue that the defending dragon was an allegorical reference to clerics of Thunor, who protected their home using powerful lightning-based miracles. Regardless of the truth, Spyre adopted the symbol of a storm dragon squatting on a mountain peak as its standard around this time.

The end of the war brought no peace. With the Anari Empire in ruins, chaos spread across the land. Unwilling to risk attack by marauding bandits, the denizens of Spyre began to make the city their permanent home. A new outer wall, encompassing what is now the New City was raised as protection against the howling wind, and new streets laid out. With no agricultural land within easy reach, life was especially tough. Were it not for the stubbornness of the citizens, the city would likely have been abandoned during one of the many famines.

Around 154 IR, a clan of frost dwarves appeared at the city gates. Seeking a new home, they vowed to help construct new buildings, open mines in the Lesser Hills, and swear fealty to the ruler, on the conditions that they be allowed to reside within the upper peak of the mountain and be left to their own devices. Desperate to attract merchants, the dwarves' terms were accepted.

Despite being loyal to the city for over 300 years, the dwarves rarely mingle with the greater populace, preferring the company of their own kind and the comfort of their great stone halls. While little bad blood exists between the two communities, many citizens continue to eye them suspiciously.

Thanks to the prudence of the counts and the industriousness of the people, Spyre has prospered as the centuries ticked by. The process was slow, the citizens never allowing the population to expand too quickly lest the limited resources available be pushed beyond breaking point, and never flooding the market with too much mineral wealth.

The last great expansion came in 317 IR, when the Outer City was constructed to ease the growing burden on the crowded New City. Despite this extension, Spyre once again finds itself short of living space.

SOCIAL HIERARCHY

The first count was enthroned in 85 IR. After the collapse of the Anari Empire, the city was briefly ruled by a succession of petty tyrants. Stirred up by the cult of Thunor, the people rose up, overthrew the dictators, and elected a noble family to govern them wisely. The position is hereditary, passing to a new family elected to high status by a council only if the incumbent family line dies out.

The count's children, although forbidden to own land by city law, are awarded the title of lord-baron. Their children in turn are lord-knights.

The core of the upper class is made up of the old families, those who can trace their ancestry back to the official foundation of modern Spyre, as marked by the introduction of the first count. Most have grown rich from centuries of mercantile and mining activities. The heads of these families are awarded the title of banneret, with their children being knights. The second rung of the upper class has risen to high status by dint of having vast personal fortunes or having been appointed as nobles by the count. The old families tend to look down on them as upstarts, while the new nobility sees the old families as decadent and past their prime.

The middle class is made up of less wealthy merchants, clerics and mages, popular skalds, important bureaucrats, military officers, master craftsmen, and the like. As with most middle-class citizens, they are constantly jockeying for greater influence and wealth in the hope of rising in station.

At the bottom of the ladder is the lower class. It is primarily made up of miners and quarrymen, craftsmen and tradesmen, constables, scribes, and so on.

As a general rule, one's station at birth is not a barrier to social promotion. True, many born to the lower class rarely rise above the middle class, but hard work, and making the right friends, can ensure one at least has a comfortable life.

GOVERNMENT

Technically, Spyre is governed by Count Baldar Anthwine. In truth, the power of the counts has always been held in check by a council. While it has no authority to legislate, its collective is deemed to be that of the people. As such, the counts listen carefully to their advice before making any important decision. The council's primary role is to govern the city on behalf of the count. The council comprises three separate branches, the first two of which are awarded automatic seats.

In theory, the elections are open to all adults born, and currently resident in, Spyre. In truth, only the wealthy and the very popular have any chance of winning. All adult citizens of Spyre are entitled to vote. Elections are held every four years during Werremonan.

RULES OF THE REALM

These setting rules apply in Spyre.

* **Seasonal Prices:** Winter frequently sees Spyre isolated from the surrounding land causing prices to rise as shortages strike. Prices for goods are 80% of normal during summer, normal during spring and fall, and 25% higher in winter.

* **Temperature:** Spyre's elevated position isn't enough to have a dramatic effect on the temperature, though it is colder than the surrounding land. On most days, the temperature is at the lower end of the scale for the season. When the wind gathers strength (1 in 6 chance per day), treat Spyre as being in the Low Winterlands.

The council meets weekly on Endedaeg, though rarely does every member attend. Lendmann Gloin usually sends his son and heir, Dvalinn to speak in his place, while no one is ever sure whether the attendant cleric of the Unknowable One, when he bothers to show, is truly the highest ranking cleric in the city.

COUNCIL MARTIAL

The Council Martial is made up of two members of the count's staff, these being the Lord Steward (who effectively runs the city on a day-to-day basis) and Lord Castellan (responsible for all matters pertaining to the army and constables, as well as the city walls), and the ruler of Dvergelf.

Lord Steward: Aiglante ap-Gautier (female, Anari, 51)

Lord Castellan: Octa Cynewulfsunu (male, Saxa, 43)

Dwarven Ruler: Lendmann Gloin (but more often his son and heir, Dvalinn; male, dwarf, 87)

COUNCIL SPIRITUAL

The Council Spiritual consists of the resident high priests of the city's three most important gods—Thunor, Ertha, and the Unknowable One.

High Priest of Thunor: Thunderson Mercadier Stormchild (male, Anari, 37)

High Priestess of Ertha: Forge Daughter Oriabel ap-Rene (female, Anari, 40)

High Priest of the Unknowable One: Varies

COUNCIL CIVIC

The Council Civil also has three seats. These are awarded to citizens elected by the masses. Until a generation ago, one councilor was elected from the Old City and two from the New City. Believing their affairs were being ignored, the denizens of the Outer City petitioned the count to be treated as a separate ward and given their own elections. Today, each of the three districts elects one councilor.

Old City Councilor: Jehan ap-Girbers (male, Anari, 30)
New City Councilor: Sexburh Eadbaldsdohtor (female, Saxa, 64)
Outer City Councilor: Alban ap-Alban (male, Anari, 42)

LAW AND ORDER

Ensuring criminals are caught falls to the constables, a force of 200 men and women equipped as city guards. The constables are answerable to the High Constable, who in turns answers to the Lord Castellan.

Each of the city's three districts has its own force of constables. Each of these is in turn divided into three watches, which patrol the streets for 8 hours a day. First Watch operates from 6 a.m. until 2 p.m., Second Watch from 2 p.m. until 10 p.m., and Third Watch from 10 p.m. until 6 a.m. In the Old City and Outer City, each watch comprises 10 men broken into two patrols of five. In the New City, the largest district, the watches are of 40 constables formed into eight patrols of five.

The remaining 20 constables are responsible for guarding the main gates and inspecting visitors for taxable items. With the gates open only during daylight hours, there are just two watches—First and Second—each having ten constables.

Every fifth constable is a sergeant, a veteran with some leadership qualities. Each watch is commanded by a watch sergeant, a more senior soldier. Daily responsibility for each of the three districts falls to a watch captain.

With its narrow streets and densely packed population, area-effect spells are forbidden unless cast in defense of the city or with special permission of the count. Those who flout the law are subject to heavy fines (upward of 500 gs), public flogging, or both. Repeated offenses made result in the perpetrator being expelled.

Food shortages and water pollution could easily spell disaster for Spyre, more so than in other cities. Crimes involving sabotage of the city's food and water supplies brings with it hefty punishments. The most serious offenses are capital crimes.

