

# PATHFINDER CHRONICLES™



CITIES OF  
GOLABION

Joshua J. Frost, Tim Hitchcock,  
Jonathan Keith, Rob McCreary,  
Jason Nelson, and Jeff Quick

### Whitethrone

Allegiance Irrisen  
Large City monarchy; AL NE  
Base GP Value 8,000 gp  
Population 24,900



### Vigil

Allegiance Lastwall  
Small City military dictatorship;  
AL LG  
Base GP Value 4,000 gp  
Population 9,780



### Nisroch

Allegiance Nidal  
Large City theocracy; AL LE  
Base GP Value 8,000 gp  
Population 24,320



### Cassomir

Allegiance Taldor  
Large city governor and nobility;  
AL N  
Base GP Value 8,000 gp  
Population 32,340



### Corentyn

Allegiance Cheliox  
Large City lord-mayor and nobility;  
AL LE  
Base GP Value 8,000 gp  
Population 24,300



### Ilizmagorti

Allegiance Mediogalti Island  
Large City mayor and Red Mantis;  
AL LE  
Base GP Value 8,000 gp  
Population 10,500



# CITIES OF GOLARION

A *Pathfinder Chronicles* Supplement

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# BUILDING SIX CITIES

This book is the culmination of months of planning and some unusual experimentation in the design process.

Paizo makes use of excellent writers, but being able to write and being able to draw a good map aren't talents that always go hand in hand. Because city maps are a key element of this book, we wanted to make sure the initial maps were of the highest quality possible so cartographer Rob Lazzaretti would have a high baseline for creating the final detailed maps for this book. To achieve this, we had an "open call" on the Paizo blog, asking amateur and professional cartographers to send us samples of their work.

The response was overwhelming, with more than 100 people responding to the open call, and a majority of them sending in two or more sample maps. Most of the submissions were adequate, some were too detailed for our needs, and some were a hair's breadth from being ready for publication. From

these submissions, we selected a handful of cartographers that matched our style and the quality level we were looking for. We then described the six cities to these talented folks and had them provide us with maps showing their visions of these cities. We gave those maps to the six designers, who described the cities in detail, using the maps as a reference and guideline for their text, and marking interesting locations on the maps for additional detail or clarification in the text. These six maps then went to Rob, who produced the six color maps you see in this book.

## Bigger Is Better

Part of the reason we put so much effort into making these maps great is they're also appearing in *Pathfinder Chronicles: City Map Folio* as 17" × 22" poster maps. That means Rob draws them at poster map size and we shrink them down in this book to fit on a single page. At their full size, you can see an incredible amount of detail, add your own information about secret or plot-significant locations, or use them as player-friendly handouts for campaigns set in and around that city.

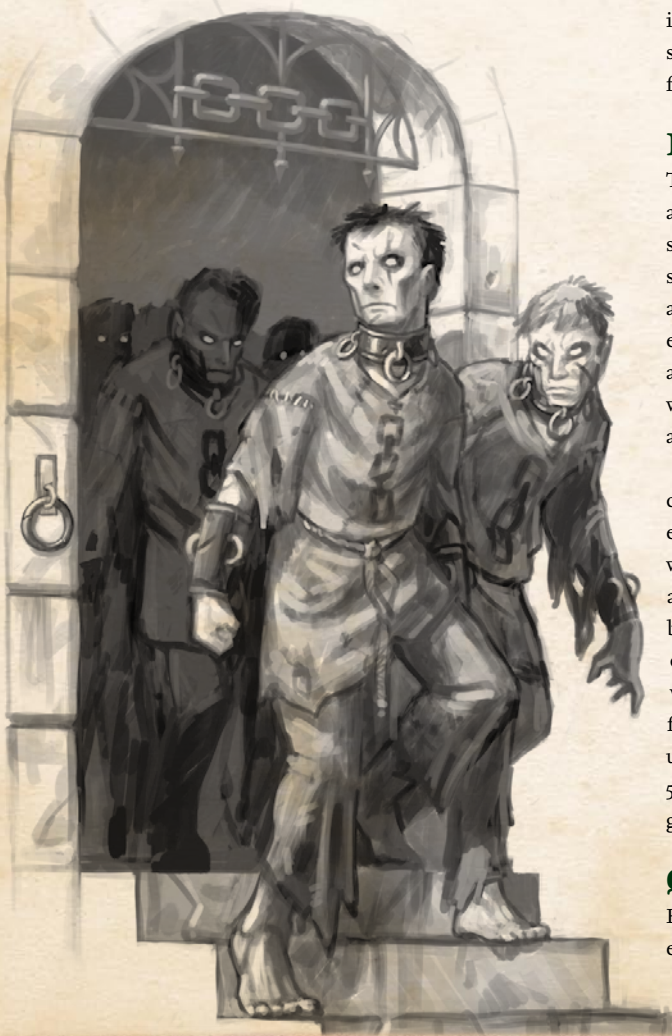
## Evolution of Art

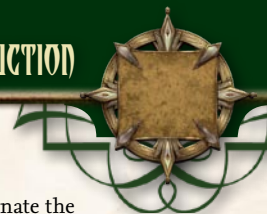
This introduction gives a glimpse at the process of selecting art for a book. On the left is a sketch of the Silent Enforcers, surgically muted monks that serve as Nisroch's city guards—soldiers clad in rags and tortured into martial perfection from a young age. The illustration depicts them with eerie white eyes, making them look undead. As they are quite alive—although psychologically scarred by what they've endured—we asked the artist to change the eyes to a visible, haunted appearance, which you can see on page 39.

On the opposite page is an early version of an ice troll city guard of Whitethrone in Irrisen. Since we only recently established the strong-underbite look of Pathfinder's trolls with the cover of the *Pathfinder RPG Bestiary*, branching out and creating an ice troll variant was something new for this book. However, while this sketch definitely shows a fierce and dangerous creature, the posture of the troll in the sketch, as well as its clawed feet, looked a little too much like a werewolf for our tastes, so we asked the artist to redraw the troll as more upright, with human-like boots. The final illustration on page 58 shows a slightly more civilized troll—one able to work as a guard, but likely to tear your face off if you get him angry.

## Quick Reference

Each of these cities is presented in the same format so you can easily find what you're looking for. Each chapter opens with an illustration of some part of the city and a general overview





of its nature. The **Appearance** section describes what the city looks like—sights, sounds, and smells—and may include a district-by-district breakdown. Following this is the city's **History**, telling the city's origin (if known) and how it grew to its present size and condition. The next section is **Society**, which addresses the nature of the locals, the city government, rulers, social classes, and special circumstances such as the presence of monsters or slaves. The **Relations** section covers how the locals deal with other cities, foreign interests, known settled groups of monsters, and so on. The **Sites of Interest** are named locations in or near the city, designed to give a feel for the city or the place to attach an adventure hook. The last section lists multiple **Encounters** appropriate to the city, giving GMs easy plot hooks to get PCs in local events. Each chapter also includes the **flag** of the city's sovereign country and an illustration of a typical **city guard** from that location.

**Cassomir:** Though Taldor is an empire in decline, it remains a significant naval power on the Inner Sea, and Cassomir is the heart of its shipbuilding. Supplied with wood under an ancient treaty with a local druid circle, the city continues to churn out fast and sturdy vessels, helping Taldor maintain its grip on its last holdings. Joshua J. Frost, Paizo staffer and expert on Taldor (*Pathfinder Companion: Taldor, Echoes of Glory*) covers the ins and outs of this bustling city.

**Corentyn:** Built at the foot of the Arch of Aroden, the broken span that once linked Avistan and Garund, Corentyn grimly watches over the Golarion equivalent of the Strait of Gibraltar, blockading hostile ships and extracting tariffs for Chelixa. Unfortunately, most of this money goes inland to the capital, and Corentyn sees few benefits from its location or trade. Gaming veteran Jeff Quick (*Pathfinder Companion: Elves of Golarion*) addresses how the superstitious hard-working people of this city deal with the presence of devils and other foreigners in their midst.

**Ilizmagorti:** Long a haven for pirates before the cult of the Red Mantis took it over, the people of this city are strangely peaceful, for one never knows who is secretly a master assassin. As a consequence, pirates and illicit traders move stolen goods and contraband through this port, always wary that the town's secret masters may turn against them. Paizo RPG Superstar 2008 finalist Rob McCreary (*Pathfinder Adventure Path* volume #24: "The Final Wish") delivers a juicy mix of intrigue, mystery, and lost treasure.

**Nisroch:** Ten thousand years ago, the horselords of Nidal promised their eternal servitude to the dark god Zon-Kuthon. Now forever bound to the shadow, the people of Nidal live under the thumb of their mysterious Umbral Court. The country's single open port, Nisroch, is heavily policed by acolytes and weaponless guards seeking traitors and heretics, even as they rub shoulders with foreigners, trading common goods for masterwork weapons, armor, and trinkets of shadow magic. Paizo veteran and skilled mapper Tim Hitchcock (*Pathfinder Module:*

*Carnival of Tears*) peeks under the veil of Nidal to illuminate the darkness. For more information on Zon-Kuthon, see *Pathfinder Adventure Path* volume #11: "Skeletons of Scarwall."

**Vigil:** Built just across the border from creepy, gothic Ustalav, and garrisoned with holy troops to watch over the tomb of the most terrifying lich known to the world, the people of Vigil are zealous in their duty to guard against the encroachment of evil. Surrounded on three sides by dangerous foes, they struggle to find happiness and camaraderie in their moments of peace. RPG Superstar 2009 finalist Jason Nelson (*Pathfinder Adventure Path* volume #22: "The End of Eternity") writes about how they lift their spirits with faith, brotherhood, and friendly competition.

