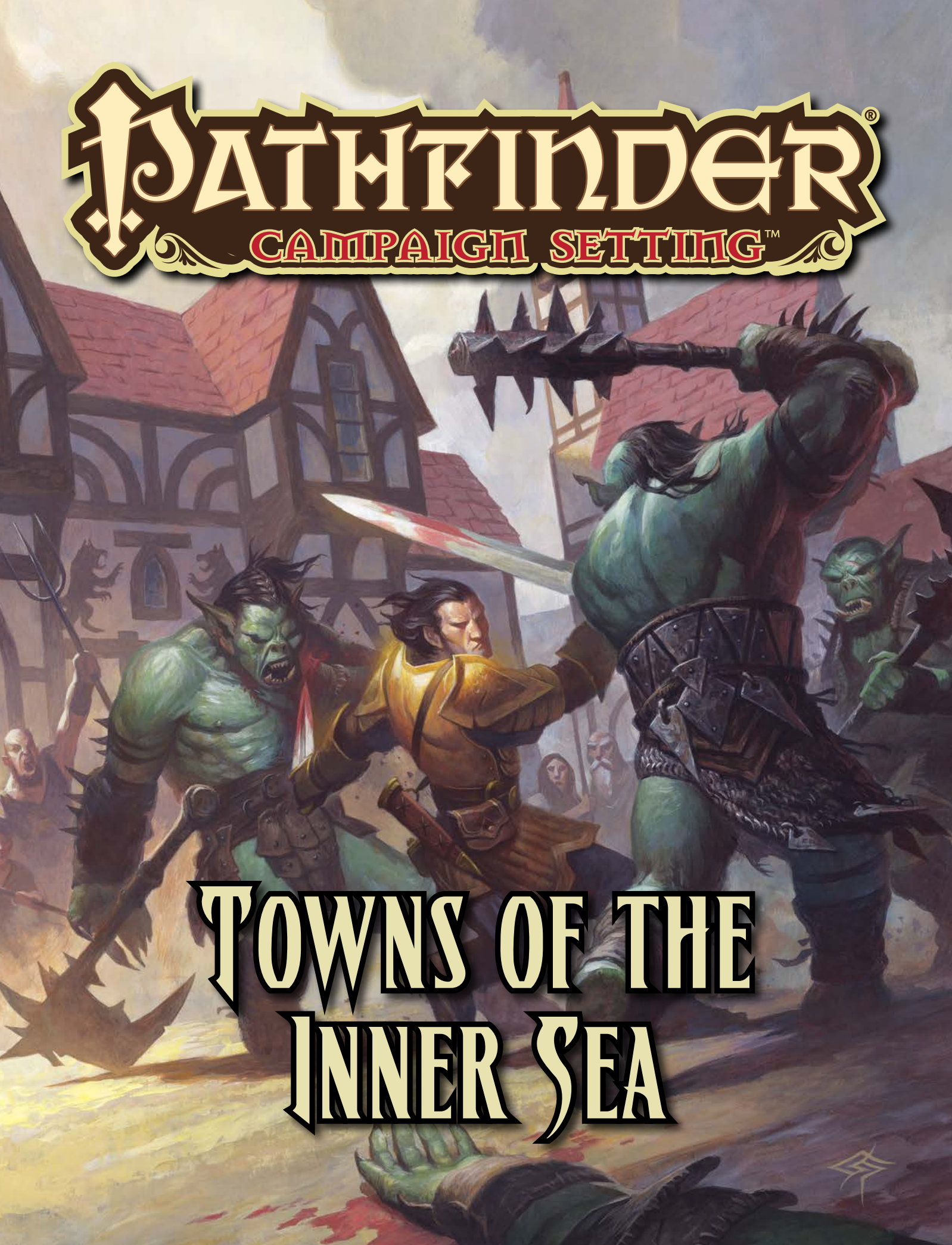


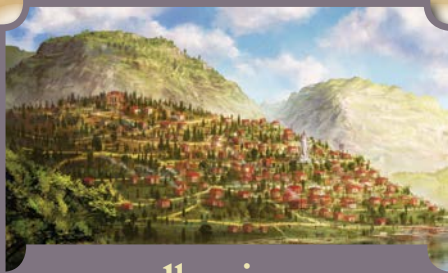
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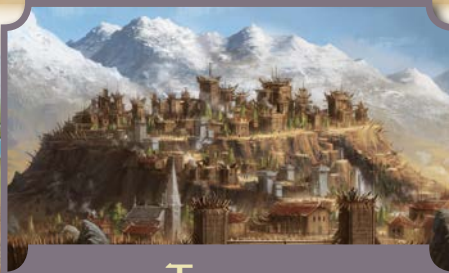


TOWNS OF THE INNER SEA

Towns of the Inner Sea



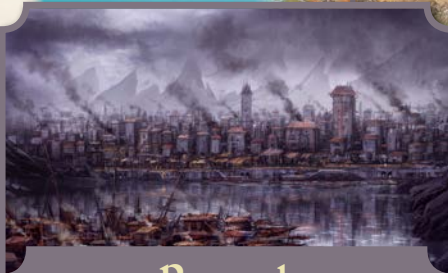
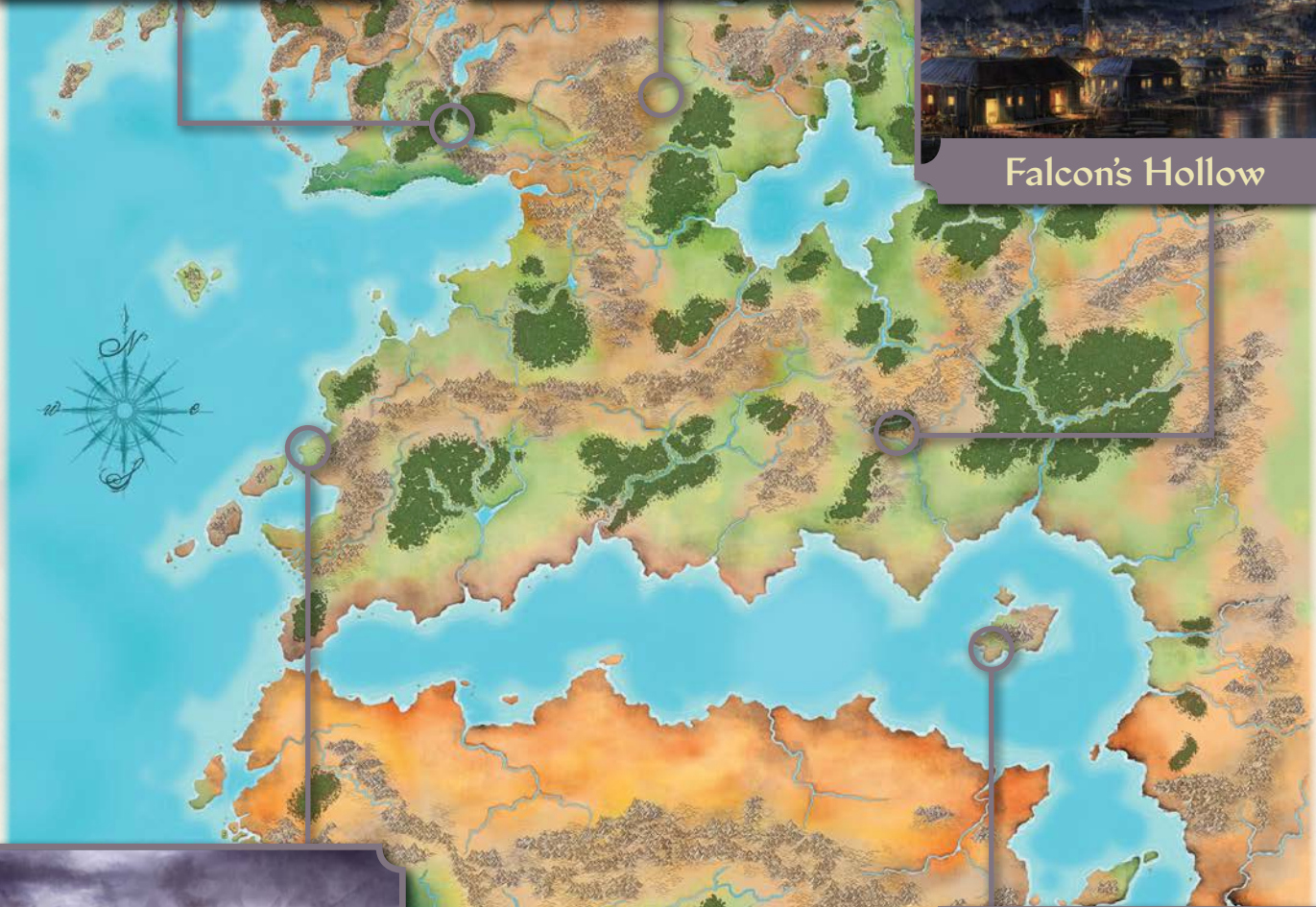
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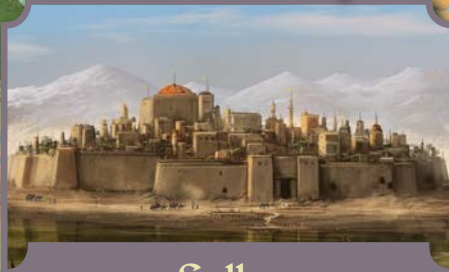
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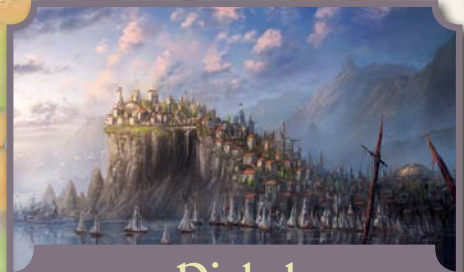
Falcon's Hollow



Pezzack



Solku



Diobel

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On the Cover



The residents of this peaceful town have Valeros's back as he convinces a band of orc raiders that they're not welcome 'round these parts.



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Reference

This book refers to several other Pathfinder Roleplaying Game products using the following abbreviations, yet these additional supplements are not required to make use of this book. Readers interested in references to Pathfinder RPG hardcovers can find the complete rules of these books available online for free at paizo.com/prd.

<i>GameMastery Guide</i>	GMG	<i>Paths of Prestige</i>	POP
<i>Inner Sea World Guide</i>	ISWG		



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WELCOME HOME

Whether they're convenient stopovers where treasure-flush adventurers can reprovision and rest, beloved communities rich with allies and memories, or skewed expressions of questionable values and strange customs, towns are some of the most useful and versatile locations in any campaign. This book provides GMs with six distinctive settlements, each filled with vibrant characters, compelling locations, and threats in need of heroes. These settings make perfect hometowns for characters looking to start their adventuring careers, but can also be used as the central adventure sites for later adventures, or even entire campaigns.

While the towns in this book are distinctive, they can also be dissected or repositioned as stand-ins in similar regions for the next time the characters journey to an unexpected dot on the map. Small settlements that are anything but boring backwaters, these towns are filled with colorful residents and intriguing histories that make them suitable for virtually any campaign.

OTHER TOWNS TO EXPLORE

Towns make fantastic starting points for both players and adventures. It follows that many Pathfinder Modules and Adventure Paths begin in small communities or have the fate of such locations tied to the success of their quests. In addition to the towns presented in this book, the following settlements, each town-sized or smaller, are thoroughly detailed in their related adventures, and include maps, elaborations on locations, characters, and more. Whether you're interested in more adventures based in small communities or are looking to give your characters a home worth defending (or your villains a target worth imperiling), these communities make the perfect settings for all manner of stories.

Belhaim: Founded by a famous dragonslayer, this Taldan town rests near a swampy edge of the Verduran Forest and has a reputation for quiet self-sufficiency. The townsfolk's relationship with the druids of the nearby woods is typically peaceful, though the same can't be said of their interactions with the local kobolds. More details about the town, and a mighty threat to its people, can be found in *Pathfinder Module: The Dragon's Demand*.

Dustpawn: Located near the western arm of the Five Kings Mountains, Dustpawn exists to draw iron ore from the earth but supplements its wealth by being a quiet haven for smuggling and trades in modest amounts of illegal goods. Little out of the ordinary ever happened to the tough people of Dustpawn—at least until something

from space crashed nearby. The strange incidents in and around this town are featured in *Pathfinder Module: Doom Comes to Dustpawn*.

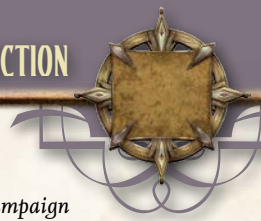
Gundrun: The last remnant of the fallen nation of Sarkoris, Gundrun exists within the boundaries of the Worldwound, surviving as much by the determination of its residents as the low strategic value to the realm's demonic despots. The people of Gundrun are among the last true keepers of Sarkorian ways and traditions, including the mysteries of the summoners known as god-callers. This community is detailed in *Pathfinder Campaign Setting: Lost Kingdoms* and mapped in *Pathfinder Campaign Setting: The Worldwound*.

Heldren: This sleepy Taldan settlement can be found along the Border Wood, one of the boundaries separating Taldor and Qadira. The peaceful woodcutters, herders, and farmers of this village go about their lives with little mind for national squabbles or scheming organizations, all the while unaware of the strange magical connection their village shares with the distant community of Waldsby. Heldren serves as the starting point for the Reign of Winter Adventure Path and is explored in *Pathfinder Adventure Path #67: The Snows of Summer*.

Kelmarane: The village of Kelmarane and its infamous battle market lie in ruins at the start of the Legacy of Fire Adventure Path. It's up to the adventurers to win back the town, after which they have upward of a year to help bring the community back to life. Kelmarane, including ruined and reconstructed maps, features in both *Pathfinder Adventure Path #19: Howl of the Carrion King* and in *Pathfinder Adventure Path #24: The Final Wish*.

Ravengro: The residents of this insular farming town in Ustalav's county of Canterwall know to be suspicious of strangers, their town having been founded to support the nearby—and now ruined—Harrowstone Prison. Despite the prison's fall, the townsfolk make quiet lives for themselves, respecting each other's privacy but treating outsiders with a combination of distrust and fascination. The Carrion Crown Adventure Path begins in the town of Ravengro, which is fully detailed in *Pathfinder Adventure Path #43: The Haunting of Harrowstone*.

Sandpoint: The best-known little town on Varisia's Lost Coast, Sandpoint has a history of mystery and murder and has been the launching point for many noteworthy adventuring careers. The generally good and hardworking townsfolk toil to make their community a place worth living in and defending, despite the dangers of the Varisian wilds and threats from the region's sinister



past. Sandpoint features most prominently in *Pathfinder Adventure Path: Rise of the Runelords Anniversary Edition*, but also makes cameo appearances in the Jade Regent and Shattered Star Adventure Paths.

Thornkeep: This nearly lawless community shelters within the fringes of the Echo Wood in the eastern River Kingdoms. The freewheeling nature of the locals, permissive edicts of the town's baron, and numerous ruins and monster lairs in the surrounding forest make the town an attractive base for adventurers seeking to increase their wealth and notoriety. This town and some of its most famous adventure sites are detailed in the book *Pathfinder Online: Thornkeep*.

Waldsby: Huddled against the trees of the Hoarwood in Irrisen, Waldsby is a community of trappers and loggers bound together by their need to survive and fear of the White Witches who rule their nation. Little do they know that their village shares a mysterious connection with the Taldan settlement of Heldren in far more pleasant climes. Waldsby is the gateway to the snowy nation of Irrisen in the Reign of Winter Adventure Path and features prominently in *Pathfinder Adventure Path #67: The Snows of Summer*.

TOWNS TO DEVELOP

Part of the appeal of adventures set in and around small towns is the ease with which the PCs can develop relationships and have a greater effect on the populace as a whole. From a GM's point of view, the scale of a town makes the setting easier to bring to life by filling it with nuanced descriptions of characters, locations, and goings-on. While many towns in the Inner Sea region are elaborately detailed, some have little more than a brief description written about them, giving GMs the perfect springboard to create homes for their next adventures. The following towns have only the barest descriptions set in place, making them ripe for GM development.

Albatross: This foreboding cliffside village in Nidal is haunted by thousands of sea birds (*Pathfinder Campaign Setting: The Inner Sea World Guide* 135).

Bellis: This trading town in Andoran's Verduran Forest is known for its bees and the quality of its apicultural products (*The Inner Sea World Guide* 44).

Bristlewark: This colorful and unusual Chelish community lies at the edge of the Aspodell Mountains and is ruled by Gnome King Drum Thornfiddle (*The Inner Sea World Guide* 56).

Dravod Knock: The Kellids of this small community of stilted shacks in Numeria drag clay, mud fish, and strange discoveries from the adjacent Lake Porphyria's silt plains (*The Inner Sea World Guide* 144).

Kibwe: At the eastern reaches of the Mwangi Jungle, this town serves as neutral ground for numerous tribes

and races from throughout the wilds (*Pathfinder Campaign Setting: Heart of the Jungle* 35).

Litran: The lethal Gray Gardeners have claimed this blood-soaked community as their headquarters in Galt (*The Inner Sea World Guide* 73).

Riverspire: At the southern edge of the Fierani Forest, nearly everyone in this elven town is related to the prominent Morgethai family (*The Inner Sea World Guide* 97).

Slipcove: A halfling port town on Bag Island, ruled by Free Captain Jolis Raffles (*Pathfinder Campaign Setting: Isles of the Shackles* 7).

Sojourner's Rest: This settlement of fey in the Grungir Forest is built in the shape of a Varisian knot (*Pathfinder Campaign Setting: Lands of the Linnorm Kings* 13).

Whispertruth: In the Vergan Forest hides a settlement of heretics dedicated to the downfall of Razmir, the Living God (*The Inner Sea World Guide* 161).

TOWNS TO CREATE

Sometimes GMs and players want a place of their own to mold as they please. If you want to create your very own town to provide a fresh start for your adventure and serve as your personal sandbox in the Inner Sea region, check out the Founding a Settlement section of Chapter 4 of *Pathfinder RPG Ultimate Campaign*. While GMs and players could certainly choose from among the numerous unclaimed corners of the Inner Sea to found a new settlement, founding a community is a central goal of the Kingmaker Adventure Path. Throughout that campaign, the PCs find themselves with legal claim to develop a portion of the River Kingdoms as they see fit, likely resulting in the creation of a new settlement and eventually even a fledgling nation. The guidelines for settling and creating a town were originally presented in the first two volumes of the Kingmaker Adventure Path and have since been updated and expanded for use in any campaign in *Pathfinder RPG Ultimate Campaign*.

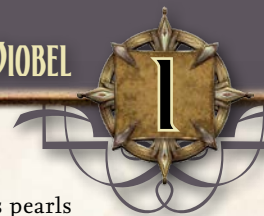




DIOBEL

“Pick a pelt! Pick a pearl! Everything’s for sale in Diobel. Don’t listen to those high n’ mighty Absalomites. Their city ain’t nothing but a bunch of kneelers, necromancers, bloody barbers, and—worst of all—politicians. They’re right about one thing, though: we’re simple folk, who like our smoked oysters and a mug of ale after a hard day’s work and a game of drouge now n’ again. Here, anyone who ain’t afraid o’ hard work can make a good living and walk with his head held high as any lord’s. So welcome, friend, and if you’ve got goods you want moved to Absalom tariff-free, I might just know a man who knows a camel who knows a bird’ll get ‘em there.”

—Dagen Karbie, hawker, importer, and member of the Barge Gang



Diobel bills itself as the “Doorway to Absalom,” and that very reputation draws thousands of visitors to this tiny harbor town each week. They come for swift transport for themselves and their cargo; for trade in fur, pearls and lumber; and for unconventional entry into Absalom, either because they wish to avoid tariffs or because they deal in illegal contraband. It’s for this latter reason Diobel is also called “the Back Door of Absalom.” Diobel’s streets bustle with visitors from all walks of life, but the city’s especially attractive to those with flexible relationships with the law.

The town is a stepping-stone to the most cosmopolitan city in the Inner Sea region, yet its residents are earthy, honest folk. Whether they’re oyster farmers or smugglers, dockworkers or shopkeepers, all of Diobel’s residents toil in the imposing shadow of the Citadel, the beating heart of a massive network of trade commissions operating under the auspices of the secretive Kortos Consortium. Some of these simple folk, however, trace their ancestry to the first explorers to arrive on Kortos after Aroden lifted it from the sea floor. Compared to the history of Diobel’s roots, the grand houses of Absalom are but upstart latecomers, and many a haughty visitor has been humbled by a reminder of this fact, murmured with a wry smile by a weathered man or woman shucking oysters on the quay.

HISTORY

The first mentions of a settlement at the location of current-day Diobel date back to the Pirate Siege of Absalom’s early history. Fleets of bloodthirsty brigands seized the harbor at Diobel as a foothold on Kortos, from which they launched fleets against the “Jewel of the Inner Sea.” Tales passed down among seafarers say that Diobel has been a smuggler stronghold of some sort ever since, though some of these accounts claim the port was then called “Derelict.”

The first residents of what is now Diobel were soldiers, sailors, pirates, and plunderers who took part in the Pirate Siege. These survivors either didn’t want to return home or didn’t have a home to return to, so they stayed at the camp and built permanent structures. Some were smugglers who found the natural harbor easy to navigate and set up shop to continue their clandestine operations. As the centuries passed, these first few huts were replaced, often many times over, by sturdier buildings. The first Diobelians (though they weren’t called that at the time) found the climate welcoming and the natural harbor to be teeming with fish and oysters. Those who ventured inland and braved the monsters inhabiting the island found opportunities in trapping and fur trading. Others saw the untouched forests and knew they could make piles of gold harvesting the lumber.

In time, the sprawling oyster beds and lustrous pearls hidden therein drew many old inlander families from the monster-teeming wilds of the island to the harbor, and the resulting growth of the town sparked a robust trade with passing vessels in lumber, furs, and pearls. The people living in Diobel used the crude roads and trails blazed by previous sieges of Absalom to trade with the grand city, and over time they built up the trails into a proper road. This road is the same one now used by the caravans of traders and smugglers who help bring goods to Absalom from Diobel’s protected harbor.

Diobel’s reputation as an unofficial doorstep to Absalom was finally legitimized with the ascendancy of Lord Gyr as Primarch of Absalom. Lord Gyr’s rise to power was aided long ago by the plotting of his childhood friend, Scion Lord Avid of House Arnsen. As a reward, Gyr installed Avid as Teriarch (a title invented for the position) of Diobel, and placed the Doorway to Absalom under Avid’s control. Lord Avid, however, viewed this posting not as a reward but as an exile, and the two became bitter rivals.

The Primarch isn’t the only adversary with which Lord Avid must contend. Diobel has long been the headquarters of the Kortos Consortium—on the surface, it’s a guild of merchants that controls trade between Absalom and Diobel, but it’s actually an elaborate smuggling operation. The quiet port town proved the perfect place for the Consortium to pull the strings of its economic empire, until the arrival of Lord Avid put the future of the town at a crossroads and sparked a struggle for control of Diobel.

DIABEL

LN large town

Corruption +2; **Crime** -3; **Economy** +2; **Law** +4; **Lore** +1;

Society -2

Qualities insular, prosperous, strategic location

Danger +5

DEMOGRAPHICS

Government overlord

Population 4,850 (4,723 humans, 37 gillmen, 33 half-elves, 21 halflings, 16 elves, 8 dwarves, 12 other)

Notable NPCs

Alvalda Margruel (NG female human aristocrat 3/bard 10)

Elvi Kaldroon (CG female human expert 4/fighter 4)

Mason Karbie (CN male human rogue 8)

Palraxi Locosta (NE female tiefling aristocrat 4/sorcerer 7)

Prince Lyrel Rambas (CE male human rogue 6/fighter 4)

Scion Lord Avid of House Arnsen (LN male human aristocrat 3/wizard 13)

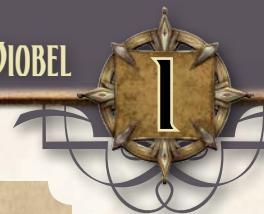
MARKETPLACE

Base Value 2,860 gp; **Purchase Limit** 15,000 gp;

Spellcasting 5th

Minor Items 3d4; **Medium Items** 2d4; **Major Items** 1d4





LIFE IN DIOBEL

Life in Diobel hasn't changed much in centuries. The same families ply their trades along the Bristles, pulling oysters from the same ancient sea beds, ferrying barges along the same waterways, hawking pearls on the same piers, and skinning pelts with knives passed down from mother to daughter. Even the cries of the vendors along the waterfront are echoes of the trills and melodic calls that could've been heard lifetimes ago; the piers ring daily with cries of "Picka-picka-pearl!", "Picka-picka-pelt!", and "Lug-ya lumber, lug it on home!"

The citizens of Diobel care little about the grand titles and political games of Absalom's high society, but they respect hard work and those who make their own way in the world. Many of the families whose toil fuels the town's economy rise each morning before "Lady Sun pokes her head out from the covers." Whether dredging for oysters, smoking the day's catch, or seeing to their shops, families who work along the Bristles put in long hours, gossiping and singing old songs to pass the hours in merriment rather than drudgery. Diobelians are proud of their crafts, and love to celebrate at the end of the day, usually gathered around a plate of smoked oysters at Kaldroon's Smokehouse, or kicked back on the piers of Pikapell Market with a "mug o' brown" (a strong earthy ale brewed by the locals).

The town's longstanding ties to smuggling have instilled a general disdain for licenses, fees, taxes, and regulations among the old families of Diobel, and an amused contempt for politics and legal distinctions. Even families like the Kaldroons, who take pride in their honesty and refusal to engage in criminal activity, resent anyone who quotes rules or uses legalese in a disagreement. Simple, forthright common sense wins the day in Diobel.

The only thing Diobelians despise more than officiousness is pretentiousness. They are egalitarians at heart, and anyone who tries to place himself above others will be the target of derogatory snorts and mutters of "Well ain't he just a shiny pearl!" That said, while the Diobelians look out for their own, any who refuse to work for their keep are likely to be tarred with sneers of "Those briny scum? They haven't so much as shucked an oyster in weeks!" Most of the town's slang is derived from Diobel's main industries, and some of the most piquant colloquialisms are heard in threats, such as "I'll shuck your oysters, son!" (an utterance generally followed by a swift kick to the groin), or "Best shut your clam before I knock out some pearls!" (a prelude to a right hook to the jaw), or even "I'll sell your pelt down on the Bristles if you keep it up."

Outsiders are always welcome at Pikapell Market, where their coin drives the markets, but most Diobelians

RUMORS IN DIOBEL

Here are a few of the current rumors circulating in Diobel.

Family Feuds: Mason Karbie got his limp by framing one of his rivals for bad-mouthing a young daughter of the Kaldroon clan. The family dealt with the "offender," but unraveled Mason's deception soon after. Elvi Kaldroon broke Mason's leg; it healed badly and has pained him ever since. Mason's still looking for payback.

Harpy Kidnappers: A group of harpies has started roosting in one of the larger wrecks in the harbor. They fly into town by night, lure children from their beds with their captivating songs, then snatch up their young prey to be devoured back at their ruined nest.

Smuggled Spiders: A Vudrani merchant tried to smuggle a large brood of dream spiders into the Bristles, but the Barge Gang botched things and the vicious critters escaped. The Bristles are crawling with them now, their narcotic bites leaving locals and tourists alike in a drugged stupor, and Scion Lord Avid is furious because one of his advisors was bitten and still hasn't awoken.

are cagey about forming close ties with anyone who isn't a native. Even foreigners who've lived in the town for years admit wistfully that they still don't quite feel they fit in. In Diobel, you're not considered a native unless your family has lived and worked in the town for at least three generations.

Local celebrations are frequent and often rowdy. The Kortos Consortium hosts a trade fair each spring, supplying free food and drink to all the families whose hard work earns their generous profits every year. A common rite of passage among the old families involves youths finding their first pearls, the profits of which they often use to buy their parents a token of thanks or to chip in toward family expenses.

DIOBEL AT A GLANCE

The residential areas of Diobel are composed of neatly cobbled streets with one- and two-story houses whose wooden siding has been weathered to a warm gray by rain and salt, but the neighborhoods are anything but monochrome. Trim is painted bright whites and pastels, window boxes and kitchen gardens overflow with herbs and flowering plants, and the streetside wall of each family's house is adorned with a form of ornamentation unique to Diobel: a fishing net into which are fixed mementos telling the story of the family's livelihood and history. A child's first catch might be marked with a brightly painted fishing lure, while a prosperous year trading in furs might result in the addition of a cunningly carved wooden mink or bear. A native Diobelian can read these nets like a history book, learning of a family's

THE KORTOS CONSORTIUM

The current major players in the Kortos Consortium are House Locosta, House Margruel, and the self-styled Prince Lyrel Rambas.

House Locosta: The Locosta family speaks as though their heritage is Taldan, though any local expert gossiping on the pier will tell interested parties that they're actually Chelish. The House also claims their major ventures are in Qadiran spices, but in truth, their profit derives from the slaves they buy there and sell to secret flesh markets. The current head of the House is Palraxi Locosta, a middle-aged woman who would likely be handsome-looking were it not for a terrible skin condition. She is constantly seeking ointments and magical cures for this chronic affliction, but locals whisper that her scaly red skin is a sign of some ancestor's dalliance with devilkind.

House Margruel: With a fortune built on constructing ships for powerful houses in Absalom, House Margruel controls a great and ever-growing number of the Consortium's trade vessels. The family is loved by the common folk (who might otherwise view its pretensions to nobility with a jaundiced eye) because of its charitable works in the town, as well as its constant and unwavering insistence on using local labor and goods for the Consortium's needs. The residents of Diobel see the family as local people made good, and take keen pride in the accomplishments of its current matriarch, Alvalda Margruel, a statuesque woman in her late forties. Her four grown children handle the House's day-to-day business, but Alvalda maintains the House's important local connections, and can often be found strolling the boardwalks or enjoying a mug of brown in one of the finer waterfront taverns. Some strange pact is said to exist between Alvalda and Elvi Kaldroon, who normally has no time for "high and mighty" merchant types, but never hesitates to stand and speak up for the Margruel family.