THE COURTS

Spyre has four courts, all of which are secular in nature. Overseeing them is the Lord Provost, the most senior magistrate. He is assisted by a number of junior provosts, all of whom are well-versed in the law.

The Court Common oversees the most criminal cases. Everything from treason to murder and theft to arson falls under its authority. Under local law, religious crimes (blasphemy, sacrilege, etc.) are tried by the Court Commons. By ancient right, a cleric of the affronted faith sits on the provosts' bench.

The Court Exchequer has authority over financial crimes. Tax evasion, failure to pay fines issued by another court, counterfeiting, and operating a business without a license all fall under its jurisdiction.

The Court Husting is concerned with matters of trade and commerce. Cases most commonly involve squab-

bling merchants, but individual tradesmen may be hauled before the court for giving false measure, breach of contract, and the like.

The Court Martial handles cases involving members of the constabulary on duty, the army, and citizens with a noble title (regardless of the nature of their crime).

Fines, public flogging, and confiscation of goods are typical sentences for minor infringements. Slavery is illegal in Spyre, but those convicted of more serious crimes may be sentenced to public servitude. Typically, the criminal is ordered to work in the mines for a set period. The maximum sentence a court may hand down is life without parole. Conditions in the mines and quarries are harsh, and the guilty party has only what freedoms he can buy through bribes.

Those found guilty of heinous crimes may be sentenced to death. Only one method is employed in Spyre—criminals are dragged to the top of Execution Tower and thrown to their deaths. Known spellcasters have their tongues removed and fingers broken to hamper any attempts to avoid their fate. No one has ever survived the long drop, but in the event they do, it is deemed that Thunor has absolved the criminal of any wrongdoing. For this reason, the method of execution has become known as "being thrown to Thunor's Mercy."

Under an agreement between the lords of Spyre and Dvergdelf, frost dwarves are immune to prosecution by the human courts. This does not mean they can run rampant, however. Arrested dwarves are dragged back to Dvergdelf and handed over to local authorities for punishment. While some of the city's denizens believe such dwarves get away lightly, Lendmann Gloin takes a severe stance against his kith and kin who tarnish the race's honor by committing crimes in Spyre.

THIEVES' GUILD

Spyre's thieves are well organized and cautious—when you live in a city with only two ways out (the bridge, access to which can quickly be closed, or a long climb) you need to be sensible about planning crimes and avoiding detection. The gang, known as the Long Drop (because that's what you get if you cross them), is 35 strong, though they are spread around the city.

EDUCATION

No one in Spyre has an automatic right to education. Indeed, the city lacks a formal education infrastructure. For the poor, education is handled at home, with adults passing on basic literacy and numeracy, as well as local customs, history, and folklore. Richer citizens can afford to hire private tutors, experts who can elevate their offsprings' knowledge to higher levels. Temples educate novitiates in the tenets of the relevant faith and the Entertainers' Guild provides teaching for those who wish to become skalds.

Though it is off the beaten track due to the difficulty of reaching it, Spyre is rapidly developing a reputation as a center of skaldic learning. Indeed, among skalds it is considered second only to Scathmoor, though it has a leaning toward Saxa tales and poems that does not appeal to everyone. Most taverns have a resident storyteller to entertain patrons, and several shops now cater to their needs.

Most children begin work at age 8. Those of craftsmen and tradesmen learn the skills of their parents. Others are hired out as cheap labor, though never in professions that risk serious injury, sent to become apprentices to a master craftsman, or help around the home.

Isolated on their towering peak, Spyre's citizens are, on the whole, an ignorant lot. While they catch snatches of news from visiting merchants and skalds, they have little true understanding of the size of the continent or its diversity of cultures. In the eyes of most citizens, the world extends only as far as they can see from atop the city walls.

The official language of Spyre is Anari, with Saxa a close second. Although the city attracts merchants, few ever need to deal with outsiders. Thus, Trader is the third most common language. Speakers typically learn it on the streets or in taverns, though those apprenticed to a merchant house might be given formal tutoring to ensure greater fluency.

RELIGION

While the right-minded citizens of Spyre offer praise to all the benevolent deities and supplicate the more malevolent ones, three are held in special regard. Within the city walls they are known as the Trinity. The name has entered common parlance, with phrases like "In the name of the Trinity" and "Trinity bless you" replacing more generic phrases invoking all the gods.

Whether or not the original settlement was a temple is irrelevant in the eyes of the people—the windswept plateau is clearly an important place to Thunor, and thus he deserves to be the city's patron. While the cult could wield great power due to its large number of worshippers, it is interested only in ensuring the counts stay honest. Should one ever seek to oppress the people beyond the cult's tolerance, the clergy would be quick to stir the masses into action.

Regardless of a worshipper's actual faith, Thunor plays an important role in his life and death. When a baby is named, the mother carries the infant outside and lets it cry into the wind. Although meaningless noise to mortals, this cry carries to Thunor's ears the child's secret name (known as his "wind name"), which only the god knows. This name, supposedly, protects the child from the attention of demons, wicked gods, and others who might seek to lead him from the straight and narrow.

Room is precious in Spyre, with no accommodation made for the dead. Those who wish to have family members close by must pay to have them transported down the mountain, cremated, and then carried back up. Most

WINDY GAMES

The citizens of Spyre have learned to use the wind that blasts across the plateau for recreation.

Dye Ball: A popular pastime, dye ball involves standing atop the Windbreak and throwing light wooden balls soaked in colored dye into the wind. Caught by the wind, the balls fly back toward the city. Part of the skill is throwing the ball so it comes back in the direction of an opponent.

Contestants may dodge the incoming projectiles, but are disqualified if they drop below the level of the parapet. Anyone struck by a ball is eliminated from the contest.

Kite Fighting: On high holy days of Thunor, the market square hosts the Dragon Duel, a kite fighting contest involving as many as 200 contestants. A typical duel involves anywhere from five to ten kites in the air at the same time, though there are fewer kites as the competition goes on. The final is always fought between two kites. The cult of Thunor offers a prize of 50 gs to the eventual winner of the knock-out competition.

Kite fights involving player characters can be handled by a simple opposed Agility roll—highest roll wins the bout, all losing kites are wrecked. Clerics of Thunor and elementalists who know air can use their arcane skills if they prefer.

The Wind Run: Held on a day in summer in which the wind is sufficiently strong and gusty to impair movement, the Wind Run is considered the city's premier sporting event. To outsiders it is an act of lunacy.

The aim is simple—to run as far along the top of the Windbreak as possible before the wind knocks you off. For obvious reasons, the wind must be blowing into the city. The crowd follows along at ground level to catch those whom the wind overbears. Even with the crowd, serious injuries can, and do, occur. The wind can be capricious, and several contestants have fallen to their death when the wind suddenly switched direction.

Whoever gets the furthest without being blown off the wall is declared the winner. There is no prize, only public adoration and free drinks from well-wishers.

citizens are given sky burials. Their mortal remains are placed in an iron cage and lowered over the side of the city walls, there to be pecked at by birds until their bones are consumed or scattered by the wind.

With an economy reliant on gems, metal, and stone, it is little surprise that Ertha is an extremely popular deity. She is devoutly worshipped only by those who work in the extraction, purification, or working of metal and stone, but most citizens offer her some form of prayers on holy days.