**Whitethrone:** Locked in an eternal winter by the legendary witch Baba Yaga, Irrisen is a grim place where the people live at the whim of their rulers and must tolerate trolls and winter wolves as citizens rather than monsters. As Queen Elvanna's family prepares to hand over the country to a new daughter of the witch, noble families vie for power and wealth, using lesser beings as pawns. Lawyer-turned-game designer Jonathan Keith (*Pathfinder Companion: Chelixa, Empire of Devils*) presents a city where the wolves walk in human shape and trolls are responsible for dealing with troublemakers.





## Chapter One

# CASSOMIR

While Oppara shines as the largest and most opulent city in Taldor, and Zimar looms as a stronghold of harsh and militaristic rule, Cassomir maintains its own proud standing as the naval heart of the empire and, arguably, the heart of all naval activity on the Inner Sea. Cassomir has been the source of the Taldan Imperial Navy's greatest ships—with some of Golarion's finest shipwright and craftsman families working for the Admiral and the Grand Prince over dozens of generations, Cassomir rarely sees a week pass without a new capital ship launched and towed out into Star Bay to begin service to the empire.



As the naval hub of the empire, Cassomir is rich with tradition and its citizens are a blend of soldiers, sailors, and a burgeoning underclass of vagabonds and adventurers that plumb the depths of Cassomir's Locker, an infamous series of sewers and underdocks. Cassomir's strategic location at the mouth of the lengthy Sellen River positions it perfectly to dictate and manage all traffic headed for destinations in Galt, Kyonin, Mendev, the River Kingdoms, and beyond, while at the same time the city keeps watch over the neighboring nation of Andoran should the upstart child of Taldor ever decide to invade the empire.

## APPEARANCE

Even those unfamiliar with navies or sailing immediately recognize that Cassomir's main trade is shipbuilding. The skeletal hulks of partially built ships line the harbors, forming an uneven horizon as the rest of the city arcs around the harborage. Built on land reclaimed from the surrounding swamp, the river city smells wet and always feels busy.

## HISTORY

Cassomir's unique city design reflects its long history. Once a simple merchant harbor centered around the ancient Quickfall Abbey (a site holy to worshipers of the dead god Aroden, now in ruins), Cassomir soon grew to become the naval heart of the empire, and a fortified series of ramparts were built west of the original town (what is today called Old Cassomir). As Taldor's expansionistic attitude increased, so too did its desire for ships, and soon the small harbor was expanded and improved and dozens of dry docks were added for the construction of enormous vessels of war. An increase in naval traffic caused the navy to petition the Grand Prince to further expand Cassomir, draining a portion of Blackwood Swamp south of the Imperial Naval Shipyards to make way for a new castle and its surrounding neighborhoods. This area of Cassomir became known as Admiral's Fen, as every attempt to plan and order the streets, buildings, sewers, and sidewalks here was thwarted by the swamp, its wet and murky fingers always reaching back into Admiral's Fen to tilt a building or open a sinkhole in the middle of a busy road.

The penultimate piece of Cassomir was constructed just 200 years ago—Grayguard Castle. This black-walled structure surrounds an enormous temple that once served Aroden is now shared by the many faiths of Taldor. Grayguard Castle also serves as the home of Cassomir's governor and is the official residence of the Grand Prince when he visits the city—something he does at least once a year so that he might get a personal tour of his newest ships. Cassomir's most recently designated district is a series of craggy, rocky islets just off the coast of Grayguard Castle known as the Dog's Teeth. The district's ramshackle collection of huts, battered wooden structures, tents, and occupied caves

make up the heart of wanderer and adventuring culture in Cassomir—a dirty, harsh, and battered little collection of rocks in which the right person, with the right money and the right names, can get just about anything an experienced adventurer might desire.

## SOCIETY

The average Cassomir resident is a salt-of-the-earth, nose-to-the-grindstone laborer or merchant. Cassomir's proximity to the Inner Sea, its port, and its intense naval presence mean that most social life in the city revolves around sea trades: fishing, ship construction, seamanship, imports—if it's related to the ocean, it's a career held in high esteem in Cassomir.

Hard daily work gives the average Cassomirite a gruff exterior, a no-nonsense attitude, and a stubborn resolve to finish whatever needs to be done. Shiftless layabouts, vagabonds, criminals, and all those who don't earn their keep through muscle and grit are looked upon as second-class citizens. Even those who spend their days in a manor house ordering their servants about or who stand on street corners barking out orders to the masses are regarded in Cassomir as arrogant, boastful, and corrupt.

Cassomirites are a religious people as well, revering Gozreh above all others, though a small minority of the city still reveres Aroden and refuses to accept his death. When the fishing season begins anew every spring, Cassomir's priests of Gozreh lead a solemn procession through the streets, banging a lone drum and chanting in ancient Azlanti a prayer for protection and calming of the sea. Trailing behind the priests, in a line that stretches out for several blocks, come the wives of Cassomir's fishermen, their faces painted red in remembrance of those who died at sea. They sing the old chant at the top of their lungs and carry buckets of red paint, splashing it at every street corner and emptying it in the sea at the end of the procession. Only by doing this do the citizens of Cassomir believe their fishing vessels to be safe from the rolling waves of the eastern Inner Sea.

Religious, hardy, and gruff are the people of Cassomir. Despite this, the most notorious residents of the city seem to defy Cassomir's heart and, for the most part, the people love them for it. Some of Cassomir's more famous denizens are detailed below.

**Admiral Kasaba** (LN female human commoner 1/fighter 3/expert 3) is notorious for being the empire's first female Admiral, in charge of the entire Taldan Imperial Navy. Half-Qadiran, she rose to prominence after spending most of her life as a galley slave on a Zimar corsair ship in the Obari Ocean. Kasaba is a fierce, strong, and lithe woman who is quick to anger at any reference to her half-Qadiran ancestry. The people of Cassomir admire her can-do spirit, and her gruff demeanor fits right in with the people of her adopted home.

**Brother Zaganos of the Wildwood Lodge** (N male human druid 7) lives in Cassomir as a representative of the

1. Ruins of Quickfall Abbey
2. Ramparts
3. Old Cassomir
4. Blackwood Swamp
5. Imperial Naval Shipyards
6. Admiral's Fen
7. Castle Grayguard
8. Dog's Teeth
9. Abbey Green
10. The Admiralty Citadel
11. Grayguard's Shadow
12. Threegates
13. Cassomir's Locker
14. Harbor Watch
15. Pharama's Pulpit
16. Swift Prison
17. Treacherous Jack







Wildwood Lodge. He is responsible for maintaining trade relations between Taldor and the druids of the Verduran Forest and works closely with the gnome shipwrights in the Imperial Naval Shipyards to make sure they have all the blackwood they need to keep Taldor's navy well-stocked with ships. Zaganos is rumored to be over 200 years old, his life extended by a magical brooch he wears pinned to his chest at all times. Though most of Cassomir's citizens distrust him, they respect what his position means to them—wood for their ships.

**Ethem Baler** (LN male gnome expert 5) is a bleaching, an ancient gnome with shockingly white hair, pale skin, and blanched eyes. Exhibiting a somber demeanor and a reserved and sullen personality, he seems to live for only one purpose: the construction of new ships. As the Chief Shipwright of the Imperial Naval Shipyards, Ethem Baler has kept the shipyard's production on schedule for more than a hundred years. Unapproachable by those he doesn't know, and frequently ignoring those who haven't been introduced to him by someone he knows, the old gnome's presence is sobering to those around him, and his soft, incredibly quiet voice forces everyone to lean in and listen carefully.

**Governor Bozbeyli** (LN male human fighter 6), a veteran knight of Taldor's cavalry, rose to prominence after fighting several border wars in the Zimar Prefecture. He began life as a meager peasant outside of Cassomir, serving in a militia under the command of the then-governor of Cassomir. His heroics as an officer in the Taldan Horse saw him promoted to the senatorial class of Taldor by Grand Prince Stavian III himself, and he was given the responsibility of running Cassomir as effectively and efficiently as he led his men in battle. Bozbeyli is a stout, strong man of middle years with graying black hair and a well-groomed gray beard. He is never seen without his Qadiran scimitar, a weapon he took from a Qadiran bandit-king in the Southern Range, even though the weapon looks out of place on his belt as he wears his governor's robes. Cassomir's citizens regard Bozbeyli as a corrupt blowhard who gets in the way more than he helps—a false rumor trumped up by the residents of Dog's Teeth as revenge for the Governor's many attempts to clear that district of its citizens.

**Jean Coremont** (N male human rogue 5/fighter 4), best known by his nickname, "the Lion of Taldor," is the country's most famous corsair and calls Cassomir's harbor home. Responsible for sinking more Chelish, Andoren, and Qadiran merchant vessels than any other corsair in service to the empire, Jean Coremont's secret is his training as a youth

by the secretive Shadow Schools in Oppara. Jean Coremont is a Lion Blade, a covert agent of Taldor whose duty for most of his life has been interrupting the shipping traffic of the enemies of the empire. He regularly puts his small fleet in at Cassomir to party with the nobility, but he's most truly home at sea and lives for the sounds of combat on the rolling waves of the Inner Sea. At least five other nations bordering the Inner Sea have high bounties on Coremont's head, but he's managed to keep it on his shoulders despite the attention. His frequent jaunts with the leaders of the city notwithstanding,

Cassomir's citizens, for the most part, regard Coremont as a true hero of the people and anticipate his many returns so they might hear the next grand tale of the Lion of Taldor.