Prince Lyrel Rambas: The self-styled "prince" hails from the Sodden Lands, but the murderous thugs that make up his crew are drawn from a hundred different ports of call. His profit margins are incredible, and most assume his success is bolstered by the fact that most of his goods are acquired on the high seas, rather than purchased.

births and deaths, triumphs and losses, and joys and sorrows from the handmade ornaments affixed to its strands. At night, the houses' thick-paned windows gleam

with a flickering, honeyed glow cast from the island's traditional three-pronged candleholders, lit to guide weary fisherfolk and pearl divers home for the evening.

The harbor is a loud, bustling festival of maritime trade. Food carts with awnings painted to advertise their delicacies vie for space with artisans selling mother-of-pearl jewelry and merchants haggling over shipping prices. Across the street from the docks, storefronts shoulder up against the offices of shipping companies, broken up by the occasional narrow alley in which a resourceful entrepreneur might encounter individuals offering less traditional methods of getting one's merchandise into Absalom.

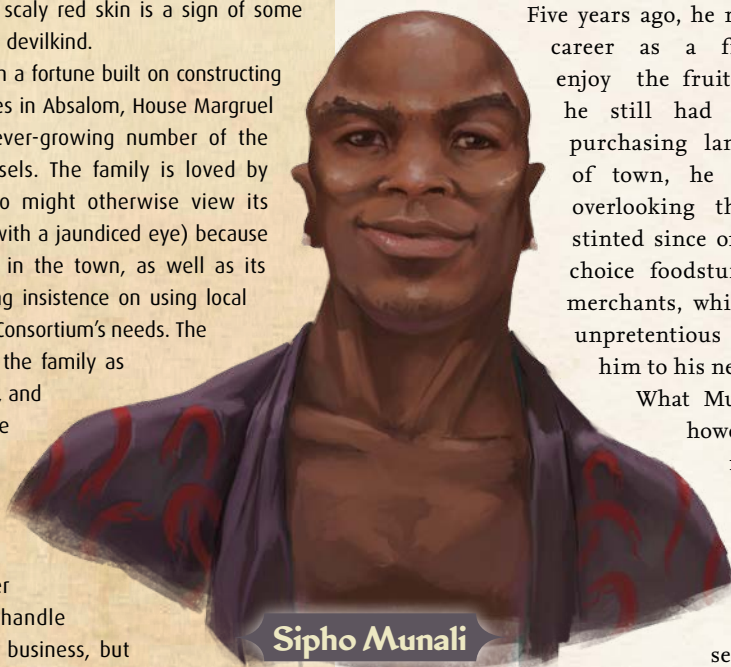
1. Munali Manor: Sipho Munali (N male human sorcerer 10) is a relative newcomer to Diobel.

Five years ago, he retired from a lucrative career as a freebooter captain to enjoy the fruits of his success while he still had all his limbs. After purchasing land on the north end of town, he built a large manor overlooking the sea, and has not stinted since on fine furnishings and choice foodstuffs bought from local merchants, which, combined with his unpretentious manner, has endeared him to his new neighbors.

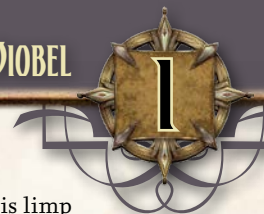
What Munali doesn't advertise, however, is that he was not merely a pirate, but rather a privateer in the employ of the Andoren Navy. And although he's in fact retired from the life at sea, he has agreed to keep an alert (but unofficial) eye on the ships entering and leaving Diobel's

harbor, their cargoes, and the Devil's Pier in particular—for the Office of Privateering Actions. To this end, he's been cultivating friendships with the major players in the Kortos Consortium and captains based out of Diobel, as well as less public relationships with dockhands and some of the smugglers who transport goods to Absalom. So far he's had no luck learning anything of substance about the Devil's Pier, but he has made some progress learning about House Locosta's involvement in the flesh trade. He might be interested in obtaining assistance in his investigations from outsiders of proven discretion.

2. The Claw District: The Claw lies on the outskirts of the town, and is the beginning of what many Diobelians call the inland, generally with a grimace. Some of the older families on the Isle of Kortos keep camps and



Sipho Munali



homesteads there. Few outsiders travel to the Claw, save those planning an expedition to the island's wild interior.

3. The Red Bridge Pearl Market: Located on the edge of town, the Red Bridge spans the Deluge, a narrow river that flows through Diobel and empties into the harbor. Since the town's founding, a market has run daily on and below the bridge; in recent years, the market has become the preferred location for high-profile pearl vendors and merchants dealing in the finer luxuries. Red Bridge offers an elegance that Pikapell's brine-soaked piers cannot, and its elevated location offers a pleasant salty breeze. Since Lord Avid took control of Diobel, the Red Bridge has also become a favored spot for wizards' duels among visiting young spellcasters who hope to gain Avid's favor, employ, or mentorship.

After the duels claimed a few bystanders and damaged valuable merchandise, Avid declared them a public nuisance and issued an edict forbidding them, with varying harsh penalties.

4. The Snout District: The Snout lies on a sloping ridge overlooking the docks and piers of the Bristles, and is home to many old families of Diobel: local artisans, lumberjacks, traders, trappers, and hunters. Less crowded than the Bristles, the Snout hosts those who live off the land, as well as members of Diobel's middle class.

5. The Trawl: This maze of broken ships was originally dragged into Diobel's harbor to defend against seaborne attacks. This artificial reef now serves as home to barge masters and pilots who work the harbor. The Trawl is the floating nexus of the barge trade, which ferries goods off larger vessels and into the Bristles; it's also where most of the town's barges and small boats are moored. The Trawl is under the unchallenged control of the Karbie family, who run the Barge Gang with a firm, unforgiving, and often knife-wielding hand. The Karbies are an old Diobelian family who know all the hidden dangers of the wrecks and derelict vessels littering the harbor.

Mason Karbie, the current leader of the Barge Gang, is a short old man with a lame leg and unnaturally long arms. He has thin, oily hair and bears a scar across his face from an encounter with an angry school of reefclaws he nearly didn't survive. He now wears the scar with pride, hoping its appearance gives him an intimidating

presence. He's known as a devil with a knife, and his limp doesn't seem to slow him down in a scuffle. The gang has long been one of the most powerful organizations in Diobel, taking a cut of any goods they carry as tribute, and occasionally claiming entire cargoes and spinning tragic tales of accidents during the crossing. Their secret stashes and holds riddle the harbor and the Trawl.

Any merchants who complains about the Barge Gang's practices find themselves cut off from barge services and unable to get their goods into Diobel. Even barge masters who aren't directly affiliated with the Karbies wouldn't dare cross them by offering their services to a merchant they'd blacklisted.

The pirate Prince Lyrel Rambas has already clashed with the Karbies and now wages a secret war with them in and around the half-sunken ships in Diobel's harbor. He has found the Barge Gang far more cunning and frustrating than previously expected.

6. Wisps on the Water: A floating multitiered pleasure barge sits moored to the wreckage that makes up the Trawl. Home to sophisticated courtesans somewhat out of place in earthy Diobel, Wisps on the Water is a paradise of fine dining, intoxicating spirits, beautiful men and women of every race, and exotic indulgences for all of the senses.

The proprietress is a beautiful Varisian woman named **Salodri** (N female human bard 6). Tall and incomparably elegant, she occasionally graces an especially cultured or interesting patron with a dance, the mere sight of which

is said to be more sensual than any other indulgence on the barge. Rumors claim Salodri's mother was a nymph, whose jealousy of her daughter's incredible beauty and sensual powers caused her to curse her child never to set foot on land. Whatever the truth, Salodri has been known to dine with famous captains on their ships, but has never stepped onto Diobel's docks.

The barge takes its name from the illusory floating lights that are its trademark, said to be the boon of a mysterious patron who created them to light his way back to the only true pleasure he had found in this world. Whispers abound as to his identity, but Salodri is the embodiment of discretion. Some instead speculate that they are actually sprites seduced into service by the intoxicating beauty of their mistress.



Salodri



7. Kaldroon's Smokehouse: This simple, spacious restaurant is filled with rustic wooden benches and tables, but otherwise largely unadorned. It serves the tastiest smoked oysters and steamed crabs in all of Diobel, and its prices are cheap, spawning lines that stretch to the waterfront. Even the humblest families can afford a plate of oysters there, but the house specialty's renown and inimitable flavor lures the most cosmopolitan outsiders to the smokehouse's tables. This makes Kaldroon's a common ground for all Diobelians, a place where wealthy merchants rub elbows with the briniest dockside workers as both gulp down the restaurant's fare.

Jitsy Kaldroon (NG female human commoner 4), called "Auntie Jitsy" by all in the Diobel, runs the smokehouse with a warm smile that freezes into a gimlet stare at the slightest sign of misbehavior in her establishment. The Kaldroons are one of the oldest families in Diobel—neither exceptionally wealthy nor highly placed, but connected in some way to everyone. They're known as hard, honest people who have farmed oysters and dived for pearls since the town's beginning. The Kaldroons are a big family, and they stick together. They are loyal to a fault, indifferent to social status, and single-minded to the point of stubbornness, and they possess an unerring sense of justice. Though they have no political aspirations of their own, their support is sought by anyone who wishes to accomplish anything in Diobel—even by Lord Avid (who rarely lowers himself to consort with the natives), and criminal elements like the Karbies would never think to cross them. As a family, the Kaldroons are allies to any justice-oriented visitors to or residents of Diobel, and dread foes to anyone who insults their family, besmirches Diobel's traditions, or dares to threaten the good common folk of the town.

Plenty of dangerous people have targeted the Kaldroons over the decades, and they are all dead and gone, while the family continues to thrive. If anyone expresses a desire to cross the Kaldroons, any old-timer in Diobel who overhears immediately attempts to dissuade the rash fool, promising that "crossing the Kaldroons ain't worth the trouble that follows." Even with such a stern reputation, the Kaldroons treat all visitors to Diobel as welcome guests (provided they are polite and show respect to the people of the town), showing them every hospitality, treating them to spiced or smoked oysters at the Smokehouse, and offering them their hands in

friendship—so long as these guests don't insult Auntie Jitsy's cooking.

8. Zamlin's Drouge Den: Zamlin's Drouge Den is the other side of the coin to Hoag's Rickets and Rumples down the street. While Hoag's establishment is a gaudy eyesore, Zamlin's Drouge Den is a jet-black two-storied inn with the elegance and simplicity to attract a wealthier and more cultured crowd than does her counterpart. In addition to fine libations, Zamlin's second-floor gaming parlors offer many activities, but chief among them is the incredibly addictive game of drouge, the local pronunciation of a traditional Vudrani game called *draj*, whose name translates roughly as "menagerie." Played with slender ivory and obsidian plaques bearing symbols such as the elephant, the crocodile, the wyvern, the hydra, and the dreaded chimera (which changes the very rules of the game every time it's revealed), drouge has been a sensation on its home continent for hundreds of years, and its appeal is not lost on the high-stakes gamblers of Diobel either.

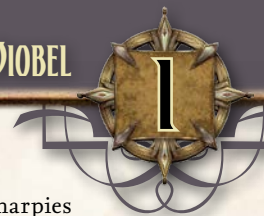
Half Vudrani and half Taldan, **Talika Zamlin** (NG female human expert 4/bard 2) has her own roots on the island (she's distantly related to the Jarks). Many believe Zamlin and Hoag are at odds and are constant rivals, but nothing could be further from the truth. Their gaming dens attract entirely different crowds, and the two are boon friends who enjoy playing drouge and rumples against one another. The two proprietors occasionally team up against the host of street sharks and alley hustlers who attempt to profit from their businesses. Both despise the

shell game plied by con artists, in which they maneuver three oyster shells about on a wooden crate and gullible tourists must guess the location of a pearl in order to win it. As far as Zamlin and Hoag are concerned, these hustlers give gambling a bad name, so they often send their security to not-so-gently drive out swindlers who plague their city.

9. Hoag's Rickets and Rumples: The ever-opportunistic **Filian Hoag** (CN male halfling rogue 5) arrived in Diobel 30 years ago to open his posh gambling den and inn, offering games of chance, exciting performances by traveling bards, and contests of athleticism and skill. Rickets and Rumples is a three-story whitewashed inn, painted with black and red dots on its exterior. Locals and visitors alike come to sample spicy food, wild gaming, and stunning spectacles.



Mason Karbie



The establishment gets its name from its two most popular games. Rickets is a fast-action dice game with outrageous odds and equally outrageous payouts. When the rickets table is hot, a player can earn life-changing money in moments, but most go broke in minutes. Rumples is a card game in which the players and the dealer fold cards as they play to try to create interesting and memorable marks. A skilled rumppler with a good eye can gain a large edge in the game, but Filius's dealers and in-house players are some of the best in the Inner Sea, and usually manage to fleece anyone daring enough to play against them.

Filius Hoag is a dapper black-haired halfling gentleman from Taldor. As he likes to tell it, he was quite the halfling-of-intrigue in his wild youth and is now hunted by more than one assassin from his homeland. Many doubt the halfling's tale and think he made the story up to seem more important. However, last spring a stranger came to town, and in less than half an hour Filius was boarding a merchant vessel and was gone for weeks before returning with a story that he had needed to visit an ailing aunt.

10. Hall of the Teriarch: Looming at the heart of the town like a gaudy pendant around a fisherwoman's weathered throat, the Hall of the Teriarch is the seat of Absalom's power in Diobel, the court and offices of Lord Avid Arnsen. The Hall is a domed stronghold constructed over the ruins of the old keep that once marked the town's center. It dominates the town's otherwise humble skyline, its ramparts and spiraling towers glistening beneath the sun or moon with an unnatural luster that visitors find spellbinding, the result of thousands of polished mother-of-pearl tiles so tightly fitted that they appear seamless. The interior is similarly adorned, and bright light can become blinding as it reflects off the gleaming surfaces.

11. Harpy's Gate: Though Diobel is not walled, the old remnants of a half-finished wall stand near the edge of town. At its middle is a large gatehouse that opens to the road caravans use to get to and from Absalom. Various caravan leaders stake out spots here to solicit business from those arriving in Diobel who hope to trade with the larger city on the island. Each caravan leader has her own prices based on the weight, size, and nature of the cargo—and may greatly inflate their rates depending on the what the client wants to move. The towers along the remaining parts of the wall are guarded by archers who

scan the skies during the day, ever alert for the harpies that plague the town.

12. Scabbit Camp: Braving this encampment's brutal, easily riled inhabitants can prove perilous, but for those willing to risk it, this wild site is one of the best places to buy quality furs at low prices. The Scabbit family runs the camp, and most in the area are their kin, for the raucous folk don't mingle much with outsiders—not even to extend their family tree.

The Scabbits are some of the finest hunters on Kortos, but they grow more emotionally unstable with each generation, and many Diobelians believe their inbreeding has led to insanity. Others in Diobel say the Scabbits spend too much time cavorting with monsters, and have come unhinged as a result. They even suggest that **Makka Scabbits** (CE male human ranger 7), the current widower patriarch, has taken a harpy as his new bride.

13. The Consortium Citadel: Before Avid's Hall of the Teriarch dwarfed it, the Citadel quietly overshadowed the Bristles with its solid presence, and was the most readily visible sight from the deck of any vessel approaching the harbor, a testament to the undeniable supremacy of the Kortos Consortium in Diobel. Built of the island's native stone, its stoic walls match the weathered gray walls of the residents' houses, and are brightened by trim painted a rich emerald green and numerous pendants and banners representing the trade commissions and powerful merchant families belonging to the Consortium.

Though the Citadel is no longer the largest building in town, it's still at the heart of commerce in Diobel, and sees more visitors each day than the Hall of the Teriarch. Every trade commission and merchant family with stock in the Consortium maintains offices and quarters within the Citadel. Some of the most profitable deals are conducted in the warded conference chambers on the highest floor, and anyone seeking to conduct serious business in Diobel will encounter all manner of obstacles if she doesn't first approach the Kortos Consortium to gain permission. The Consortium's most powerful players are in constant flux—some become major players overnight thanks to a shrewd negotiation or the whim of fortune, others are beaten down by rival factions, and still more are eaten alive by the harsh and unpredictable whims of trade.



Avid Arnsen

ADVENTURES IN DIOBEL

Although Diobel is a simple trade town, the chance for adventure and intrigue fills its streets.

Missing Sailors: Several ferrymen and barge masters working the night shift for the Karbies have gone missing as of late. At first, old Mason Karbie suspected Prince Lyrel Rambas and his brigands, but evidence suggests someone or something dragged those who vanished from their barges and devoured them beneath the waterline. A few pearl divers have gone missing as well, and the Karbies' crew claim to have seen dark shapes creeping among the wreckage of several of the sunken ships in the harbor.

Mysterious Arsons: A few weeks ago, a strange Chelaxian with unnaturally long fingers, claiming to be the Paracount Detroxi Chard, arrived in Diobel. He quickly secured the services of salvage expert **Edela Rovalos** (N female human expert 3), giving Rovalos charts that point to the wreck of a Chelish vessel called the *Hellcat* and demanding any relics in its hold in exchange for rights to the rest of the salvage. Rovalos returned from the salvage mission with a rusted cold iron box carved with strange sigils, but the Paracount had vanished before the salvager returned. A fire broke out in Rovalos's warehouse the following night, spreading quickly to the shipyards of the Bristles, and though it was quelled, new conflagrations spark nightly. Lord Avid seeks clandestine investigators to track down the cause of these fires.

Live Cargo: A ship arriving in Diobel's waters yesterday pulled up to Devil's Pier to unload its cargo, rather than to the public piers—and a shaken dockhand deep into his cups confessed to Sipho Munali that he heard weeping and muttered prayers coming from several of the crates as she unloaded them. All has been quiet at the pier since, with no sign of the unnerving light, so whoever was in the crates may still live; Munali will pay good money to any who'll brave the Devil's Pier and investigate.

14. The Bristles District: Diobel's dockside district is an ever-churning, noisy collection of piers, docks, boardwalks, markets, cut-rate taverns and inns, chandler shops, filled-to-groaning warehouses and hovels where the town's poorest families eke out a meager existence. The Bristles are dominated by industrious ship-builders, merchants trading larger volumes of merchandise, and caravans departing from Harpy's Gate to carry all manner of goods to Absalom. Most of the Bristles' gillmen residents make their homes beneath the piers here, scavenging among the refuse of Pikapell Market above.

15. Pikapell Market: This bustling dockside market is often the first port of call for visitors to Diobel. It began as a tiny trading post during the town's founding, little

more than a scattering of makeshift stalls around a single pier. Over the centuries, the market has overtaken neighboring piers and now occupies an entire section of the Bristles.

Pikapell Market's piers groan with crowds haggling with food vendors, pearl hucksters, fur traders, local artists and artisans, and merchants hawking all manner of wares. The origin of the market's name is hot point of contention between the pearl sellers and fur traders, who refuse to agree on whether it was cries of "Pick a pearl!" or "Pick a pelt!" from which the name was originally derived. Drunken disputes over this occasionally break into scuffles, which end with one or more participants plunging into the harbor. The waters surrounding the market are rank with offal and litter, to the dismay of any bystanders and stall owners who end up in the water along with the careless combatants.

16. Devil's Pier: Absalom allows only a handful of Chelish vessels into the city at any one time, because of the tumultuous history between the two nations. Any excess vessels must await entry outside Diobel. The ever-prickly Chelaxians produced a considerable bribe to induce Lord Avid to allow the construction of a pier in the Bristles reserved solely for Chelish vessels, and claimed it as the territory of the sovereign Empire—which the locals call "Devil's Pier." Several permanent employees were then shipped over from the homeland (rumor has it that an insult to a powerful noble or some other untoward act is rewarded with a posting to the Devil's Pier), and were housed above a storefront along the docks that also serves as the dockmaster's office.

A windowless warehouse was constructed on the pier, the banners of Cheliox were hung from its tall pylons, and the pier was opened for business. Almost immediately, however, Chelish ships began docking at Diobel's public piers once more, and the ships' crews and pier's employees alike went tight-lipped and white-faced when asked why. The pier now stands empty, and the few who have attempted to gain entry to the warehouse have vanished abruptly. The townsfolk soon began to grumble about the Chelaxians bringing devils to their island, reasoning that the pier and warehouse must be protected by summoned servitors of Hell so monstrous that even the Chelish captains feared to approach them. The rumors were fueled by the eerie light that occasionally seeps from beneath the doors of the warehouse around midnight. Petitioners besiege the Hall of the Teriarch almost daily, demanding the expulsion of the foreign devil worshipers, but Lord Avid remains stubbornly silent on the matter.

Meanwhile, the pier stands empty, given a wide berth by locals and visitors alike, who complain of a strange feeling of unease or nausea when they pass near.



ELVI KALDROON

Elvi has flint in her eyes, steel in her spine, fists like hammers, and the Kaldroon frame: tall with broad shoulders made strong from years dredging the shallows for oysters and brawling with anyone foolish enough to cross her.

ELVI KALDROON **CR 7**

XP 3,200

Female middle-aged human expert 4/fighter 4
CG Medium humanoid (human)

Init +2; **Senses** Perception +8

DEFENSE

AC 15, touch 13, flat-footed 13 (+2 armor, +1 deflection, +2 Dex)

hp 60 (8 HD; 4d8+4d10+20)

Fort +8, **Ref** +5, **Will** +8 (+1 vs. fear)

Defensive Abilities bravery +1

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee mwk harpoon +12/+7 (1d8+6/×3) or unarmed strike +10/+5 (1d3+3)

Ranged mwk harpoon +11/+6 (1d8+5/×3)

STATISTICS

Str 16, **Dex** 14, **Con** 14, **Int** 10, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 12

Base Atk +7; **CMB** +10 (+12 grapple); **CMD** 23 (25 vs. grapple)

Feats Catch Off-Guard, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (harpoon), Improved Grapple, Improved Unarmed Strike, Iron Will, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (harpoon), Weapon Specialization (harpoon)

Skills Acrobatics +6, Climb +7, Diplomacy +5, Intimidate +6, Knowledge (local) +11, Perception +8, Profession (oyster fishing) +7, Sense Motive +8, Survival +8, Swim +14

Languages Common

SQ armor training 1

Combat Gear *potion of cat's grace*, *potions of cure light wounds* (2); **Other Gear** mwk harpoon, *bracers of armor* +2, *cloak of resistance* +1, *ring of protection* +1, antitoxin, carved wooden crab, rope (20 ft.), shucking knife, sunrods (2), tindertwigs (5), small pouch of pearls (worth 36 gp)

Though well past her fortieth winter, Elvi Kaldroon is as hale and hearty as someone half her age. Her hair is chestnut brown, silvered in places, and she wears it long and free, draped down her back. Her arms, face, and neck are tanned from years in the sun, and her skin is leathery and taut.

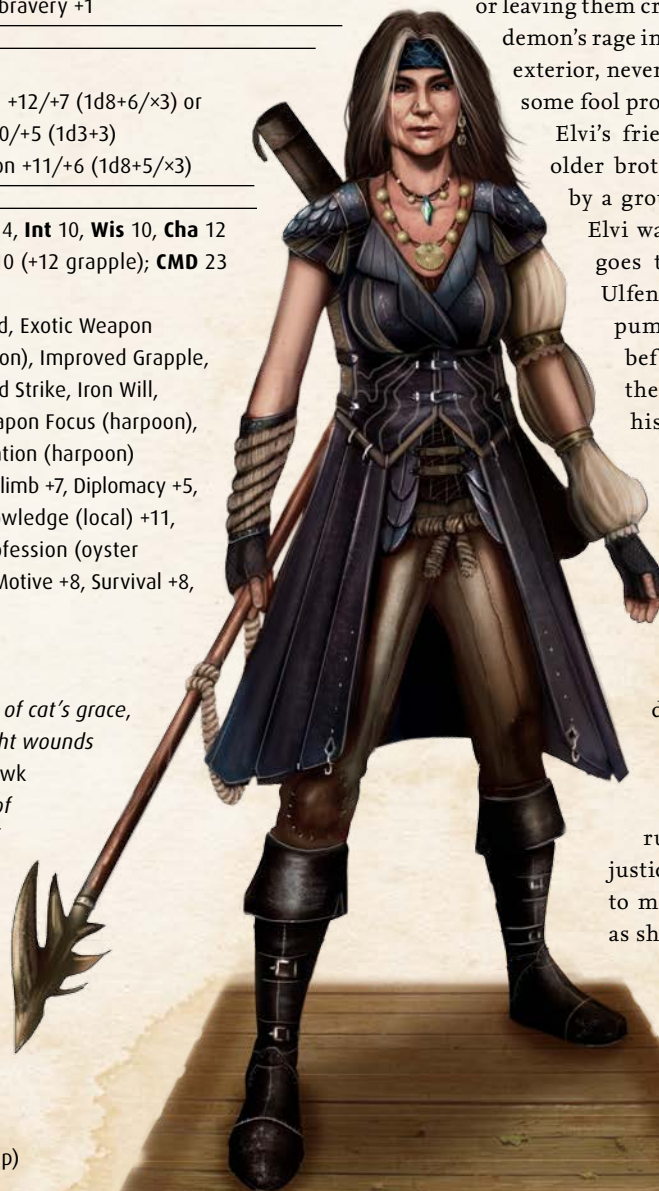
Elvi upholds her family's traditions and reputation, and ensures her kin avoid any untoward activity that might cast shame on their reputation as the hardest-working, hardest-fighting, most iron-willed family in Diobel. The Kaldroons are especially proud of the lack of criminals in their family tree. They are hard but honest people, who never steal or bully the weak. In fact, though Elvi tends to mind her family's business, she's been known to intervene if she witnesses someone abusing the weak in town, often by beating such attackers toothless or leaving them crippled. Like all Kaldroons, Elvi has a

demon's rage in her heart, but she maintains a steely exterior, never losing control unless the actions of some fool provokes her.

Elvi's friends and neighbors know that her older brother, Keldrick, was beaten to death by a group of visiting Ulfen warriors when Elvi was 12. According to locals, the story goes that Elvi killed the largest of the Ulfen murderers with her bare hands, pummeling him with a savagery more befitting the island's minotaurs, biting the Ulfen's nose off, and then caving in his face with a furious series of blows.

No one who has any sense crosses the Kaldroons. Any slight against the family is answered by the entire clan—and with tenacity unmatched by the most savage and vengeful of beasts. The Kaldroons are utterly fearless, ruthless, and cunning, and they do not compromise until a blood debt is repaid to their satisfaction.

Elvi decides what manner of recompense each slight deserves, ruling with a grim sense of detached justice. That said, Elvi is more than happy to move past old transgressions as soon as she feels family honor is satisfied, and every other clan and family in town knows the Kaldroons never hold a grudge once they've dealt with trouble. Anyone who offends the clan twice, however, had better leave Diobel quickly and never come back.





FALCON'S HOLLOW

“I thought the same when I first arrived: a fine frontier, a fresh start, everything I’d ever dreamed of. I’d just stumbled off the trail with debt collectors nipping at my heels. Tall trees, fresh winds, and an honest day’s work in the cutyard for an honest day’s pay—that’s what Boss Teedum told me when he put an axe in my hand. Wasn’t long, though, ’til I was working well after sundown just to keep up with the ‘Consortium fees’ and ‘axe tax.’

“Welcome to Falcon’s Hollow, and may the gods take mercy on you, ’cause sure as hell no one and nothing else will.”

—Edal Sathelbury, Lumber Consortium veteran

Falcon's Hollow is the end of the line for many of its residents—the final destination in their flight from the long arm of the law, a haven from crushing debts, a sanctuary from crippling abuse, or a new start free from religious persecution. This ramshackle lumber town clings to the ragged edge of Andoran's Darkmoon Vale, staring down the wild shadows of a vast and largely unexplored frontier. Falcon's Hollow attracts the desperate in droves—and it also beckons the calculatingly cruel, who merrily grind those poor souls under their unforgiving heels. Beset on all sides by wild beasts, the dead of a ruined dwarven empire, and malicious fey, the townsfolk of Falcon's Hollow must also contend with the hardened hearts of those few who have made the town their fiefdom and the heavy yoke they hang around the necks of its citizens.

HISTORY OF FALCON'S HOLLOW

Falcon's Hollow is a relatively young town—only 140 years old—but in that time, it's had more than its fair share of tragic events and violent conflicts with monstrous neighbors. Tales of these events are passed on from one generation of old-timers to the next, cobbled together from “sawing dust” (chatting in the cutyards) or “blowing cinders” (telling tales around a hearth fire at Jak-a'-Napes, the Sitting Duck, or one of the other inns and taverns around Falcon's Hollow).

Founded around 4573 AR, Falcon's Hollow began as the latest in a long series of settlements hastily erected by the Lumber Consortium. Unlike its predecessor, Falconridge, Falcon's Hollow successfully clung to its existence in the face of wild beasts, dark things from deep within the Vale, and other desperate trials.

The survival of Falcon's Hollow is a testament to the steely resolve of its three founding families: the taciturn Larko clan, the brave Samkils, and the brutal KreeDs. These bone-hard folk weathered the Harpy-Hag Massacre of 4603, finally ending that conflict by marrying a Larko son off to one of the hag Ulizmila's seemingly innumerable daughters.

The decade-long period known as the Misery (4631–4641) claimed most of the children of Falcon's Hollow, before coming to a close when the attic whisperer responsible was found by Balkri Kreed and promptly dismembered by her furious hands—though not before it claimed the final breath of her son Talin, the last of an entire generation of the three families to be snuffed out in their cribs.

The Hobgoblin Strife of 4679 claimed the last living scion of the Samkil family, though more than a few old-timers insist that the crossbow bolt buried in young Jebrika Samkil's back bore a suspicious resemblance to those used by Thalsin Kreed, Thuldrin Kreed's father. Most of the

surviving citizens from that time bear scars from this savage contest over the region's darkwood groves.

In 4701, the Falcon's Feud concluded with the eradication (by mass burning) of the Larko clan, most of whom had become “unnatural folk”—changelings and worse—thanks to their ties to the hags of the Vale's deepest wilds. Many townsfolk from that time cast their eyes downward when speaking of those events, uncomfortable with the tragic irony of this thread in their town's history: the Larko family was the one to step up and sacrifice their eldest son to marriage with a hag's daughter to ensure the community's survival, and the same neighbors his sacrifice saved would eventually seize upon that tainted bloodline as cause for wiping out the family. Along with the end of the Samkil line at Jebrika Samkil's death a few decades before, the extermination of the Larkos left Thuldrin Kreed and his son Jurin as the only surviving descendants of the original founding families, and the sole owners of the whole region's Lumber Consortium chopping rights.