The cult has never been afraid to flex its collective muscle. Over the years, it has secured better working

conditions and pay for miners and quarrymen, set standards for metalworkers, and helped negotiate quotas. All of this has made the cult very popular with those who rely on the mines and quarries for their livelihoods.

The last major cult is that of the Unknowable One. While all his aspects receive some form of worship, he is most popularly honored as the patron of bards and storytellers. The cult's rise has been swift, growing hand-in-hand with the rise in the number of skalds in the city. More often than not the cult avoids politics like the plague. Every now and then, though, it likes to remind the establishment not to take itself too seriously. The latest act of law it somehow managed to get passed was a ban on wearing trousers on Marketdaeg. The ban lasted exactly one week before the clerics argued that semi-nudity was shameful behavior and demanded the law be repealed.

The cult of Var, while popular, has not yet been able to expand its sphere of influence sufficiently to warrant it becoming a major cult in Spyre. Arguably it is the fourth largest, for Spyre depends on merchants for its very survival.

As befits a city, every other deity has at least a handful of true worshippers, with many more offering praise as and when it is deemed necessary. For example, Freo suddenly becomes very popular with anyone who must cross Gambler's Bridge or take the long walk down the mountain. Lacking much in the way of agriculture, Eostre's cult is very small and wields almost no power. Prayers are said, of course, for to ignore her dual aspects is to court famine.

FESTIVALS

The counts have variously favored either the cult of Thunor or Ertha over the centuries. As a result, the high holy days of each faith are now considered public holidays. That said, only those who pay tithes to the relevant cult are permitted to take the entire day off work—others are forced to work until noon before they can enjoy the festivities or attend the temple. Of the Unknowable One's high holy days, only Humility Day and Joker's Day are considered official holidays.

Only two other days are recognized as public holidays. The first is Founding Day. Held on the second Heafod-daeg of Haerfestmonan, it marks the day the first count was enthroned. As such, it is also considered to be the official birthday of the incumbent count. It is a time to remember the glorious deeds of the past in song, repeatedly drink the health of the current count, and give praise to one's ancestors. The only buildings that are open for business are the taverns, inns, and skaldic halls, and they do a roaring trade.

The last Marketdaeg of Huntianmonan is Last Chance Day. Traditionally, this is the time when fog and snow begin to make life difficult for merchants. It is the last day when goods are available at their autumnal prices—come the next dawn, everything starts to get very expensive. As one might suspect, it is a time when citizens spend copious amounts of money securing the goods they think they will need to see them through the long winter.

MILITARY

Spyre has never had much of a military. Technically the constables can be called upon to defend the city in time of attack, but such an event has never happened since the modern city was founded. Perched high up a mountain and surrounded by strong walls, Spyre is an attacker's nightmare. A siege might work, but few armies care to be left on an exposed mountainside for weeks or months on end.

The only real way to assault Spyre is by air, and it is precisely that approach that the small army covers. A mere 30 strong, the Artillerists are responsible for manning 15 ballistae placed on towers around the city. Only half the number is on duty on any given day. The Artillerists are commanded by the Master of Artillery, who is subject to the authority of the Lord Castellan.

The frost dwarves have vowed to supply troops should it be required, but no one is exactly sure how many would answer the summons or what their specialties may be. To be honest, no one really expects them to ever be called upon to serve Spyre.

AUXILIARIES

Any adult may enroll as an auxiliary. Akin to a militia, auxiliaries are trained only in the use of bows. Anyone signing up receives a short bow (but no arrows) for free, but is required to attend training several times a month during summer. Failure to maintain one's weapon to a battle-ready status results in a 200 gs fine, while failing to attend training results in expulsion from the auxiliary and confiscation of one's bow.

PRIVATE FORCES

Any person may hire private guards to protect his person, property, or possessions. Such persons must receive a minimum legally agreed wage (see **The Iron Guild** in *Rassilon Expansion 2*) and be registered with city authorities.

Paladins are an exception to the rule, counting as members of the appropriate cult rather than as private forces. There is no limit to how many paladins a cult may station in Spyre, but all those of accepted deities are required to swear an oath to help defend the city in times of need.

Being a private guard in no way permits one to break the law. In theory, excessive force in the pursuit of one's duties may result in criminal charges being brought. In practice, the constables are often prepared to look the other way so long as they receive the credit for the arrest (it makes them look good for no extra effort).

TRADE & TRIBUTE

As far as Spyre's citizens are concerned, there is only one trade road that matters—the snaking lifeline that

winds up the side of the mountain. Running from Spyre to the trade road junction outside Sanctuary, it is known locally simply as The Road.

Spyre's primary exports are based on mining and quarrying. The base of the Pinnacle and the Lesser Hills, over which Spyre claims sovereignty, boast vast reserves of ore, as well as good building stone. Much of this is exported, with heavily laden caravans a regular sight from snow-melt through to first snowfall, though some ends up in the hands of the city's metalworkers. Small quantities of finished metal goods, including jewelry, are exported, but not in sufficient quantities to count as a major resource.

Food is the main import. Preserved fish, along with whale oil, flows in from Angmark, cheese from Royalmark, and livestock, dried meat, and grain from across the surrounding lands. Beer, brewed locally, is the drink of choice for most, but wine, imported from Aspiria, is popular with the well-to-do and those seeking to project the illusion of wealth.

While imports of livestock provide sufficient wool and leather to manufacture clothing, the biting winds make furs essential, especially in winter. Although exotic furs are imported from above the Icebarrier Mountains, most citizens must make do with rabbit fur.

TAXES

Spyre's ruling family generates much of its income from mining interests, thus allowing them to place a relatively tax light burden on the citizens.

Bridge Tax: All traffic entering or leaving the city is charged 1 ss to help maintain Gambler's Bridge. The fee is per pedestrian, rider, mount, beast of burden, or wagon. Thus, a cart pulled by two mules with one rider counts as four separate entities for tax purposes.

Customs Duty: Keen to ensure merchants continue to visit, Spyre charges a flat 2% duty on imports and exports during summer but only 1% during spring and winter. Trade caravans that somehow reach the city in winter pay only 0.5%. The duty extends to the stocks of quarried stone, even though these goods rarely enter the city gates. Food imports are charged at one-half of these rates.

Food Tax: All citizens, regardless of age or employment status, are required to pay 13 gs a year to help contribute to keeping the city granaries stocked.

Hearth Tax: In order to prevent citizens owning large houses and thus taking up valuable living space, Spyre has long taxed citizens based on the size of their homes. This equates anywhere from 2% (a small house with multiple occupants) to 20% (a large home with few occupants) of a household's annual income.

Sales Tax: All goods sold legally in Spyre are subject to 5% taxation. In game terms, all prices in the city are 5% higher than those in the *Hellfrost Player's Guide* equipment list. This is added on after seasonal variations.

Tithes: Tithing is a legal requirement in Spyre. Citizens pay into a central coffer, which is then divided equally between the cults of the Trinity. Since the Unknowable

One has no temple to maintain, his share of the money is put into public coffers to help keep the walls, sewers, and cisterns in working order.

ARCHITECTURE

Spyre is divided into three districts. The oldest part, known appropriately as the Old City, comprises the land once occupied by the great fortress. Today only the wall remains; the other buildings (with the noted exception of the Spire) have been demolished to make way for housing. The structures of the Old City are the finest architecturally and also among the largest, being constructed when space was not as restricted, though they are still smaller than their counterparts in other cities.