## RELATIONS

In many ways, Cassomir is the reason for many of Taldor's poorer relations with its neighbors. As the gateway of the Sellen River, Cassomir employs the Imperial Navy and Taldan River Guard to board and search the constant flow of vessels making their way north on the River Road. They harass pilgrims headed to the Worldwound to fight demons, tax merchants making for the River Kingdoms to sell their goods, and occasionally sink vessels for no reason other than not stopping to be searched. Andoran's navy does its best to protect ships headed for the Sellen River, but won't go so far as to provoke a skirmish with the Taldan Imperial Navy if they've laid claim to a ship.

Cassomir's citizens also feel a certain level of superiority over the rest of Taldor. After all, if it weren't for the hard work of the Imperial Naval Shipyards and Cassomir's devotion to maintaining relations with the druids of the Wildwood Lodge, Taldor would be a largely unprotected empire, ripe for invasion from the sea. As it stands, the frequent production of large warships keeps the Imperial Navy well supplied with vessels. Cassomir's citizens are loyal Taldans, devotees of the Grand Prince and patriots for all that Taldor stands for—they just feel that Taldor owes them a debt of gratitude for keeping the empire safe. A debt, they think, that's rarely paid.

The rest of the world tends to see Cassomir as a dangerous place—not in the sense that living in the city is a dangerous pastime, but more in the sense that Cassomir supplies Taldor with the teeth that allow it to patrol and harass most ship traffic in the eastern Inner Sea. The primarch of Absalom maintains a summer home in Cassomir (though he's never visited it), and while he claims to use it to grant vacations to loyal subjects, many outside of Taldor believe he keeps a home here only to remind Taldor that their naval power only goes



## The Wildwood Peace

Nearly a thousand years ago, the druids of the Wildwood Lodge approached the emperor of Taldor and presented a simple request: give the Wildwood Lodge some autonomy to protect the last dominion of the blackwood trees, and in exchange the druids would ensure that Taldor had ships for the duration of the empire. Tired of losing patrols to fey raids and largely unable to control the forest anyway, the emperor agreed.

Today, the portion of the Verduran Forest that resides within Taldor's borders is still a semi-autonomous prefecture of the Taldan Empire and the monarchy still honors the Treaty of the Wildwood. Once per year, the city sends a diplomatic delegation to the Isle of Arenway, the home of the Wildwood Lodge, to reaffirm Taldor's peace treaty with the druids. In a simple ceremony, the diplomat sets foot on the island beach in front of a senior druid and exchanges a bag of seeds for one arm's length piece of fine wood, then returns to his boat and sails downriver back to Cassomir.

Because some captains consider this wood especially lucky, city officials auction off the token, donating the money to local widows and orphans. The winning captain usually has the wood carved to resemble his ship's figurehead, then affixes it to the mainmast to watch over the ship. Especially wealthy captains may have multiple "druid tithes" bolted to the mast. It is customary that the captain brings these with him if he ever moves to a new ship, or bequeaths them to a worthy subordinate if he retires.

so far, and that the eyes of the many nations of the Inner Sea are upon them.

The one place where Cassomir maintains civil, maybe even friendly, relations is with the druids of the Wildwood Lodge in the Verduran Forest. Druids are allowed to freely roam the city and are even permitted to train and bring the youth of Taldor into their fold. What better way to maintain relations with the men and women directly responsible for the trees that flow into Cassomir's harbor for shipbuilding than to make them feel at home and supply them with fresh bodies for the cause? For their part, the druids of the Wildwood Lodge are well aware of what the timber they bring in is used for, but their loyalty remains with the Lodge and the Verduran Forest itself, and so long as those two things are well maintained and cared for, they feel they've done all they can to protect their woods.

Part of Cassomir's friendly relationship with the druids is based on the city's open channel to the gnomes of the town of Wispil. At the heart of the Verduran Forest, the semi-autonomous town is the center of Taldor's woodcrafting and lumber industries. Though the population of Taldor is mostly human, Wispil is largely comprised of gnomes,

half-elves, fey, halflings, and a smattering of dwarves. The gnomes keep careful track of how much wood the shipbuilders need, add in amounts for their own crafts, and send their loggers into the forest with druid escorts in search of trees to be used in ship production. Through this combined effort, the forest still remains large, healthy, and vibrant; no fey habitats are disturbed, and even the treants see the utility in clearing paths through dense areas for firebreaks and to provide places of new growth. The gnomes haul the cut timber to the Verduran Fork (the eastern waterway connecting with the Sellen River), and hand them over to gnome boatmen (called "boomrafters"). These gnomes tie the logs together into simple rafts and float their cargo downstream to Cassomir, where they are snapped up by the shipbuilders.

By far, Cassomir's worst relations are with the Andoren country folk in the plains and woods of eastern Andoran. Taldan bandits roam this countryside like a scourge and are constantly harrying farmers, shepherds, and their communities. Governor Bozbeyli has repeatedly assured the free citizens of eastern Andoran (as well as Andoran's leaders) that Cassomir Prefecture is doing all it can to stem the flow of bandits into the Andoren interior and has even hanged a few high-profile bandit leaders to back up his claims. Still, there are many in Andoran who believe these hangings to be nothing more than a ruse, criminals dressed up like bandit kings and hanged at Pharama's Pulpit in an attempt to cover the truth: that Taldor is arming and supplying insurrectionists within Andoran's borders to destabilize the region for a potential future invasion. Whatever the truth, were Andoran and Taldor to ever go to war, Cassomir would be at the heart of that struggle.

## DISTRICTS

Cassomir is home to several very distinct districts.

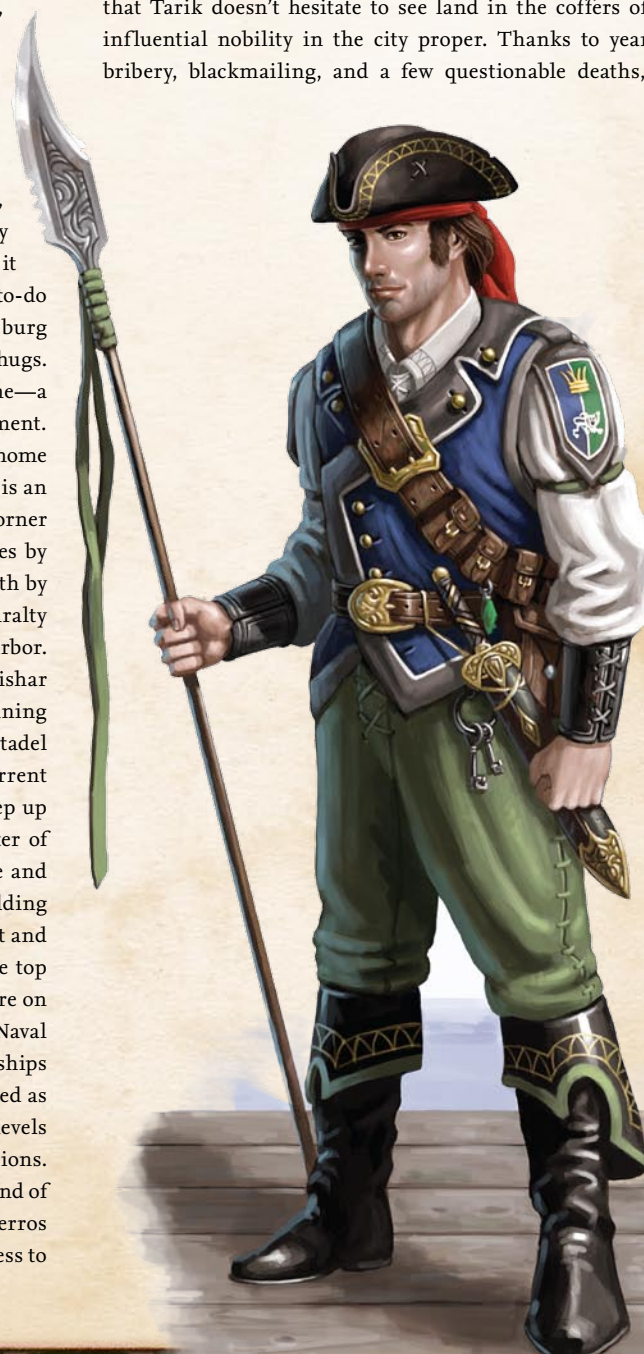
**Abbey Green:** This district surrounds the ruins of Quickfall Abbey and is bordered to the north by Threegates and to the south by the Imperial Naval Shipyards. Abbey Green is tenanted by artisans, historians, former military officers, and well-to-do merchants. The buildings here are some of the oldest in Cassomir, constructed of stone, brick, and mortar, and generally standing no taller than three stories. Many resident merchants live here in apartments above their stores, and Abbey Green is also occupied by some of Taldor's finest tailors, leatherworkers, jewelcrafters, and fine metalworkers. Quickfall Abbey's storied past of hauntings and disappearances does little to bring down the mood of Abbey Green, and the district is often alive with street fairs, artist showcases, and outdoor concerts. Most of the residents of Abbey Green, despite the district's jovial nature, still generally avoid Quickfall Abbey, and whisper stories of the frightful moaning, banging, and screams said to pierce the cool night air above the ruins.