In more recent years, leprosy arrived at Falcon's Hollow; around one in 10 of the residents have contracted the wasting disease, most developing it late in life rather than exhibiting effects at birth. A leper colony has sprung up on the edge of town, occupying an abandoned cutyard and log house and providing a refuge for those chased from the town by residents afraid of contracting the affliction.

The Night of Silver Blood werewolf attacks in 4712 left Falcon's Hollow largely untouched, though the orphanage, Elara's Halfway House, burned down shortly thereafter under dubious circumstances.

FALCON'S HOLLOW

NE small town

Corruption -1; **Crime** -6; **Economy** -1; **Law** -2; **Lore** -3;

Society +4

Qualities strategic location, superstitious

Danger +0; **Disadvantages** plagued

DEMOGRAPHICS

Government council (Lumber Consortium)

Population 1,400 (1,328 humans, 44 halflings, 14 elves, 14 other)

Notable NPCs

Deldrin Baleson, Sheriff of Darkmoon Vale (LN male half-elf expert 3/fighter 3)

Lumber Consortium Overboss Payden “Pay Day” Teedum (LE male human monk 2/fighter 3)

Magistrate Vamros Harg (NE male halfling aristocrat 2/sorcerer 5)

Thuldrin Kreed, Gavel of the Lumber Consortium (LE male human expert 3/rogue 9)

MARKETPLACE

Base Value 880 gp; **Purchase Limit** 5,000 gp; **Spellcasting** 2nd

Minor Items 3d4; **Medium Items** 1d6; **Major Items** —



LIFE IN FALCON'S HOLLOW

The virgin forest and crystalline river nearby Falcon's Hollow seem to offer freedom, far from the cares and demands of civilization. In truth, all who work there do so under the oppressive auspices of the Lumber Consortium and Thuldrin Kreed's harsh vigilance, which make life as hard as the darkwood the lumber town devours.

Nevertheless, the resilient folk of Falcon's Hollow find a grim pride in their work. The cutyards are the pumping, bleeding heart of the town, with shifts around the clock cutting and shipping darkwood and other lumber down the River Foam. Hard men and women break their backs and lose limbs to saw and axe in the yards, aging 5 years for each one they spend toiling under these grueling conditions. They're a rough and honest (for the most part) folk, obeying orders and defending the Consortium to outsiders. The lumberjacks and millworkers generally aren't looking for heroes—their problems are their own, and they're too proud to look to strangers for deliverance.

This cutyard culture dates back over a century, with rituals persisting from the earliest years of Falcon's Hollow. Disputes between loggers are settled on the river in a bout they refer to as a "loggerheads." Every so often a shout will ring through the yard, with one logger challenging another to go loggerheads on their dispute. The combatants balance on logs in the water with a length of knobby timber in hand. The first battered into the water is pulled out by the rest of the crew and acknowledges the truth of the other's claims. Some superstitious lumberjacks believe that water sprites judge the contests and take delight in ensuring that the wronged party gets vengeance, even in defiance of the competitors' comparative strengths and skills. From that moment on, the dispute is "given to the river" and no one speaks of it again. This phrase is also common parlance for a slight judged unworthy of actual dispute, with grumblers urged to give their complaints to the river and move on. Old Kreed approves of this logger justice, citing the old maxim "People are soft and bend to lies. Wood is hard; let it decide."

The loggers play as hard as they work in what little time they get away from the yards. Aside from establishments like the Rouge Lady, which do a brisk business in alcohol and tawdry favors year-round, the townsfolk host several ramshackle celebrations throughout the year. First Cut marks the start of every spring, although it's now more ceremonial than practical, as Kreed forces lumber crews to slave away in the woods during even the bitter cold of the winter months. Still, the occasion brings families out to celebrate the start of the traditional lumber season. In the darkest months of winter, Quinn's Carnival comes to town to charm residents with spectacles, games, contests, and stranger attractions (see *Pathfinder Module: Carnival of Tears* for more details).

RUMORS IN FALCON'S HOLLOW

As in any small town, rumors are hot commodities in both work yards and taprooms. Some of the current cycle of news and popular gossip includes the following.

Boss Orc-Blood: Boss Teedum's piggish nose is said to be the result of orc blood in his background. Teedum's response to these rumors varies. When he's in a black mood, he pummels the speaker, but if he's feeling gleeful, he laughs and claims that his grandmother seduced an orc that took her fancy.

The Brookman Belle: Amanor, an evil nixie, lives in Brookman's Well. Most of the time she merely watches the people who come to draw water, but now and then she marks someone. Each time she does, the marked person vanishes shortly thereafter. People say that the mark varies, but it's always as a rash seen after drinking the water.

The Cutyard Queen: Thuldrin Kreed has a secret mistress out in the woods, a fey queen who teaches him timeless secrets and truly wicked pleasures beneath the full moon, in exchange for woodwork made to her unearthly designs. Kreed ventures out alone for these trysts, without the otherwise near-constant presence of his bodyguards.

The Lost Larkos: The Larkos are dead, but not gone. Their burned and twisted corpses washed up in a marshy patch of forest deep in Darkmoon Woods. Now they skulk in the swamp, howling into the trees and swearing vengeance against Kreed and all of the town's inhabitants.

Murdered Mother: Sharvaros Vade engages in strange necromantic experiments in his tower. He keeps the desiccated corpse of his murdered mother hanging from hooks up there, where her raspy cackles can be heard echoing through the lumber piles on quiet nights. Some say Vade toils around the clock to restore her to true life.

FALCON'S HOLLOW AT A GLANCE

Falcon's Hollow is a logging town through and through. Most buildings have log walls, or are finished with wooden siding. The roofs are covered in wooden shingles. The town is rough-looking for the most part, but some homes feature lovingly wrought ornamentation that shows their owners' pride: decorative molding, carved cornices, window mullions, and delicate inlays on furniture. Sawmills and lumberyards are the main evidence of the town's industry, along with dusty, exhausted cutyards filled with stumps. Sawdust invades nearly every home, bed, and meal in the community, like sand in a beach town—but locals claim one gets used to it, and mock those who can't stand the dust. Around Falcon's Hollow, the forest flourishes, dark and

impenetrable, seemingly eager to claim the lives of those who endlessly assault its borders.

1. Brookman's Well: This small spring supplies most of the town's fresh water. It's named for the resident who dug it 40 years ago, Dreklas Brookman, a man who has big plans for expanding the town with engineering works and architectural projects, including a cathedral and a great stone bridge. He was gaining the support of the town's residents when he crossed old Thalsin Kreed, Thuldrin's father. Dreklas ended up having an accident in the cutyard shortly thereafter, even though he didn't work there. The Kreed family immediately took control of the well; their thugs guard it night and day, and charge a hefty fee for its use. Those who can't afford the fee have to settle for attempting to sneak a bucketful from the well after dark, when the guards are often drunk, or otherwise rely on the sawdust-choked waters of the Foam.

2. Goose 'n' Gander: Brickasnurd Hildrinsocks (CN male gnome expert 4/wizard 2), the only gnome in Falcon's Hollow, runs this cavernous general store. Goose 'n' Gander is a labyrinthine muddle of winding aisles and precariously balanced shelves stocked with everything someone living on the frontier might require. There is no apparent method to the store's organization, and one might find a variety of unusual items stocked in among the more usual domestic staples, dried foods, and mining supplies—some of the more noteworthy recent discoveries include a gourd of alchemist's fire whose shape resembled that of a baby, a petrified pseudodragon hollowed out into a bull's eye lantern, and an unnaturally cold and blood-stained chisel. If one searches the shelves long enough, one can find most standard adventuring gear here, along with the occasional minor magic item, usually *feather tokens*, *silversheen*, or more rarely *sovereign glue*. Brickasnurd claims to find some of his most curious inventory during long walks in the woods, but some say the gnome keeps counsel with several of the cryptic fey who still lurk amid the groves of Darkmoon Vale.

3. High Market: Perhaps the High Market's greatest draw is that it sells meats and vegetables without a hint of rot on them. Influential residents shop the various stalls here for imports from distant cities and the rare quality local goods. The ex-mercenary **Ayda Vorshin** (NE female half-orc warrior 5) runs weekly caravans to and from Olfden, stocking the market with silk clothing, shoes, spices, and jewelry. Local artists such as Deveera Gadsel (see page 22), known for her woodcarvings and handmade jewelry, offer their wares among the imports. The market

offers one of the few opportunities in Falcon's Hollow to purchase quality goods costing more than 10 gp.

The High Market's treasures are not available to all, however. Boss Teedum's most loyal thugs restrict access, admitting only those Kreed deems influential enough to be of use. Kreed also holds a lottery once per month to grant nine lucky "common" residents permission to shop in the market for up to 3 days.

One of Kreed's most insufferable lickspittles, the middle-aged **Kilarin Salk** (NE female halfling expert 3/rogue 2), personally inspects all groceries sold in the High Market. Kilarin is a failed farmer with a black thumb, and is notoriously corrupt. Although plenty of high-quality produce and meats are brought to her for her daily inspections, a third of the stock never makes it to the market. Farmers in the region know that quality is only one of the qualifications needed to pass the inspection—a hefty bribe for the halfling is required as well.

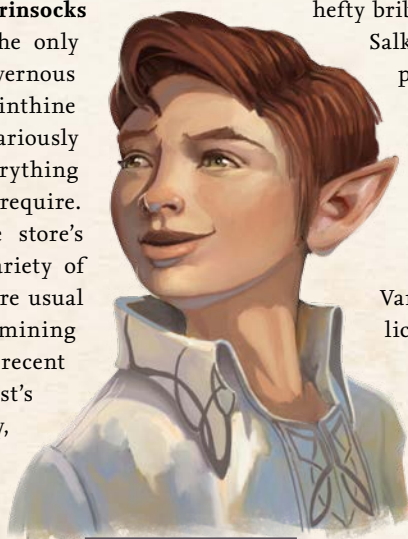
Salk's jumped-up position has made her prickly, and any real or imagined insult to her considerable pride results in a lifetime ban from selling goods in Falcon's Hollow, a sentence that generally equates to a choice between exile or poverty for most farmers.

4. Hollow Tribunal: Magistrate Vamros Harg dispenses merchant licenses, stamps mining and lumber claims, and passes judgment on criminal and civil cases from this sturdy log building. Most residents enjoy the irony of the Hollow Tribunal's name, since the justice meted out is rarely equitable.

Harg is a young and attractive failed barrister with a fondness for finery, and known to be firmly in Kreed's pocket.

Kreed put Harg in power with the understanding that he could remove the halfling just as easily at the first sign of disobedience. Harg doesn't dare oppose Kreed directly, but his shame at his own cowardice leads him to try to nudge cases away from Kreed's greedy eye and give people a fair shake when he can. If he were ever to get enough support from folks not yet broken by Kreed's regime, he might step up to the challenge and start doling out true justice.

A stormy romantic relationship with one of Sheriff Deldrin Baleson's deputies, the cantankerous and handsome **Tabrik Splint** (LG male dwarf ranger 3), takes up most of Harg's time away from work. Splint is unabashedly outspoken about Kreed's corruption and the need for a change in leadership, and Harg finds it increasingly difficult to protect his lover from his patron's wrath.



Vamros Harg

5. Jak-a'-Napes: A ramshackle inn leaning precariously against the town's stables offers food and lodging to travelers passing through Falcon's Hollow. The rotund and ruddy **Jak Crimmy** (CG male human bard 6) is a retired troubadour who sports an easy smile and always has a warm welcome, a solid meal, and a tale or two ready for weary visitors. His cinnamon-crust ed flapjacks are legendary, as are his skill at juggling frying pans and his astonishing marksmanship with a crossbow.

Jak makes his cinnamon pancakes once per week, and the line to taste a sugared forkful runs all the way around the building and halfway down the thoroughfare. For some reason, Kreed never sets foot in the inn, a peculiarity that's the source of many a wild rumor. Some claim Jak is related to the old Samkil family, and some strange magic pact or fey curse bars Kreed from taking action against this last scion of the Kreed family's old competitors.

Others whisper that Jak was once a member of the Talons, one of the most notorious adventuring parties in Darkmoon Vale, which would make him a very dangerous man. Whatever the truth is, Jak won't give credence to any of the tales, saying only that he is a retired entertainer from far off Riddleport. When asked about Kreed, he merely shrugs and laughs that "cinnamon isn't for everyone."

6. Low Market: Open to all, the Low Market sells the High Market's leftovers, including produce no longer fresh enough for the High Market's favored customers, heavily salted meats, and other questionable foodstuffs—most of which barely survive their trip to the market. Nothing in the Low Market sells for more than a few gold pieces, and almost nothing is worth more than a few coppers. Portly **Jasin Greatoak**

(N male human commoner 2), called "Great Oaf" by unkind children, organizes the market's various stalls and cart-bound booths. He is good-natured but dimwitted, and rarely has a sober thought run through his head. The Low Market is frequented by hordes of poor lumberjacks, struggling farmers, and outcasts. A few ramshackle stalls serve ale and blindness-inducing moonshine to carousing lumberjacks, fueling their revels and making pick-pocketing an easy prospect.

7. Lumber Consortium Headquarters: Once the most impressive building in Falcon's Hollow, this office has fallen into disrepair, while Thuldrin Kreed's manor house grows in opulence. Kreed uses this building only to host important Consortium guests and conduct other official business he wishes to keep out of his private estate.

Otherwise, the building remains empty, alone with the ghosts of its former grandeur. The only object in the building not left to the ravages of time is a statue of Kreed's father, Thalsin. The stern visage and proud frame of one of the greatest leaders in the town's history is always freshly polished by Thuldrin's cowed servants, who live in terror of his ire should the statue not be properly respected and maintained. The host of clerks who once toiled here have been released from employ as Kreed has gradually reduced the amount of paperwork concerning the lumber trade in Falcon's Hollow. He's grown bold in his corruption, and now the few clerks keeping track of his affairs work out of his manor house. Any real dealings the Consortium conducts with outside forces occur there, and the message is clear: Thuldrin Kreed is the Lumber Consortium.

8. Quinn's Carnival: Every night, **Namdrin Quinn** (CN male half-elf bard 7/shadowdancer 2) and his companions wow crowds with feats of skill and magic at this carnival of wonders just outside Falcon's Hollow. Quinn is a sinewy performer with a long face haunted by loss. His sunken eyes stare off into a distant and fading memory of former happiness, and rarely fix on those who speak to him. He once led a band of veteran adventurers, but after a dangerous quest claimed the life of his wife, Tessa, he ended his career and established the carnival. Rumor has it that after the tents close, Quinn and his band treat with dark fey, whose anger mounts at the Consortium's constant incursions into the wood. Some say Quinn spies for the vengeful fey, who plan vicious retribution and murder (see *Pathfinder Module: Carnival of Tears* for more details.)

9. Roots and Remedies: Creeping ivy and flowering window boxes cover the facade of this two-story log building. Inside, the small, mud-tracked shop smells of burnt earth and spicy incense. Bunches of dried herbs hang from the ceiling, along with dangling pots, presses, alchemical apparatus, and arcane glassware. Pouches of rare plants, jars of colored powders, and a collection of dried, preserved, and jellied animal parts fill high shelves and tables that serve as both displays and workspace. The owner, **Laurel Gebre** (NG female human expert 3), is a rail-thin Garundi woman with glasses, her hair arranged in dreadlocks loosely pulled back from her face. The tough but good-hearted woman serves as the local herbalist and healer, though her income stems as much from her sale of snake oils and aphrodisiacs as from her cure-all



Laurel Gebre

and medicinal teas. Although well versed in the healing properties of a variety of concoctions, she's quick to remind angry patrons that she's not, in fact, a physician. Despite this, for many who can't afford more expensive healing magic, Laurel is the best hope for health and even a thimble full of sympathy in Falcon's Hollow.

The most recent black mark on Laurel's reputation is the irksome and increasing rate of leprosy among the town's residents. Many of the infected have sought her help to no avail, and many point out that she has profited by selling the afflicted a variety of experimental tonics. Grumbles of impending retribution have been heard among the miserable outcasts in the upriver leper colony and the families of the afflicted.

10. The Sitting Duck: The Duck is the local hot spot for adventurers, explorers, and other rapscallions looking for excitement, although it stands a little too close to the town's palisade for most residents' comfort. The tavern serves a potent brew of fermented darkwood leaf—one that could floor an ogre in a few tankards. Raucous games of “knivesies” and “lefty-loosy” (two quite dangerous recreational activities with a high rate of maiming) rage late into the night among adventurers sharing tales of the dangers of Darkmoon Vale, Droskar's Crag, and other nearby landmarks. The noise emanating from the town's most dangerous drinking den attracts the attention of the occasional predator outside the palisade, and these creatures often hop the wall and attack. Luckily, the clientele is nothing if not well armed, and such events only fuel the night's revelry.

Originally built by a retired adventurer named Larden “Ferret” Kried, the Duck was taken over by the brawny thug **Ergin Tock** (CN male human fighter 2) after the tavern became a beacon to dangerous adventurers and the Ferret disappeared. Tock produced a dubious deed to the Duck with Larden Kried's signature (though most claim it was forged), along with a letter explaining that the Ferret had returned to the carefree life of the adventurer. Tock's former job as hired muscle for Thuldrin Kreed was suspicious enough, but when Vamros Harg certified the deed as genuine, it was all the evidence the townsfolk needed that Kreed had decided the Duck needed to be under the Consortium's direct control. A few wags claim Kreed took deep offense to

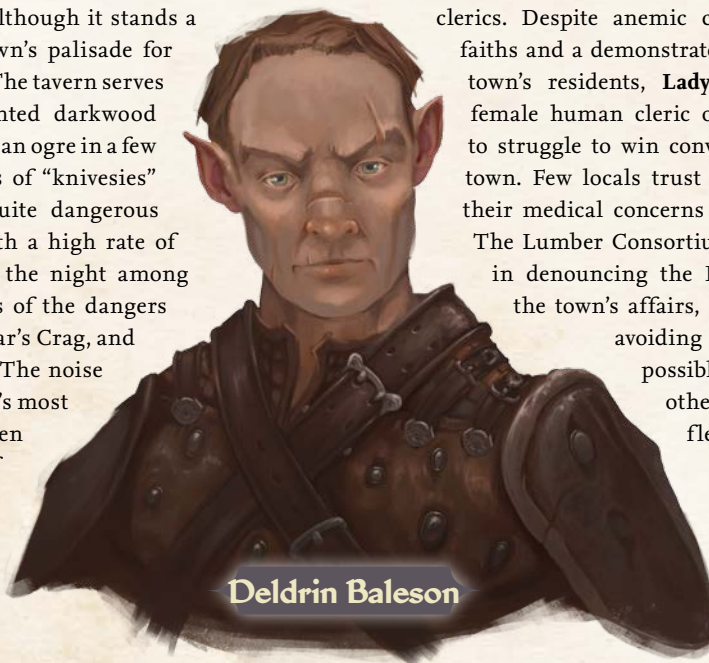
the fact that the Ferret's surname was a homophone for his own.

Kreed likes to keep close tabs on any adventurers or mercenaries passing through Falcon's Hollow, hiring those he deems useful and convincing those who might oppose him to move on in short order. The Duck is the perfect venue for gathering all these potential employees and threats in one place. Tock keeps an eye on the clientele, but he isn't Kreed's only pair of eyes in the place. The lovely barmaid **Jalene Artem** (CE female human rogue 4) is one of Kreed's most trusted agents, as skilled in slitting throats as she is at prying secrets from even the most stalwart paladin. Tock and Artem report to Kreed every morning on the past night's activities at the Duck.

11. Temple of Iomedae: Falcon's Hollow has few clerics. Despite anemic competition from other faiths and a demonstrated record of care for the town's residents, **Lady Cirthana Gensar** (LG female human cleric of Iomedae 6) continues to struggle to win converts in the beleaguered town. Few locals trust Cirthana, and most lay their medical concerns at Laurel's feet instead. The Lumber Consortium has made itself clear in denouncing the Inheritor's meddling in the town's affairs, and the locals oblige by avoiding the temple as much as possible. Many members of other religious sects who fled here from Olfden and larger settlements to escape persecution from major faiths—mostly worshipers of Calistria and Kurgess, but also a few quietly faithful servants of the empyreal lord

Cernunnos and the archdevil Barbatos—resent the recent arrival of Iomedae's followers, and tensions run high among the most zealous. This conflict has resulted in more than one less-than-holy brawl on the muddy thoroughfare of Worship Way.

Cirthana regularly requests assistance from others of her faith in her quest to aid the endangered souls of Falcon's Hollow, but the corrupting nature of this wild frontier post is far too tempting for the devotion of most initiates to survive. Cloistered would-be paladins and clerics find themselves woefully unprepared for the challenges of Falcon's Hollow, and most end up pawns of the Consortium, lured from their ideals by bribes from Kreed's agents, whether in the form of gold or free passes to the Rouge Lady.



Deldrin Baleson

Kreed enjoys flaunting his power by condescendingly offering donations to her cause, praising her efforts to “look after the hardworking souls of Falcon’s Hollow,” while secretly crippling her efforts to reform the town. Cirthana recognizes such acts for the mockery they are, but as yet has done nothing to act directly against Kreed.

12. The Rouge Lady: The silk-veiled parlors in the back of this burlesque and gambling hall double as a brothel owned by **Kabran Bloodeye** (CE male half-orc rogue 5/fighter 2), leader of the Redrock Guild, a criminal syndicate that controls the town’s shady activities for Thuldrin Kreed. Aside from his blood-red eyes, Kabran’s most striking feature is his missing nose, cut from his face long ago in a far-off city, in punishment for crimes committed there. He wears a bronze nosepiece over the crater in his face, which whistles disturbingly as he sucks air through it, and dribbles blood and mucus that he wipes away with a crimson handkerchief. The Rouge Lady is where his top-tier prostitutes peddle their charms. His current favorite is **Ralla Hebbadan** (N female changeling expert 4), ever in demand by wealthy patrons. While not the most beautiful in his stable, Ralla has somehow managed to maintain an appearance of sincere fragility that attracts those with a penchant for both cruelty and power, and she wields it with determination to provide for her only living kin, her younger brother **Hollin** (CN young male human rogue 1). Hollin hates Falcon’s Hollow passionately for how he and Ralla are forced to live, and it’s only a matter of time before he decides to take justice for him and his sister at knife-point. (Neither of them is aware that Ralla isn’t truly Hollin’s sister, but rather the changeling daughter of the green hag, Igale, who lives deep in the Kingtower Woods.)

The Rouge Lady offers several games of chance native to Falcon’s Hollow, such as “huckle-chuck” (played with scrimshawed sheep’s knuckles or wooden dice), Rouge Lady-Grim Lady (a card game with a Succubus Queen and a Corpse Queen as trumps), and Spin the Saw (using a circular saw blade on a nail that is spun to indicate odds, victory, or defeat).

The basement of the Lady serves as Bloodeye’s personal torture chamber, hosting the only pleasure in which the half-orc permits himself to indulge. Here, he extracts “truth” from any unfortunates Thuldrin Kreed suspects of crossing the Consortium.

13. The Cutyard: Spewing sawdust into the Foam around the clock, the Cutyard is the ever-pumping heart of Falcon’s Hollow. Lumber crews work the yard around the clock under horrific conditions. Night shifts work with waterwheel-powered saws and grinding lathes, with only a single dim lantern to light their dangerous toil. Maiming and accidental deaths are frequent. If questioned, Kreed merely answers that oil is hard to come by up in Falcon’s Hollow, but there are lots of fingers.

Far more insidious than the threat of physical injury is the crushing effect of unending labor and monotony on the psyches of the workers. Most of the lumber crew live in cramped shacks surrounding the Cutyard, plagued by the sounds of saws and axes even when they aren’t working. More than a few workers have snapped after a few years in the yard, taking axes to their coworkers before Kreed’s thugs mow them down with crossbow fire.

The lumberjacks call this “going axe-mad,” a term that has come to indicate losing one’s temper in an explosive manner.

14. Kreed Manor: Thuldrin Kreed’s domicile is more of a stronghold than a mansion—it’s surrounded by 10-foot-high darkwood walls, guarded by some of the deadliest rogues in the Redrock Guild, and patrolled by the most vigilant sellswords that Lumber Consortium gold can buy, making the manor nigh-impregnable. Rioters have tried to burn the Kreedes out, prompting the Kreedes to add four interior water towers within the stronghold’s walls). When harpies began infiltrating

the upper floors on moonless nights,

the Kreedes placed an ever-present clutch of crossbow-wielding guards on the roof, and in response to a green hag who shape-changed and walked through the front gates, they instigated the rigorous use of passwords. Kreed’s family has not survived the perils of Darkmoon Vale for over a century by accident.

Few residents of Falcon’s Hollow have ever seen the interior of the mansion, and none outside Kreed’s inner circle (Kabran Bloodeye, Boss Teedum, and Magistrate Harg) have ascended to the second floor, where Kreed’s personal quarters are protected by deadly traps of his own design and vicious creatures trained by his hand.

15. Sharvaros Vade’s Tower: The necromancer hermit **Sharvaros Vade** (LE male human wizard 4) occupies a stone tower overlooking the dreary souls of Falcon’s Hollow from its place of prominence on the Perch, the



Ulizmila

ADVENTURES IN FALCON'S HOLLOW

Many adventures await those who visit Falcon's Hollow. GMs might use the following ideas as springboards into all manner of dangers. Additionally, the following Pathfinder Modules all take place in and around Falcon's Hollow: *Hollow's Last Hope*, *Crown of the Kobold King*, *Revenge of the Kobold King*, *Carnival of Tears*, and *Hungry are the Dead*.

Overripe Revenge: Local farmer **Luli Chapes** (LG female human ranger 2) has been growing some of the largest and best beats, tubers, and other vegetables in Darkmoon Vale for years. She's long bristled under Kilarin Salk's blackmail, but her recent befriending of local artist Deveera Gadsel has encouraged her to take a stand against the High Market's corruption. As a result, her goods are no longer stocked there, forcing her to the brink of poverty. Last week, a jack-o-lantern filled with alchemist's fire exploded outside the High Market. Salk points to Chapes as the obvious culprit, but Chapes denies any wrongdoing and reaches out for help.

Mayor amid the Masses: Sheriff Deldrin Baleson is attempting to organize the town's first-ever election for mayor by rallying the oppressed of the town to his call. Thuldrin Kreed seeks to plant his own puppet in the role of mayor, while Baleson seeks an honest and upright candidate. Baleson seeks objective outsiders to protect him and the other candidates, and to generally prevent Kreed from turning the election into a sham.

Queen of Darkmoon: The fierce hag **Ulizmila** (NE female green hag witch 12) returns to Darkmoon Vale after decades of absence, spending some time in town in the guise of a frail old woman. Insulted by the infestation of her lands, she's gathering an army of harpies, hill giants, werewolves, and worse to send against the town. A party of brave heroes is needed to defend against this brutal siege, and more importantly, to ascertain Ulizmila's motivations, which lie shrouded in a dark curse sown upon the town's three founding families.

hill at the east edge of town. Within, Vade conducts gruesome experiments on corpses discarded by Falcon's Hollow. Occasionally, the recluse requires a live subject for his research, generally an out-of-towner supplied by Kabran Bloodeye. Vale's only living companion is his frail son **Savram** (LN young male dhampir adept 1), a pale boy whose mother's identity remains a mystery. Many locals claim the child was born from a dead consort, thus explaining his spindly frame and ivory complexion.

The tower itself is a sturdy, ugly edifice without much in the way of adornment. A handful of gargoyles populate its upper parapet, and observers swear they change

location and posture over time, speculating that Vade uses these stony thralls to collect the victims of accidents and violence to fuel his research.

16. Woodwil: The workshop of outspoken artist **Deveera Gadsel** (CN human expert 4) also serves as a haven for a clique of semi-artistic locals, those interested in doing more with their lives than simply hacking and sawing all day. Deveera has had more than a few run-ins with Vorshin of the High Market, who sees the growing popularity of Deveera's crafts as cutting into the profits of her own import business, and has used similar intimidation tactics on other local artisans, attempting to frighten them into restricting their business to Low Market. The half-orc and her cronies have broken into workshops, including Woodwil, where they've smashed goods and injured artisans. Deveera is trying to organize a guild to provide mutual protection from Vorshin. Thus far, Kreed finds the situation amusing and hasn't intervened, although he promises to crush both sides with equal relish if they pose a threat to public order. Meanwhile, he's allowed Deveera to form her guild, provided she pays a hefty share of her profits to the Consortium as an "administrative fee."

17. Abandoned Cutyard: A half-mile west of the existing cutyard, Falcon's Hollow's first lumber mill and the surrounding log cabins lie abandoned, keeping company only with stumps and muddy earth. Locals claim this facility was abandoned when the newer cutyard in the current town center was established, but old-timers tell a different story. According to local legend, 60 years ago during a midnight shift, bloodcurdling screams were heard from the old mill. When Thalsin Kreed and his people went to investigate, they found no sign of any of the workers. Kreed himself went inside and returned pale as snow and trembling. Those who tell stories of that day proclaim that Kreed's hands always were as steady as those of a clockmaker, except for that one night. Whatever he saw in at the old mill put fear in him for the first and only time.

The recent outbreak of leprosy has driven many of the infected to the old cutyard, where they have formed a makeshift colony of tents, cobbled-together shacks, and abandoned work sheds. The shadows of the rotting buildings now mercifully conceal the ravaged faces of droves of the sick and dying, peering out at any who draw near. Lady Cirthana Gensar sent a few of her acolytes to aid the lepers, but they did not return. She petitioned Kreed to send someone to investigate, but he laughed her off, sneering that his thugs would be useless if their cutting hands fall off. Some say Thuldrin Kreed's father shared with him the secret of what evil sleeps in the old cutyard; if that rumor is true, he's declined to tell even his inner circle.

THULDRIN KREED

The fearsome power behind the Lumber Consortium, Thuldrin Kreed rules Falcon's Hollow with an iron fist.