Beyond the wall, and occupying the rest of the main plateau, is the New City. Built after the Blizzard War, it is home to most of the city's population and the center of its trade and industry.

The Outer City sits on a smaller plateau to the southwest of the New City, joined to the beating heart by a bridge.

Due to the difficulty of digging postholes, Spyre's buildings are constructed from local stone. This also serves to protect them from the worst ravages of the wind. Timber is used only to support the pitched roofs and, in some cases, for internal partitions.

Limited land for building forced the builders into certain choices. Aside from the avenue that cuts through the city, the streets are too narrow for carts. Houses are small, even in Old City (though they look nicer), and built two or three stories high. The last major building project saw houses extend downward, though the sewers have limited them to a single subterranean level. Lacking natural light, they are dingy holes occupied by the poorer end of the social spectrum. The homes of rich citizens have glass to keep out the constant wind. Those of poorer folk have wooden shutters.

THE SUN

Below are the local sunrise and sunset times and the hours of daylight for the first day of each month.

Month	Sunrise	Sunset	Daylight
Snaermonan	0738	1629	8h 51m
Frostmonan	0722	1703	9h 41m
Eostremonan	0642	1743	11h 1m
Plohmonan	0553	1818	12h 25m
Sowanmonan	0502	1854	23h 52m
Werremonan	0425	1927	15h 2m
Scerranmonan	0412	1949	15h 37m
Hegmonan	0427	1944	15h 17m
Haerfestmonan	0458	1911	14h 13m
Falmonan	0531	1822	12h 51m
Huntianmonan	0605	1729	11h 24m
Fogmonan	0642	1644	10h 2m
Wulfmonan	0719	1619	9h 0m



MAJOR LOCALES

spyre

1. the halt
2. gamblers bridge
3. city walls & gates
4. the spire
5. the count's manor
6. the courts
7. the nest
8. trade enclave
9. the sparkling hall
10. axe and hammer
11. hord's hall
12. kevil's kites
13. hammer street
14. the hammered head
15. wagon yard
16. dung collector
17. the piper's call
18. the merchant's rest
19. lutes & flutes
20. the market
21. day laborers' guild
22. shrine to freo
23. freo's footwear
24. the messengers' guild
25. the dovecote
26. hospice
27. the storm dragon
28. observatory
29. warehouse district
30. prospecting office
31. entertainers' guild
32. furrier
33. wings & claws
34. dvergdelf
35. city garannies
36. brewery
37. abattoir
38. livestock pens
39. execution tower
40. second chance pawn shop
41. the last drop
42. wing and a prayer

In addition to the locales detailed below, all the major crafts are represented. Although it may require a Streetwise roll to glean the address of a particular business, the characters should have little difficulty finding armorers and weaponsmiths, herbalists, healers, glassblowers, potters, weavers, dyers, tanners, blacksmiths, farriers, parchment makers, carpenters, masons, wheelwrights, scholars, and so on.

Inns and taverns are less common than in similar sized cities, there being fewer visitors. Quality of furnishings, entertainment, and service varies immensely from downright disgusting to luxurious. The variety of foodstuffs is limited, but local chefs have learned to produce wonderful dishes with the limited fare.

OUTSIDE THE WALLS

1. THE HALT

The last leg up the mountain path is the steepest and the most difficult. With the city gates shut at dusk, few merchants have any desire to spend the night exposed to the elements. Sensing a means of making money, an enterprising citizen purchased a section of land where the trail is at its widest and built an inn.

Known as the Halt because most merchants arriving late in the day choose to do exactly that, the inn also provides stabling, a fortified building where wagons and their precious cargoes can be stored, and both a wheelwright and cartwright to assist with repairs. A small shrine to Freo allows visitors to say prayers before attempting the last leg of the journey or to give praise for a safe descent.

Prices are exorbitant, being four times higher than in the city proper. Given the only other choice is a sleepless night huddled in a drafty wagon being battered by the merciless wind, merchants have little option but to pay the price. Fortunately, the food and drink are of excellent quality, the rooms warm and dry, and the bed linen changed every week.

2. GAMBLER'S BRIDGE

The only access route to Spyre is via a long, winding trail up the mountain. Travelers end their journey at a long, arched bridge, whose supports stand on smaller outcroppings. Across the bridge lies Spyre.

If the bridge originally had a name, it has long since been forgotten. These days it is half-jokingly called the Gambler's Bridge. There are many holes in the bridge, the low side wall, vital to stop travelers being blown over the side during winter storms, has large sections missing, and the great support pillars are cracked. Despite its name and bad reputation, only a handful of people dies each year trying to cross the bridge.

Count Baldar has recently passed a law allowing the dwarves to pay less taxation in return for repairing Gambler's Bridge. Although a few human citizens resent this, the vast majority knows that the bridge is their lifeline to the outside world and that a stable, safe bridge could lead to increased trade.

3. CITY WALLS AND GATES

Surrounding the New City is a high wall known as the Windbreak. Despite being the same height and thickness, the wall encompassing the Outer City is called the Lesser Windbreak. Both walls stand 40 feet high and are 20 feet thick. Spaced around the perimeter are a number of towers. Only ten feet higher than the wall, many have been converted into houses over the years. The tops

are flat. Ballistae are stationed on some, while others are used as firing platforms for the auxiliary archers.

The city has three gates. Gambler's Gate is the main gate, providing access into the city from outside. Technically it is two separate gates, the Outer Gate and the Inner Gate. Both gates are open from dawn until dusk. Once night falls, only the count can authorize their opening. During the day, the constables assigned to gate duty assemble at the Outer Gate to inspect traffic. The portals, 20 feet high and 10 feet wide, are heavily reinforced with iron bands. Heavy iron portcullises mounted in front of and behind each set of gates can be lowered in the unlikely event of an attack.

The bridge spanning the short gap between the New City and Outer City has a similar gatehouse configuration. Both sets of gates are open day and night, however, and there are no constables on duty at any time (barring civil unrest or similar emergency). These gates are referred to simply as the New Gates.

The Grand Gate, so-named despite being the smallest of the trio and with only a single gatehouse, allows passage into the Old City. Although closed between dusk and dawn, a postern gate allows pedestrians to move between the districts. Again, constables rarely loiter here.

OLD CITY

The Old City is the center of political power in Spyre and home to many of its wealthier citizens. There is little industry here, though there are a number of shops catering to the needs of the upper class.

4. THE SPIRE

The spire rises a hundred yards into the sky, its smooth walls broken only in the south-facing portion by regular, round holes. Within the spire is a narrow spiral stair, which runs up the center and leads to a number of chambers. Each chamber curves around the walls and has a single hole which, while looking small from the ground, are actually six feet across.

The purpose of the spire is forgotten, but most folks believe it served as a watchtower, the chambers and holes being platforms for ballistae or archers. Why the holes don't extend the entire way around the spire is something the locals dismiss with a shrug.

Thunor dislikes enclosed spaces, but the local cult has long argued that the Spire, with its many holes, is far from enclosed. As a result, the Spire has become an unofficial focal point of Thunor worship, though it is used only on high holy days and then only by the clergy. Standing in one of the openings allows the clerics to feel the wind that whips across the plateau and, if they are confident in their faith, leap into the void *before* invoking *fly*.