**Admiral's Fen:** Built to feed the quick expansion of Cassomir after the construction of the Imperial Shipyards, Admiral's Fen has long fought a losing battle with the murky dampness of the Blackwood Swamp. Admiral's Fen is bordered on the north by the Imperial Naval Shipyards and to the west by Grayguard Castle and Grayguard's Shadow. The land that later became this district was reclaimed from the swamp by draining a significant portion of it into the brackish moat that surrounds the city. Streets were planned, buildings constructed, and sewers dug, but all of it quickly began to lose ground to the ever-expanding—and some would say malevolent—Blackwood Swamp. Today the Fen's air is a perpetual swamp-stink of wet mud, rotting vegetation, and murky pools of water. The streets long ago sunk and were replaced mostly by rutted, muddy lanes. The buildings are mostly intact, but those with poor foundations crashed to the ground long ago, leaving muddy ruins in places. The denizens of Admiral's Fen make do with their situation and employ engineers, and sometimes even wizards, to keep the district as dry as possible. It's a losing battle, though, and because of it the district has over the years moved from being a well-to-do neighborhood of aristocrats and nobility to a worn-out burg of lower-class craftsmen, dock workers, and outright thugs. The Fen is largely seen as Cassomir's haven for crime—a reputation the vagabonds of Dog's Teeth are happy to foment.

**The Admiralty Citadel:** Originally constructed as the home of the first governor of Cassomir, the Admiralty Citadel is an impressive stone structure located in the southeast corner of the Old Cassomir district. Surrounded on three sides by enormous towers and thick stone walls, and on the fourth by the large ramparts that surround Old Cassomir, the Admiralty Citadel commands an impressive view of Cassomir's harbor. Though the Imperial Navy is headquartered on Jadrishar Island in Oppara, most naval officers receive their training and serve out their posts at the Admiralty Citadel. The citadel is also home to Admiral Kasaba (see page 7), the current head of the Taldan Imperial Navy, whose job it is to keep up with the Grand Prince's demand for ships. At the center of the Admiralty Citadel is a towering building of marble and granite with an open courtyard at its center. This building houses five floors of officers encompassing Taldor's best and brightest shipwrights in addition to a large cadre of the top officers of the Imperial Navy. Admiral Kasaba's offices are on the top floor on the south side overlooking the Imperial Naval Shipyards, forever watching the progress of dozens of ships under constant construction. Since the citadel once served as the primary fortification for Old Cassomir, dozens of levels of dungeons and crypts lie beneath its rocky foundations. Many of the lower dungeons are sealed, and rumors abound of connections to the Darklands and an enormous city of derros who stalk the midnight streets of Cassomir and gain access to the city via these very tunnels.

**Dog's Teeth:** A ragtag jumble of rocky islets just off the coast of Grayguard Castle, the Dog's Teeth are inhabited by the largest assembly of vagabonds and adventurers in Cassomir. At low tide, the Dog's Teeth are connected to the beach below the castle, but high tide forces the denizens of the Teeth to use rickety canoes and smaller sailing vessels to reach the shore. The Dog's Teeth are ruled by an enigmatic old half-orc named **Tarik the Unclean** (N male half-orc fighter 4/rogue 2), who maintains order in this unofficial district of Cassomir through cajoling, bribes, and outright violence. Because the heart of Cassomir's black market lies in the tangled web of Dog's Teeth politics, there's money to be found there—money that Tarik doesn't hesitate to see land in the coffers of the influential nobility in the city proper. Thanks to years of bribery, blackmailing, and a few questionable deaths, the





denizens of Dog's Teeth are left to their own devices and are completely ignored by the Cassomir constabulary. For those visiting Cassomir hoping to plumb the depths of the infamous Cassomir's Locker or to explore the rumored Darklands catacombs below, Dog's Teeth is the best place to find magical items, weapons, and contraband cargo, though those with refined tastes will need to overlook the general squalor and stench of the place to find the thriving market within.

**Imperial Naval Shipyards:** No other place in the Inner Sea region manufactures vessels of war at the pace, quality, and volume of the Taldan Imperial Naval Shipyards in Cassomir. The poorly kept secret behind the unsurpassed excellence of Cassomir's shipyards lies in the blackwood trees harvested by the druids of the Wildwood Lodge and sent to Cassomir in great numbers. The mutually beneficial arrangement serves to protect the druids' pact with Taldor in return for supplying the empire with the hardest, lightest wood on Golarion. Nearly every Taldan ship of war that sails the seas is built of this blackwood, with 90% of them constructed in Cassomir. The towering skeletons of dozens of ships in various states of construction make up the heart of this district, administered by a bustling cottage industry of woodworkers, rope-makers, tar and pitch factories, sail weavers, and lumber mills.

The district also houses the industries of interest to sailors returning home for the first time in a great while—brothels, moneylenders, inns, pubs, fighting pits, shrines, and open-air markets are everywhere, and humanity constantly packs the district during the day. At night, the Cassomir constabulary heavily patrols the shipyards to protect the vessels being built, but even these patrols fail to keep crime at bay, and citizens are frequently warned to avoid the shipyards after nightfall. Recent kidnappings of prominent residents of the shipyards have the city on edge, and the constabulary has vowed to get to the bottom of the crimes.

**Grayguard Castle:** Grayguard Castle is an impressive fortress that stands watch over the entrance to Cassomir's harbor. Its high, vertigo-inducing walls and towers bristle with catapults, ballistas, and trebuchets, each ready at a moment's notice to unleash hell on any enemy captain insane enough to sail into the harbor under a flag of war. The castle itself is home to Governor Bozbeyli, administrator of Cassomir Prefecture, and a distant cousin of Grand Prince Stavian III (see Society on page 5). The enormous temple in the center of Grayguard Castle was once one of the largest temples to Aroden outside of Oppara. Today, the temple is instead tended to by all of the faiths of Taldor, and a small clerical school there trains healers for duty on Taldan naval vessels. Constructed atop an outcropping of rock jutting from Blackwood Swamp, Grayguard is the highest point in Cassomir. Only a single road winds up to the impressive gates, and security at Grayguard is tight, since the castle's fall would signal the end of land-based security in the harbor.

**Grayguard's Shadow:** This small district exists to supply the castle with whatever it needs. Its borders press tightly against the castle's impressive walls, starting north of the castle and winding around to the southeast side. So named because the castle casts the district in shadow for much of the day, Grayguard's Shadow remains clean and well patrolled by the constabulary and naval security forces. The only landing for ships outside of the Imperial Naval Shipyards is a single fortified dock surrounded by dozens of warehouses and import/export businesses that keep the castle well stocked with weaponry and supplies. Grayguard's Shadows rests primarily on the rocky outcropping that also supports the castle, and therefore does not suffer the same issues of rot and decay that plague Admiral's Fen. Anyone traveling from the Fen into Grayguard's Shadow knows they've entered the district the moment the roads appear again and buildings stand up straight.

**Old Cassomir:** Actually but the third-oldest district in Cassomir, Old Cassomir gets its name from its role as the city proper for the majority of Cassomir's history. Surrounded on all sides by impressive ramparts and accessed only by two enormous gates on the east side, Old Cassomir is a charming district of solidly constructed buildings, well-paved streets, and a large park system that surrounds the district and abuts the ramparts—effectively keeping the ramparts clear of construction should they ever need to be manned for war. Old Cassomir houses the Admiralty Citadel, Pharasma's Pulpit, and the odd Swift Prison, as well as the majority of Cassomir's nobility and senatorial class. The few unbearded (the Taldan lower class) who call Old Cassomir home are generally servants, gardeners, butlers, or any types of craftsmen who deal in the upkeep of homes and estates. Crime is low in Old Cassomir, as the headquarters of the Cassomir constabulary is located here and most of the constables call this district home. Still, rumors abound of strange, shrouded men wandering the streets at night, and rare but frightening disappearances happen here just as often as they do in other parts of the city.

**Threegates:** This small district of perfectly aligned streets, romantic brick row houses, tree-lined avenues, and small but beautiful parks garners its name from its location between the main gates of the city and the two main gates of Old Cassomir. The wealthiest district of Cassomir, Threegates is home to the remainder of the city's senatorial and nobility class citizens, as well as most of the wealthy merchants associated with the ship-building trade. Abbey Green borders Threegates on the south, while to the west lie the ramparts of Old Cassomir, and to the east the city's brackish moat and Blackwood Swamp.

## SITES OF INTEREST

Several of the more important locations in Cassomir are detailed below.



**Blackwood Swamp:** Surrounding Cassomir on all landward sides is the murky and perpetually shaded Blackwood Swamp. Once part of the primeval forest that covered this entire region, Blackwood Swamp is a rotting, brackish marshland of tangled trees, dense overgrowth, quicksand, man-eating plants, monsters, and more. Cassomir was long ago cut from this swamp, and the city constructed an enormous moat at various stages of the city's growth to keep the denizens of Blackwood Swamp at bay. Even today, the city routinely hires adventurers and mercenaries to invade the swamp and take out marauding humanoid tribes, menacing hydras, or worse, and it's not uncommon for the swamp's monsters to raid the city proper.

The Pathfinder Society has long claimed that Blackwood Swamp is located atop enormous Azlanti dungeons and caverns—the ruins of a great Azlanti city that rested here 10,000 years ago—but only have a few carvings and rotting tombs to back up their claim. To date, no one has found any such remains within the swamp, though its dense vegetation and wet, rotting conditions do well to conceal anything in the swamp, even ancient ruins. The road that travels through the Blackwood Swamp from the main gates of Cassomir is an elevated causeway constructed of wooden beams and thick stone piles, and though heavily patrolled by the Taldan Phalanx, it still sees its share of banditry and assaults. Most merchants travel the Blackwood in force, and young thrill-seekers hunting for work need look no further than guarding these merchant wagon trains as they make their way out into the Taldan countryside.