THULDRIN KREED

CR 11

XP 12,800

Male human expert 3/rogue 9

LE Medium humanoid (human)

Init +3; **Senses** Perception +26

DEFENSE

AC 19, touch 14, flat-footed 16 (+5 armor, +1 deflection, +3 Dex)

hp 53 (12 HD; 9d8+3d8)

Fort +4, **Ref** +10, **Will** +9

Defensive Abilities evasion, improved uncanny dodge, trap sense +3

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee +1 *keen rapier* +13/+8 (1d6/18–20)

Ranged +1 *light crossbow* +12 (1d8+1/19–20)

Special Attacks sneak attack +5d6

STATISTICS

Str 8, **Dex** 16, **Con** 10, **Int** 12, **Wis** 13, **Cha** 20

Base Atk +8; **CMB** +7; **CMD** 21

Feats Alertness, Combat Reflexes, Deceitful, Deft Hands, Iron Will, Persuasive, Skill Focus (Perception), Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus (rapier)

Skills Appraise +16, Bluff +24, Diplomacy +24, Disable Device +11, Disguise +24, Escape Artist +11, Intimidate +24, Knowledge (geography, history) +5, Knowledge (local) +16, Perception +26, Sense Motive +20, Sleight of Hand +8, Stealth +6, Use Magic Device +20

Languages Common

SQ trapfinding +4

Combat Gear *potions of cure moderate wounds* (2), *potion of invisibility*, *wand of charm person* (10 charges), acid (2), alchemist's fire; **Other Gear** +1 *chain shirt*, +1 *keen rapier*, +1 *light crossbow*, *belt of incredible dexterity* +2, *hat of disguise*, *ring of protection* +1, black book (containing detailed notes on almost everyone in town), thieves' tools, 23 gp

Thuldrin Kreed is descended from a long line of powerful and ruthless lumber barons. His father, Thalsin, showed his son the hard lessons of rulership—and how to break someone's spirit—at a tender age. Thalsin taught him that taming a person is no different than breaking a wild horse, nor squeezing the ear of a wolf until it becomes a cowering cur that begs for scraps at its master's hand.

Above all, Thuldrin despises bad luck, the one vulnerability he cannot control, and the fey's most insidious weapon against his family. When a citizen of Falcon's Hollow suffers hardship because of misfortune alone, and Kreed can find no fault or weakness that led to the misery, he sometimes lavishes aid upon the sufferer.

His fear of bad luck manifests in many ways. He refuses to gamble and engages in no vices beyond uncompromising greed. He meticulously plans each move he makes, and is notorious for being several steps ahead of even the most creative foes.

Tall and broad-shouldered, Kreed wears the simple clothing favored by the lumberjacks he keeps under his thumb. He learned long ago that ostentatious displays of wealth are weak displays of power that invite only jealousy and petty desperation from foes. He prefers action to display, and his only tokens of power are a finely wrought rapier and his father's magical crossbow, which he always keeps close at hand.

His only living relative is his son, Jurin. Jurin's mother died under dubious circumstances not long after his birth, and much to Kreed's disgust, the child takes after his mother in being slim and bookish. The boy has kind eyes, though his father is doing his best to raise him as a proper Kreed and heir to the Consortium's grip on Falcon's Hollow.





ILSURIAN

We are small and humble, they say, and so what do we have to be proud of? I say we have our liberty! We have a sharp sword in every home and under every soft bed! Not one child in Ilsurian has been bound by the slaver's shackles or the edicts of corrupt noble masters. Every person is free to be judged by his own merit, and to live life without such condemnation. We're too willing to forgo our independence for agreements with unworthy sorts. What good is one's own propriety when a trusted neighbor treats with the nobility, bandits, or vagrants? There remains one true maxim for any Ilsurian: Keep your eyes sharp and your sword even sharper.

—Genthus Duggern, in his tract *Ilsurian's True Legacy*

The people of Ilsurian pride themselves on their independence. Founded by the military commander Ilsur and other expatriates from Korvosa, the town still follows its old ideals of meritocracy and military principles—or at least pays lip service to them. The fishers, traders, and loggers who now inhabit the town are a far cry from the Chelish soldiers who founded it, but in their minds the pride of their ambitious past far outweighs the modest achievements of their present. To Ilsurians, the mere fact that Korvosa never overtook the town proves the truth of their ideals. And they're confident that their sword arms are strong enough to discourage any who would try to take their liberty.

Situated at an important crossroads for waterborne trading vessels, Ilsurian sees many travelers. But the residents, predominantly descended from Chelish stock, could do without their Varisian visitors and settlers. The people of Ilsurian buy into the negative stereotypes of Varisians, making it difficult for such people to move into the town or even bring their caravans nearby. Some still try, enduring the insults and dirty looks, because the Ilsurians have rarely resorted to violence to deal with Varisian visitors.

HISTORY OF ILSURIAN

After the fall of the Chelish Empire, Korvosa's new monarchy displeased many the citizens now subject to it, including Ilsur, who had been a First Sword of the Knights of Aroden. Ilsur struck out from his home city with as many followers as he could muster and founded a new town in 4631 AR. Although he lent his name to the settlement, he expected that he would only live there temporarily until the time was right to return and overthrow Korvosa's leadership. His efforts ran into serious difficulties, however, and after only a few short years he had given up on gathering enough allies to realize his dream. Ilsur resigned himself to taking pride in his achievements within his town, rather than seeking greater glory in Korvosa—particularly as his more militaristic followers, displeased with his failure, left to take on mercenary work or join other armies.

Ilsur had believed Korvosa, under his rule, would be run by military leaders chosen by their ability and the strength of their convictions, and he applied these principles to his leadership of Ilsurian. He established the town's original legal code, one that favored military veterans and encouraged the cultivation of skill with arms and strong leaders. Until Ilsur grew frail, he served as Grand Commander of Ilsurian. During his command, he defused many tense situations without violence: a series of nighttime raids by creatures from the Ashwood in 4637, a trade embargo by old rivals from Korvosa in 4643, and a threat of pillaging from raiders traveling the

Yondabakari River in 4656. Ilsurian's reputation as a safe haven against invaders grew.

After Ilsur's death from natural causes in 4665, his successor Mirian refused to take on the title of Grand Commander out of respect for the founder. Since then, a council has led the town, with each council head possessing a different level of power. The place has moved away from the military hierarchy after which it was modeled to a simpler, more practical form of government.

When Ilsur selected a site for the town, he was looking for a prime location, not worrying about whether such locations were already occupied. The land he chose was a common campsite for traveling caravans of Varisians, and Ilsur drove off the group he found there with the threat of violence. Since then, Ilsurian's Chelaxian descendents have been on bad terms with the Varisians. In 4634, Uresina Rofennela convinced several prominent trade caravans to bypass Ilsurian, causing Ilsur to eventually sign an agreement to allow Varisians to legally dwell in the town. This agreement has been followed begrudgingly, except in 4667, when Gaddin Vrance—the second council head of Ilsurian and an autocrat—declared a purge of all Varisians within the town borders. Most were driven out, but a few who refused to leave or were physically unable do so were put to death. Vrance didn't last long, and while most residents agree his methods were too extreme, a few still whisper that it was the right thing to do.

In 4705, the traveling Umbra Carnival stopped in Ilsurian for the first time. It's since become a welcome sight, and citizens anticipate its return. The Umbra Carnival is detailed in *Pathfinder Module: Murder's Mark* (for 1st-level characters) and *Pathfinder Module: The Harrowing* (for 9th-level characters).

ILSURIAN

N small town

Corruption +0; **Crime** +0; **Economy** +1; **Law** -2; **Lore** +0;

Society +4

Qualities racially intolerant (ethnic Varisians), strategic location

Danger +0

DEMOGRAPHICS

Government council

Population 790 (712 Chelaxians, 47 Varisians, 23 other humans, 3 half-elves, 5 other)

Notable NPCs

Chieftain Gwan (CE female skulk rogue 2)

Council Leader Irilley Braeton (LN female human aristocrat 5)

Genthus Duggern (NE male human fighter 4)

Sheriff Kyra Feldane (LG female human expert 4)

Sister Esrelda Woodmere (LG female human cleric 2)

MARKETPLACE

Base Value 1,100 gp; **Purchase Limit** 5,000 gp; **Spellcasting** 4th

Minor Items 3d4; **Medium Items** 1d6; **Major Items** —



LIFE IN ILSURIAN

People in Ilsurian live charmed lives compared to the residents of many towns on Golarion. Raids by bandits and monsters are rare, the criminal element in town prefers to stay under cover and thus rarely causes major trouble, and the town has gone unconquered since Ilsur founded it.

Most Ilsurians make their livelihood as hardworking fishers and loggers. Fishers ply Lake Syrantula in small canoes to haul in its plentiful stock. About half of them collect only enough to feed their families, content with having plenty of free time and needing little. The others take out larger nets and bring back enough to sell to the other townsfolk and trade for drink at the Two Waters Tavern. Loggers take ferries across the Skull River to topple trees in the Ashwood and sell them to trading barges or residents building new structures in town. The loggers don't stay longer than they have to, preferring the relative safety of the day over the notorious dangers that roam the Ashwood in the dark. Most loggers pray to Erastil every day before heading out, and some even hire rangers of upstanding reputation to accompany their expeditions.

The wealthier residents of Ilsurian got that way through clever trade agreements, investments, and stakes in the town's busy warehouses and docks. The soil around Ilsurian is poor for farming, so the town must import most crops. They trade timber and fish to nearby settlements, but the warehouse and dock owners get a cut of nearly every transaction. The most profitable enterprises belong to Arhaneem Braeton (owner of several small warehouses and the prime docks) and Borvius Monchello (who owns Ilsurian Storage & Hauling). Especially valuable items that arrive for trade go through the Locked Box.

A six-person council adjudicates laws and settles disputes in Ilsurian. The townsfolk take great pride in their civic duties, and turn out in great numbers for the biennial democratic elections. Since Ilsurian is meant to be a meritocracy, citizens are instructed to vote based more on the quality and experience of the candidates than their stances on issues, though people have slowly moved toward the latter over the last several years. This meritocratic system is also why only former council members—who have supposedly proven their merit—can nominate new candidates. Council heads, too, are chosen by the rest of the council, and serve 2-year terms. The laws don't allow council heads to be voted in for successive terms except in rare emergency situations, and only in cases where the council unanimously allows it.

Citizens celebrate many prominent festivals throughout the year, especially during the summer. Usually, they gather in the courtyard around the statue of Ilsur at the heart of town or along the shore of Lake Syrantula. Festivals occur

RUMORS IN ILSURIAN

Given their generally tame lives, Ilsurian's citizens spread rumors constantly. Many paint outsiders as the cause of most of the town's troubles—whether those troubles are real or imaginary.

Gilded Goods: A distant cousin of Petra Monnisio found one of their family's heirlooms for sale at a market clear off in Wartle. Asked about it, the merchant said, "The Gilded Hands send good wares." None of the known thieves around here seem to have the wherewithal to fence something so far away. There must be a bolder class of crook behind this.

Heir to Ilsur: Official records say that Ilsur's line died out, but that's not quite true. He had a child out of wedlock, and sent the daughter to another town to keep her out of danger. Turns out she was Genthus Duggern's own mother, and he's got the blood of Ilsur in his veins. This doesn't give him any legal claims, but it certainly reflects well on his character.

Korvosan Entanglements: The Brisdell Trading Company ship comes through from time to time, and people say they've seen the sailors covertly passing out Korvosan coins to known scofflaws. Clearly they're spying on the town for the Korvosan government so they can invade. Be vigilant, and keep the criminal element far from important matters.

Varisian Thefts: Wandering, no-good Varisians have been sneaking into people's homes and taking their valuables. Denius Vorsatello says he got home in time to stab one robbing his home, but didn't get a good look at the vagrant. He followed the trail of blood with great haste, but strangely enough it went nowhere.

on religious holidays, with the largest, Archerfeast, on the 3rd of Erastus. Not only is this one of the holidays closely associated with Erastil, the most revered god in Ilsurian, but it also speaks to the town's love of physical competition and martial skill. The arena fills with competitors in archery contests and a mock gladiatorial tournament that lasts all 24 hours of Archerfeast, and an aquatic obstacle course brings fishers out to use their canoes for sport instead of work.

The other major holiday is Founding Day on the 10th of Arodus, when Ilsurians gather to read poems and political essays expounding on Ilsur's foresight in founding the town. At least, that's the prescribed form of celebration; the long, drunken party that continues on late into the night is the true festival to most residents.

Though Ilsurian is divided into the haves and the have-nots, the two groups coexist well enough, united by a rare spirit of civic cooperation. This disregard of social class doesn't extend to ethnic Varisians, though. A wealthy trader and a humble fisher who'd sit down for a drink together at the Two Waters Tavern would scowl

and make quick work of their beverages if a group of Varisians walked into the joint. This prejudice isn't restricted to the visits of nomadic Varisian caravans—it rears its head every day. A few dozen Varisians have taken up permanent residence in Ilsurian, and some are even second-generation residents. Their lives aren't easy. They're forced to sell their fish, crafts, or services for lower rates than their Chelaxian counterparts, and pay more for goods and services. Most of the residents refuse to socialize with them, and many businesses hang "No Varisians" signs in their windows. By the letter of the law, Varisians have all the rights of any other citizen, but the town's commitment to personal freedom means that the individual residents can be just as bigoted as they like. This adds up to an unwelcoming and distrustful atmosphere for many visitors.

ILSURIAN AT A GLANCE

Most of Ilsurian's residents live in small wooden homes made of timber hauled in from the Ashwood to the north and with simple shingled roofs; these are often set up as communal dwellings. The wealthier residents instead built dwellings of imported stones, typically situating them higher up on the hill upon which the town was built. Packed dirt roads lead down the gentle slope to the docks on the Skull River and Lake Syrantula, meeting up with larger roads leading to the north and west. Various interests control the docks, but the most prominent and central docks are owned by Arhaneem Braeton. The council frequently attempts to purchase them or build public docks to make citizens' travel less reliant on Braeton, but have so far been blocked.

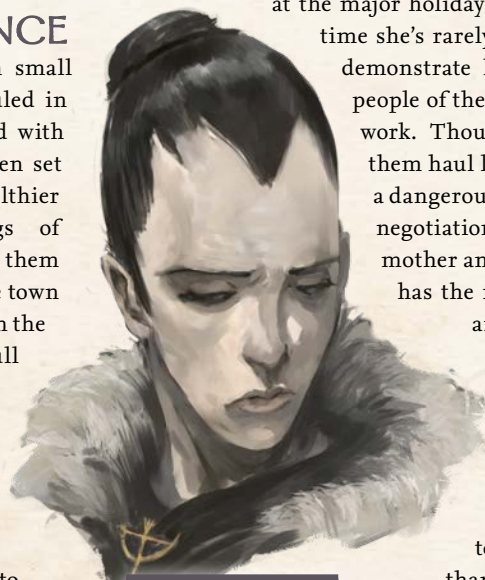
1. The Locked Box: The town's primary pawnbroker and moneylender, **Archivin Walder** (N old male human expert 2) owns and operates the Locked Box. His wife **Agnes Walder** (N old female human expert 1) assists around the shop, dealing with customers while Archivin works on the books in the back. The building's large showroom, filled with cases displaying jewelry, antiques, and ornate weapons, even brings in people who have no intention of buying. Archivin has no time for these sightseers, but Agnes acts pleasantly enough when they come through. Several traps protect The Locked Box against intruders, though they're built to capture or wound, not to kill. Proud and elitist, Archivin takes in only the finest pawned merchandise. He refers poorer and less socially acceptable people to Mistress Robella's

Curiosity Shoppe, and rarely disguises the disdain in his voice when he sends them along.

2. Temple of Erastil: The respected cleric Sister Eselda Woodmere maintains the Temple of Erastil. Though she's not particularly powerful, she keeps a strongbox full of scrolls that allow her to cast many divine spells of 4th level or lower. The temple is a wooden building decorated with wooden sculptures of beasts that are common to the forests and rivers surrounding the town. Both the building and sculptures are weathered and mossy, and trees surround the temple, their branches shading a courtyard open to the air and sheltering the small garden growing inside. Sister Woodmere tends the garden with the assistance of some of the town's children, and anyone is free to eat of its bounty when in need. Sister Woodmere holds services here only a few times a year, at the major holidays of Erastil's faith. The rest of the time she's rarely even at the temple, preferring to demonstrate her faith by socializing with the people of the town and helping them with their work. Though at times this means helping them haul lumber back to town or track down a dangerous wild animal, usually she provides negotiation and mediation. Born to a Varisian mother and Chelish father, Sister Woodmere has the rare ability to pass in both circles and speak to both groups. Her peacemaking tactics have kept violence from erupting in Ilsurian many times over.

3. Town Jail: Sheriff Kyra Feldane oversees the town guard, based in the jail near the heart of town. Usually, there are no more than two or three people in the cells, and only rarely are they brought in for anything more than public inebriation or disturbing the peace. Sheriff Feldane has

been at the job for 15 years, after starting at a young age. Both her parents were members of the guard, so she came into the job already knowing many of the veterans with whom she now works. One of her closest friends on the force is the jailer **Toma Driphus** (LG male middle-aged human expert 4), who prefers to stick around in the jailhouse rather than patrolling the city—but in his younger days, he saw enough to provide valuable advice to the sheriff on certain cases. Sheriff Feldane knows how deeply racial tension runs in Ilsurian, and prides herself on staying above it and remaining fair to both sides. The members of the guard don't all agree with her, and she continuously struggles with keeping them in line. Because of Ilsurian's martial culture, there's no shortage of townfolk chomping at the bit to join the guard,

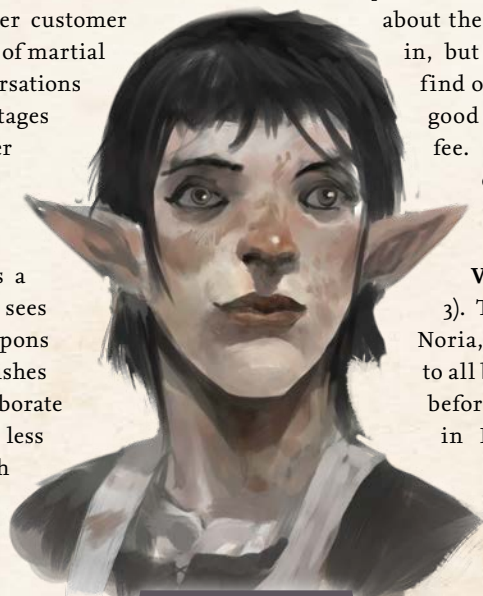


Eselda Woodmere

but most of them are too militant and independently minded to take orders and do the job well.

4. Semere Arms: Expert weaponsmith **Ve a Semere** (CG female half-elf expert 5) satisfies the demands of Ilsurian’s residents for quality weapons. Because the townsfolk consider weaponry a part of their heritage, they’re constantly seeking to repair or maintain their heirlooms and purchase new weapons. It’s common practice to buy a brand new weapon when a child comes of age, and not unheard of to commission a tiny weapon—typically a thin thrusting blade—for a young child to carry. Ve a has lived in Ilsurian for only 5 years, and is one of the few half-elves in town, but she has been accepted wholeheartedly because of her skill in forging weapons. She still struggles to understand the citizenry’s fixation on weapons, even knowing that the laws mandate owning them. In order to keep her customer base, however, she’s endured plenty of martial posturing and overly long conversations about the advantages and disadvantages of different types of weapons in her efforts to indulge people who’ve never actually had to use them. To keep herself content in her work, she creates every weapon as a unique work of art. She frequently sees commissions for masterwork weapons from the wealthier citizens, and relishes the rare chance she gets to collaborate on magic weapons. Armor is in less demand since it doesn’t have such an important place in the town’s cultural identity, and is instead usually imported.

5. Shiver Den: A dozen hammocks strung up in this rotting shack hold people who are addicted to the narcotic shiver (see below) and are too far gone to be accepted elsewhere in the town. Most of them used to be fishers in Ilsurian, and a few were river or lake traders from out of town who got drawn in, became addicted, and never went back. Most do everything they can to stay unnoticed, stealing out during the night to loot docked boats and unlocked houses for minor items to trade for shiver. Better known than most of the addicts, **Filton Legg** (N male human commoner 1) wanders about the town most of the day. He was a beloved fisherman—though he was never very good at actually catching fish—and most people take pity on him since they remember him fondly. Lately he’s been trying to clean up and kick the habit, even attending the periodic services at the Temple of Erastil and seeking honest work. Still, he doesn’t have gainful employment, so he sleeps in the one place where



Ve a Semere

it’s free: the shiver den. All worry that this makes it less likely he’ll stay clean.

SHIVER

Type injury or ingested; **Addiction** major; **Fortitude** DC 18

Price 500 gp

Effects variable; 50% chance to sleep for 1d4 hours or gain immunity to fear for 1d4 minutes

Damage 1d2 Con damage

6. Two Waters Tavern: Every day, multiple ships put in at Ilsurian even if they don’t need to drop off any cargo, just for the chance to stop in at Ilsurian’s tavern. **Noria Arephion** (CN middle-aged female expert 3/rogue 2) keeps a welcoming atmosphere in her establishment, and serves anyone who has the coin. Some natives grumble about the Varisians or shiver addicts coming in, but once they return to the bar they find out that Noria has upped her prices a good measure with a special complainer’s fee. Anyone who gets confrontational or violent gets dealt with by one of the burly regulars, usually **Willik Brandeboyd** (N male fighter 2) or **Vesperia Corsicare** (CG female rogue 3). These two are particularly close to Noria, and people whisper that they used to all be members of a crew of river pirates before seeing fit to go straight and settle in Ilsurian. Any time someone gets thrown out bodily or turned over to the guards, Noria laments that she’d have been right in there giving them a pounding if she were as spry as she was in her younger days.

Noria carries a selection of ales, wines, and spirits unmatched anywhere in town, in no small part because of a secret agreement she has with the dockhands. They guarantee that she gets first pick when shipments of alcohol come through, and she guarantees they get free drinks and a taste of beverages they’d never be able to afford. Noria uses mugs with the Two Waters’ seal, and lends them out to townsfolk when they need a drink to go. They’re a common sight all over town.

Some of the local fishers feel Cayden Cailean best represents the ideals of the town, and they built a prominent shrine to him on the second floor of the tavern. Called the Wheel of Freedom, it’s really nothing more than a drinking game with a fancy name. It’s made of an old ship’s wheel laid horizontally, each spoke painted a different color. To “worship at the

wheel,” a patron spins it, turns around, and tries to grab one of the spokes as it spins. If she gets a solid grip, everyone gathered around calls out the color as she walks downstairs to purchase the drink that matches. A patron who can’t make it downstairs and back up has “paid Cayden his due.”

7. Braeton Manor: A successful river merchant, **Arhaneem Braeton** (LN male human expert 5) owns the largest estate in Ilsurian. At the crest of the hill, a private road leads to the two-story structure surrounded by trees. Arhaneem’s family all live here: his wife **Canalee Braeton** (LN female human aristocrat 4) and their 10-year-old son **Martim** and 9-year-old daughter **Summer**. They’re attended by the married servants **Nesmia** and **Werros Claseria** (LG old human commoners 3). The mansion isn’t enormous, but by the standards of a small fishing town it’s practically a palace. The Braetons frequently invite other traders and merchants to the mansion for private dinners, and most of these rugged travelers are impressed and a little intimidated by the accommodations. Canalee believes propriety matters a great deal, and refuses to allow Varisians or other “undesirable sorts” to attend any functions at the manor. Her children, though, have more adventurous spirits, and often spend time with Varisian children when they’re let loose to play in town. They receive sound paddlings from the servants each time their mother finds out. Arhaneem has a reputation for arrogance and overreach, especially in his business dealings. Over the years he’s lost many contracts by assuming that potential business partners would never think of going with any company with a lower social standing in Ilsurian—and saying as much to their faces.

8. Council House: In this long, low-ceilinged building, the town council of Ilsurian meets and hears issues. The building’s capacity can’t keep up with the public’s interest in civic matters, so the benches overflow for almost every meeting, with more citizens clustered around the windows to watch the proceedings. The council has even contracted Genthus Duggern to print the minutes from the weekly meeting for public consumption, though the secretary **Milon Kesseric** (LN male human aristocrat 3) believes he’s been changing some of the wording and altering Milon’s original notes to fit the new transcripts.



Irilley Braeton

Irriley Braeton, the head of the council, belongs to one of the most prominent families in Ilsurian. Rumors constantly fly that she schemes with her brother Arhaneem to bend the law in his favor, which would explain his success as a merchant and his control of such a large portion of the town’s docks. In fact, Irriley works incredibly hard, and spends so much time at the council house that she’s far more likely to sleep at her desk than at her home in the northwestern part of the town. (She no longer lives in Braeton Manor; it’s entirely the property of her brother.) She’s devoted to what she calls the “traditional ideals” of Ilsurian, and works toward what she considers the best interests of its people—particularly those people with lineages that trace back to its founding. This also means she’s instructed various trusted informants around town to report back to her about the activities of Varisian travelers and any other strangers who pass through. She commands the guard to act on even light suspicion, frequently clashing with Sheriff Feldane, but imposes no penalty greater than a night in jail or expulsion from town. She won’t have mob justice or vigilantism happening while she’s in charge.

In addition to Irriley and Milon, the council is made up of **Ambator Ausperius** (LN middle-aged male human aristocrat 3), **Palaxarn Hespion** (LE female human aristocrat 2), **Dharla Khesteror** (NE female human expert 3), and Vea Semere. All these council members are of Chelaxian descent, and Vea is the only non-human and the only member of a family line that arrived in Ilsurian after the city’s founding. Vea was a dark horse in the council election, nominated by people who hoped that the weaponsmith would push for even looser laws about weapons within the town’s borders. The wealthier humans on the council freeze her out of discussions and vote down most measures she presents.

9. Statue of Ilsur: When designing the basic structure of the town, Ilsur plotted a garden courtyard in what was then the center. After his death, citizens commissioned a large stone statue of him to stand in the center of this green. He faces east-northeast toward Korvosa, symbolically guarding the town and its water traffic against the depredations of the nobles. Town rallies take place around the statue, with speakers mounting a platform next to it while the rest of the town surrounds them. This would be intimidating in normal circumstances, but is made even more so since an old law mandates that the citizens bring their weapons to such rallies. This practice is almost entirely for show, but when

people dislike a speaker's words, it's common practice to draw their weapons and hold them aloft until the speaker either makes amends or exits the courtyard. Former allies of Ilsur or their descendants stop at the statue when they pass through town, some to pay their respects and others to spit at the base of it because Ilsurian never made good on his promises to retake Korvosa.

10. Market Stalls: All around the courtyard that surrounds the towering statue of Ilsur, small merchant stalls and tents peddle a variety of wares. Though permanent residents operate some of these, most belong to itinerant ethnic Varisians who stay for only a few weeks before moving on to sell their goods in other towns. For a town plagued by racial tensions, this is a contentious practice. Angry Ilsurian residents often start shouting matches with the Varisian merchants, and the guards typically throw both parties in the jail overnight, since jailing only the resident would provoke a backlash from like-minded townspeople.

Despite these occasional conflicts and the reputation they've given Ilsurian among the nomadic traders, Varisians still come to this lucrative spot. The trade across the river and lake makes it an excellent spot to pick up items and delicacies that are in demand elsewhere. The Varisians, particularly the elderly **Trumori Kadarru** (CN old male human expert 4), also do good business by selling illegal goods under the table. Because of Ilsurian's lax laws—generally if you're not hurting anyone, it's not illegal—this mostly consists of dangerous drugs like pesh and shiver, plus imported Korvosan items that are banned because their sale benefits that city's nobles or promote their way of life. Trumori has a wide array of items available, and his children funnel more goods his way all the time. Tattoos cover his body, and he uses a secret code that involves the customer pointing at specific tattoos to indicate what she wants to purchase.

11. The Patriot's Library: Owned by Genthus Duggern (see page 33), this public library purports to be a repository for books about Ilsurian's history and other topics of interest to its citizenry. In truth, Genthus carefully curates his collection to suit his specific interests. His own tracts are the most prominent books in the establishment, and are among the few publications of which he keeps multiple copies. Another popular choice, *The Annotated Annals of Ilsurian*, comes from a previous, rigorous publication that Genthus

personally expurgated and annotated to emphasize the martial successes of Ilsur and the town over diplomatic ones, and to oversell the danger that "foreign threats" pose to the citizens. Despite its massive shortcomings, the Patriot's Library remains the only free public library in town. Many a citizen has become literate thanks to its collection, and many parents find books for their children there—though the smart ones read first and check out books selectively. A cadre of Genthus's devoted followers, who call themselves the Truth Advocates (see page 33), volunteer at the library and try to impress their agenda on its patrons.

12. Ilsur's Arena: The establishment with the longest legacy in Ilsurian, the arena was founded when Ilsur and his followers first came to Ilsurian. The troops trained there extensively to prepare for their overthrow of Korvosa, and it's still used today for weapons training. The arena shrank over the years as new buildings were erected around it (mostly warehouses and other establishments that don't have to worry about noise from the combatants). Ilsur's Arena is sanctified in the name of Iomedae, and three times per day all fighting must stop for 1 hour to allow for prayer. There's no dedicated caretaker for Ilsur's Arena, but several townsfolk serve as experts on different fighting styles. Most of them once served as soldiers, but were injured or got too old for the job. They include polearms master **Kyresti Peorus** (LN middle-aged female warrior 2), archer **Pryannion Varaccus** (LG male ranger 1), and the popular swordmaster **Lidia Chegarre** (N female warrior 3). The city subsidizes their work as part of their mandate to keep all citizens ready to defend themselves.

13. Mistress Robella's Curiosity Shoppe: **Robella Monchello** (NE female human alchemist 4) operates this run-down old shop stuffed with shelf after shelf of odd, mostly useless items. The business formerly belonged to an old man with no descendants who died from a slow illness—actually the result of deliberate poisoning by Robella. She befriended him so that she would inherit the business after his death, and made only minor renovations to the stock and the dilapidated store. Most of the work she put in was underground: a secret basement and tunnel leading to Ilsurian Storage & Hauling, the business of her husband Borvius. A few of Robella's wares have been revealed to be fenced goods pilfered from trading vessels. She maintains it's law



Ilsur

ADVENTURES IN ILSURIAN

Ilsurian's intrigue is typically on a small scale that interests only the locals. Most dangers come from raiders traveling down the Skull River or ethnic conflicts.

The Skulk Tribe: Chieftain Gwan leads a tribe of skulks who live to the southwest of Ilsurian on the shore of Lake Syrantula. Most of the skulks are addicted to shiver, and they follow secret orders from the Gilded Hands to get more, raiding rival shipments crossing the lake and stealing from houses in Ilsurian. The tribe lives in a shallow natural cave with barricades made from bits of crashed boats. They're always camouflaged, and have rigged their barricades with simple traps to weaken intruders.