The base of the Spire, a roughly rectangular building, has been used as the council chambers for many generations. It is here, in an austere chamber decorated only with Spyre's banner and the holy symbol of Hothar, that the council meets to discuss how best to advise the count.

5. THE COUNT'S MANOR

Walled off from the rest of the Old City, this compound is the private residence of the ruling count and his immediate family. Although it has open grounds surrounding it, much of which is taken up with a flower garden and allotments growing a variety of vegetables, the house is modestly sized.

Few locals have ever seen inside the count's manor—he rarely holds civic functions at home. Given his wealth, it is little surprise that stories of rooms adorned with fabulous treasures are commonplace. The thieves' guild knows better than to try and rob the count—such an audacious act would ensure a swift crackdown on their larcenous activities.

6. THE COURTS

This large, grand building is the seat of law. As well as the four separate courts, it contains a small subterranean jail. Those suspected of committing criminal behavior are kept here until their trial (2d6 days) only if they are accused of a serious crime or are considered a flight risk (as most adventurers are). The building also serves as the central armory for the constables and the office of the High Constable.

7. THE NEST

Spyre has its fair share of taverns and inns selling food and drink. The Nest, which occupies the top floor of a housing block in Old City, is one of the best eateries in the city. Full meals aren't cheap—a cheap meal is effectively a small starter, an average meal costs 4 gs, and expensive meals begin at 25 gs. The food is excellent, though, and the company refined. Adventurers in armor or carrying weapons are turned away at the door.

Given few commoners can afford to eat here (assuming they get passed the door), it is the reserve of the city's elite, making it an ideal place to make important contacts.

NEW CITY

Heavily populated, the New City is home to the majority of the population. It is also the economic and industrial heart of Spyre.

8. TRADE ENCLAVE

Constructed as two roughly "C"-shaped buildings, the trade enclave is the center of mercantile activity.

The northern building is home to representatives of Angmark, Coglelund, the Crystalflow Confederacy, the Magocracy, and Royalmark. Each has a spacious and comfortable apartment providing living, office, and entertaining space for the occupant and a small number of staff and guards. These distinguished persons are not ambassadors, nor are their apartments considered embassies. Rather, they are appointed spokesmen representing the

mercantile interests of their respective homelands. The larger southern building is home to many of Spyre's merchants. Between them is a covered courtyard, in the center of which is a small shrine to Var.

The enclave is a hotbed of intrigue, with each nation seeking the best deal for its merchants at the expense of rivals. Relations between the visiting dignitaries are best described as sour—more than once the constables have had to break up fights and smooth ruffled feathers.

The thieves' guild does a brisk business here. Instead of robbing the dignitaries, it serves them by stealing ledgers, letters, and other written information that might be useful in trade negotiations. Little wonder, then, that the representatives prefer to employ *voice on the wind* spells whenever possible.

9. THE SPARKLING HALL

Carved into the living rock beneath Old City, the Sparkling Hall is the temple to Ertha. Its walls are adorned with thousands of gemstones, while great plates of beaten metal inscribed with prayers in huge letters hang from the ceiling.

In front of the altar, a slab of polished granite, is a metal hatch inscribed with Ertha's holy symbol. Under it is a narrow shaft that drops, so folklore says, into the heart of the world. Worshippers throw gems and metal items into the hole on Feeding Day.

Primarily used by frost dwarves, there is a separate entrance from Dvergdelf. The iron door to the tunnel is barred when not in use and can be opened only from inside the tunnel.

10. AXE AND HAMMER

A popular stop for adventurers, this small shop in Lower Dvergdelf is owned by Balin Deepdelve, the best weaponsmith in Spyre. Locals refer to the establishment as "Slash and Smash." Balin sells only axes, hammers, and maces. These cost 10% more than normal, but the workmanship is exquisite and the weapons are very durable (+2 Toughness).

In addition, Balin sharpen any axe to a fine hone for 35 gs. This gives the weapon a flat +1 damage bonus, but only until the wielder rolls a natural 1 (regardless of Wild Die) on his Fighting die, at which point the edge is blunted. A weapon cannot be sharpened again until the edge is blunted.

11. HORD'S HALL

Argon Aalfsunu of the Entertainers' Guild is not the only person in Spyre who knows old stories, songs, and poems. Hord Wordsmith, a venerable frost dwarf song mage, spent almost two centuries wandering Rassilon before he retired to Spyre. Hord now owns a small tavern in Lower Dvergdelf.

Popular with all Spyre's inhabitants, patrons are encouraged to take to the small stage and regale audiences with

stories and poems. The proprietor is always found at the back of the tavern, away from the roaring hearth, when the tavern is open, but it is a rare night he takes to the stage.

Hord's knowledge of stories is vast, but far from complete. In order to impress the grumpy dwarf, prospective students must make a Knowledge (Folklore) roll at –4. Success means they have taught Hord a new story, something he rewards with passing on one from his repertoire. If the GM has the *Legendary Endeavors* supplement, Hord counts as a mentor skaldic school.

12. KEVIL'S KITES

This small shop mainly sells prayer kites for use in festivals to Thunor. A basic model sells for 1 gs, while one painted with Thunor's holy symbol costs 3 gs. Kevil Halfdansunu, the proprietor, also makes "dueling kites" shaped like dragons.

Citizens use the fragile kites to stage aerial combats—whoever destroys his opponent's kite wins. A basic model costs 2 gs. Nimble and sturdier models (+1 to operate them) cost 5+ gs, the price varying with the level of decoration and the design.

13. HAMMER STREET

Aptly named, Hammer Street rings out with the clang of metal on metal from dawn until dusk most days. The lefty-hand side of this one street, its buildings butted up against the Windbreak, is home to most of the city's metalworkers. Using the city's ready supply of copper and iron are armorers, blacksmiths, bladesmiths (swords, daggers, and axes), coppersmiths, macers (maces, hammers, and flails), nailers (makes nails), and wiredrawers (manufactures wire). Other metals are fashioned into usable objects by braziers (brass), plumber (lead), goldsmiths, pewterers, silversmiths, and tinner.

Few artisans sell direct to the public—their wares are typically sold to shops, market stallholders, and merchants. Most accept private commissions, but charge 20% more than normal due to income lost by diverting their attention to the project.

14. THE HAMMERED HEAD

Instantly recognizable by its sign (a hammer smashing down on a bare head), this New City tavern sells the strongest drink in the city, a potent wine known locally as Hammer. Most people can manage only two small flagons before they begin to stagger like they've taken a serious blow to the head. The drink is so well known that it has spawned a local expression—anyone staggeringly drunk, regardless of the drink they have consumed, is said to be Hammered.

15. WAGON YARD

Spyre's narrow streets were not built with wagons in mind. When a trade caravan arrives, it proceeds down

the main avenue as far as the Day Laborers' Guild (see #18), where its contents are unloaded. Once relieved of their burden, the wagons are moved to this yard until it is time to load them again.

Surrounding the yard are the workshops of cartwrights, wheelwrights, farriers, and provisioners, all hoping that the merchants have need of their services before they begin the return leg of their journey.