**Cassomir's Locker:** The district known as the Imperial Naval Shipyards has been built and rebuilt numerous times in the city's history. What began as a small wharf to supply the city soon grew into a formidable dockyard, which was later rebuilt and converted into the shipyards of the empire. The constant construction, combined with the region's natural tendency to sink into the marshy soil, has given rise to a series of connected vaults, sewers, abandoned basements, and flooded tunnels known locally as Cassomir's Locker. The Locker is said to be filled with crocodiles, human-sized rats, and giant insects, and ever-present rumors hint of a Darklands city even farther below.

Only about one-quarter of the Locker has been fully explored and mapped, and the Pathfinder Society routinely sends agents down below to explore its sunken tunnels, though they're not saying publicly why they spend so much time down there. Casual exploration of the Locker's shallowest levels has brought forth tales of derros, drow, duergar, and other creatures of the Darklands living just below the streets of Cassomir. The city council declares these fantastic tales just that—implausible ramblings of the mad—but the citizens of Cassomir still find it curious that all known entrances to the Locker are either heavily guarded or permanently sealed.

## Five Adventuring Companies of Cassomir

These groups are the most famous in Cassomir, past or present, though by no means are they the only noteworthy ones.

**Blackrock Company:** Still active and led by **Shmad Blackrock** (CG male gnome bard 9), these adventurers are famous for having delved the deepest into Cassomir's Locker, though they keep what they've found there to themselves.

**Crantor's Gang:** Though they claim many delvings into Cassomir's Locker and more than a dozen forays into the dangerous Blackwood Swamp, Crantor's Gang are believed by most to be nothing more than spoiled braggarts trying to lie their way to fame. They are a dangerous bunch—especially when their stories are questioned in public.

**Dogs of Dog's Teeth:** More smugglers than adventurers these days, the Dogs carved their fame into Cassomir's lore by clearing Dog's Teeth of vermin, undead, and a stubborn hydra about 20 years ago. Today they work for Tarik the Unclean, keeping the peace and outfitting adventurers.

**The Holy Five of Aroden:** Comprised entirely of half-elves whose parents were devotees of the dead god of humanity, the Holy Five use Cassomir as their base of operations to explore the many ruins in Taldor's interior.

**Partisans of the Eagle Knights:** Wiped out while trying to free the condemned from Pharamasma's Pulpit 10 years ago, the undead Partisans live on in infamy as proof that Andoran seeks to undermine the authority of the Grand Prince. Cassomiri mothers tell their children to be good or fear the wrath of the Partisans.

**Harbor Watch:** Opposite Grayguard Castle across Cassomir's harbor stand three enormous towers known as Harbor Watch. The primary tower of Harbor Watch rises right out of the ramparts of Old Cassomir and stands higher than any other structure in the city, though the towers of Grayguard Castle are taller by virtue of their lower starting elevation. A thick curtain wall connects this central tower to the other two shorter towers, all three of which stand ready with ballistas, trebuchets, and catapults to defend the harbor from all enemies. A thick chain runs out of the base of the southernmost tower and disappears into the rolling waves of the harbor. It is said that this chain can be lifted from the sea bottom by an enormous winch in the basement of Harbor Watch and that it connects to a buried bunker on the opposite beach, allowing the city to effectively seal off the harbor from naval traffic. The chain, however, has never been used and some wonder if it's a decoy to give naval enemies further pause in any plans they might have to attack Cassomir.

**Pharamasma's Pulpit:** A curious structure called Pharamasma's Pulpit stands tall in the central square of Old Cassomir.





## New Feats

Many youths hear the call of the sea and come to Cassomir to join Jean Coremont's corsairs. Looking for a life of adventure, they gain fame in service to the empire. Meanwhile, adventurers come to Cassomir to cut their teeth on the dangers of the Locker, a series of caverns, underdocks, buried buildings, and extensive sewers. It's not uncommon for first-time parties of young and inexperienced delvers to get their education on dungeon exploration by traveling through the Locker.

## Corsair of Taldor

Many Taldans seeking a life of adventure and service to the empire come to Cassomir hoping to join the ranks of Jean Coremont's corsairs. Those who do soon find themselves on the high seas, battling enemies of the empire and gaining fame for themselves and their shipmates.

**Prerequisite:** Spent at least 1 month working on a ship for Jean Coremont.

**Benefit:** You get a +2 bonus on initiative checks made while on a ship and deal an additional +1 damage when using light or one-handed weapons on a ship.

## Master Delver

You've spent some time in Cassomir's Locker and have learned a little bit to help you survive.

**Prerequisites:** Explored part of Cassomir's locker.

**Benefit:** You get a +2 bonus on all Knowledge (dungeoneering) checks and Perception checks made to notice traps. Knowledge (dungeoneering) is always a class skill for you.

Built of wood, rope, and mortar, with a central platform some 30 feet above the ground, this structure serves as the gallows for all capital crimes in the region. Once a month, those condemned to death for their crimes are rousted from the confines of Swift Prison, marched across Old Cassomir through crowds of onlookers, and either hanged, beheaded, or drawn and quartered in front of the curious Cassomirite citizens. The executions are supervised by the city's Lord High Executioner, a position of great respect and wealth that unfortunately seems to doom its office holder to a fate similar to those of the Pulpit's guests. The current executioner, **Maximilian Marley** (NE male human expert 3), has only held the office for a year after beheading his predecessor for high crimes and treason. The monthly executions are a sort of local holiday, and Cassomir's population swells as farmers, merchants, peasants, and serfs from the surrounding countryside use the festivities as an excuse to come into town and hawk or trade their wares.

**Swift Prison:** Most Taldan prisons are located on the distant frontier, where criminals or political opponents are

sent to be forgotten. Cassomir, however, maintains its own local prison, partially financed by the Imperial Navy, that encompasses a square city block in the southern part of Old Cassomir. Partly a prison, and partly a block of apartments and houses in which wealthy criminals are placed under house arrest, Swift Prison is a curious oddity in the realm of prisoners and their keeping. The prison's boundaries are defined by the Rules of the Swift, which govern where prisoners are free to roam. Criminals condemned to death or convicted of violent crimes are housed in the block's central prison keep, with its thick gates, heavy chains, and surly, underpaid guards. More casual criminals, such as political outcasts, war criminals, famous outlaws, and the like, are instead given free reign of the entire block, but are under strict awareness that their sentences would be converted to prompt capital punishments should they stray beyond the Swift's borders. Trained thief-takers guard the corners of the Swift and memorize every prisoner's face so they might more easily track inmates down should they flee. Surprisingly, only a handful of prisoners have ever escaped the confines of Swift Prison, and its system of housing criminals has worked successfully for over a thousand years.

**Treacherous Jack:** Thousands of years ago, Taldans constructed a series of lighthouses from the Sellen River down to the mouth of the Porthmos River along a stretch of coast called the Jagged Saw. With only two natural harbors at Cassomir and Ridonport, the Jagged Saw is a treacherous stretch of coastline filled with hidden shoals and rock-strewn cliff sides, howling with blistering winds and pummeled by frequent storms. In order to protect the dense traffic along this coastline, magical lighthouses were built to be self-contained, unmanned beacons to keep shipping traffic from straying too close to the Saw. Nearly all of them are now either ruins or broken relics of Taldor's once glorious past.

One of the lighthouses, located just west of the Harbor Watch and presiding over the entrance to Cassomir's harbor, still works—at least, most of the time. A submerged causeway connects the lighthouse, known as Treacherous Jack, to the shore, making the magical beacon only accessible by foot at low tide. Jack is a stout, solid stone structure wider at the base and narrower at the apex, topped by an enormous flame-shaped object that glows brilliantly both night and day. Treacherous Jack gets its name from its penchant for randomly turning off its light, usually at the worst times (such as at night during a storm), and millennia of such erratic behavior have led to the sinking of more than a hundred ships. Magical scholars are stumped by the lighthouse's unreliability, with some claiming a waning of the lighthouse's magic, and others that a malevolent influence is at work. Regardless of the cause, Treacherous Jack is a familiar and welcome sight to all sailors returning home to Cassomir after weeks or months at sea.



## ENCOUNTERS

Despite being a hub of civilization, Cassomir has numerous threats to its peace and security.

**Clear the Shipyards of Pests:** The Imperial Naval Shipyards are always in need of strong men to keep the yard free of pests—vermin, monster, and human alike. Giant rats, thieves, and swarms of beetles plague the shipyards on a nightly basis, and it takes all of the shipyard watch's attention to keep the place intact until morning. New adventurers are often sought for a week or month's work to clear pests from the shipyards, or even to delve into the Locker to root out the source of a vermin infestation or scour the sewers of a cult or gang of thieves seeking to disrupt the empire's steady supply of ships.

**Delving Cassomir's Locker:** Most of Cassomir's Locker remains unexplored by the citizens of Taldor, and enterprising PCs can find good work (and good rewards) by joining up with any number of adventuring companies that make their way into the Locker each week. Most of these companies only scratch the surface of the Locker, returning with shiny baubles or a few coins, while a few rare and brave companies spend months below the surface, returning with tales of monsters, men of the dark, and lost cities, as well as heavy sacks full of armor, weapons, and treasure.

**Hanging Day at Pharasma's Pulpit:** The first Oathday of every month is Hanging Day at Pharasma's Pulpit, when citizens from Cassomir and beyond flock to Old Cassomir to witness the condemned as they're beheaded, hanged, drawn and quartered, or magically manipulated for the amusement of the public. Hanging Day also brings pickpockets, cutpurses, thugs, gangs, and thieves to Old Cassomir, and the district is always on the lookout for formidable warriors to help patrol the streets during this busy, almost festival-like day.