Fey Plunderers: Empty trading boats float down the Skull River and wash up on the shores of Ilsurian, their cargos lost. In a rare spate of cooperation, Arhaneem Braeton and Borvius Monchello posted a sizable reward for finding the source of the disruption. In truth, in the Shimmerglens to the north, a kelpie calls in crew members on passing boats. A trio of satyr cronies boards the boats afterward, collecting their favorite pieces of the cargo—particularly rare wines meant for the Two Waters Tavern.

Rosarennic Returned: Noble families in Korvosa have long memories. Orsidey Rosarennic feuded with Ilsur before his exit from the city, and her granddaughter **Oboria Rosarennic** (LE female human bard 7/rogue 3) has never forgiven the insult. Finally confident in her family's position in Korvosa, she plans to send ships across Lake Syrantula, teeming with elite mercenaries ready to seize Ilsurian. Oboria knows the townsfolk will put up a fight, and has instructed the mercenaries to kill anyone who dissents, and to save for her the honor of smashing down the statue of Ilsur.

enforcement's job to worry about such things, not hers, but always complies with their demands on those rare occasions such items are found. She and her husband Borvius curtail their illegal activities for a short time whenever this happens.

14. Ilsurian Storage & Hauling: Two operations in one location—one legitimate business and one criminal enterprise—the Ilsurian Storage and Hauling site includes both an aboveground warehouse and a hidden basement packed with illegal goods. The Korvosan expatriates **Borvius Monchello** (LE male human ranger [urban] 3) and Robella Monchello run the Gilded Hands thieves guild from the basement, and Borvius also owns and operates the profitable warehouse and hauling business. He constantly vies with Arhaneem Braeton over control of the docks and preferential or exclusive agreements with various traders.

The Gilded Hands secretly control the criminal underground of Ilsurian, most of which revolves around smuggling in illicit goods in the middle of the night from incoming ships, storing them under Ilsurian Storage & Hauling for weeks or months, and then fencing them. A few of these items go through Mistress Robella's Curiosity Shoppe, but the Monchellos send most along to other settlements to keep from being caught by the local authorities. Robella also alchemically creates doses of shiver to both sell and trade for services. Among those who owe the Monchellos for shiver are a tribe of skulks who live near Ilsurian (see sidebar). They're used for risky tasks that require the stealth they're known for, and they always receive orders through go-betweens so the Monchellos can't be implicated.

The actual members of the Gilded Hands are just street toughs, sometimes armed with alchemical concoctions made by Robella. The more competent members of the guild don't spend much time in Ilsurian. Instead, they travel with important shipments to other settlements, where they look for opportunities the guild can exploit. The guild faces a serious challenge: It's growing too large for Ilsurian, and there's not much more activity they can expand into before they're too high profile. Borvius and Robella haven't found any new rackets to start up, and returning to Korvosa isn't an option, so they're looking seriously at making a major public push to remove some obstacles in the way of their control over Ilsurian. (One potential method for executing this plan is detailed in the 1st-level adventure *Pathfinder Module: Murder's Mark*.)

15. Braeton Docks: Owned wholly by Arhaneem Braeton, the busiest docks in Ilsurian operate from dawn till dusk, plus night shifts when there's a particularly important shipment expected. Arhaneem draws exceptional profits because his docks are positioned near the warehouses on the north shore of Lake Syrantula, and because he's struck an agreement with several local businesses that guarantees they'll trade more favorably for shipments that pass through his docks. Ownership of these docks is contentious, with other business interests taking great offense that Braeton was able to claim the best locations for his docks. Some claim his business has attained unearned privileges—a grave insult—because the Braeton family line stretches back to the town's founding, and he was able to buy up the interests of old family friends. Borvius Monchello of Ilsurian Storage & Hauling leads the traders who continue to raise the issue and complain that the council can't possibly be impartial when Arhaneem's sister Irriley leads them. Though the unified coalition against Braeton demands the docks be opened up for public use, Borvius secretly wants sole ownership.

GENTHUS DUGGERN

A self-proclaimed protector of Ilsurian's core values, Genthus Duggern believes that the town has become soft and forgotten too much of its military heritage.

GENTHUS DUGGERN

CR 3

XP 800

Male human fighter 4

NE Medium humanoid (human)

Init +2; **Senses** Perception -1

DEFENSE

AC 18, touch 12, flat-footed 16 (+5 armor, +2 Dex, +1 shield)

hp 30 (4d10+4)

Fort +5, **Ref** +3, **Will** +0 (+1 vs. fear)

Defensive Abilities bravery +1

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee mwk bastard sword +9 (1d10+5/19-20)

Ranged mwk heavy crossbow +7 (1d10/19-20)

STATISTICS

Str 16, **Dex** 14, **Con** 13, **Int** 10, **Wis** 8, **Cha** 14

Base Atk +4; **CMB** +7; **CMD** 19

Feats Exotic Weapon Proficiency (bastard sword),

Intimidating Prowess, Persuasive, Power

Attack, Weapon

Focus (bastard

sword), Weapon

Specialization

(bastard sword)

Skills Diplomacy +8, Intimidate +14,

Knowledge (history, local) +4

Languages Common

SQ armor training 1

Combat Gear *potion of bull's strength*, *potions of cure moderate wounds* (2), *potion of eagle's splendor*, +1 bolts (5), thunderstone (2); **Other**

Gear scale mail, light wooden shield, mwk bastard sword, mwk heavy crossbow with 20 bolts, 170 gp

To shift the town closer to his ideals, Duggern eagerly seeks a place on the town council, though none of its members are willing to nominate him. So instead, he's gone to the people, spreading propaganda about himself and trying to recruit them directly; he believes that if he can get popular support, the council will have no choice but to nominate him if they want to maintain their own positions.

All of his tracts are well-written, rabble-rousing pieces. He recounts events with a loose interpretation of the

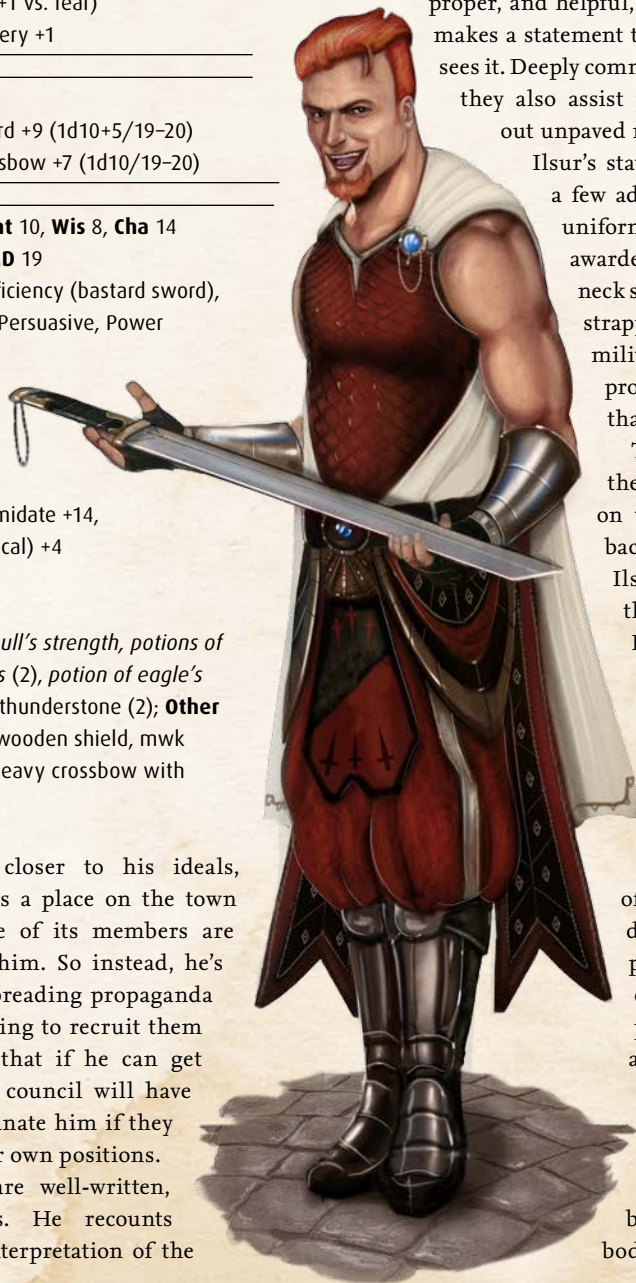
truth, and applies his own spin to them. To focus on his political aspirations, Genthus has pushed most of the day-to-day work of maintaining the library onto his small group of dedicated acolytes: the Truth Advocates.

Mostly young men in their late teens to early twenties, they've bought into Genthus's beliefs wholeheartedly. There's always one of them operating the library during the day, while the rest visit other residents of Ilsurian. They have long conversations in the taverns, public spaces, or in any home whose residents will invite them inside, mostly talking about events around town and gossiping about the Korvosans. They follow very specific directions from Genthus that they should be unfailingly polite, proper, and helpful, but they must correct anyone who makes a statement that contradicts history as Genthus sees it. Deeply committed to the betterment of Ilsurian, they also assist people with their chores, smooth out unpaved roads, and clear up rubbish around

Ilsur's statue. They wear fine clothing with a few adornments reminiscent of military uniforms, including a simple medal awarded to each Truth Advocate, a silk neck scarf, and a well-maintained weapon strapped to the belt. Despite their military appearance, they resemble a proselytizing religious group more than a militia.

Though most Ilsurians believe the Varisians are the biggest scourge on their town, Genthus likes to fall back on the biggest bogeymen of Ilsurian, the ones who have been there since the beginning: the Korvosan nobles. Many of his tracts detail the shortcomings and cruel acts of specific nobles, with counterexamples showing how Ilsurian residents would never have such failings.

Genthus still describes Varisians as inferior to Ilsurians of Chelish descent, but largely depicts Varisians as objects of pity, not true villains. In his descriptions, he portrays them as people who will corrupt Ilsurians and degrade their way of life, if given the chance, but makes it clear that if Ilsurians simply stand up against these ne'er-do-wells they have nothing to fear because they are far stronger in body and mind.





PEZZACK

Diabolism's yoke enslaves us all
From false Egorian! Of Westcrown born,
Through Thrunish veins no longer flows the blood
Of Cheliox, but that of men unsouled—
From Chelish lips, 'tis not the Queen who speaks,
This whore of Asmodeus, but her love,
To sing you to a sleep where one forgets
That once we were a nation of free men.
Awake! To arms! Throw off complacency,
Or die as livestock willfully enchained!

—Amalia Wraxton's *Abrogail I*, Act V, Scene ii

Though within Cheliox's borders, Pezzack does not truly belong in that nation. It is a revolutionary hotbed, and its citizens remain defiant against the diabolic usurpers of the Chelish throne. Despite a siege and blockade lasting years, the people maintain their independence, though keeping the insurgent forces from falling apart is a constant challenge. Surrounded by mountains and the Arcadian Ocean, the town is easy to defend but difficult to leave.

HISTORY OF PEZZACK

Pezzack was the only town to overthrow its Throne-appointed ruler after the Chelish civil war. It ruled itself as an independent city-state under the banner of the dead god Aroden. Half a year later, the standard of House Throne flew again over a town of ashes. The governor's Hellknights burned the poorer quarters to the ground, but failed to kill the very idea that had sparked the rebellion in the first place—that the rule of Throne is illegitimate, won through diabolism and deceit, and that no true heirs to the nation of Aroden would allow themselves to be ruled by outsiders. After this destruction, which the Pezzacki now call the First Ashes, other Chelish cities toying with rebellion instead capitulated. But Pezzack never fully submitted. The town remained on the brink, poised to once again break out in open rebellion.

A generation after the First Ashes, Pezzack rose again. An influx of immigrants—mostly from Galt and Andoran—rebuilt and repopulated the town, many attracted by the writings of Indageous Vonor, a legendary Chelish playwright who had witnessed the sacking of Pezzack firsthand. Forbidden to own weapons after the First Ashes, the Pezzacki employed arms of a different sort, wielding ink rather than steel. Criticism, satire, and insurrection flowed from the Glass on the Hill, Vonor's famous theater. Seditious pamphlets and essays printed in Pezzack spread throughout Cheliox, and into Avistan beyond, turning this isolated town into a magnet for revolutionary thinkers and agitators. Gracchian Tauranor, Pezzack's military governor, cracked down on speech and assembly, and started hanging dissidents from Traitor's Hook. The town became a powder keg again, just waiting for a spark to set it off.

The spark came in 4710 AR when Amalia Wraxton, Vonor's finest student, premiered *Abrogail I* at the Glass on the Hill. A history dripping with excoriating satire, the play painted Abrogail as Asmodeus's lover and a conspirator in the death of Aroden. The play never finished; summoned by infuriated loyalists, Governor Tauranor and his knights stormed the stage to shut down the production. When the cast refused, Tauranor's knights had killed both Indageous Vonor and Valeria Minish, a popular actress who was especially beloved among the poor. Rebellion exploded instantly. Tauranor never made it out of the theater—rioting

mobs tore him and his Hellknights to pieces. The rest of the town guard left their posts to put down the rebellion, and blood painted the streets. The strix, the winged inhabitants of the reach known as Devil's Perch to the southwest of the town, took advantage of the chaos to drop burning logs onto the settlement. For the second time in a century, most of Pezzack burned. When the dust of the Second Ashes had settled, a third of the town's population was dead and a new era of anarchy had begun.

The reaction from Egorian was swift. A Chelish armada under the command of Governor Vedra Sawndannac blockaded the town, trapping over a hundred merchant ships at anchor in Fat Harbor. From the deck of the flagship, Amalia Wraxton was tried in absentia and sentenced to death. The rebels now control most of Pezzack—though their rule is disorderly—and any Chelish soldiers still in town have retreated to the loyalist quarter around the dead governor's manse. A new makeshift settlement has risen in the harbor: Docktown, a chaotic maze formed out of the interconnected ships not allowed to leave. And despite every printing press being seized, from somewhere in town the notorious Printsmith produces pamphlets and plays decrying the Thrunes and undermining their right to rule. These works have spread far beyond Pezzack and Cheliox. Though the ruined Glass on the Hill has been shuttered, rumors of another theater abound—a secret playhouse performing banned works called *The Burrow*. Hidden from the Thrunes, this theater is where many claim Amalia Wraxton plans to premiere her newest work, *Abrogail II*, and thereby spread revolution to every corner of Cheliox.

PEZZACK

CN large town

Corruption +5; **Crime** +6; **Economy** -4; **Law** -6; **Lore** +2;

Society -5

Qualities insular, notorious, rumormongering citizens

Danger +35; **Disadvantages** anarchy, impoverished

DEMOGRAPHICS

Government anarchy

Population 4,800 (4,600 humans, 70 halflings, 56 dwarves, 30 gnomes, 24 half-elves, 20 other)

Notable NPCs

Insurgent Leader Habar Curl (CN male human fighter 1/rogue 3/gray gardener^{POP} 1)

"Mayor" of Docktown Brucks (NE male tiefling expert 3/rogue 3)

Military Governor Vedra Sawndannac (LE female human aristocrat 1/fighter 5/hellknight^{ISWG} 2)

Revolutionary Playwright Amalia Wraxton (CG female middle-aged half-elf bard 7)

MARKETPLACE

Base Value 1,300 gp; **Purchase Limit** 7,500 gp; **Spellcasting** 5th

Minor Items 4d4; **Medium Items** 3d4; **Major Items** 1d6



LIFE IN PEZZACK

Pezzack is not an easy place to build a life. The town is geographically isolated from the rest of Cheliax—a fact that drew its first dissidents—and is surrounded by the inhospitable terrain of the Menador Mountains, where the xenophobic strix dwell nearby on Devil's Perch. Even before the blockade, there weren't many avenues for work—most of the town's rank-and-file workers fished or worked on whaling crews to earn a living. Since Docktown arose, though, Fat Harbor has been overfished. Competition for the whaling jobs is fierce for a number of reasons: it's the only industry still operating under the blockade (see page 38), it provides meat that can be smuggled into the town—after the Chelaxians take their massive cut—and for the truly desperate, it's a way out of a town under siege.

Pezzack is divided between three broad factions—the loyalists, the insurgents, and the Docktown merchants. The loyalists are the smallest faction, but also the best armed. The soldiers trapped in the town after Second Ashes discarded their uniforms and were absorbed by the loyalist population, but remain ready to remobilize at a moment's notice. They mostly keep themselves, sequestered in the southwestern section of the town, where they wait for the chance to retake the town—hopefully with the aid of an invasion force from the sea.

The insurgents are both the largest faction and by far the least organized. Of the several smaller sects that exist within their ranks, the largest is that of the Galtans, who would if given the chance paint the streets with the blood of the loyalists. Amalia Wraxton's faction, the White Thistle, claims to want Pezzacki unity and independence. However, most of the unaligned townsfolk believe they're more interested in disseminating seditious writings through the country than in governing and protecting the town, and would be content dying in a blaze of glory as long as their story would be told.

The incompetency of the insurgents' rule over the town has most people turning to Docktown. Though the merchants of this semi-sovereign floating town are unabashedly fleecing the citizenry, Docktown is the only reliable place to find material goods, and crime there is far lower than in Pezzack proper. The merchants don't consider themselves Pezzacki, and their goal is a secret to no one—escaping this watery prison.

The Pezzacki also live under the constant harassment from the strix. Fat Harbor used to be a prime strix fishing ground, a fact the strix haven't forgotten. Solitary travelers out of view of the towers that have been set up to defend against the strix are likely to be attacked, as is anyone traveling overland out of town. The Pezzacki have to get their fresh water from a series of wells leading to an underground river because the strix routinely drop dead goats and festering corpses into the headwaters of

RUMORS IN PEZZACK

Below are some current rumors circulating in Pezzack.

Alliance with the Strix: There is an abundance of rumors concerning the strix. Some say the birdlike humanoids have formed a secret alliance with the insurgents. Others say they've allied with Governor Sawndannac, and that she bought their allegiance by promising to raze the town and return to them their traditional fishing grounds. Whatever the case, strix have been seen flying to and from the deck of Sawndannac's flagship.

Darjan's Infatuation: The son of the slain military governor, Darjan Tauranor leads the loyalists in Pezzack. He hasn't attempted any sort of a counterattack from within the town, and the reason—so it's said—is that he's in love with Amalia Wraxton. It's also rumored that Wraxton was married in secret and even has a child—and that if Darjan finds out this is true, he might change his mind and try to take back the town from the people who killed his father.

Docktown Armada: Rumors abound that the Pezzacki insurgents are working with the Docktown merchants to find a way to break the blockade and escape Fat Harbor. Details are hazy, but it seems to have something to do with expanding the Guts—the tunnels that run under the town. Most folks believe that has more to do with creating additional living space. However, rumors swirl that the expansion has something to do with turning Docktown into an armada that would rival Sawndannac's fleet.

Sawndannac's Delay: No one seriously thinks that the insurgents could prevent the Chelish navy from retaking the town if Sawndannac ever orders a full-scale assault. It's rumored that she hasn't invaded because she wishes to preserve her strength rather than suffer massive casualties in an attempt to reclaim the town. Sawndannac isn't about to weaken a force loyal to her when she could let the rebels starve themselves into submission. She needs those troops to take on her greatest rival at court—her uncle, Anzer Lupetrious. It's widely believed he orchestrated the mutiny that left a necklace of scars across her throat.

the river that feeds the town and poisoning it. Though there was some degree of peaceful bartering in the past, since the blockade the strix have stopped trading with anyone from the town. It's not an uncommon sight to see them perched out of arrow range on the rocky towers that ring the town, watching and waiting for Pezzack to fall.

All of this has turned life in the town into a stressful ordeal. It was never meant to house the number of people displaced by the blockade, and with swaths of the town still in ruin from the Second Ashes, the poorest have had to move into the Guts—the sewers and tunnels below the settlement—to find housing. People are scared

and hungry and running out of hope. The insurgents, especially the White Thistle, ameliorate this as best they can by distracting the citizenry with performances and pretty speeches. It's stopped working, though, and rumors of a counterrevolution—one that would break the insurgents and invite Sawndannac's force into town—are rumbling. The prevailing wisdom among the townsfolk is that the insurgency will be dead in a year, as will Amalia Wraxton, wherever she's hiding. Whether Pezzack will survive a Third Ashes is anyone's guess.

PEZZACK AT A GLANCE

All of Pezzack is hemmed into a small patch of land between rocky spires and shadowed by the Menador Mountains. The exits out to sea through Fat Harbor and by road into the mountains have been blocked, and almost every building is in disrepair. Resources are scarce, and despite the status quo of the long siege, every day seems like it could be the tipping point that brings finality to the conflict, leaving it either a free city-state once more or another thrall to House Thruene.

1. The Blockade: In the aftermath of the Second Ashes, half the town burned to the ground and an angry mob tore Pezzack's military governor and his hellknights to pieces. Egorian dispatched a fleet to bring the rebellious town to heel. The fleet sailed to Pezzack and dropped anchor across the Pinch (the narrow mouth of the harbor), just outside of arrow range from the hastily constructed bulwark of the Shorewall. There they sit, blockading the town, content to let the fires of rebellion burn themselves out. The tactic is working—support for the revolutionaries in town is waning as belts tighten and residents grow more desperate for food and supplies.

The commander of the fleet is Pezzack's new military governor, Vedra Sawndannac, a polite and ruthlessly cunning Chelaxian and a distant cousin of Queen Abrogail. An angry choking scar mars her throat. She received it while suppressing a mutiny under her command, and her hands are covered with smaller scars won in duels and skirmishes. Sent to retake Pezzack, Sawndannac has opted to preserve her force's strength. Rather than attempting to recover the governor's burned-out manse, she maintains her headquarters on her flagship, the *Reprisal*. Her forces seize any and all ships attempting to enter the town, strip them of goods, and send them either to Docketown or back out to sea.



Vedra Sawndannac

She then has the goods sold at least at a 25% markup to any townsfolk willing to row out to the blockade. Few people are, not because they don't need the supplies, but because they'd likely be robbed or killed as traitors the moment they return to Pezzack. This is by design—all part of Sawndannac's plan to turn the townsfolk against the revolutionaries and spark a war within the town that her forces can then mop up after.

2. Entrances to the Guts: Running underneath Pezzack from Whaler's Point to the Governor's Manse, interconnected smuggler's tunnels, storerooms, and sewers stretch the length of the town and even extend beneath the harbor. Dubbed "the Guts" by the townsfolk, these tunnels are the only means the Pezzacki have had of resupplying the town during the blockade. They also serve as crude housing—not everyone could afford to rebuild after the fires, so many folks have since taken up residence in the Guts, most often squatting in the basements or storerooms of shuttered businesses. It's a miserable existence for the people dwelling underground.

3. Traitor's Hook: A single low stone spire rises from the edge of Whaler's Point at the mouth of the Pinch. Atop it, a gallows extends out over the water. During the harsh rule of Gracchian Tauranor, hundreds of insurrectionists and progressives were hung from Traitor's Hook and left for the birds to devour. Now, Gracchian's skeletal corpse dangles from the noose. Every morning, **Meliar Aructus** (LE male old human cleric of Asmodeus 10), the former high priest of the town, climbs the hook and resurrects Gracchian—who had Aructus' revolutionary daughters hanged—to watch him choke to death again.

4. Whaler's Point: The spit of land that encloses Fat Harbor to the north is the same sort of terrain as that which surrounds the town—rocky spires and broken stone rises, useless for construction. Hundreds of years ago, whalers set up operations on the only practical piece of land on the spit, at the point right off the Pinch. Pezzack's whaling industry is the only one Sawndannac has allowed to operate during the blockade, and she extracts quite a percentage of their profits for the privilege. The whalers, not really having a choice, go along with it. Day and night, blubber boils in the whalers' try pots, choking the sky with pillars of acrid smoke. The stench is unbearable.

The head of the Whalers' Guild is the laconic and dour **Noose Ramsmaul** (N dwarf expert 3/ranger 1). He's so

far been able to hide his smuggling activities from the Chelaxians. Under a warehouse at Whaler's Point is an entrance to the Guts, the series of smuggler's tunnels that leads under the harbor to Pezzack proper. The food and weapons the whalers smuggle into town through the Guts have kept the rebellion going when it should have burned out months ago.

5. The Inkwel: Standing defiantly at the northeastern corner of Fat Harbor, Pezzack's main waterfront inn used to provide a pleasant view of the harbor and the Arcadian Ocean beyond. Now, Sawdannac's Blockade dominates the horizon outside this three-story establishment. A haven for the poets and political agitators, the building itself was one of the few to survive the riots after the Second Ashes, although the sides of the inn show fire damage from the inferno that consumed much of the town in the riots' aftermath. Half fortress and half inn, the entire building is stonework, and was originally Pezzack's garrison in the town's early days. Though the proprietor has made it more hospitable on the inside, the building's exterior shows its military past: arrow slits for windows, a crenelated upper floor, and heavy door into which the town's most famous poets and playwrights have carved their names. The rooms are cold and somewhat cramped, but can house many guests each. Since the blockade and the siege began, the inn has been filled to capacity just like every other one in town. Rebels and insurrectionists planning their next attempt to break the blockade pack the common room of the Inkwel day and night. Fights and bloodshed are frequent, and unaligned locals tend to avoid the place.

The Inkwel is owned and operated by **Lorin Meese** (CG male human expert 4/fighter 2) a congenial man for a Chelaxian and a retired soldier who fought in the ongoing clashes with the strix. Even under siege, he has an open door policy for the inn and allows anyone inside—revolutionary or loyalist—as long as they don't start trouble. To deal with any trouble that does arise, he has **Chankings**, an iron golem bodyguard and bouncer built for him by Sanda Malferixian (see area 10). Meese loves the theater and fiercely defends the town's artists. He's widely assumed to be the Printsmith, a prolific revolutionary who has printed thousands of seditious

pamphlets and plays for dissemination across Cheliox and Avistan.

Meese is not the Printsmith—Chankings is. He's a modified iron golem with a moveable-type printing press built into his chest. At a command, Chankings inclines like a table and opens his chest, revealing printing plates and thousands of tiny bits of moveable type. Then a dozen tiny arms split from his shoulders to move the type around at blinding speed. He is literally a walking printing press. Chankings is able to print hundreds of pamphlets an hour, and remembers any texts he's read or had dictated to him. As long as he has enough paper and ink, Chankings reproduces the words of Pezzack's revolutionary authors.

6. Shorewall: On an escarpment that drops sharply into the sea just south of the blockade, the old Chelish flag, from before the time of the House of Thrune, flies above a series of homes and buildings. This defensible bulwark, called Shorewall, extends from the impassable stone upthrusts that surround the town to the entrance to Fat Harbor. Built by the rebels after the blockade set anchor, Shorewall has resisted all attempts to take the town by sea. Spells and flaming arrows from Shorewall sunk two of the blockade's vessels that tried to sneak through the Pinch at night; now those hulks provide an additional barrier to traveling both in and out of town, a fact that hasn't endeared Shorewall's defenders to the general populace, and especially not to the merchants and sea crews who lost their ships to Docktown.

The bulwark is commanded by Habar Curl, a Galtan who's become the leader of the most militant wing of the rebels in Pezzack. It's rumored that Curl and his men have a *final blade* somewhere in Shorewall, and have used it on Chelish loyalists and even Pezzacki they deemed not committed enough to the cause.

7. Strix Defense Towers: A series of tall towers jut up at regular intervals around the mountainous border of Pezzack. These towers were built to keep a watch on the strix and to defend against their attacks on the town. Each provides a good range of sight, and cover for archers and ballistae firing bolts or weighted nets. Only twice have the strix attacked the town en masse. The first time was before the towers were built, illustrating the need for them. The second was an opportunistic attack during the



Chankings

Second Ashes, when the strix dropped burning bundles of oily logs to burn down the town. During that second attack, the strix managed to take and topple one of the towers (see area 9), which has not been rebuilt since. The towers today—when they are occupied at all—are staffed by a mix of revolutionaries and untrained militia. This detail has not been lost on the strix.

8. The Glass on the Hill: On its hilltop perch overlooking the harbor, this theater was once the pride and joy of Pezzack's artistic community. Today, it's a shuttered ruin. It was here, only 3 years ago, that Amalia Wraxton premiered *Abrogail I*, the play that reignited revolution in the town. The Second Ashes damaged much of the Glass on the Hill, though by pure luck the stage remained intact. The most notable feature of the empty theater is a bloodstained patch on the still-standing stage where Gracchian Tauranor, the former military governor, killed lead actress Valeria Minish. Some in the town whisper that her ghost haunts the theater.

9. The Abandoned Tower: When the riots of the Second Ashes engulfed the town, the soldiers in the strix defense towers abandoned their posts to join the fray. The strix took advantage of their absence to firebomb the town. A handful of brave citizens took the defense of the towers into their own hands. Chief among these was Hobbie Zoot, husband of the town's resident alchemist, Bonnifer Zoot (see area 12). He held one tower—the largest and sturdiest one—all on his own until Rixin, the strix chief, grappled him and dropped him back past the tower from a hundred feet up. Hobbie landed near the base of the tower, and his potions exploded on impact. The resulting detonation destroyed major sections of the tower, and even though its framework was strong enough that its corners and roof still stand, many walls and floors have collapsed or are on the verge of doing so. The Pezzacki avoid the treacherous site, but at night, it's not uncommon to see a strix or two fly to the tower and disappear into the ruins.

10. Academy of Applied Magic: Pezzack's school of magic has always been geared toward producing artisans skilled at crafting magic items, rather than adventurers. To that end, the curriculum centers on utilitarian spells that have a use in construction or infrastructure instead of in battle. The program focuses heavily on brewing potions and scribing scrolls, and PCs should be able to find some of either for sale at the school. The academy's

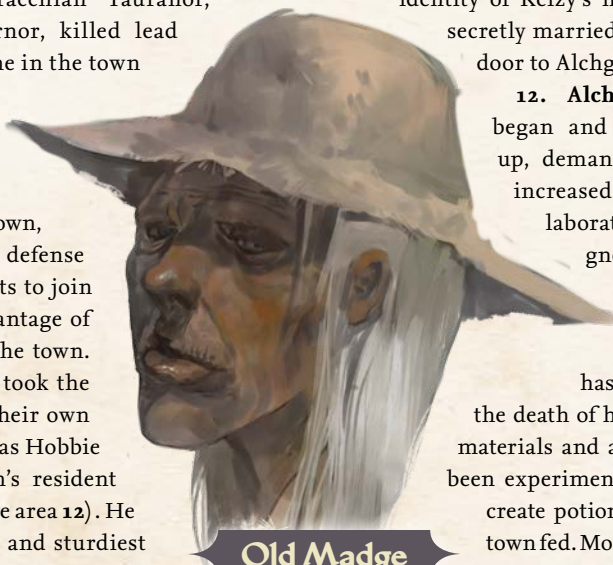
headmaster is **Sanda Malferixian** (N female elf wizard 10), who has been waiting for years to find an appropriately talented student to train as her successor. She takes any sufficiently skilled wizard she meets aside and tries to convince him to take over the school.