16. DUNG COLLECTORS

Although wood is available from the slopes of the Lesser Hills, most citizens prefer to burn charcoal, it being easier to store and producing higher heat. Even though it only travels a short distance, the lengthy creation process makes it too expensive for the poorest in society. Fortunately, the various beasts in the city produce plenty of fresh manure that needs to be disposed of promptly to avoid polluting the cisterns. Warm deposits from the wagon yard and the livestock pens (see #38) are collected by Ragwald Brown-Hands and his foul-smelling employees. Once dried, the dung is sold for fuel.

Ragwald is a novitiate of Brúni, god of dung (see *Matters of Faith*). Although loyal and careful to avoid sins, he has never bothered much with the spiritual side of the faith and knows only the god's signature miracle (*stun*).

17. THE PIPER'S CALL

It is not hard to miss this lower-class tavern—the slightly off-key wail of loud pipes echoes up the neighboring streets. The regular patrons don't mind the noise—it allows them to talk without fear of being overheard even at the next table and it conceals the activities of the thieves' guild, which operates out of a secret room in the cellar.

18. THE MERCHANT'S REST

The largest inn in Spyre, the Merchant's Rest is the preferred haunt of visiting merchants. Catering for both rich merchants and their poorer wagoners and guards, the inn offers a range of food and accommodation.

Unless they have business with a merchant, few locals patronize the inn from late spring to early fall. Those that do are usually skalds looking for news, curious youngsters keen to see folk from the world below the mountain, and thieves looking for an easy mark. As the caravans cease toward winter, the number of local patrons steadily grows.

From late spring until early fall, Streetwise rolls made in the establishment to learn information about events beyond the reach of Spyre have a +1 bonus. In many cases, the news will be several months old.

19. LUTES AND FLUTES

Run by Pip (real name Pipbert), a mostly retired engro song mage, this shop sells musical instruments. Pip has developed a reputation as a master craftsman, and it is well deserved.

While most of his stock is fairly mundane, if well made, his best pieces grant a +1 bonus to appropriate rolls when used to accompany storytelling or purely for musical purposes. Prices for high-end instruments start at 200 gs, but he is never short of orders.

20. THE MARKET

Located in the center of New City, the Market is Spyre's main shopping center. Stallholders tout for business from dawn until dusk on Marketdaeg and Sangdaeg, and from dawn until midday on Heafoddaeg and Healfdaeg.

In the middle of the square is a shrine. Unusually, it is not dedicated to Var, but to Thunor. It takes the form of a towering stone pillar, to the top of which is tethered a rune-decorated windsock. As well as being a place of worship, the windsock also provides notice to citizens planning on crossing Gambler's Bridge as to the wind strength and direction.

One patrol of constables, ever vigilant for pickpockets and petty thieves, routinely wanders the market whenever it is open for business.

Three paladins of Var also patrol here on market days. They are a private security force, hired collectively by the stallholders. Each trader who has paid into the pot receives a wooden token to hang on his stall. These stalls then count as the paladins' stock for the purpose of sins. When not on duty, the trio works as security guards in the warehouse district.

21. DAY LABORERS' GUILD

Although merchants must unload their goods outside this building, much of their cargo is destined for the warehouse district and the city granary. With wagons unable to navigate the narrow streets, the burden of moving cargo falls to stevedores.

Each morning, a runner from the Halt brings news of visiting caravans that will require unloading. Similarly, merchants already in the city who need cargoes loaded onto wagons report to the guild to hire laborers at sunrise.

Work is assigned on a first-come, first-served basis. Transportation of cargo is charged at a flat 1 ss per load within the city. With work paid in this manner, the stevedores do not dawdle with their burdens. In order to prevent fraud, there are minimum loads the stevedores must transport on each trip. These are based on the type of goods being moved. Stevedores can also be hired to carry goods down the mountain. This service costs a flat 3 gs per load.

Merchants pay the guild directly. The guild hands over one-half the money to the stevedores and retains the other half. When winter comes and the caravans stop coming, the funds stored with the guild are used to help provide for the workers and their families.

22. SHRINE TO FREQ

Standing in the center of a busy intersection just inside the main gate is a shrine to Freq. It takes the form of a

weather-beaten stone statue of the god of travel. Cluttered around the base are piles of cheaply made shoes (see below).

23. FREO'S FOOTWEAR

Everyone needs shoes, but master cordwainer Valeray ap-Guicharde has hit upon a novel way of boosting business. As well as conventional shoes and boots, Valeray manufactures "prayer shoes." Unsuitable for daily use due to their shoddy construction, the cheap (1 ss per pair) footwear is marketed as a symbolic offering to Freo. Instead of being left at the shrine of Freo for other travelers to make use of, the soles of the footwear are inscribed with prayers for safe passage written by those about to cross Gambler's Bridge and descend the mountain.

Valeray came up with the scheme shortly after becoming a master craftsman. After nearly 40 years, the practice of offering prayer shoes is ingrained in the hearts and minds of not only the locals, but also merchants who visit on a frequent basis.

Despite his dubious sideline, the master cordwainer is worthy of the title. As well as day-to-day footwear, he produces excellent boots for those starting a long journey. Perfectly fitted for the individual, the quality footwear costs 20 gs a pair.

Extremely comfortable, and very hardwearing, they increase the wearer's Pace by 1, but only for the purpose of calculating overland travel pace. Due to their being custom-made, anyone wearing a pair of boots made for someone else has -1 Pace when calculating their overland pace.

24. THE MESSENGERS' GUILD

For those who need to contact family or friends at ground level but don't fancy climbing down and back up the mountain, there is the Messengers' Guild. The guild uses carrier pigeons for most messages, the birds being trained to fly to either the mines and quarries, or to guild offices in Aslov and Halfway.

For those who require faster communication, and privacy, the guild sells *voice on the wind* scrolls up to Veteran Rank (30 words maximum). The user simply inscribes his message on the parchment and then burns it to activate the magic and transmit the message.

25. THE DOVECOTE

Much of the meat consumed in Spyre is dried, having been shipped in from afar. Fresh meat is available, but it is prohibitively expensive for most citizens. In order that his people might dine on fresh meat, the count's grandfather opened a large dovecot.

A state-run enterprise designed to make no meaningful profit, the dovecot sells doves and pigeons, and their eggs, in the market. Despite there being many hundreds of birds, supplies are carefully rationed to ensure there are always enough birds should famine strike. As such,

they sell very quickly. As a sideline, the birds' droppings are fried and sold to visiting merchants as fertilizer.

The birds are the official property of the count. Stealing one from the dovecote or killing any pigeon or dove inside the city is treated as theft. Once beyond the city walls, the birds are seen as fair game, something that swiftly gave rise to an increase in the number of birds of prey owned by citizens.

26. HOSPICE

Run by the cult of Eira, the hospice provides medical care for Spyre's citizens. Much of the courtyard outside the hospice has, with the count's blessing, been converted into a garden for cultivating medicinal herbs. While mostly reliant on their skills as healers and herbalists, the six clerics who run the hospice keep a small supply of *bealing* potions for emergencies.

One large room has been loaned to a cleric of Eostre Animalmother. She, along with two lay members, serves the community as a veterinarian. Residents of Spyre have few pets, but she does good business tending to the strains and minor injuries picked up by visiting merchants' pack animals.

Located in a separate building just north of the main structure is the public sauna. Here the poorest can rub shoulders (quite literally) with their richer neighbors for a mere 1/4 ss. Patrons who desire privacy while they cleanse away the grime of city life can rent the entire sauna for 5 gs per hour (timed by a burning candle).