**It Came from the Swamp:** Cassomir's moat only keeps out things that can't swim, and Blackwood Swamp is full of monsters with fins and flippers. In this encounter, the PCs hear cries of distress coming from one of the districts closest to the swamp and find a small gang of scraggs attacking townfolk, trying to drag them back into the swamp for food.

**Kidnapped by Derro:** Though the people of Cassomir prefer to think the rumors of vile derros lurking below the city are just imaginative ramblings of the mad, the truth is that a large derro city—Corgunbier—lies below the surface of Taldor's naval capital. Though it happens rarely, derros are sometimes spotted in the open, wandering the nighttime streets of Cassomir as they search for easy pickings (food, gear, and slaves) to take back down below. In this case, the PCs find a party of derros dragging bound and gagged citizens toward an open sewer grate, intent on bringing fresh slaves to the Darklands markets or using the captives as subjects for cruel experimentation.

Cassomir is an excellent place to start a Darklands campaign; the PCs can use the city as a base of operations for repeat ventures below the surface, striking out at the derro settlement, exploring farther afield to the duergar capital city of Hagegraf,

or delving deeper into the realm of Sekamina. Unethical PCs may forge a trade agreement with the duergar (for lumber) or the derros (for slaves). For more information on these Darklands locations, see *Pathfinder Chronicles: Into the Darklands*.

**Make Way for the Governor:** When the governor of Cassomir Prefecture travels the streets of his city, he is never accompanied by less than a full company of city watch. They make for a very impatient parade, knocking citizens aside in the streets and ruthlessly putting down any resistance to the governor's travels. A good roleplaying encounter could find the PCs saving young or frail citizens about to be trampled by the governor's caravan, or even scrapping it out with his guards in order to protect a block of street vendors as they quickly move to drag their livelihoods out of the way before the governor's men smash their stalls.

**Press-Ganged:** Cassomir is surprisingly empty of the homeless due to frequent citywide raids that sweep up people for "vagabonding." Most of these unfortunates are set to rowing the ships of Taldor's corsairs, but some are forced to do manual labor in the shipyards or (if they have weapon training) as guards or servants at Grayguard Castle. The PCs could easily find themselves, especially at low levels, swept up by the Taldan Phalanx and press-ganged into a wide variety of new careers across Cassomir.

**Rowdy Sailors Return:** A crew of rowdy corsairs or the proud sailors of the Imperial Navy return to Cassomir with pockets stuffed with coin and heads full of bravado. The city always struggles to keep its own sailors under control in the districts immediately adjacent to the Imperial Naval Shipyards, and the PCs would be wise to tread carefully in any of these rowdy dockside bars and pubs.

**Seeking Adventure in Dog's Teeth:** Tarik the Unclean rules Dog's Teeth with an iron fist, but there are always those who seek to unseat Tarik and take possession of the Teeth's limited resources, effectively gaining control of the one part of the city that supplies and outfits adventurers. As such, Tarik is almost always fighting one small skirmish or another to keep control of his collection of rocky islands, and keeps positions open for those willing to swear loyalty in exchange for coin. Alternatively, the PCs could find themselves being offered a large sum of coin to help a gang remove Tarik from power once and for all.

**Street Fight:** Cassomir is a safe city, for the most part, but still possesses a vast criminal element, albeit one that operates largely in the shadows. It wouldn't be out of place for the PCs to find themselves in the middle of a dispute between two rival gangs that spilled from a warehouse or secret sewer locale into a full-blown, raging street fight.

**Time for a Joust:** Jousting tournaments and other knightly competitions are popular peacetime ways for noble knights to earn fame and coin, as well entertain for the lower classes. Certain knights with bad reputations may plan to cheat at their events, and rivals or city officials may hire the PCs to investigate.





## Chapter Two

# CORENTYN

Founded as an army outpost, and the survivor of dozens of wars, Corentyn is a military town. Central to the rise of the diabolic Chelish empire, Corentyn is an occupied ruin, a major trade center, and host to the busiest shipping lane in the known world. Both the North and South Tacks pass within Corentyn's control, and the city takes a piece of it. This money, however, is sent to Egorian, and the people of Corentyn see little of the wealth their city generates. The nobles in the capital look down their noses at the very people responsible for their prosperity and security, and the residents of Corentyn grudgingly accept this condescension.



The City of Nine Forts is inaccurately named, only because nine is too few—Corentyn boasts well over a dozen fortified buildings. Fortifications around and within the city have repelled invaders for millennia, and the defensive accretion only gets thicker with time. Scholars of history appreciate the living heritage in Corentyn, even as some of that heritage crumbles from neglect. At times, this decay opens lost passages and rooms, allowing the quick-witted (and quick-footed) to uncover old secrets even in a busy city.

In modern times, Corentyn is best known as the center of action for savvy slave traders entering the Inner Sea. Castle Gheradesca, headquarters of the Hellknight Order of the Chain, stands just outside the city, and the Hellknights ensure orderly transactions. The Corentyn blockade, combined with overpowering naval fortifications in the Hespereth strait, keep the city well protected from Andoren warships. With these measures firmly in place, slave trade is considered safe and sure behind Corentyn's walls.

As a result, the finest and most exotic slaves brought to the Inner Sea appear here first, in private and open slave auctions. Ordinary slaves pass through to more distant ports, but the most valuable ones change hands in Corentyn. In addition to the slave markets, fish, wine, and exotic goods keep the trade districts bustling.

The famous Arch of Aroden forms the city's western border, the last great vestige of a lost dedication to a dead god. Chelish diabolists control Corentyn now, and devils walk the city, the temple of Asmodeus being open to all who claim the courage to bargain for their rightful destiny.

Corentyn's armada makes the heartiest pirate blanch. The naval yard is too small to contain all the ships; the rest of the fleets roam the Inner Sea and Arcadian Ocean hunting pirates, chasing escaped slaves, and supporting Chelish endeavors. If all the ships were recalled, it is said, a body could march the 15 miles of the Hespereth strait across the decks of the Corentyn navy.

## APPEARANCE

Corentyn has an imposing but aged look. From land, the 50-foot-high, gray and brown limestone walls block sight and sound, with only the smell of the ocean betraying what's on the other side. From the sea, the city scales the hillside, revealing its architectural glory like a 2-mile tapestry.

Not surprisingly, the most prominent features in the City of Nine Forts are the many forts and bulwarks laced throughout. Walls punctuate the city at seemingly odd places, leftovers from younger days, and no fortification is considered too much in Corentyn.

Limestone cliffs and four-story buildings give newcomers to the city a feeling of vertigo. Everything seems to keep going up and up. Tall buildings clump together for structural support, allowing for few alleys. Those that do exist are narrow, gabled openings between buildings that rise to

heights of no more than a story before closing the gap. Some alleys cut across blocks, but others lead to open courtyards that sprout tall, green, flowering plants year-round.

Steep paved streets with open gutters on either side make travel a simple experience. Rain catchment systems deliver fresh water throughout the city via small aqueducts. The aqueducts are unobtrusively molded into the architecture, and provide a rooftop "footpath" across much of the city for the nimble. The city has no true sewer, but long, deep trenches carry waste from several parts of the city down to the sea.

Modern homes and galleries in the Noble Quarters and Easttown tend to mimic the gothic marble and intense ornamentation of Egorian, but most other buildings are decorated with architectural flourish rather than filigree. Stone facades, sweeping arches, simple corners, and gently sloping roofs define the look of common buildings. Residences used to be painted bright, eye-popping colors, but in the last 50 years, color has faded. Some houses remain brightly colored, but many more have peeling paint, or bare gray stone. Enormous sums of money flow into Corentyn's treasury, but a huge percentage of it flows back out into the navy. This leaves little for civil works, which explains the continued ruins in a city perched on the richest trading route in the known world.

**East Drenches:** Closer to the Noble Quarters and Manor District, this section caters to rich and more romantic clientele. Highly specialized shops carry unique wares, while small museums and reading rooms peek from in between, along with unstaffed courtesy shrines to non-infernal deities. An unspoken code requiring fine clothes and temperate behavior is observed, and guards here require little provocation to escort unsuitable visitors away. Most establishments in either of the Drenches can be reached on foot, but singing ferriers pole flat-bottomed "bridgebarges" around the canals for those with coin.

**Easttown:** Below the High Quarter, and east of the Noble Quarter, this collection of houses and squares is occupied by well-to-do traders and various gentry who settled in Corentyn. The relatively wide streets are cobbled, and squares feature fountains and statuary.

**Gallows Walls:** This section of the city is mostly rubble, and the gates to it are chained shut. When the diabolists took over, a particularly zealous group of devil-worshippers rounded up a large number of priests who remained loyal to Aroden and sacrificed them en masse to Asmodeus. People now claim to hear weird sounds and ghastly shrieks coming from here on dark nights.

**High Quarter:** The northern section of the city is home to tradesfolk, fishers, farmers, vintners, sailors, and more, living together in cramped but clean houses. Shops, pubs, and civil offices occupy this quarter, as well as a fair amount of rubble from tumbledown buildings. Priests run hidden churches to other gods here, in addition to the bombastic temples of Asmodeus.





**Mercanto:** The largest and richest trading houses have shops here on the waterfront, selling gems and jewelry, rugs, furniture, fine clothes, perfumes, spices, magic items, spells, and more. Slaves are on sale daily in the Open Slave Market located right on the central docks.

**Navy Yard and Ship Yard:** Ships are built, berthed, and repaired in these protected docks. The fortified posts make it exceptionally difficult for any unwelcome ship to get within a mile of the harbor.