11. Vim's Smithy: One of the only businesses near Gold Street that's remained in constant operation is Vim's Smithy. It is owned and operated by **Kallador Vim** (CG male human expert 3/fighter 2), who was trained by his late grandfather. Cool-headed and quiet, Vim is a weaponsmith by training, and provides arms for the revolutionaries for the cost of materials alone, bartering for materials and fuel when he can't get it from smugglers. He lives in the shop with his young son **Kelzy** (NG male young half-elf commoner 1), a bright youth of somewhat slender build. Vim's most closely guarded secret is the identity of Kelzy's mother—Amalia Wraxton, who secretly married Vim and lives in a garret next door to Alchgarden.

12. Alchgarden: Since the blockade began and the Shorewall bulwark went up, demand in Pezzack for potions has increased dramatically. From her tower laboratory, **Bonnifer Zoot** (NG female gnome alchemist 5) and her apprentices have been doing their best to keep up. Curt for a gnome, she smiles little and has a burning hatred of the strix for the death of her husband. Perpetually low on materials and always in a hurry, Bonnifer has been experimenting with ways to alchemically create potions of nutrients to help keep the town fed. Most of her experiments have failed, and because of the pressures of production, she hasn't had the time to properly dispose

of her failures. Her apprentices have taken to pouring the failures out of the tower window into the nearby park. The foliage in Alchgarden, as it's come to be known, has begun to manifest bizarre adaptations, including glowing flowers, trees with tentacles, and pinecones that explode on impact.

13. Madge's Noodle Cart: If there's one thing the revolutionaries and loyalists can agree on, it's that **Old Madge** (CG old female human witch 6) serves the best seafood noodles in town. Madge is a friendly, if apparently absentminded, Varisian transplant who can be found selling her famous fare in one of three regular locations around the waterfront. It is an open secret that Madge knows which banned plays are playing where and when, and communicates this information only if patrons order correctly from her cart. It's a closely guarded secret, however, that she knows the location of Amalia Wraxton



Old Madge

and the Burrow. Madge's cart is pushed by **Snapjack** (CN male goblin rogue 2/barbarian 4), a none-too-bright member of the Licktoad tribe who ended up on a ship from Varisia and got stranded in Pezzack. Snapjack loves practical jokes (mostly involving the throwing of fish heads) and is fascinated by anything made of glass. He's as fiercely loyal to Madge as she is to him.

14. The Tenements: Most of Pezzack that burned down during the riots was contained to the poorer quarters, where homes were made of wood rather than stone. These areas have been rebuilt in poorer condition than they were in before the fires—building materials are scarce, and most homes were built with whatever survived the fires. The new tenements are dirty and cramped, making them hotbeds of crime and discontent.

15. Gold Street: Before the blockade, the stretch of shops along Gold Street was a thriving hub of economic activity. Since the blockade, it's seen an economic boom of a different sort. Gold Street is the name the townsfolk originally gave to the row of prosperous storefronts and workshops that once housed the town's artisans. The shops have all shut down for a lack of raw materials and customers, and their owners—mostly loyalists—have holed up in the Governor's Manse or the Throne Defiant. Today, townsfolk go to Tubmarket for their goods.

One business is still operating out of Gold Street: the thieves' guild that set up shop as the legitimate businesses shut down. The thieves are more interested in goods than in coin. What they collect, they sell to the highest bidder, usually one of the inns.

Cessia Florianthus (LE female human expert 4/rogue 2) used to run the town's accounts. Now she heads the Pezzacki thieves' guild and makes sure all her customers' demands are met.

16. Docktown: When the blockade drew across the mouth of the bay, it was during Pezzack's annual trade festival. Dozens of merchant ships and hundreds of smaller vessels suddenly found themselves trapped in an overcrowded harbor. The town couldn't absorb this new population, so the ships became homes for the trapped merchants. As the armada sent in additional captured ships, the harbor ran out of safe anchorage, so the captains lashed their ships together, creating a floating village of decks, masts, crew quarters, and cargo holds. In the years since, as hope of ever leaving the harbor has dwindled, new construction has sprung up on the knot

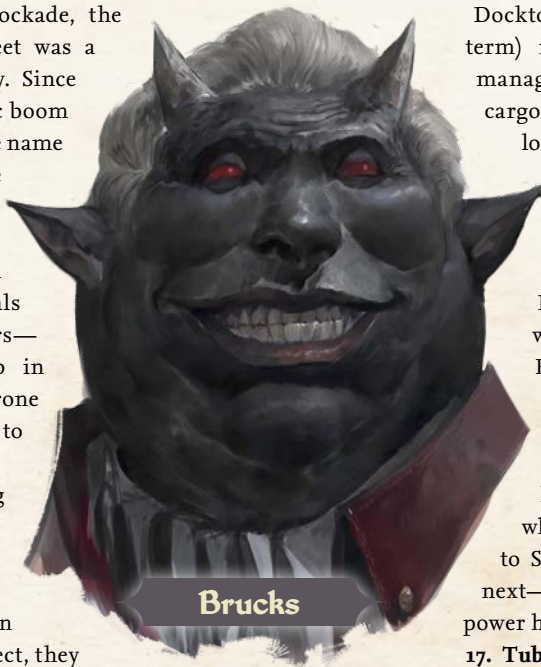
of ships: tenements and garrisons built on decks, rope bridges strung between crow's nests and forecastles, and bridges between gunwales. What was once a throng of independent vessels clustered together for survival has since become a semiautonomous political body of its own.

Virtually all of the ships that compose Docktown have been altered in one way or another to allow for living and trade space. The construction, such as it is, is a maddening maze of bridges, passages, and occasional gulfs of water between decks. The floating town can be reached via the docks in Fat Harbor. Whenever the need arises, Docktown has the ability to cut ships free from one another and reorder itself. The result is that only Docktown's residents can reliably navigate the ever-changing landscape of the floating town.

Docktown's mayor (for lack of a better term) is Brucks, a hedonist who's managed to seize the most valuable cargoes and thus is able to pay a loose assortment of brigands and thugs to keep him in power. Also called the Peacock, Brucks has dressed himself in the finest fabrics Docktown's holds have to offer, whether or not they match. He's an opportunist by nature, and plays the revolutionaries and townsfolk against one another to stay in power. He knows his time is limited—when Pezzack eventually falls to Sawndannac, Docktown will be next—but is content to enjoy what power he has for the time being.

17. Tubmarket: The only open market in either Docktown or Pezzack proper, Tubmarket is a multistory galleria converted out of a colossal junk from Minkai. Anything that can be found in Pezzack can be found here. That's not to say Tubmarket has everything—because of the blockade, there's only a 75% chance to find even basic goods that any hamlet would have readily on hand. However, thanks to the range of ships caught in the harbor, the marketplace has a small city's allotment of magical items for sale (though its base value is unchanged). Unless people are bartering, everything in the market is subject to a steep price hike. With goods so scarce, coin just doesn't have the purchasing power it does elsewhere.

18. Auntie's: Docktown has its own floating tavern—Auntie's—and it's arguably the most popular in town. The garishly decorated main floor of the three-story tavern and rooming house is in the former hold of a



Brucks

ADVENTURES IN PEZZACK

Even the smallest change in Pezzack's power balance could result in a massive upheaval in this anarchic settlement.

The Docktown Kidnapping: Through his spy network, Brucks learns that Kelzy Vim is the son of Amalia Wraxton, and kidnaps the boy with the intent of flushing Wraxton out of hiding. When Wraxton travels to Docktown to free her son, she's ambushed and taken captive. Brucks intends to trade her to Governor Sawndannac in exchange for being allowed to leave Fat Harbor with the plunder of Docktown in his hold. Brucks's minions have cast off all connections to Pezzack, and have cut a number of the Docktown ships free while awaiting Sawndannac's arrival. The PCs must find a way into Docktown and navigate the shifting landscape of this floating mini-town to free Wraxton before the Chelaxians can extract her.

Arming the Rebels: While expanding the Guts, diggers beneath the town discovered the entrance to a buried ancient dungeon. The architecture identifies it as having been built by the fallen Jistka Imperium. Writings discovered there allude to a weapon buried somewhere in the complex—one deemed so dangerous that it was entombed far beyond the borders of Jistka to prevent it from being discovered. The insurgents believe this weapon could be used to break the blockade, and hire the PCs to find and recover it.

The Invasion: The inevitable finally occurs. The invasion comes from three directions at once—by sea, as the Chelish fleet pours through the Pinch; by land, as the loyalists and remaining soldiers attack from the southwestern quarter; and by air—the rumors of an alliance between the strix and the Chelaxians were true. It's up to the PCs to organize a defense and prevent the wholesale slaughter of the revolutionaries and their supporters.

merchant ship. Rooms and suites make up the top deck. **Auntie** (CG female old halfling expert 4) runs her brothel, the Siren's Call, out of the second floor. She knows all the gossip in town and is happy to spread any and all rumors, whether they're true or not.

19. The Burrow: Not just a rumor, Pezzack's hidden theater doubles as the headquarters for Amalia Wraxton (see page 43) and her allies, the Fine Company. The entrance to the underground amphitheater called the Burrow can be found in the storeroom of Berryblack's Underground Delights, a mushroom farm operated by the cheerful and always-singing **Hazzleton Berryblack** (NG male halfling commoner 2/expert 2). Berryblack's wife, **Mimzy** (CG female gnome illusionist 6) is a staunch ally of the rebels and has concealed the Burrow's entrance with her magic. The Berryblacks' farm is one of the only farms in Pezzack, and is thus always busy—which masks the comings and

goings of the revolutionaries operating out of the Burrow. Currently, the members of the Fine Company, when not rehearsing, are working on a tunnel to connect the Burrow to the Guts. This not only would allow the rebels another entry point into their theater and base, but would also make it easier to transport goods and contraband via the smugglers' tunnels from Whaler's Point.

20. The Throne Defiant: This is the only inn in town with rooms still available. They go unfilled for two reasons: the prices are overly expensive, and the inn caters to loyalists. It has, however, become the de facto home of **Valia Wain** (LN female human cleric of Iomedae 8), a kind and elderly priest whose chapel was burned during the riots. She doesn't care for the arts, and though she isn't happy with how Cheliex has been ruled, she abhors rebellion and those who would break the law to force political change. Nevertheless, she has never turned down a patient in need.

21. Governor's Manse: The seat of power in Pezzack used to be the Governor's Manse, a fortress built into the natural stone walls surrounding the town. The fortress was built by Dullut Pillar, the patriarch of a dwarven family of builders and stonemasons that has since relocated. The manse was burned during the Second Ashes, when rioters came up through the Guts and opened the gates to the angry mob outside. Today, it's the center of the loyalist faction in Pezzack—citizens devoted to the crown who would like nothing better than to see Sawndannac invade and kill the revolutionaries en masse. Currently residing in the manse is **Darjan Tauranor** (LN male human noble 3), the son of Gracchian. Citizens of all factions in the town respect him for not escalating the conflict, though this is no great feat, as he's essentially powerless and commands few soldiers. He's allowed the manse to become a safe haven for loyalists, and does his best to quell intra-town strife. The talk of the town is that he's in love with Amalia Wraxton, and some suspect that she's found safe haven somewhere in the manse.

22. Mountaingate: The single land route leading into Pezzack via the Overland Road has its terminus at Mountaingate. This fortified entrance is of dwarven design and features three portcullises and a series of protected archers' towers, since the main threat of invasion has always come from the strix of Devil's Perch. The revolutionaries have filled the space between the portcullises with junk and rubble from the fires, making the gate utterly impassable. A year ago, frustrated by the blockade's lack of progress, officials in Egorian decided to risk the strix's wrath, and dispatched an army to punch through Mountaingate and retake the town. The force never arrived, and now the strix in the surrounding mountains are outfitted with the latest Chelish armor and weaponry.

AMALIA WRAXTON

The author of several plays denouncing the House of Thrune, Amalia Wraxton has done more damage to Chelish rule in Pezzack than anyone, much of that just with her pen.

AMALIA WRAXTON

CR 6
XP 2,400

Female middle-aged half-elf bard 7

CG Medium humanoid (elf, human)

Init +5; **Senses** low-light vision; Perception +15

DEFENSE
AC 16, touch 11, flat-footed 15 (+5 armor, +1 Dex)

hp 42 (7d8+7)

Fort +2, **Ref** +6, **Will** +6; +4 vs. bardic performance, language-dependent, and sonic; +2 vs. enchantments

Immune sleep

OFFENSE
Speed 30 ft.

Melee mwk rapier +7 (1d6–2/18–20)

Ranged dagger +6 (1d4–2/19–20)

Special Attacks bardic performance

 20 rounds/day (countersong, distraction, fascinate, inspire competence +3, inspire courage +2, move action, *suggestion*)

Bard Spells Known (CL 7th;

concentration +11)

 3rd (2/day)—*good hope*, *secret page*

 2nd (4/day)—*calm emotions* (DC 17), *eagle's splendor*, *enthrall* (DC 17), *scare* (DC 16)

 1st (5/day)—*charm person* (DC 16), *disguise self*, *remove fear*, *sleep* (DC 16), *ventriloquism* (DC 15)

 0 (at will)—*detect magic*, *ghost sound* (DC 14), *lullaby* (DC 15), *message*, *open/close*, *prestidigitation*
STATISTICS
Str 7, **Dex** 12, **Con** 10, **Int** 17, **Wis** 13, **Cha** 18

Base Atk +5; **CMB** +3; **CMD** 14

Feats Alertness, Improved Initiative, Skill

Focus (Perform [oratory]), Spell Focus (enchantment), Weapon Finesse

Skills Bluff +11, Diplomacy +14, Disguise +14, Escape Artist +4, Intimidate +8, Knowledge (history) +13, Knowledge (local) +13, Knowledge (nobility) +13, Knowledge (religion) +11, Linguistics +7, Perception +15, Perform (comedy) +14, Perform (oratory) +17, Sense

 Motive +13; **Racial**
Modifiers +2 Perception

Languages Common, Elven, Hallit, Infernal, Skald, Sylvan

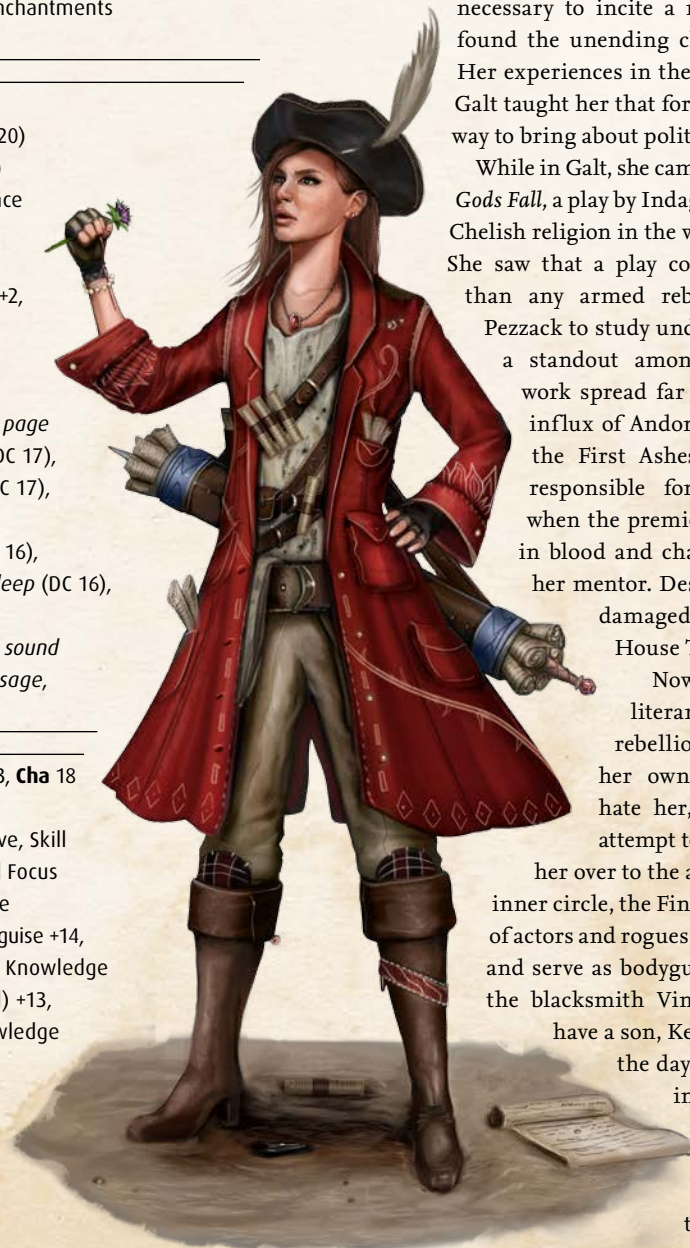
SQ bardic knowledge +3, elf blood, lore master 1/day, versatile performance (comedy, oratory)

Combat Gear *potion of expeditious retreat*, *potion of invisibility*; **Other Gear** +1 chain shirt, dagger, mwk rapier, *headband of alluring charisma* +2, ink, inkpens (2), parchment (20 sheets), scroll case, 65 gp

Like many of her generation, Amalia was horrified by the House of Thrune's use of diabolism to seize the throne. She joined an army of rebels opposing the Thrunes, and when this group was betrayed from within, she was one of the only survivors of a Hellknight attack against them. She fled to Galt, where she had hoped to learn the tools necessary to incite a rebellion. She instead found the unending chaos of a failed state. Her experiences in the Chelish civil war and Galt taught her that force of arms was not the way to bring about political change.

While in Galt, she came across a copy of *When Gods Fall*, a play by Indageous Vonor satirizing Chelish religion in the wake of Aroden's death. She saw that a play could do more damage than any armed rebellion. She came to Pezzack to study under Vonor, and became a standout among his students. Her work spread far and wide, causing an influx of Andorens and Galtans after the First Ashes. She was indirectly responsible for the Second Ashes, when the premiere of *Abrogail I* ended in blood and chaos—and the death of her mentor. Despite the cost, she had damaged the respectability of House Thrune.

Now the face of Pezzack's literary community and the rebellion, Wraxton hides in her own town. The loyalists hate her, and more than one attempt to kidnap her and hand her over to the armada has failed. Her inner circle, the Fine Company, is a troupe of actors and rogues who perform her work and serve as bodyguards. Amalia married the blacksmith Vim in secret, and they have a son, Kelzy. Wraxton longs for the day they can live together in the open, and hopes her latest work—*Abrogail II*—will lead to a Pezzack where this is possible.





SOLKU

“When the laughing beast-men attacked, I hid between two of our camels until the guards drove them off. For days after, nothing bothered us but the usual dust, heat, and flies. Then the mountains lifted above the horizon, and at last we came in sight of glorious Solku. How solid the town’s gate! How peaceful the boats sailing upriver! How golden the evening sun, which set the Citadel’s dome aflame! We clapped and cheered to see our journey’s end.

“Of course, that’s when the bandits struck again.

“The healers say I’ll keep my arm. But enough of that—let me tell you about sunrise service at the Lambent Citadel!”

—Rehema Nasreen, Sarenite pilgrim

Solku is an island of civilization in a perilous land. Gnoll and human raiders alike have broken their teeth and blades against the town's defenses, and even during relatively quiet years, bandits and slavers prey on those outside the walls. Despite this, Solku's gates have remained open during all but the most desperate times, welcoming traders from across Garund and beyond, as well as pilgrims seeking Sarenrae's blessing at the Lambent Citadel.

Residents' faith in the safety of their fortress-town has not always held fast, however. Just over a decade ago, gnoll forces laid brutal siege to the town and nearly succeeded in taking it, shaking to the core the residents' belief in their town's security—and in some cases, their gods. While the settlement survived, victory came at great cost, and today the town's leaders still hotly debate how to strengthen its defenses and whether they should take the fight to the gnolls. At the same time, some of those who can afford to leave are quietly doing so; each year when the caravan season ends as spring heats up, a few more homes stand vacant.

HISTORY OF SOLKU

In 2217 AR, Sarenite refugees fleeing persecution in Osirion arrived in what is now southwestern Katapesh. Their leader, the charismatic priestess Vedic, had a vision in which the Barrier Mountains to the west encircled her people like strong arms, sheltering them from threats. Inspired by her vision, the refugees founded a settlement named Sarenrae's Bastion at the campsite where the vision had come upon her. For the next thousand years, the prophecy held true, with the growing town enjoying the Dawnflower's blessing of peace—a reward, residents thought, for living a hard but pure life, and for resisting the corrupt ways of those who settled to the east.

That peace was broken in 3256 when gnoll slavers began raiding Sarenrae's Bastion, catching the residents unprepared. For 2 years, the raiders struck again and again, carrying off any they could snatch in their raids until Solku's fledgling militia, aided by a few brave spies, managed to break up the slavers' alliances and finally drive them off. Feeling betrayed and abandoned, the surviving residents rejected the traditional leadership of Sarenrae's church; they instead granted rule to secular leaders and renamed their town "Solku," a Keleshite word meaning "ashes."

Determined not to be victimized again, the survivors built up the walls around their town until it became the fortress-town it is today. But while stone was plentiful, defenders were not—many of those trained to fight had died in the conflict, and the survivors couldn't afford to hire mercenaries. Finally, Lady Safiya Belbasani and the

leaders of Sarenrae's church settled on a compromise: the Sarenites would train guards to defend the town, and the church would make no further claims on power. This arrangement worked, and Solku gradually regained its reputation as a safe oasis. As trade increased in the region, it became a popular stop for caravans, and prospered as a result.

In 3721, when raiders—this time human slavers from Okeno—next attacked in earnest, the people of Solku were ready. The fighting was fierce, but the Sarenite-trained defenders repelled the raiders in a series of skirmishes known as the Year of Rent Sails. In addition to solidifying residents' faith, the attacks also strengthened their opposition to slavery (driven partly by Sarenrae's ideal of protecting the weak, and partly by self-interest). For a time, Sarenite paladins even used Solku as a staging ground to fight slavery in the region, raiding slave pens as far away as the nation's capital, but when most of the abolitionists were captured, fear of reprisals soon stopped the efforts.

The tenuous peace held until 4701, when gnoll forces led by Rath Sandstalker besieged Solku in overwhelming numbers. Knowing their danger, Lady Cynore called on allies in the Iomedean church for aid. In a final climactic clash known as the Battle of Red Hail, Solku's defenders broke the siege, but it was a costly victory. Many defenders were lost—including Lord Hanif Osahar and all of the Iomedean paladins—civilian casualties were high, and while the gnolls were driven off, they were not definitively defeated. Now rumors are muttered that gnoll forces are massing again in the mountains, and Solku's leaders fear that the most recent peace may be short-lived.

SOLKU

NG large town

Corruption -2; **Crime** 0; **Economy** +1; **Law** 0; **Lore** +1; **Society** +1

Qualities holy site, pious, prosperous

Danger +5

DEMOGRAPHICS

Government autocracy

Population 4,900 (3,742 humans [2145 Keleshite, 1369

Garundi, 228 other], 578 halflings, 326 dwarves, 124 half-elves, 53 gnomes, 21 elves, 56 other)

Notable NPCs

Asweya Stilyo (LN female half-elf cavalier 6)

Erilene Finch (CG female halfling expert 4/rogue 4)

Lady Chanar Cynore (LG female human paladin of Sarenrae 8)

Lord Hazic Kel-Kalaar (NG male human magus 8)

Menthis Talp (N male human wizard 7)

MARKETPLACE

Base Value 2,600 gp; **Purchase Limit** 15,000 gp; **Spellcasting** 7th

Minor Items 3d4; **Medium Items** 2d4; **Major Items** 1d4

Solku



LIFE IN SOLKU

Much of life in Solku centers around two poles: the hundreds of caravans that pass through the town each year, and Sarenrae's Lambent Citadel. The caravan route is the primary source of Solku's prosperity, and during the cooler months, travelers visiting the town en route to or from elsewhere in Katapesh, the Mwangi Expanse, Nex, and Osirion swell the town's population by as much as 2,000. These visitors include traders, pilgrims, miners from the Barrier Mountains, and soldiers on leave from Fort Longjaw, as well as explorers seeking lost desert cities, the Lightning Stones, the fallen city of Kho, and the Fountain of Tabis. Hundreds labor to feed, entertain, and house these travelers—so many pack the town during the cooler months that inns cannot contain them all, and many households rent out a room or two to guests to bring in extra money. Many more residents sell supplies, pack animals, and mounts or hire themselves out as guards, laborers, or crew on the ships the ply the river. Still others sell local products like metalware, tapestries and rugs, and creative variations of refined pesh to traders for export, or work for trading houses that oversee and direct caravans and their cargos.

Solku is not only a major stop for caravans, however; it's also a holy site for the Dawnflower's church in Garund. Pilgrims travel hundreds of miles—and sometimes even from distant reaches of the Empire of Kelesh—to visit the Lambent Citadel. Most of the town's residents venerate Sarenrae (Abadar, Iomedae, and Nethys are also popular), and attend services at least once per week; the more devout visit the Lambent Citadel daily. Her followers work hard to pay the required tithes that supports the Citadel and its good works, which include not only feeding and sheltering the poor, but also training the town's guards and a citizens' militia that acts as an auxiliary force during times of great danger. Many young men and women train in this militia out of a sense of civic or religious duty, though others are more motivated by the chance to meet other young people without familial supervision.

Sarenrae's most important holidays—Burning Blades and the Sunwrought Festival—liven up what would otherwise be a quiet time after the influx of traders has stopped for the summer. The most devout pilgrims endeavor to stay through the end of the Sunwrought Festival, then hastily depart for cooler regions. Many of the Inner Sea's other main holidays are celebrated as well, particularly those of Abadar. The locals also honor two unique holidays: Bastion Day on 19 and 20 Lamashan, a festival honoring the founding of the town, when it's traditional to host a stranger from one noon until the next; and Night of Tears on 7 Pharast, a solemn vigil commemorating those lost in the Battle of Red Hail.

Solku is largely a safe town. Within the town walls, crime is mostly limited to petty theft, overcharging, and swindles

RUMORS IN SOLKU

Despite its resolute exterior, Solku's precarious existence makes it a hotbed of tension and local gossip.

Dissention: Solku prides itself on the transparency of its government—so when leaders clash, everyone knows. While Lord Kel-Kalaar and Lady Cynore seem friendly enough in public, their dispute over how best to defend Solku has become obvious in debates. He favors a cautious approach centered on better training and arming the militia, while she urges aggressive action against the gnoll forces before they fully recover. She's impatient with his foot-dragging, while he's alarmed at her readiness to spend lives on risky ventures. Some even mutter that the Sarenites might hijack the town guard to launch a preemptive attack, or try to oust Lord Kel-Kalaar, though Cynore and her supporters vehemently denounce such claims. Regardless, the gnolls would certainly see either upheaval as an opportunity.

Traitors and Infiltrators: Rumors of jackalwere spies infiltrating the town have circulated for centuries, but there's a new urgency to them lately. At public forums, citizens have demanded that all traders who enter the town be tested, a suggestion repeatedly rejected due to the expense and the likelihood of driving trade away. Others point their fingers at the residents of Dustyfoot—spies could have posed as refugees during the siege, and herders who spend days at a time in the hills have a perfect cover for meeting gnoll agents.

Dangerous Drugs: Pesh is a minor vice in Katapesh, and many indulge now and then during difficult times, but it seems someone's selling a bad batch. Several respectable citizens have been found wandering the streets in a drugged daze, and no one knows where the contaminated pesh is coming from, as the victims can't remember their source. Many people are worried for the safety of themselves and their trade.

Vision in the Ruins: Most locals know the ruins near town aren't safe, but some children went poking around one on a dare. They say they saw a boy run from a ruin, calling for help, but as they approached, he collapsed, chopped into bloody pieces by invisible blades. The remains vanished. Most presume it's a fantasy, but the conviction of the children is unnerving, and no one's been out there since.

and cons that prey on pilgrims—false relics, “holy” water drawn from the river, and tithing baskets that line the collector's pockets. Those who venture outside Solku's walls, however, are at risk from bandits and gnoll raiders, as well as monstrous threats such as crocodiles, giant scorpions, and the occasional wyvern. The caravans and trading ships that depart from Solku travel under heavy guard. The fisherfolk, farmers, and herders whose livelihood takes them outside the town rely on the periodic patrols that put down threats, a finely tuned instinct for danger, and prayer.

SOLKU AT A GLANCE

Within the town walls, Solku today looks much as it did before the Siege of Red Hail: a settlement of multistory stone buildings, most of them walled and subdivided compounds with several owners and a central courtyard. Such compounds may house the headquarters of trading houses, extended families (perhaps along with a family business), or groups of artisans sharing living and working space. Larger buildings feature windcatchers to fight the burning heat, or magical means of climate control if the inhabitants can afford it. Most buildings feature brightly colored doors—those belonging to Sarenrae’s faithful are often painted red in her honor—with blessings painted on them in stylized script designed to look like holy animals or religious symbols. Poor citizens live in crammed tenements or shacks built from whatever materials they can scavenge.

Outside the walls, recovery from the siege has been slower. The docks just outside the River Gate were rebuilt almost immediately—one set of docks along the dry season waterline, and another set where the river reaches during the winter floods—as were the pens for mounts, pack animals, and other living cargo outside the Sunrising Gate. The farms surrounding the town, particularly on the fertile floodplain, are once more heavily cultivated, but the farmhouses, the slums that huddled against the town walls, and the villas on the hills to the north remain burned-out ruins inhabited only by the desperate and criminal, and are reputed to be haunted. The surviving residents of the outlands retreated behind the walls during the siege, and most have abandoned their former homes to the ghosts of those they lost.