27. THE STORM DRAGON

The inn has changed hands many times down the centuries, but it has never changed its key features. A huge tapestry depicting a brave warrior defeating a storm dragon covers the rear wall of the main hall. According to folklore, the victorious warrior visited Spyre, where he gifted the then owner of the tavern several dragon scales. Once they hung proudly on the wall, but today the servants use them as trays.

The inn is popular with visiting adventurers, whom the locals try to coax into telling stories of their heroic deeds. No matter the deed recounted, the response to such stories always runs along the lines of, "Brave indeed, but it wasn't as worthy an act as beating a storm dragon single-handed, was it?"

28. OBSERVATORY

Spyre's elevated position attracted Prynciple Edith ap-Cadmar, an air elemental with a passion for stargazing. Over the years, she has spent a small fortune building an observatory. Her crowning glory is a large telescope, purchased at great expense from Al-Shirkuh.

Although she has exchanged correspondence with the cult of Qedeshet in Sirhan, City of Stars, she was both shocked and delighted to receive a message three months ago stating that a delegation of priests would be

arriving as soon as possible and that they greatly desired to use her facility. They gave no reason for their visit, but urged the mage to keep their impending arrival a secret. So far, there has been no sign of the delegation.

Shortly after receiving the letter, Edith began to feel she was being watched. Initially putting it down to paranoia induced by the secretive nature of the missive, the feelings have intensified over the months.

Edith greatly desires to discover who is spying on her and for what purpose, but she is also mindful of the clerics' desire for secrecy. Perhaps a small band of trustworthy adventurers might be able to solve her problem without breaking confidence.

29. WAREHOUSE DISTRICT

Running along the eastern wall of New City are rows of stone warehouses. Spyre's economy is a thief's delight—luxury goods and wine flow in, while metal ingots and gems flow out, and all of it is stored in the warehouse district at some point. The constables maintain a constant vigil here, as do three paladins of Var, but even their presence is not enough to deter the thieves' guild. Adventurers looking for gainful employment can easily find work as guards.

30. PROSPECTING OFFICE

Spyre does not claim dominion over the Lesser Hills, but it has long lent military support to the scattered settlements in return for mining rights. Anyone seeking to prospect in the hills must secure a license from the Prospecting Office.

A license costs 50 gs and is good for one year. The license requires any prospector striking a workable vein to sell the ore or gems to Spyre. Alternately, he may sell his stake to the city for a one-off fee, the price varying with the estimated productivity of the mine. The mine's potential productivity is determined by the cult of Ertha.

31. ENTERTAINERS' GUILD

Formed a decade ago by a Saxa skald called Argon Aalfsunu, the Entertainer's Guild underwent several name changes early on. He first named the group the Lyres, until someone pointed out the similar sounding of the Saxa word "lyre" to the Anari word "liar." Next it became the Luters Guild, but again people laughed because of the word sounded like the word "looters." Argon eventually settled on the "Entertainers' Guild," though it is not one he likes.

Although Argon and his troupe are very popular with the citizens, the Guild exists to ensure ancient Saxa stories, poems, and songs survived the ages. Argon travels extensively through Saxa lands for much of the year, returning to Spyre to commit the knowledge to writing.

Legendary Endeavors Errata: The Entertainers' Guild counts as a moderate center skaldic school, but the Story Points can only be spent on tales with a Focus directly related to the Saxa, such as a specific Saxa dominated settlement, a specific Markland, or the Saxa culture as a whole.

32. FURRIER

Although in the Hearthlands, Spyre's elevated position means it is often colder than the surrounding lands. Warm clothing is essential even in summer, especially on windy days, and furs are preferred in winter.

Common garb is made of fox or rabbit fur, creatures found in abundance in the Lesser Hills. The fur of bears, beavers, mink, and otters is used in more expensive clothing. Polar bear fur is especially prized by the wealthy, purely because it is so expensive to procure.

Cecilia Edwinsdohrt is regarded as the best furrier in Spyre. As well as conventional furs, she can tailor make a range of custom furs. Prices are additional to the base cost of a set of furs. The Tailored modification can be combined with either Lightweight or Thick, but not both. Likewise, Lightweight and Thick cannot be combined into a single set of garments.

Lightweight (+75 gs): These furs weigh just 3 pounds; *Tailored (+300 gs):* These furs count as both normal furs and tailored clothing; *Thick (+200 gs):* Thicker than normal but with no added weight, these furs grants +2 to Vigor rolls to resist cold.

33. WINGS & CLAWS

In addition to the doves and pigeons from the dove-cote, the Pinnacle is home to several species of birds, not to mention plentiful rabbits on the lower slopes. While few citizens have the inclination to clamber down the rocks or make frequent trips to the foothills, they are quite prepared to use hawks to supplement their diet with fresh meat.

The establishment is operated by Margot, a female engro. She raises all her birds from eggs, training each of them to obey a specific set of commands (which are passed on to customers). Standards hawks cost as per the *Hellfrost Player's Guide*. More adept birds of prey cost 500 gs, but give the owner +1 to Survival rolls when hunting.

Margot has several breeding pairs, but she is always interested in purchasing viable eggs. She pays 50 gs per egg, but only after the bird has hatched.

What she really wants is a giant eagle's egg. City ordinance doesn't expressly prohibit keeping such huge birds, and it would enable her to roam far and wide on its back. She is prepared to offer 500 gs, but again only after the egg hatches.

34. DVERGDOLF

Also known as Dwarf City (the citizens of Spyre are far from imaginative), Dvergdelf is home to the majority of Spyre's 2,100 frost dwarves. Built entirely into the mountain, it is divided into three distinct zones. Grand stairways lead between the levels. Reluctant to allow outsiders into their private domain, the stairs are guarded by surly huscarls.

Lower Dvergdelf is essentially an indoor market. It is one long U-shaped tunnel with small shops on either

side. Here one can purchase all manner of dwarven goods, negotiate for specific services, or sample dwarven cuisine. This is as much of the dwarven town as most non-dwarves ever see. The next level, Middle Dvergelf, is a place of work and storage. The highest level, Upper Dvergelf, is the residential district.

Although technically part of Spyre and thus under the authority of Count Baldar, the dwarves have been granted many concessions over the centuries to earn their favor. They are permitted to maintain a private army of huscarls (there are 50, plus as additional 100 hall guards of which the Count is unaware), Spyre's courts have no jurisdiction over crimes committed in the halls, and the dwarves are permitted to worship whatever gods they see fit.

Lendmann Gloin Brittlebeard, the aged head of Clan Deepdelve, is the *de facto* ruler of Dvergelf. While Gloin remains typically insular, his eldest son and heir, Dvalinn, is more open toward the dwarves' neighbors and is keen to strengthen the relationship.

OUTER CITY

The newest district, the Outer City was once considered part of New City. Following political pressure, it was granted recognition as a separate part of the city and awarded its own councilor. Initially, the district was populated by middle-class citizens. Keen to move the less pleasant industries out of the main city, the council ruled that certain trades could only be conducted in the Outer City. Since the decree, the district has devolved into crowded, dirty, and pungent lower-class area.

35. CITY GRANARIES

Until 414 IR, all food shipments belonged to merchants, who stored them in private granaries in the Old City. Following the infamous Grain Grab, a bloody riot caused by food shortages and price rises that left 54 dead and hundreds injured, the city constructed its own granaries in the Outer City.