**The Noble Quarters:** An ancient city wall cleaves the noble section, creating an artificial east/west distinction, such that this quarter is considered two districts. Older families have west-quarter houses, but the Archheathen's Manor is in the east quarter. This subtle rivalry swirls beneath every other current in Corentyn noble life.

**Slave Quarter:** Most slaves in Corentyn work the docks, and few owners have room for all of their slaves at home. Thus, slaves are housed together in these slums in the shadow of the Arch. Hellknights keep watch, but most slaves are too broken to consider escape or uprising. Precipitous cliffs over rocky waters discourage wandering off, and walls prevent anyone from entering or leaving the Slave Quarter after curfew.

**The Jut:** This thin finger of land forms the harbor's east wing. Here, the academy and barracks train and house young sailors and new officers. Special units also operate from here, including the wizard fellowship and manticores squads.

**Trade Quarter:** Sprawling across the entire harbor, this quarter encompasses four districts (Mercanto, East Drenches, the Warehouse District, and West Drenches). Two are partly subsumed by the sea, creating canals where roads once sloped down to boat slips.

**Warehouse District:** The largest merchant houses in town store goods in this collection of boxy stone buildings. The south side of the district is a deep dock well, where even large galleons can sidle up for unloading.

**West Drenches:** Appealing to sailors, artists, and bon vivants, this is the only part of town with wooden buildings. Various unsavory dealings happen here, day or night. The taverns and brothels are dirty but organized, and even relatively safe, as Chelias has no problem regulating and enforcing laws around debauchery. Food markets are also found here by the water.

## HISTORY

Corentyn predates Chelias, established in 1520 AR by General Coren, leader of Taldor's Third Army of Exploration. Coren secured the western tip of Avistan, and the neck of the Inner Sea, for the glory of Taldor. He established what some called excessive earthworks among the scarps to make the post "forever indomitable."

Corentyn was a staunch military outpost, even as a lively fishing town began to dig into the cliffs among the fortresses. Not quite 200 years later, the famed General Khastalus sailed back east to secure Taldor's western border, and took lessons on fortification and militarization with him to found Augustana.

Following the expulsion of clerics from Rahadoum in 2555 AR, thousands of holy men and women fled across the strait to Corentyn. This sudden abundance of religious fervor and indignation compelled Lord Kevid Chemoch to initiate a hasty

public works program to build a bridge across the strait back to Garund, as a tribute to almighty Aroden. (This had the unwitting side effect of establishing Corentyn as an outlet for slave labor, though many considered themselves righteous servants rather than slaves). Aroden's church insisted on

over-fortifying the bridge (never a hard sell in Corentyn) should the heathens attempt to invade—which happened more than once until Chelias claimed Kharijite during the Everwar. The bridge was finished in 2606, just in time to celebrate the bimillennial countdown to Aroden's prophesied reappearance. The city remained a site of religious pilgrimage for over a thousand years after the Arch's completion.

Though time has been unkind to the bridge, the Arch ultimately served its purpose, spanning both the physical and theological gap between Rahadoum's insistent godlessness and the self-proclaimed "people of Aroden." The monument's magnitude also redirected a wounded zeal that nearly turned Corentyn into a staging ground for strikes at Rahadoum (a detail which Corentyn nobles feel elders in Azir have never fully appreciated).

When Chelias was formally chartered in the mid-1900s, Corentyn's strategic importance was considered vital to the nation's sovereignty, a value borne out repeatedly. Most devastating was the Battle of a Hundred Kings in 4639, the decisive battle in the Chelish civil war following Aroden's death. Thrune forces, bolstered by devils, commanded the Corentyn forts, repelling simultaneous attacks from House Davian's army and a naval assault backed by the Sargavan treasury. This battle was Davian's death throes, and Thrune had little trouble cementing its victory in the following year, creating the diabolical Chelias known today.

Unfortunately, Corentyn has yet to fully recover from the wounds sustained in that battle. The city's mighty fortresses remain pitted and cragged. Walls crumble in places, and whole sections of the city are rubble. Little new construction has occurred outside the naval yard in the past hundred years, and a centuries-old struggle to reclaim the Drenches from flooding has been abandoned.



Through the city's 3,200 year history, no outside force has ever conquered its high walls and rough cliff faces. Some have begun to wonder if neglect will accomplish what no invader could.

## SOCIETY

Corentyn society splits into three groups, who have little overlap. Their worlds occasionally collide, but when they have a choice, these three elements of Corentyn society remain separate.

### Commoners

The commoner in Corentyn is hard working and taciturn. You rarely hear Corentyners complain—but outsiders rarely hear much from them at all. Harsh law enforcement makes them distrustful of anything that might bring attention. “Better the devil looks away,” is a common Corentyn admonition not to draw attention to yourself, and a mindset that permeates the High Quarter. It’s why competent stonemasons walk by ruined buildings every day and do nothing to fix them. And because the High Quarter contains all the necessities for life, this attitude is why some residents, especially the elderly, never leave; these people can barely describe the harbor, half a mile down the hill.

In oppression, religions thrive, and most gods have a pocket of believers in Corentyn. The ones with organized worship communities include Erastil, Abadar, Iomedae, Torag, Milani, and Aroden. Long before diabolism ascended, Corentyn was a pilgrimage site for Aroden worshipers. Not even Aroden’s death has killed his worship in Corentyners, but it has warped into a set of superstitions native to Corentyn (see the sidebar on page 22). Most common and native Corentyners wear protective charms and wave hand signals to ward off evil, all rooted in the Aroden worship of centuries ago, and when a Corentyn swears by the Arch, he means to follow through.

### Nobles

Ignorant nobles and outsiders can be forgiven for thinking that swearing by the Arch has to do with the Archheathen, lord of the city. When Corentyn’s mayor capitulated to diabolism more than 70 years ago, the Aroden priests cursed him as an “arch-heathen, sworn to destroy the city from within.” This damnation resounded throughout the city. To blunt it, subsequent mayors adopted the name as a badge of honor. Today, it’s part of the official title.

**Archheathen Kettermaul Charthagnion** (NE male human aristocrat 5/fighter 2) is the current lord, a handsome, muscular, dark-haired man. A former captain in the Corentyn navy, he is an able administrator with a rich voice and hearty laugh. Even his enemies describe him as “despicable, yet likeable.” Kettermaul maintains power in the new, “traditional” Chelish way—by making bargains with various devils. He maintains a professional friendship with **Lictor Uro Adom**

(LE male human fighter 4/ranger 2) of the Order of the Chain, and wields the political pull to influence, if not outright control, the Hellknights in town. Kettermaul is frequently accompanied by his gelugon advisor, **Oronothos**, in public. The two have adjoining offices in the Archheathen’s Manor, one of a cluster of government buildings overlooking the harbor. The Archheathen is an excellent dancer, and never misses an opportunity to attend noble balls on the social calendar, though he finds most noble pursuits wearisome. These dances are also the only occasions he is seen with his wife, **Iridelia** (NE female human aristocrat 4). Theirs is a political marriage; they sleep in separate rooms, often with separate lovers. The nobles fight for their attention nonetheless, as infighting seems to be their primary occupation.

While infrequent, it is not unheard of for nobles to walk with their devil servitors in the open. Commoners try to avoid looking at them, but many city merchants have come to see devils as yet another business opportunity. Some foreigners become so enamored with the devils’ trading prowess that they become true believers in Asmodeus. Others attempt to keep transactions strictly money-based, as diabolists try to insert “favors” and “extras” into increasingly complex agreements.

Corentyn is unfashionable in Chelish high society. Nevertheless, all major noble houses maintain residences here, though most are occupied by only commoner staff for most of the year. (Out-of-favor family members occasionally slum it here through the warm winters.) Corentyn is a traditional summer vacation spot for nobles, so families breeze through at least once a year, and smaller, local nobles try to keep up.

### Traders and Military

Rich citizens without noble title or land make up an unusually large percentage of Corentyn’s population. A few trading houses in Easttown rival the noble houses for grandeur, and extended naval service is an excellent way to gain standing and wealth. More than one Easttown resident started in the High Quarter, and then made his or her fortune in the navy. Other rich outsiders move to Corentyn for the brisk ocean air and moderate climate. More than one nonhuman resident lives well in the courtyards and mansions of Easttown.

Compulsory naval service awaits every young adult citizen of Corentyn. The city mandates 2 years of service, but many sailors stay on longer, for the adventure and prestige that come with being part of the Corentyn navy. Children with arcane aptitude are apprenticed to a member of the wizard’s lodge, the Esoterium, led by **Zilthuras Demestrio** (LE male human aristocrat 1/wizard 8).

Wizardry is rightfully respected by the diabolists, and thus tightly controlled. The Esoterium is more of a club than a guild, made up principally of naval officers and ex-officers. Club members have high standards of behavior, but rely on social pressure to ensure conformity rather than express law. Wizards who are “the wrong sort” and unintellectual sorcerers

are simply not asked to join. By city law, nonmembers are prohibited from casting any spell more complex than cantrips within 5 miles of the Esoterium Lodge. Violators have their spellbooks burned, while sorcerous violators have their hands broken. It is customary to inform spellcasting visitors of this particular law, whether they arrive by the roads or the docks.

Challenging authority is so harshly punished in Cheliox that most people don't even try. The vigilant navy sets the tone for visitors, and Hellknights instill a healthy respect in all who walk the city streets. This leaves little authority for the town guard to wield. Problems of any complexity are quickly addressed by more powerful entities, leaving the town guard lazy and slightly corrupt. They can effectively police a discouraged populace, and the threat of elevating the stakes quells rebelliousness in normal visitors. Adventurers, however, used to seizing initiative from the jaws of beasts, find the town guard astonishingly incompetent at law enforcement. Thus, once in the city, dedicated troublemakers find it relatively easy to get away with low-profile mischief.