1. Sarenrae’s Lambent Citadel: In 3722, buoyed by the town’s successful defense against the Okeno slavers, the leaders of the Dawnflower’s church convinced the people of Solku that their victory was the result of Sarenrae’s renewed favor and began construction of Sarenrae’s Lambent Citadel. The resulting cathedral is a vast, lofty building, famed for the stained-glass dome that tops the temple’s sanctuary (and the protective magic that kept that dome pristine even through the most recent siege). When sunlight strikes the dome, the glass appears to catch fire, glowing in the red and gold shades of the dawn. Within the massive stone structure, however, worshipers are kept cool by the thick stone walls and cunningly designed windcatchers that ventilate heat and draw in breezes.



Hazic Kel-Kalaar

Today, the temple is part of a larger complex that is easily the largest structure in Solku. In addition to the temple, the complex includes chapels for quiet prayer (Solku’s original temple now serves this role), housing for resident clergy and honored pilgrims, meeting rooms, libraries, a small hospital, a training ground, and a well-guarded treasury—though many of the collected tithes and donations immediately flow back out into the community to aid the poor and finance provisions and upkeep of the Citadel.

In addition to its role as a center of worship, the Citadel serves as a shelter in times of great danger. During the Siege of Solku, Sarenite priests and paladins nursed the wounded back to health here. Many of those who fled to Solku from the outlying countryside, often arriving with nothing but their lives, spent their first night in the dormitory or camped in the training ground.

The current head of the Lambent Citadel is Lady Chanar Cynore, a hero of the Siege of Solku and a fierce advocate of the town’s residents. Although day-to-day management of the Lambent Citadel and its charitable works falls to **Noha Meerad** (NG female human expert 2/cleric 3), and **Adar Bilyadan** (LG male half-elven paladin 6) organizes training and drills for Solku’s guards and civilian militia, Lady Cynore is a tireless leader who motivates by example, and has her hands in everything that goes on at the Citadel. She visits training sessions to spar with new recruits, helps distribute food to the needy, and preaches fiery sermons at services about the Dawnflower’s light of mercy and judgment and the responsibility of all people in Solku to defend each other.

2. Town Hall: The main building of the town hall complex holds the town council’s chamber, offices for Lord Kel-Kalaar and several judges, and the courtroom. If Lord Kel-Kalaar has found ruling Solku a heavier burden than he anticipated, he shows few signs of it in public; though busy, he can always muster a friendly smile and a few minutes to hear out a citizen in need.

An adjoining building contains the main guard barracks and armory of the town watch; below lies Solku’s prison. Smaller guard posts dot the town, mostly near major intersections. The commander of the guards, **Marjan Hediye** (LN female human fighter 6), holds frequent meetings with Adar Bilyadan, head of training at the Citadel (as well as Giana Secondstride of Fort Longjaw and Asweya Stiyo, when they’re in town), to discuss recent events, the performance of their troops, and any rumors of gnoll activity. She has also begun leading the guards and militia in extra drills; given recent tensions between the Sarenite

leadership and the secular government, she wants to ensure that in a crisis, they'll instinctively follow her orders—not those of Bilyadan or Lady Cynore.

3. Dawnflower's Pure Rest: This lodging house offers inexpensive accommodation to pious Sarenites, and grudging accommodation at a higher rate to all others. The inn offers no entertainments other than a small library of religious tracts. The beds are narrow and hard, the food plain, and the wine watered. The innkeeper, **Atash Ramin** (LG male human expert 3), is an ascetic, formal man who attends dawn services at the Citadel each day, and expects guests to do likewise. Though he's not always easy to get along with, he tithes all profits from the inn to the Lambent Citadel, so characters who cause him problems are likely to hear about it from more powerful Sarenites. Likewise, those who meet his approval often find that his friendship opens doors among the town's religious elite.

4. Breakstride: On the western side of town is Solku's largest and most comfortable inn, Breakstride. Run by retired adventurer Eriene Finch, the inn is known for the luxuries it offers to those who can afford them, as well as for providing clean, pleasant rooms and equal courtesy to those with leaner purses. To garner new business, Eriene sends runners armed with pitchers of beer and directions to Breakstride to meet caravans entering through either gate. The inn's staff are disproportionately halflings; Eriene has been inspired by whispered tales of the Bellflower Network to quietly free halfling slaves, whom she then provides with work and lodging.

5. First Market: Much smaller than New Market, First Market is located in the old town, not far from the River Gate. It caters mostly to locals, with stalls selling everyday goods such as cooking pots, simple clothing, and produce. Food stands serve hearty meals of fish-and-vegetable stew and flatbread freshly baked on heavy clay plates, and cater to those who work at the nearby docks and warehouses. Some unusual vendors still have stalls here, though. One of these is the Song Emporium, where **Oluheye Wakeyi** (N male elf expert 2/druid 3) sells not only homing pigeons, hawks, and exotic songbirds, but also birds said to have once been the familiars of powerful witches and wizards—or even spellcasters who fell afoul of strange curses. While many are skeptical of Oluheye's more outlandish claims, the market takes its nickname, "Song Market," from these birds.

6. Demerkez Armory: The bustling armory of dwarven smith **Rekab Demerkez** (LN female dwarf expert 4/fighter 2) supplies weapons and armor to the town guard, as well as to mercenary companies or traveling warriors. Though much

of the stock consists of simple weapons and light armor, she keeps some heavier armor and better weapons on hand just in case, and if the buyer isn't in a hurry, she and her staff can make almost anything desired. She rarely carries enchanted items, but does have an arrangement with local wizard **Nazhin Senay** (N female human wizard 5), who can enchant items for those willing to pay.

When half of Rekab's staff ran off to join an ill-fated expedition to reclaim the Zolurket Mines, she bucked tradition by taking on non-dwarven apprentices, mostly humans from Dustyfoot. Some in the dwarven community disapprove of her giving away valuable secrets to outsiders, but as she points out, there were no available dwarven candidates, these employees could hardly be bigger fools than the ones who left, and she's had all of her apprentices purified by a priest of Torag.

7. Gilded Dreams: This high-end pesh parlor owned by **Dabir Ghazalim** (NE male human expert 3/rogue 2) specializes in variant preparations of refined pesh with unusual properties. The ground and upper floors of the establishment are luxuriously appointed and served by beautiful and attentive men and women, who are not averse to collecting secrets that slip from drugged lips. Below, in dim cellars accessed through the servants' entrance, are comfortless rooms where the poor and desperate can feed their addictions. Dabir tests out alchemist Goli Keb's experimental products on these addicts; if a mixture proves fatal, his thugs quietly dispose of the evidence in the river outside of town. Dabir himself is a smooth, well-spoken

man who professes to seek only his customers' pleasure. He's known to be an information broker, however, and is rumored to sell traders' secrets to their competitors. The town guard harbors deeper suspicions—that he has ties to the bandits who prey on caravans outside Solku's walls—but has so far been unable to find evidence.

8. Archive of Eminent Tomes: This large building, three stories high and extending at least as far underground, is a famed repository of ancient writings and artifacts recovered from the ruins dotting Katapesh and further abroad. Its current curator is Menthis Talp, who leads an army of scholars and scribes in recording and interpreting the past of northern Garund. These assistants pore over fragments of curses and incantations to determine their purpose and how they were to function, and compare sketches of murals found in ruins to descriptions of cities from obscure legends. Outsiders can gain access to this treasure trove



Eriene Finch

for a fee, though the steep price ensures visitors come with targeted questions, not just vague curiosity. Talp further funds this ongoing research by selling artifacts once they've been studied, as well as copies of the writings and maps, and spell scrolls. He is willing to buy from adventurers who can provide a clear pedigree for their findings—but he has a sharp eye for fakes. While he sometimes deals with Pathfinders and members of the Aspis Consortium, he's deeply suspicious of both, as he knows that both organizations would gladly steal the secrets he's uncovered.

9. Illuminium: This compound is the home and workshop of **Gamar Deshta** (CN human male expert 6/wizard 2), an astronomer pursuing the theory that the hallucinations and ravings of people with sunstroke are actually the result of sun creatures attempting to communicate with the natives of Golarion. His servants watch Solku's gates with instructions to record the ramblings of anyone carried in from the desert and incapacitated by the heat. When such victims are in short supply, he sometimes hires subjects to stand amid the complex array of mirrors he's assembled in his open-air workshop and bake in the focused sunlight. As they succumb to delirium, he takes careful notes on their ravings. Thus far, he's had little luck deciphering what these creatures are trying to convey, but he perseveres nonetheless, knowing such creatures' thinking must be alien indeed. Many accomplished scholars arriving in the town find themselves invited to help Gamar interpret his strange documents, and while the ramblings of delirious travelers may shed little light on the supposed sun residents, they sometimes reveal startling information.

10. The Eagle Eye: This dive bar and gambler's den caters to visiting caravan guards and adventurers, and is also the "recruiting" grounds of the Condor Company. The tavern's employees target drunks who appear to have skill at arms—spellcasters are deemed to be too risky. The bartenders hand out a few rounds on the house while dealers let the marks win a few hands, clean them out, then generously allow them to borrow heavily from the house before wiping them out again. Once owner **Hamarad Karyadrosk** (CN male dwarf expert 3) signals that a mark's tab has spiraled out of control, an officer from the Condor Company kindly offers to cover the debt and let the unfortunate inebriate work it off—and is careful to get that agreement in writing.

11. Condor Company: This mercenary company, run by **Rostam Quassie** (NE male human rogue 4), hires out bodyguards and caravan guards for what sound like

reasonable rates, and the employees at the company's headquarters put on a good show of competence and diligence. In reality, however, many of the guards sent out on duty were duped into signing on at the Eagle Eye, and know their earnings are lining Quassie's pocket instead of their own. Although usually not dishonest, these unwilling warriors are sullen and lax, and as often as not abandon their charges if faced with real danger. Those who flee had best lay low, however—Quassie's debt collectors are his most skilled employees.

12. New Market: New Market hasn't been new since the 3700s, when it was still outside the town walls. The largest market in Solku, it's the spot where most visiting traders set up their stalls. Woven awnings protect buyers and sellers from the sun, and the air is full of the sound of buskers and the smell of roasting meats, vegetables, and nuts.

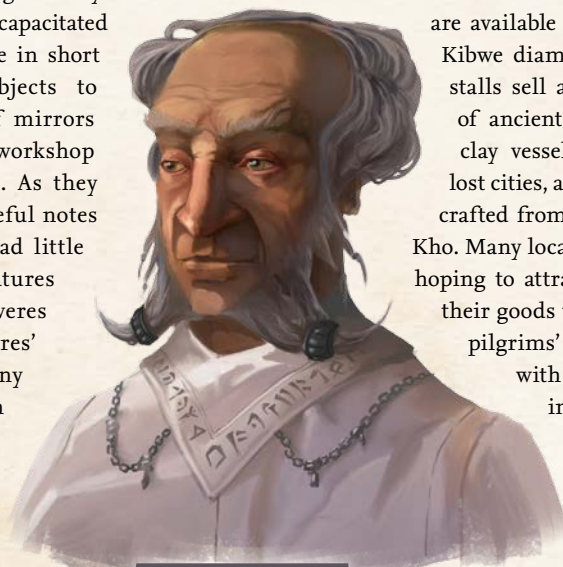
Goods from across Garund and Avistan are available here, from Osirian cotton to Kibwe diamonds to Chelish wine. A few stalls sell adventurers' bounty: weapons of ancient and mysterious make, fine clay vessels decorated with images of lost cities, and even chandeliers said to be crafted from the crystal shards of ruined Kho. Many local vendors have stands as well, hoping to attract merchants who can carry their goods to a wider market, or to snare pilgrims' coins with wares marked with Sarenrae's ankh, doves, or an image of the Lambent Citadel.

Also on display at the market are the cupbearers, veiled courtesans who trawl the market for prospective customers. When they like the look of someone, they offer him or her a cup of water with a small

tile at the bottom, stamped with the symbol of the house where they entertain. Only someone bearing a cupbearer's tile is eligible to purchase his or her entertainments, and some cupbearers give out their favors so rarely that anyone receiving one immediately becomes a minor celebrity among the locals (sometimes to their embarrassment).

Pickpockets and beggars are omnipresent at the market, but the town guards keeps them from being too aggressive. In fact, many of these market denizens can be hired as guides to show newcomers the stalls with the best prices and highest-quality goods. The market's petty thieves and beggars are organized by **Beza Duri** (CN female halfling rogue 5)—only those who give her a cut of their takings are welcome here, and any who refuse are betrayed or beaten.

13. Thrice Blessed: Coffee is an institution in this part of Katapesh, consumed as a precursor to business meetings,



Gamar Deshta

upon the arrival of guests, and after large meals. The best-known coffee house in Solku is Thrice Blessed, run by **Feyise Kendi** (N female human expert 4), and is a popular place to finalize business deals—legal and otherwise. Coffee spiced with ginger, yebye, and either sugar or salt, or brewed with cinnamon, cloves, and saffron (as is customary in Kelesh), is served in the common room. In small private rooms, guests can indulge in the full coffee ceremony, in which the beans are roasted over a brazier, ground in a trough-shaped mortar, and then brewed three times—the light third cup is called the “blessing cup.”

14. Trade Houses: The compounds of trade houses that use Solku as a hub cluster here. Some, like Medhanit House, specialize in a particular commodity (in this case, rugs and tapestries); others, like Three Lions Consortium, seek to dominate a particular trade route (Katapesh to Kibwe). A company’s compound serves as an office, housing for the company’s representatives, and storage space for small, valuable cargoes that would be vulnerable in a warehouse. The degree to which compounds are guarded is proportional to the goods and secrets hidden within, but any who steal from one of the trade houses might quickly find deadly “recovery agents” on their tail. The trade houses are also the best place in the town for mercenaries and specialists looking to hire on with caravans. Though it’s also common for those looking for caravan work to gather near the town gates and offer their services to departing caravans, everyone knows that the trade houses have the best pay—and the most thorough vetting process.

15. Zaytoon Supplies: Solku holds many provisioners, but the most trusted is Zaytoon Supplies, owned by **Ambai** and **Meseret Zaytoon** (NG female and male human experts 3). This well-equipped shop can provide anything from tents and trail food to gear for mounts and pack animals to the animals themselves. The employees can also recommend porters, guides, and guards for caravans and other expeditions, and the best inns and entertainments to enjoy while in town. Though still open for business, Ambai and Meseret were recently robbed by a figure wearing a featureless red mask, and are quite distraught—the word on the street is that anyone who can track down the thief (and the mysterious, unnamed item he or she stole) could earn a sizable reward.

16. Serpentine Blades: This building is the headquarters of the Serpentine Blades, a mercenary company led by **Asweya Stiyo**. Despite her youthful appearance, Asweya is a veteran of the Siege of Solku in 4701, as are many of the company’s senior members. During the siege, when the trained guards were spread thin and most defenders were inexperienced

militia members, she and her company donated their services, reinforcing areas where the fighting was hottest. In thanks, Solku’s leaders send many key contracts her way. Her company has a well-earned reputation for bravery, discretion, and honesty—and a hatred of slavers. Asweya relishes a challenge, and is intrigued by particularly dangerous contracts. She also always has an eye open for new members, though those wishing to join the Blades are often given exceedingly difficult tasks to prove their merit.

17. The Pens: Given Solku’s density, there’s little room for large animals within the walls. Livestock, pack animals, and mounts are instead stabled in pens just outside Sunrising Gate—some of the first structures outside the walls to be rebuilt after the Siege of Solku. Those selling animals await customers in small tents nearby, where they can shelter from the sun and burn incense to fight the pens’ smell.

Humanoid cargo en route to or from Katapesh or Okeno is also kept in the Pens while the caravans transporting them are in town. Town guards ensure these slaves are safe from abuse and given sufficient food and water—and a surreptitious blessing—while they’re here. After Solku’s centuries on the receiving end of slaver predation, slaves are not openly sold in the town, but history has taught residents to be wary of openly interfering with the slave trade, lest they face retribution. Nevertheless, slavers often grumble that slaves seem to escape or go missing from the Pens with surprising frequency, and the town guard spends little effort trying to help slavers recover their “property.”

18. Rising Dove Amphitheater:

The main public performance space in Solku, this venue hosts events almost every night during the busy season, ranging from musicians, dancers, and poets to fiery debates between civic leaders. It is also the main stage for the Chimera’s Tears Players, known for their stirring portrayal of Sarenrae imprisoning Rovagug. The actors have discussed creating a dramatization of the Battle of Red Hail, but their backer, **Kamran Jalal** (NG male human commoner 5), has thus far persuaded them the time is not yet right. Rumor has it that he keeps an eye on any traveling entertainers entering the town, hoping to find the perfect performers to play the heroes of that battle—though how those heroes still living might react to being impersonated is anyone’s guess.

19. Temple of Iomedae: Tiny in comparison to the Lament Citadel, the Iomedean temple serves a small congregation, many of whom are visitors to Solku. The temple’s high priestess, **Semira Brehan** (LG female human



Asweya Stiyo

ADVENTURES IN SOLKU

Although the town of Solku is relatively safe, danger constantly lurks outside the fortress-town's walls.

Slavers' Prey: Edris Kebede, the unofficial leader of Dustyfoot, approaches the PCs and asks them to find several farmers who ventured out to tend to their fields and never returned—their families reported their disappearance to the authorities, but it's the peak of caravan season, and the town guard is too busy to conduct a search. Finding evidence at the farm that a small band of gnoll slavers has been snatching locals, the PCs must follow the gnolls back to their lair and rescue any survivors before they're hauled off to the Fleshfairs of Okeno.

Caravan Conspiracy: Attacks on caravans have been increasing of late and the common thread seems to be that the owners or leaders of the caravans were all patrons of the Gilded Dream. Lord Hazic Kel-Kalaar hires the PCs to investigate Dabir Ghazalim and his establishment, discover whom he's selling information to, and then ride out to defend the next target from his bandit contacts, ending the threat for good.

Red Sultana's Return: The armies of Red Sultana, a sadistic gnoll leader who was instrumental in the Siege of Solku, are on the march! Lord Hazic Kel-Kalaar and Lady Chanar Cynore ask the PCs to spy on the gnoll army to learn their numbers and plan, as well as to discover whether they have agents in town or know of hidden vulnerabilities. If successful, the PCs are given a strike force to command and instructed to head off the army or, failing that, to harry it and whittle down its numbers, then join the defenders on the walls of Solku!

cleric 5), is a serious woman whose mouth tightens bitterly when she speaks of Lady Cynore and the Sarenite church. During the siege, Semira grew to admire Lady Cynore immensely; she was proud when she and Chanar were able to recruit a unit of Iomedean paladins to come to Solku's aid, and confident in Chanar's bold plan to break the siege: During the next assault, when the gnolls' attention was focused on the walls, the paladins would counterstrike at the gnolls' command and then escape back to the town, covered by a sortie by Solku's defenders. With the enemy leaders dead, their undisciplined army would surely melt away. But while the paladins' attack was a success, the sortie never appeared, and the Iomedaeans were all slaughtered. Disillusioned, Semira blamed Lady Cynore for spending Iomedean lives to save Sarenites. Even now, knowing more of the unexpected attack that prevented Solku's forces from aiding the lost paladins, Semira distrusts the Sarenites. She has notified her superiors that Iomedean resources would be better spent elsewhere, and it will take more than Lady

Cynore's repeated (but increasingly impatient) apologies to change her mind.

20. Attars and Tonics: This shop and attached laboratory are run by **Goli Keb** (CN female gnome alchemist 4), who specializes in creative concoctions of refined pesh, including variants that induce visions or imbue a sense of great confidence, although she sells more common potions as well. Dabir Ghazalim is one of her main customers in Solku, and generously tests out many of her new products for her; intent on her work, Goli doesn't ask a lot of questions about his methods. Those that he reports are most enjoyable—and sustainable as habits—she produces in larger quantities for export to Katapesh and other wealthy and decadent cities.

21. Dustyfoot: Until the siege, Solku's slums were outside the town walls, but when the gnoll army burned the outlying farms and shacks, survivors poured into the town. As smaller gnoll raids remain a common occurrence, most refugees have opted to settle permanently in Solku, and now live here in tightly packed tenements. This neighborhood got its nickname from the fact that it's home to many of the area's farmers and herders, who travel far outside the walls to tend to their fields and flocks each day, returning home in the evenings. Though the town leadership does its best to keep the poor in Dustyfoot from being totally disenfranchised, tensions still run high between the poor and their wealthy neighbors, and many of the lower class mutter that the militia didn't even try and save their farms and flocks.

Patriarch **Edris Kebede** (NG male human commoner 3) speaks for the residents of this neighborhood, bringing forward their requests for fair rent, a stronger guard presence in Dustyfoot, more frequent patrols of the farmlands to ward off gnolls, and a more determined effort to banish the hauntings that blight many outlying ruins. However, his tendency to appeal directly to Lady Cynore rather than to the secular government adds to the tension between her and Lord Kel-Kalaar.

22. Soaring Illusions: This compound is the living and working space of a gnome performance art group whose members are perfecting a masterpiece for the Sunwrought Festival—an ambitious daytime shadow theater piece in which aerialists are suspended over a gauze curtain so they're backlit by the sun. The troupe's leaders, **Esgandiar** (CG male gnome bard 2) and **Anunival Sphenonius** (CN male gnome rogue 3), have opened their home to paying guests to raise money for equipment they need for the show. However, the house these Finderplain natives welcome guests into is not their own. The actual owners are away in Katapesh; seeing that the house was vacant, the gnomes simply appropriated it—with the help of a healthy bribe to the guards who patrol this street. However, the guards can only look the other way so long, and will soon arrest all within—though they might settle for quietly paying some adventurers to evict the gnomes, in order to avoid official scrutiny.

LADY CHANAR CYNORE

A hero of the Siege of Solku and the town's spiritual leader, Lady Chanar Cynore is the head of the Lambent Citadel and in charge of training Solku's town guard and militia.

LADY CHANAR CYNORE

CR 7
XP 3,200

Female middle-aged human paladin of Sarenrae 8

LG Medium humanoid (human)

Init +1; **Senses** Perception +5

Aura courage (10 ft.), resolve (10 ft.)

DEFENSE
AC 18, touch 11, flat-footed 17 (+7 armor, +1 Dex)

hp 72 (8d10+24)

Fort +12, **Ref** +8, **Will** +11

Immune charm, disease, fear

OFFENSE
Speed 20 ft.

Melee mwk scimitar +12/+7 (1d6+2/18-20)

Ranged mwk composite longbow +10/+5 (1d8+2/×3)

Special Attacks channel positive energy (DC 18, 4d6), smite evil 3/day (+4 attack and AC, +8 damage)

Paladin Spell-Like Abilities (CL 8th; concentration +12)

 At will—*detect evil*
Paladin Spells Prepared (CL 5th; concentration +9)

 2nd—*bull's strength*, *shield other*

 1st—*bless*, *protection from evil*

STATISTICS
Str 14, **Dex** 12, **Con** 13, **Int** 11, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 18

Base Atk +8; **CMB** +10; **CMD** 21

Feats Extra Lay on Hands, Extra Mercy, Power Attack, Toughness, Weapon Focus (scimitar)

Skills Diplomacy +12, Heal +4, Knowledge (local) +4, Knowledge (religion) +6, Linguistics +2, Perception +5, Ride +2, Sense Motive +5, Survival +1

Languages Common, Kelesh, Osiriani

SQ aura, code of conduct, divine bond (weapon +2, 1/day), lay on hands (4d6, 10/day), mercies (fatigued, sickened)

Combat Gear *scroll of delay*
poison, *scrolls of lesser*
restoration (2), *scroll of resist energy*, +1 *slaying*
arrows (2); **Other Gear** +1 *breastplate*, mwk scimitar,

 composite longbow with 20 arrows, *cloak of resistance* +1,

headband of alluring charisma +2, 52 gp

Born into a Sarenite family in Absalom, Chanar felt the call to serve the Dawnflower even as a child, and became a paladin as soon as she came of age. Most of her early service was peaceful—helping in plague-stricken areas and acting as a diplomat. It was while on such a mission in Osirion that she first encountered the militant Cult of the Dawnflower. Saddened by the sect's neglect of Sarenrae's

tenets of mercy and redemption, she decided to move to the traditional Sarenite stronghold of Solku and promote a kinder interpretation of her faith. Over the next 14 years, she rose steadily through the ranks to become the head of the Lambent Citadel.

The gnoll siege in 4701 changed her mind. Watching the slums burn and those trapped outside being led off in chains, she could no longer believe that all creatures deserved a chance at redemption. Previously a reluctant combatant, she now poured her strength and power into slaying the gnolls, winning the admiration of the people.

Today, Lady Cynore believes that the best way to keep the town safe is to eradicate the gnolls completely. She understands that a preemptive strike is a hard sell to a town still recovering, but fears that Lord Kel-Kalaar's more cautious approach may ultimately doom her beloved Solku.





TRUNAU

“We have all shed the blood of orcs. We all carry the hopeknives, ready to take our own lives rather than be captured. We work the land our ancestors fought to keep, and we draw strength from their sacrifice. Our people have stared into the eyes of the hordes for two hundred years. We have married, borne children, and lived more fiercely and freely than those of softer nations can ever imagine.

“Will we be here next year? Only the gods know. All I know is that this is our home. If the orcs plan on taking it from us, then every one of us will drag ten of them screaming down to Hell with us. And we’ll be laughing the whole way down.”

—Patrol Leader Jagrin Grath

One of only two non-orc settlements in Belkzen, Trunau is a predominantly human community of sturdy farmers and resolute warriors adrift in a monstrous sea of orcs who would as soon kill them as trade with them. Its people survive through the grace of the gods, the remarkable tenacity and ingenuity of their leaders, and a simple, soul-deep refusal to be driven from the land of their ancestors.

Trunauans know sacrifice in all its forms. Though their lives are far from easy, this band of idealists, scoundrels, and outcasts takes great pride in the independence that comes from being all on their own in hostile territory. For them, every day of the town's continued existence is an enduring example of civilization's unconquerable spirit and the prodigious strength of hope.

HISTORY OF TRUNAU

Since its border was first established after the defeat of the Whispering Tyrant in 3828 AR, the Hold of Belkzen has steadily expanded south into Lastwall, pushing back line after line of crusaders and leaving countless miles of shattered border fortresses to rot within the orc-held territory. In 4515, beleaguered soldiers and farmers pushed to the limit by nearly 300 years of active war since the fall of Harchist's Blockade crafted a new border dubbed the Hordeline, a sad affair consisting of little more than earthen ramparts and wooden palisades, and made their stand along the Kestrel River. Still, it held long enough for those communities behind it to feel some measure of hope that the orc menace had finally been halted.

It was not to be. Shortly after the Hordeline's construction, its western stretch fell, and orcs flooded south into Lastwall. The commanders of Lastwall reluctantly ordered yet another general evacuation, pulling back to a new border farther east, and leaving those residents in the relinquished territory to flee to safety with whatever they could carry, desperate to stay one step ahead of the rampaging orcs.

Yet not everyone fled. Enraged by what they saw as Lastwall's cowardly betrayal, the farmers and retired crusaders in the placid settlement of Trunau refused to run. Positioned on top of a rocky, naturally defensible hill, the community dug in, sharpening stakes and digging pits, their numbers swelling with refugees and soldiers unwilling to retreat and abandon their friends. When the orcs inevitably arrived, they found their ferocity more than matched by that of Trunau's defenders, and after taking heavy losses assaulting the cliffs and log palisades, the invaders retreated south to loot vacated settlements.

Heady with victory, the surviving residents made a pact, known today as the Standing Vow (or simply "the Vow"):

to hold their land against all comers, paying tribute neither to raiding orcs nor to the armies of neighboring nations. They would stand their ground and live free, no matter the cost.

For the last couple centuries, the people of Trunau have held to this oath, and it's a matter of great pride that despite catastrophic raids and the rigors required by life in hostile territory, the town has never fallen. Even more important to some, however, is that unlike Freedom Town to the north—a town of criminals and exiles settled just inside the Hold of Belkzen in order to avoid Lastwall's strict laws—the people of Trunau have never lost their fundamentally civilized nature, nor have they resorted to paying for protection from an outside entity.

While many have come to Trunau over the years looking to escape shadowy pasts, Trunau accepts no dead weight; only those who are willing to work and contribute to the community can share the safety of the town walls. When the orcs come, every man and woman, regardless of wealth or profession, is expected to aid in the defense. Those who acquit themselves well and conduct themselves with honor find that Trunau's residents care little about who newcomers may have been in their lives before—only who they seek to be now.

TRUNAU

LN small town

Corruption +0; **Crime** -1; **Economy** +0; **Law** +0; **Lore** -1;

Society +4

Qualities insular, racially intolerant (orcs)

Danger +0

DEMOGRAPHICS

Government council (Council of Defenders)

Population 780 (620 humans, 50 halflings, 40 half-orcs, 20 dwarves, 15 half-elves, 10 gnomes, 25 other)

Notable NPCs

Banker and Councilor Lessie Crumkin (LN female human cleric of Abadar 4)

Chief Defender Halgra of the Blackened Blades (CG female old human ranger 3/barbarian 5)

Councilor Agrit Staginsdar (LN female dwarf wizard 5/fighter 1)

Councilor Sara Morninghawk (NG female half-orc barbarian 3/expert 3)

High Priestess Tyari Varvatos (LG female human cleric of Iomedae 6)

Master of Stores Kessen Plumb (NG male human expert 3)

Patrol Leader Jagrin Grath (LN male human ranger 7)

MARKETPLACE

Base Value 1,000 gp; **Purchase Limit** 5,000 gp;

Spellcasting 4th

Minor Items 3d4; **Medium Items** 1d6; **Major Items** —

Trunau



LIFE IN TRUNAU

Living under constant threat, the people of Trunau have come to embrace death as simply another part of life. This doesn't mean that all of the inhabitants are totally at peace with their own mortality, but simply that they recognize theirs is a dangerous existence, and thus strive to live their lives to the fullest without worrying unduly about which raid or unfortunate accident may finally claim them.