Merchants selling shipments of food are not charged import duty in coin. Instead, a percentage of their cargo is taken by the city and stored in the granaries. In times of crisis, this is rationed out to the citizens. This is not a free handout—every adult citizen pays 13 gs a year to compensate the city for lost tax revenue.

36. BREWERY

Spyre's water is clean by the standards of other cities, but few care to drink it straight from the well—no amount of care can prevent all impurities from entering the cisterns. Beer is thus the local beverage of choice, a drink given even to young children (although heavily watered down).

While every tavern and inn brews one or two special brews on its premises, the stock beers are all brewed at the city's brewery. The common beers and their alcohol by volume available across Spyre are Count's Tipple

(4%), Pinnacle Special (5.5%), Gambler's Risk (6.5%), and Ertha's Blood (8%).

A recent spate of sickness, and one death, has been blamed on a bad batch of beer. The proprietor, Coelred the Weaver (so-named because he is often staggeringly drunk) suspects sabotage. It is unlikely a tavern or innkeeper was behind things, simply because every drinking den in the city relies on the brewery for stock. Coelred is prepared to offer a barrel of his best ale every month for life, plus a small amount of hard coin, to anyone who can bring the culprit to justice.

37. ABATTOIR

Most of the meat sold in Spyre's market and shops is preserved, air-dried, salted, or smoked to ensure it reaches the city still edible. Even rabbits, which are plentiful, are smoked—it makes little economic sense to carry a brace or two up the mountain ever few days. Fresh meat is available, but at inflated prices. Mostly it is goat and sheep, hardy animals that graze on the tough grass that coats the slopes of the Lesser Hills before being driven up the mountain to slaughter. As well as supplying meat and offal to vendors, the abattoir supplies bone, sinew, and skin to craftsmen in need of such components.

A small statue of Eostre Animalmother, too small and lacking sufficient regular visitors to count as a shrine, stands in a niche facing the livestock pens.

38. LIVESTOCK PENS

This yard is usually dotted with wooden pens. Animals destined for the abattoir are kept here until their time is up, and the bleating of goats and sheep echoes through the surrounding streets day and night. The dung collectors (see #16) are frequent visitors to the animal pens.

On Marketdaegs when no livestock is present, the denizens of the Outer City host a small market selling knickknacks and basic goods. This has become known as the Outer Market.

39. EXECUTION TOWER

Those sentenced to death by the courts are tossed from the top of Execution Tower. By tradition, the names of the executed are carved into the tower's roof, thus allowing the gods to see their guilt. Preferring to put criminals to good use in the mines and quarries rather than remove them from society altogether, there are just under 100 names, the last inscribed 8 years ago.

40. SECOND CHANCE PAWNSHOP

Operated by Ernaut ap-Galien, the pawnshop serves patrons who need instant cash. Typically, Ernaut offers no more than 30-50% of an object's value. Pawned goods are held for a period of six months. If not reclaimed in this time (at the price Ernaut offered plus 10% interest per month), they become Ernaut's legal property.

While not a member of the thieves' guild, Ernaut is a trusted fence. He'll buy almost anything offered him and doesn't ask questions about whether the client is the rightful owner. Adventurers who know of Ernaut can always sell booty at 25% of its true value, with no need for a Streetwise roll.

41. THE LAST DROP

Visitors to Spyre visit this tavern only if seeking information from the local underworld, to hire thugs (no questions asked), or to test their fists against those of the rough patrons. The food is disgusting (though plentiful), the drink foul-tasting, the interior smoky, and the general furnishings long past their best.

The tavern occupies one of the city's towers. Three first two levels are devoted to drinking, the third to gambling, the fourth is private rooms patrons wishing to conduct business can hire, and the fifth level the proprietor's personal living space.

Locals refer to the tavern as the Jail—most of its patrons are criminals (either proven or suspected). Short of a full riot or reports of summoning demons, the city constables avoid the drinking den. Unless the victim has very influential friends, patrons can literally get away with murder inside the tavern. Although not officially affiliated with the thieves' guild, many thieves hang out here, safe from the clutches of the constables.

The tower was once used for executions, hence its name. The current owner, a vicious, one-eyed Saxa by the name of Gunther who has a secret passion for romantic poetry, maintains that the patrons would drain a man of his last drop of blood if they thought there was a profit to be made.

42. WING AND A PRAYER

Prayers written on or tied to kites are popular means of beseeching Thunor's aid. Another method, and one much favored in Spyre, is to launch a bird carrying a prayer tethered to its leg into the air. This is a double act of devotion, for when the bird reaches the heavens it joins Thunor's immense flock.

Egbert, a male engro, raises and sells a variety of small birds for this very purpose. He charges 5 gs per bird, an amount that allows most citizens to launch one or two a year and richer citizens to make monthly, or even weekly, devotions.

Egbert is a cousin of Margot (see #34) but the pair rarely ever speak to each other, and never politely. Egbert is convinced that Margot is deliberately trying to ruin his business by training her hawks to eat his prayer birds. While he seethes beneath his wide grin, Egbert informs customers that having their bird killed on the wing means Thunor found them wanting and they should try another prayer.

The resident high priest of Thunor has little love of Egbert. The engro isn't breaking any religious laws with his business—the cleric is merely upset that he didn't think of the moneymaking idea first.

BENEATH THE CITY

CISTERNS

Spyre's elevated position makes it impossible to dig wells into the water table. Concealed beneath the city are huge cisterns linked together by stone pipes and waterproofed with a thick layer of clay. They are filled with rainwater, either funneled from roofs or dropping through grates in the streets. The grates have a very fine mesh to prevent contaminants entering the water supply, but require frequent cleaning to prevent them becoming clogged. Above each cistern is a well.

SEWERS

The citizens of Spyre enjoy indoor lavatories. Bodily waste, and anything else you can fit down the hole, drops straight into a labyrinth of sewers running beneath the city. The sewers slope toward the western side of the plateau, emerging into open air at a point known locally as the Yellow Waterfall.

The sewers have recently gained a new resident—Vermilord Brantome Clawhand. A filthy and vile creature, he is slowly building up the number of rats and breeding giant rats in preparation for unleashing them on the unsuspecting city during the coming winter. Unable to find suitable food for his entire "congregation," the cleric has resorted to venturing above ground at night to kidnap drunks and vagrants.

MINES AND QUARRIES

Spyre's economy is based entirely around mining and quarrying. Despite what one might hear, there are no active mines in the upper reaches of the Pinnacle. Instead, gems, ore, and stone are mined from the base of the Pinnacle and in the Lesser Hills.

Given that returning to one's lofty home each night after toiling hard all day is virtually impossible, the laborers work a shift system. Miners and laborers hack and hew at the stone for three weeks solid each month and then have the fourth week as a rest period. While such generosity is most unusual (most citizens get two days off work a month plus a few holy days), it has helped productivity and morale. Criminals sentenced here get no breaks from their back-breaking toil.

Once smelted into ingots, the copper and iron is transported to Spyre for storage and to be worked into finished goods. Caravans usually make the long and dangerous trip only once a month. Gems are carried each week, while worked stone is stacked near the quarry unless required for a building project.

Since snow and ice can close the path to Spyre for months on end, the mines and quarries only operate from mid-spring until the first snows fall. During winter, the storerooms are emptied and only a small number of guards occupy the gem and metal mines.

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