Perhaps the best symbol of this—and certainly the one that most captures the imagination of outsiders—is the tradition of the hopeknife. Carried by every resident of Trunau, a hopeknife is a small sheathed dagger, usually worn on a chain underneath one's clothes, though young adults recently come of age often display theirs ostentatiously. The tradition of the hopeknife comes out of Trunau's understanding that capture by orcs is often far worse than a quick death, and thus all residents need to be prepared to take their own lives or offer mercy to the wounded in the event of capture. Ironically, what was originally a grim necessity has become a symbol of adulthood and independence, and many children wait impatiently for their twelfth birthdays, on which they're presented with their own hopeknives and shown which arteries to cut should they or their loved ones fall into enemy hands. Hopeknives are always kept well sharpened, and never used for anything but their intended purpose, though spouses often trade knives as part of a marriage ceremony.

After defense, and with water already handled by the Hopespring (see page 61), food is the biggest issue in Trunau. The town maintains many fields, with border patrols and guards posted in temporary watchtowers at their edges, and focuses on crops that can be stored for long periods, allowing them to maintain extensive stores so as to be ready in case of a siege. Since fields are easily burned, however, the town also relies heavily on its hunters and trappers—during periods of more active conflict with the orcs, these often join with more traditional fighters to counter-raid and steal food and livestock from the orcs themselves.

Perhaps most important to the town's survival is the *siegestone*. Early on after Trunau's decision to stand and fight, the town leaders recognized their vulnerability to starvation and made a decision to pool resources in order to find a magical solution. A trading group was sent east to Ustalav with most of the town's easily carried valuables, and they returned with the *siegestone*, a huge cauldronlike altar that in times of trouble can produce gallon upon gallon of tasteless porridge, keeping the residents from starving completely. The stone resides in the Longhouse and is never used except in direst need—both out of fear of exhausting its magic, and because no

RUMORS IN TRUNAU

In a town as small and insular as Trunau, gossip is one of the main forms of entertainment.

Daring Robberies: Jagrin's started posting guards at the entrances to the Longhouse's stores—why would he do that if someone hadn't been filching? And if only the six council members have keys, who could be responsible?

Father Figures: Halgra has a whole passel of grown children, but are those she brought to Trunau the only ones, or are some of the supposed traders she meets with her offspring as well? And what exactly is the story behind her half-orc children, anyway? Could one of their fathers be a powerful orc leader? Some folk even whisper that Hundux Half-Man, the ruler of Wyvernsting, was one of her lovers—or her child!

Lights in the Plague House: Everyone knows that lights have been seen moving around in the burned remains of the old Plague House, but what could it be? Some people think it's the ghost of Arthuris Bain, out for revenge against Trunau for not protecting the church. Others think it's will-o'-wisps feeding on the fear of the poor souls who died. Others cite less supernatural possibilities: secret romantic rendezvous, treasure hunters looking for the old church's hidden tithing coffers, or—most disturbingly—traitors meeting with their orc contacts, planning a surprise attack from within.

Mixed Loyalties: Tyari Varvatos and her crew make no secret of the fact that they want Lastwall to reclaim its lost territory. But could they actually be planning a coup to retake Trunau and turn the town into a military outpost? Why else would one of the most powerful figures in Vigil send her little sister to a dangerous backwater like Trunau?

Secret Stash: No one's quite sure where, but most people are convinced that somewhere in the Meeting Room of the Ivory Hall is a hidden safe where Halgra keeps the jewels and magic items she must undoubtedly have acquired during her decades of adventuring—items that could easily be sold off or used to help the town.

one in town is eager to taste the flavor of desperation during peacetime.

Folk in Trunau are independent by nature, yet all bow to the wisdom of the Council of Defenders. Chosen from the people's own ranks every 2 years, these six individuals devote themselves to managing the town's logistics and defense, making sure that laws are obeyed and no one endangers the community. One of the six councilors holds the title of Chief Defender, who has the final say in all matters relating to the town's safety and is commander of the people in times of crisis. Outside of that, the six councilors are theoretically of equal power in matters of the town's prosperity, laws, arbitration, and so on.

For the last 20 years, the position of Chief Defender has been held by Halgra of the Blackened Blades. A Trunau native, Halgra left the town at a young age to become an adventurer, fighting and raiding her way from the Skittermounds to the Broken Shore and beyond, up into the Realm of the Mammoth Lords. She finally returned at the age of 42 with a veritable throng of children in tow, all from different fathers, and settled in to spend the rest of her life defending her home. Though Jagrin Grath now guides the patrols and raiding parties, Halgra is still a mountain of a woman and quick with her trademark lamp-blackened swords, and her deft politics and tactical acumen mean that no one can honestly challenge her fitness to lead.

Trade is a crucial part of life in Trunau. Though far from most established trade routes, Trunau still receives the occasional merchant from Lastwall or Nirmathas eager for the valuable salvage the townsfolk still pull from abandoned settlements (as well as the inflated prices the merchants know they can demand from such an isolated community). Most common among these traders are caravans of ethnic Varisians attempting to cross the Hold of Belkzen, or Shoanti raiding parties come east from Varisia to prove themselves against the orcs or the chitinous horrors of the Skittermounds. Trunau also sends its own caravans to Lastwall, trading valuable information on orc movements to the crusaders in Castle Everstand in exchange for supplies. The town even maintains ties with a select few orc traders from Urgir, though the common wisdom is that Grask Uldeth's current infatuation with trade and civilization won't last for long.

Orcs are naturally despised in Trunau, yet ironically, half-orcs bear less stigma here than in most places. As Trunau knows what horrors orcs perpetrate on those they capture, and with Halgra herself having two children from half-orc lovers during her adventuring years, half-orcs are viewed with sympathy, and more than one half-orc raised in orc captivity has escaped to earn a place within Trunau's walls.

Trunau is a hardworking community, but also one that understands the value of celebration and taking comfort wherever it can be found. Families are tightly knit, with most families at least mildly related by marriage at some point over the generations. Residents are encouraged to

find love wherever they can, and there are few social or sexual taboos as long as residents respect the freedoms of others. Perhaps the best example of Trunau's philosophy is the holiday of Holdfast, commemorating the town's first victory over the orcs, which begins with a solemn recitation of remembrance and the burning of a wicker sword, followed by games, dancing, ale, and more than a few romantic liaisons.

TRUNAU AT A GLANCE

The most immediately visible feature of the town of Trunau is its palisade. Originally, the palisade was a hastily constructed fence of sharpened branches, but over decades of strife, the Trunauans have built it into something considerably more lasting and deadly. Ten-foot-high tree trunks, their tops sharpened into wicked points, surround the lower portion of the village, fitted so tightly that not even light passes between them. Their bases are driven another 5 feet into the earth, and the bottom half of the wall is encased in a rough but sturdy stone foundation. Trenches filled with smaller spikes create a deadly briar patch guarding the wall from assault. Also incorporated into the palisade are several rock outcroppings that rise even higher, forming the bases for several wooden watchtowers, including those on both sides of the gate.

Past the gate, the town rises up a steep switchback in the cliff face to an exposed stone plateau 40 feet above the rest of the hill. These cliffs are the town's true defense, as even a handful of defenders can easily pick off any invaders attempting to scale the sheer cliffs, allowing the townsfolk to concentrate the bulk of their defense on the lower palisades. Stone watchtowers stand in the town's higher levels as well, with fortified structures crowding between normal houses and shops. While the barns and other working structures are kept outside the walls, and many of the residents spend their days and even nights in those buildings, all residents must either maintain personal quarters in the town or pay a "siege fee" to rent a room or a patch of floor in someone's house inside the walls, to be used only during orc attacks. The siege fee is a set rate established by the Council of Defenders in order to discourage profiteering.

Below are a few of the more noteworthy locations in the town of Trunau.



Halgra

1. Main Gate: Trunau has only a single gate, as anyone needing to exit or enter during a siege could simply use a rope ladder dropped down from the cliffs at the town's higher end. The gate is built to overlap the stones to either side, allowing the rock of the hill to reinforce it against battering rams. Atop each rock stands a wooden watchtower large enough for a dozen defenders to fire bows or pour boiling water down on attackers from relative safety. Both to intimidate the orcs and to guard against fiery arrows, the towers' sides and roofs are armored with the shields and breastplates of orcs who've assaulted the walls and died, their various clan symbols prominently displayed. The town council sets a precise watch schedule to make sure that plenty of eyes are on the wall both day and night, and all adults in the village are required to take regular shifts.

2. Ivory Hall: The seat of power in Trunau, the Ivory Hall was originally festooned with the skulls of the most ferocious orc champions and chieftains felled in Trunau's first siege, their hollow eye sockets mute testimony to both the constant threat under which Trunau exists, and to the residents' unwavering commitment to surviving it. Later generations of councilors found the display too grisly and similar to the orcs' own trophy-keeping traditions, however, and discarded the bones. Today, the hall gets its name from the brilliant white of its walls, and serves as the home of whoever is Chief Defender. Halgra puts the manor to good use, allowing several of her grown children to house their own families in its many rooms. The only part off-limits to the rest of her rough-and-tumble clan is the Meeting Room—with its commanding views of the surrounding countryside, she uses it to host war councils and entertain visitors such as traders, emissaries from Vigil or Castle Firrine, or the Pathfinders who often use Trunau as a launching point for expeditions into Belkzen.

3. Flame of the Fallen: Trunauans are all too familiar with the orc practice of gathering the bones of slain foes and creating grisly monuments out of the remains. To honor the fallen dead and deny their enemies the opportunity to turn them into skeletal mockeries, Trunauans go to great lengths to retrieve the body of any citizen slain in battle. Those recovered are burned in a great pyre along the cliff at the town's crest, their light and smoke traveling up into the endless freedom of the sky. During times of siege, the beacon is kept burning

day and night to hearten the defenders and challenge to the orcs—though some cynics say that it's kept lit to keep townsfolk from noticing and despairing every time a new corpse is added.

4. Commons: The central feature of Trunau's community is a wide amphitheater with a stone floor and a raised stage at one end. By day, the Commons serves as Trunau's training ground, upon which its residents engage in martial training under Jagrin Grath—depending on their primary role in town, some dedicated warriors train nearly every day, but even those more valuable in other capacities are expected to train at least 1 day per month. By night, however, the Commons transforms into a place of relaxation and celebration as townsfolk meet to conduct hopeknife ceremonies for their youth or indulge in any other cause for festivity. Children's school lessons are often conducted on the rows of tiered seating, the stage is used for announcements and the occasional theatrical performance, and in general the Commons represents a pleasant outdoor meeting point for all residents.

5. Barterstones: While Trunau hosts some more established shops within its walls, most of its general trading is conducted at an open-air market held atop several low, broad slabs of flat rock just east of town. Originally, the market was only used for trading with orcs and suspicious outsiders who hadn't yet earned the people's trust enough to be allowed inside the community's walls, but over time the town's farmers and herders found it easier to meet here than to try and guide wagons and livestock through the town's steep and narrow streets, and now the vast majority of local trade occurs at the Barterstones as well, with market days coming twice a week (and more often when traders arrive).

6. Burned Church/Plague House: Before the fall of the Hordeline, this was a small church of Iomedae serving the local farming communities. When Lastwall's forces retreated and Trunau decided to stand and fight, the priests of Iomedae joined them—yet unlike the other residents, head priest Arthuris Bain and his two assistants refused to retreat within the fortified walls, confident that Iomedae's wrath would strike down any raiders who dared to come for them.

Though the priests fought valiantly, the church was burned to the ground almost immediately by the



Jess Meeson

rampaging orcs, and all three of its residents were slain. The church stood as a burned-out husk for decades, then 50 years ago was hastily reconstructed as a place to hold those afflicted by a plague sweeping the town. Though removing the sick from inside the town walls doubtlessly saved many, the plague house burned down in a mysterious fire only a few nights after its completion, taking with it a score of patients and healers. Whether the fire was an accident or the work of an arsonist attempting to stop the plague for good, no one knows, but no one ever proposed building on the site again.

Today, the site—known as both the Burned Church and the Plague House—is left alone, save for the occasional children’s dare to stand in the center of the blackened beams at sunset. However, lights have recently been seen moving about in the church at night, but even the best trackers unable to find any evidence of tracks there the following morning. The whole town buzzes with wild speculation after each new sighting.

7. Sanctuary: A year after the loss of Trunau’s old church, missionaries from the church of Iomedae arrived and began constructing a new house of worship to honor their goddess and minister to the people of Trunau—this time wisely building it inside the town’s walls. The new sanctuary houses half a dozen clerics and paladins who, in addition to helping with the town’s defense, staff a large prayer hall and a hall of respite where the wounded can be tended after battle. Though some citizen look askance at the Iomedaeans—all of whom still officially claim allegiance to Lastwall, and see their presence here as helping maintaining diplomatic ties with the outpost until the border can be expanded once more—no one is willing to actually turn away such hardworking and valuable residents, especially as they refuse to serve in any governmental capacity.

The current matron of the sanctuary is a young cleric named Tyari Varvatos, the younger sister of the Second Sword Knight of the Sancta Iomedae in Vigil. Speculation abounds as to why she toils here in Trunau instead of alongside her prominent sister, with most presuming she’s out to create her own name rather than live in her sister’s shadow. Her staunchest ally is an errant paladin named **Brantos Calderon** (LG male human paladin of

Iomedae 4), formerly stationed at Castle Firrine, who forsook his post to pledge his blade (and, rumormongers claim, his heart) to the resolute young cleric who toils on this harsh frontier.

The sanctuary’s longest-standing resident (and patient) is a gnarled old half-orc named **Katrezra** (CG male half-orc fighter 4/oracle 1). Raised among the Empty Hand tribe, he suffers from a terrible affliction of the lungs and weeping sores on his face and arms, gained when his jealous chieftain sent him to the Brimstone Haruspex to experience painful visions of the future. Fed up with the barbarity of the orcs, he managed to convince Halgra to grant him sanctuary, and has since found rebirth in the light of Iomedae, and proven his loyalty time and again on the town’s walls. He still occasionally has visions, and though many write them off as hallucinations or attention-grabbing, Tyari has begun privately recording them on the chance that they may point toward some important revelation.

8. Ramblehouse: Before its founding as an independent town, Trunau had little call for an inn, and for many generations after, the town’s rare visitors would stay wherever there was space. Nearly 30 years ago, however, a handful of escaped halfling slaves from Molthune fled north all the way to Trunau, determined to start new lives. One of them, **Cham Larringfass** (CG female halfling expert 4), decided to build not just a place for herself and her friends, but an entire inn and boardinghouse. She got the rest of her crew in on the endeavor, and

before long a sprawling, eccentric manor packed with rooms of all shapes and sizes sprang up in the town’s lower end. Though guests are still rare, the aptly named Ramblehouse now houses a sizable chunk of the town’s halfling population, as well as many boarders of other races. Cham, still the head innkeeper, also makes a good living off siege fees, and is thus fond of cutting deals to other halflings and members of “right-sized” races—with the only annoyance being her tendency to play matchmaker for available guests.

9. Longhouse: The largest structure in town, the Longhouse is the central meeting house of Trunau, hosting both council meetings and, on days when the weather is foul, all of the various training sessions and celebrations normally held in the Commons. In addition to its great common room for feasts and meetings,



Silvermane

the structure also contains several barracks where young unmarried warriors of either gender can live in order to focus more on their militia training. Chief among these is Jagrin Grath, who despite his simple chosen title of Patrol Leader is the councilor in charge of training and leading the town's militia. After the death of his wife—also a talented ranger and warrior—at the hands of an orc raiding party, he and his sons moved into the Longhouse and devoted themselves to protecting the town, counter-raiding the orcs who would victimize them, and training all Trunau residents in the soldiering arts, to ensure that no more families are sundered. In addition to personally leading patrols, he's in charge of organizing and posting the watchtower rotations and helping Councilor Kessen Plumb make sure that the vast stores of siege rations, weapons, and potions in the longhouse's extensive basement remain viable. With the exception of the *siegestone*, which is far too heavy to be moved without a block and tackle, all of the stores beneath the Longhouse are kept under lock and key, with only the six councilors having copies of that key.

10. Trunau Countinghouse: When Lastwall first abandoned Trunau, an Abadaran tax collector in the region named Barran Crumkin decided to go rogue and cast his lot with the Trunau residents, whom he saw as epitomizing his faith's struggle to promote civilization in the face of barbarity. He gathered other like-minded merchants in the town and founded the Trunau Countinghouse, a bank where the locals could safely deposit their wealth and earn interest instead of hiding it in their houses and potentially losing it to orc raids.

Today, the Trunau Countinghouse has grown into a large, stately building that sees to both the banking and spiritual needs of locals and traveling merchants alike. Its proprietor, town council member and banker Lessie Crumkin, can proudly trace her lineage all the way back to the bank's founder, and takes to her job well enough, though several people have noted not only that her skill at arms in the training arena, but also the way she sometimes longingly watches the patrols leaving—particularly their leader, Jagrin Grath.

11. Hopespring: Originally named simply "Hillspring," this trickle of fresh water is the reason the town was founded in this spot, and the key to its existence. Welling up from deep within the stone, this astonishingly

prolific stream provides the town with a waterfall of pure water, filling the town reservoir before filtering down through cracks in the stone once more and running underground before resurfacing in a creek miles away.

Whether the spring is natural or magical, none can say—yet that doesn't mean no one knows. A mute elven druid, whose weathered features mark his age as venerable even for his timeless race, quietly watches over the spring and its reservoir, though what purpose his quiet contemplation serves is anyone's guess. Dubbed **Silvermane** (N male elf druid 8) by the townsfolk, he has resided on this hill and slept near the spring since before the town was settled. He rarely communicates with anyone, but on occasion has been seen conversing with Halgra via some form of sign language. He generally holds himself aloof from the town's proceedings, yet the few occasions upon which he performs magic—healing a dying child or calling lightning down on raiders—earn him respect from most residents, albeit mixed with questions regarding his inscrutable motives. The most common rumor is that he's the only survivor of the Council of Thorns, a fierce druidic circle whose members ended their lives with the prodigious blood rite that gave Ghostlight Marsh its name.

12. Inner Gates: Trunau has two stone inner walls blocking off the sloping area leading up to the top of the plateau. These inner walls are designed to allow citizens to retreat to the higher town in the event that the main palisade is breached, and having a gate at either end of the slope allows defenders to better choke the invaders and turn the whole ramp into a killing ground, firing arrows down from the walls and cliff above.

13. House of Wonders: Most visitors looking to purchase spellcasting or trade in magical items are surprised to be introduced to Agrit Staginsdar. The only daughter of a long line of warriors who left Janderhoff and came to Trunau for undisclosed reasons, she disappointed her family greatly when, after only a few years of studying the arts of war, she insisted on turning her attentions to arcane magic.

Though she's built quite a fine business for herself, her family still feels strongly that her place is on patrols outside the town—and her relations are none too pleased that her childless marriage to Sara Morninghawk has



Chief Kroghut

ADVENTURES IN TRUNAU

In Trunau, adventure is never far from your door, and usually a lot closer than most residents would like.

Missing Pathfinders: Several Pathfinders who stopped in Trunau on their way to investigate a ruin along the former Hordeline have failed to return in their allotted time. This would be none of the town's concern, except that the group hired one of Jagrin Grath's sons as a guide. Unable to leave town because of his responsibilities, and unwilling to risk more of his sons or soldiers, Grath needs someone to go out to the old border fortress to find out what happened.

Trading Run: Grask Uldeth, warlord of Urgir, has actively encouraged trade between his city and Trunau in recent years, yet the town's residents have always met orc traders at the Barterstones. Now, Uldeth himself has sent a message offering a mysterious and lucrative deal, but only if Halgra will meet him at his stronghold in Urgir. Many worry that it's simply a trap—a chance to cut the head off Trunau's leadership before an invasion—but Halgra is determined to go, and needs a team with adventuring experience to accompany her.

Monastery Mystery: Sech Nevali, the Hanging Monastery, lies suspended over a chasm in the Mindspin Mountains west of Trunau, and its secretive monks show little interest in the outside world. But when one of them shows up at Trunau's gate with terrible injuries and dies before he can say more than a plea for someone to help his brothers and sisters, the PCs are asked to travel to the ancient fortress and investigate.

Orc Invasion: While most orc tribes in the area have learned that raiding Trunau isn't worth the cost, there are always new chieftains who feel the need to show strength. **Kroghut** (CE male orc barbarian 4/fighter 4), the self-proclaimed warlord of the newly formed Bearslayer Tribe, has been a constant irritant to Trunau for months now, regularly raiding the town's outer holdings. Now he's decided to sack the entire town. The warning bells are ringing, the orcs are flooding toward the gate, and the residents of Trunau need every hand that can hold a sword or cast a spell to help hold the walls!

ended the Staginsdar line. Agrit tends to be violently defensive about her life choices, but lights up when talking about her work or teaching the town's other burgeoning arcane casters. She's always eager to examine unfamiliar magic items, and anyone who appeals to her sense of wonder and mystery (and succeeds at a DC 15 Diplomacy check) can convince Agrit to identify a magic item for free.

14. Clamor: Though technically Morninghawk's Fine Steel, this smithy is better known by its nickname

"Clamor" due to the constant pounding of hammers that thunders from it during the daylight hours. Its owner, Councilor Sara Morninghawk, is the daughter of a Shoanti woman who arrived in the town already pregnant and uninterested in talking about her past. Sara cares little about her mixed heritage, save to note that it gives her "proper shoulders to work the forge."

Morninghawk oversees all of the metalwork for the town, including several apprentices specializing in different aspects of the trade. She also never goes anywhere without her mother's axe, which she generally keeps strapped to her back. Sara's well aware of the eyebrows some folks raise about her marriage to Agrit, but she cheerfully responds with a flexed bicep and the question of who else but a dwarf would be equipped to handle her.

15. The Killin' Ground: Named for its position on the sloped ascent between the town's two inner gates, this bar started as a way for **Rabus Clarenston** (CN male human rogue 2/expert 2) to finance the production of his beloved moonshine. Despite the vocal disapproval of Tyari and some of the town's more straight-laced residents, Rabus does a brisk business—with the only law governing his trade being that, should someone show for a patrol or watch duty drunk on his product, Rabus himself must share in the punishment. As a result, Rabus knows the shift schedule better than anyone, and despite his own near-constant inebriation, he never allows anyone to drink in his bar within 4 hours of his or her next shift (or 6 or even 8 hours, for those he knows can't handle their drink).

The Killin' Ground itself is a strange structure, with walls that begin a foot off the ground and a roof made entirely of canvas. When the furious local storms roll in, Rabus pulls back the canvas and lets the rain and the slope of the hill wash the filth of the bar's constant partying away—which greatly annoys his downhill neighbors.

16. That 'n' Such: Yet another business known by its nickname rather than its official name—Meeson's Goods & Salvage—That 'n' Such is the closest thing Trunau has to a general store. Its proprietor, **Jess "Crazy Jess" Meeson** (CG female half-elf expert 3), is a shrewd businessperson in most matters, but unreserved in her passion for salvage from the days before Lastwall's border retreated, and her shop is a clutter of both mundane goods useful to townfolk and "treasures" purchased from patrols and adventurers.

Her husband, **Gorkis Meeson** (NG male human alchemist 3), is equally obsessed with his own pursuits as the town's only resident apothecary. From his workshop in the back of the store, he crafts potions and curatives both magical and mundane for those residents too embarrassed or ornery to seek out the town's religious healers with their ailments.

JAGRIN GRATH

As a council member and Patrol Leader of the town militia, Jagrin Grath is a pillar of Trunau's community.

JAGRIN GRATH

CR 6
XP 2,400

Male human ranger 7

LN Medium humanoid (human)

Init +4; **Senses** Perception +11

DEFENSE
AC 19, touch 16, flat-footed 14 (+3 armor, +1 deflection, +4 Dex, +1 dodge)

hp 54 (7d10+11)

Fort +6, **Ref** +9, **Will** +3

OFFENSE
Speed 30 ft.

Melee mwk longsword

+10/+5 (1d8+3/19-20)

Ranged +1 composite

longbow +13/+8 (1d8+3/×3)

Special Attacks favored enemy (magical beasts +2, orcs +4)

Ranger Spells Prepared (CL

4th; concentration +5)

 1st—*alarm*, *entangle*
(DC 12)

STATISTICS
Str 14, **Dex** 18, **Con** 12, **Int** 8, **Wis** 13, **Cha** 10

Base Atk +7; **CMB** +9; **CMD** 25

Feats Deadly Aim, Dodge, Endurance, Far Shot, Point-Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Rapid Shot, Weapon Focus (composite longbow)

Skills Acrobatics +8, Climb +6, Diplomacy +2, Handle Animal +4, Knowledge (geography) +6, Knowledge (local) +5, Knowledge (nature) +3, Perception +11, Ride +11, Stealth +14, Survival +11, Swim +6

Languages Common

SQ favored terrain (plains +2), track +3, wild empathy +7, woodland stride

Combat Gear *potion of cure moderate wounds*, +1 *orc-bane arrows* (3), alchemist's fire, tanglefoot bag; **Other Gear** mwk studded leather, +1 *composite longbow* (+2 Str) with 40 arrows, mwk longsword, *ring of protection* +1, 40 gp

Growing up in Trunau, Jagrin Grath was always most comfortable outside the town walls. Deft with a bow and silent in the woods, he began riding with the hunting parties at a young age, and soon joined Trunau's widest-ranging patrols. There he learned to hunt the orcs that threatened his community, thrilling at the patrol's daring raids. It was also there that he met his wife-to-be, another ranger named Ila Forcansen. The two became one of the best hunting teams Trunau had ever known—even once they began a family, both still rode on patrols well into each of Ila's pregnancies, and resumed patrolling again as soon as each child was weaned, relying on friends within the town to care for their four sons while they were away.

That life ended 10 years ago, when an attempted guerrilla strike on a rampaging orc band turned out to be an ambush. Half of the patrol was slain, including both the current patrol leader and Ila. Heartbroken, Jagrin made it back to town and assumed the position of patrol leader—yet he surprised everyone by not immediately heading back out on another raid. Instead, he moved into the Longhouse with his sons and dedicated himself to his new position. Though he still rides out on patrols frequently, it's no longer for the joy and freedom of being in the outside world, but solely to protect the town and its people.

Jagrin is a hard, quiet man, and takes his job seriously. He believes in Halgra's leadership, yet also sees it as his job as unofficial second-in-command to make sure her decisions are sound. He sympathizes with adventurers' need to explore and wander, yet sees protecting one's home as a far higher calling. He despises orcs with every fiber of his being, and while he isn't about to endanger the town by provoking major tribes, he's happy to supply and support adventurers who seem intent on killing orcs.

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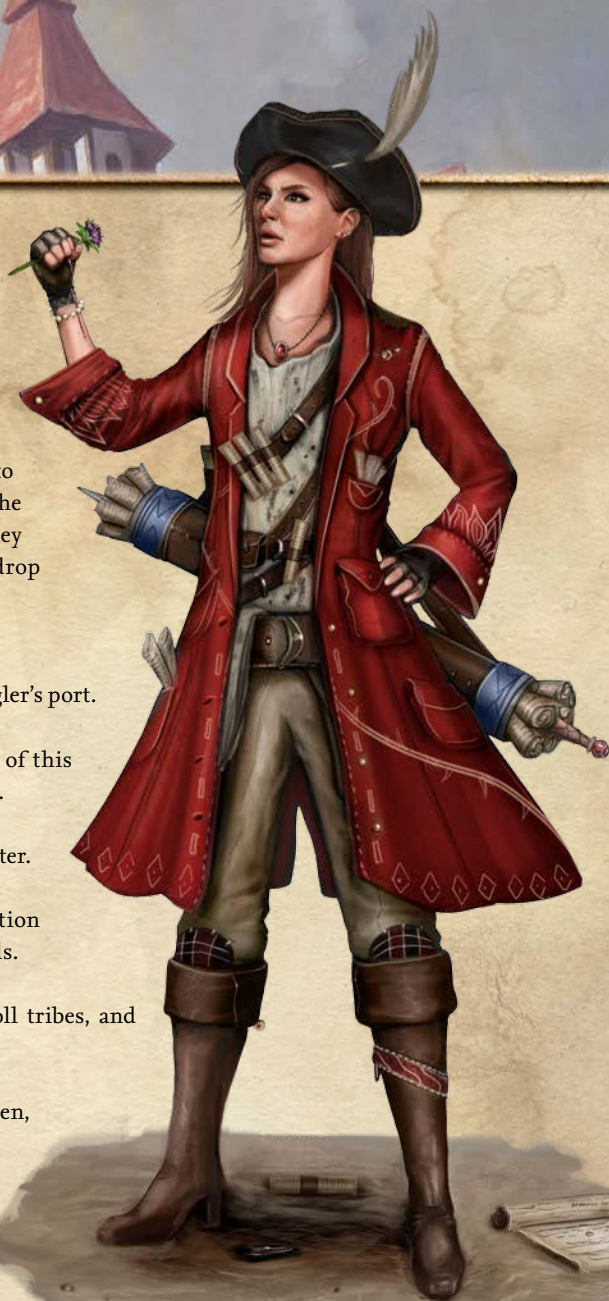
Whether they're the starting points of incredible campaigns, communities facing unfathomable dangers, or merely places for adventurers to rest and resupply, vibrantly detailed towns are vital to any fantasy adventure.

Towns of the Inner Sea explores six small but richly detailed settlements from the Pathfinder campaign setting. Each entry provides insights into the town's history, culture, and residents, as well as what dangers lurk in the shadows. Numerous adventure hooks, full-page maps, and stat blocks for key NPCs make these towns fully realized settings, ready for Game Masters to drop into campaigns whenever they're needed.

This book contains details on the following distinctive towns:

- ▶ **Diobel:** What you can't get in Absalom, you can get in this notorious smuggler's port.
- ▶ **Falcon's Hollow:** Were monsters and curses not enough, the ambitions of this town's greedy overseers would still trap its residents in mud and sawdust.
- ▶ **Ilsurian:** Torn between rival city-states, this Varisian town bows to no master.
- ▶ **Pezzak:** This sheltered port defies the rulers of the devil-dominated nation of Chelixa, its rebel spirit burning strong despite its scheming overlords.
- ▶ **Solku:** This pious fortress-town faces constant threats from nearby gnoll tribes, and while its walls stand unbreached, none can say for how much longer.
- ▶ **Trunau:** Trapped on the wrong side of the border with the orcs of Belkzen, the citizens of this stronghold stand fast against savagery.

Towns of the Inner Sea is intended for use with the Pathfinder Roleplaying Game and the Pathfinder campaign setting, but can easily be used in any fantasy game.



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