The upside to all this heavy-handedness is that the city is quite safe at night, even in bad parts of town. There is no general curfew, but the town guard questions anyone on the streets after dark, and are quick to summon Hellknights if real problems manifest.

## RELATIONS

Due to its placement on the heavily traveled Inner Sea, Corentyn is nearly everyone's trading partner eventually. Most think of Port Indomitable (as some foreigners call it) as the devil they know. No trader enjoys paying the stiff Inner Sea Access Tariff, but Corentyn blockade captains are at least predictable and consistent, and the threat of piracy nearly evaporates east of the Arch (though Chelish privateers are another matter).

The province of Kharijite on the south end of the Arch trades daily with the city. The settlements there, including Khari, treat Corentyn as their unofficial capital. Cogs and dinghies traverse the strait from sunup to sundown, carrying passengers and cargo. Official ferry boats hoist a black-and-red sail. Unofficial "scutters" are tolerated, though they suffer harassment from navy ships, and pay high docking fees on the Corentyn side.

Rahadom appears to harbor no resentment for the Chelish occupation of Kharijite. Relations are neutral, and trade is brisk. Cheliox is Rahadom's most lawful, least hostile neighbor, and Corentyn is Cheliox's face. Philosophies aside, the godless can ill afford to make enemies of the diabolists, who use this reality to proper advantage.

Fistfights and graffiti bloom in the Western Drenches every time Andoren

sailors take liberty here. Regardless, Andoren traders are too numerous and profitable to ban. Corentyn's dim welcome drives some Andoren traders down the South Tack, but others pay the docking fees just to tweak the diabolists' noses—and smuggle slaves to freedom. Andoren warships dare not venture so deep into Chelish waters just to pick fights with the Corentyn armada, but a trickle of slaves disappears with nearly every departing Andoren ship, an expensive embarrassment for the harbor master and slave owners.

Pirates all over the Arcadian Ocean have a binding hatred for Corentyn, and the feeling is mutual. Shackles captains put aside feuds to assault a Corentyn vessel together. Riddleport pirates and Ulfen plunderers from the Lands of





Linnorm Kings are ill-equipped to fight, but still try to slip the blockade to raid on the Inner Sea. In response, Corentyn skullcrushers—specialized pirate-hunting frigates—patrol as far north as the Hellmouth, and as far south as Botosani. No quarter is expected or given when they meet their quarry. Skullcrushers carry a minimum of eight siege weapons and a crew wizard dedicated to fast, pyrotechnic conflict resolution. Inner Sea pirates rarely threaten Corentyn, and regret it when they do. Their removal is left to the Ostenso admiralty.

Respected, perhaps even admired, by foreigners for its might and stability, Corentyn suffers the disregard of its fellow Chelaxians. Egorian was rebuilt with red-veined black marble after the war, but Chelish coffers are closed to help repair Corentyn's crumbling walls. Ostenso has grand, opulent docks; the docks here are cramped and crowded by slave trade. Westcrown and Kintargo revel in resplendent culture, while the militarism and precarious topography of Corentyn prevent it from becoming a cosmopolitan seaport.

Thus, jaded Chelish nobles think of Corentyners as backwater provincials: stiff, superstitious, and wedded to the sea. They drink Corentyn wine, but mock the unadorned labels. The locals accept these snubs with bitter forbearance. The slights are worse, they tell themselves, since Corentyn enables the rest of Chelixa to enjoy the opulence they import.

Furthermore, Archheathen Kettermaul Charthagnion, who should be the pride of his line, has fallen out of favor with his mother's branch of the family for apostasy. Though still a willing servant of Asmodeus who attends temple functions as appropriate, he no longer honors the Prince of Darkness as a matter of religion. The devils consider this a semantic quibble, at best. He and Oronothos have come to an agreement over this matter privately, and it does not inhibit his administration of the city. If this matter were to become public knowledge, however, it might force the Archheathen's resignation.

Despite feelings of inferiority, Corentyn is hardly the weak sister. Westcrown suffers similar imperial neglect, and Corentyn fares considerably better in its self-sufficiency. While the bulk of wealth passes through Corentyn to enrich more eastern cities, ships seldom pass Corentyn completely, as they may Westcrown. And though Ostenso's navy is larger and more impressive, their crews are less disciplined, and on the whole, less battle-ready than the Corentyn armada.

This internecine jockeying is largely invisible to Chelish commoners, who find plenty to engage the senses in Corentyn. The trade districts are a delight, fresh fish are plentiful and varied, the slave markets are free entertainment, and the small arena in the Mercanto has exotic bloodsport for those inclined to splurge for tickets.

## SITES OF INTEREST

Corentyn has many interesting locations, despite its age and ever-present disrepair.

**The Arch of Aroden:** Perhaps the largest man-made landmark in Avistan, this bridge is one of the great sights of the city, and sunrises over it are especially spectacular. Artists set up easels on rooftops most mornings, and oil paintings of this sight are common souvenirs for visitors. **Azaneta** (LN female tiefling expert 6) is an Easttown artist who gets on her roof every morning to paint the sunrise, no matter the weather. Azaneta sees lots of other things that go on in the city from her easel, and is a good source of information.

Outside the walls, walking paths run up and down the cliff slopes, leading to tiny inlets, fishing spots, and farms. Native monkeys live on the cliffs, eating grubs, berries, and whatever they can beg from passersby. One of them, Chukker, is the animal companion of **Teshka Longmoor** (CN female ranger 4), a Garundi rover who squats in a ruined house in the High Quarter. For less than the tariff cost, Teshka helps smugglers get small items in and out of the city with no fuss. She navigates the steep, winding trails with ease, and knows where to put in boats around the shoreline to draw minimal notice. Anyone in search of a guide to help them get something out of the city is told to go there among the monkeys, and call out to "Chukker." If Teshka wants to talk after that, she'll find you.

**Enkpuruk's Emporium:** This store in the East Drenches sells oddities and curios from around the world and is open 6 days a week for public viewing. The proprietor, **Enkpuruk Wanderfarther** (N male gnome bard 2/expert 2) roams Golarion half the year in search of additions to his collection, while his wives **Tama**, **Erj**, **Zula**, **Giso**, and **Fash** (N female gnome experts 1) operate the Emporium in his absence. Enkpuruk prides himself on the authenticity of his pieces, especially his collection of real Osirion mummies.

**Gallows Walls:** This section of the city is thought to be haunted, but is not; it is actually demon-infested. Dozens of demons are bound within this section of the city by diabolist tormentors who enjoy keeping them locked up, like an abyssal zoo. The binding also keeps them invisible, and in a confused state. A hamatula called **Molkur** watches over Gallows Walls with a pair of magical lenses that allow it to see invisible creatures. An entrapped babau named **Nagirte** has lately taken to tapping coded messages on the walls of buildings overlooking the West Drenches in his clear-headed moments. People in the area remember hearing the tapping, but no one has yet put together that it might be an attempt to communicate.

**Henderthane's Armory:** This understated shop sells only masterwork or magical arms and armor. **Curidon Henderthane** (LE male human aristocrat 4/fighter 2) of House Henderthane is the exclusive supplier of fine swords to Corentyn officers, and his blades are widely reputed to be the best weapons in Corentyn. Curidon rarely deals directly with small purchases, but his chief saleswoman, **Tiziana Arkala** (LN female human expert 2) is happy to assist interested buyers. When Tiziana meets someone of unusual character or competence, that's when Curidon gets involved. Curidon frequently needs some

bloody work (whether thuggery or outright assassination to discourage a rival or encourage a debtor) around Cheliox and neighboring nations to help his business along, and he loves meeting new prospects who can't be easily traced back to him. Even morally upright adventurers can be tempted when Curidon asks them to remove an evil "obstacle."

**Honor Shop:** For low-profile shopping, **Vuminia Elesperi** (N female human expert 2) runs this business in the West Drenches, which sells basic adventuring equipment and leads on how to find specialized goods. Vuminia is comfortable with illegalities, but is clearly risk-averse. She can tell adventurers where to go to find black market items, but she won't show the way unless they make it worth her time.

**The Labor Market:** This plaza in the West Drenches is a place to find hired help of all sorts; a constant wash of underemployed talent flows here between shipments from the docks. A small amphitheater and an arena in the nearby Mercanto are available to test the prowess of potential hirelings. **Cataldo Enzerio** (NG male half-elf bard 5), an old, easygoing soul with a home in Easttown, serves as the touch point for many vagabond workers. Cataldo doesn't go in for adventurous shenanigans anymore, and won't be much help to PCs looking to start something, but one of his hirelings might be up for it.

**The Museum of History:** This is a large building in the High Quarter, a converted courthouse from days when justice was less quickly determined. In contrast to the surrounding buildings, the museum is in fine repair, and houses artifacts from Corentyn's illustrious history, revised by the current infernal regime. **Zefiro Balinger** (N male human expert 4) is the curator and director of the museum. Balinger cares little for good or evil, but as one of the closeted Arodenite faithful, he cares very much for preserving history. When asked to revise history books to flatter the diabolists, he instead forges new books, and hides the originals in the museum cellar. A pair of Chelaxians from the Imperial Ministry of Historical Accuracy have come back asking questions about the forgeries recently, and Zefiro feels a trap closing around him. Whatever happens to him, he wants the originals taken to an associate for safekeeping in the Wise Quarter in Absalom.

**The North Vineyards:** The fruit of these vines to the north of the city create sweet-yet-tart wines, well regarded throughout Cheliox. The secret is grafting an assassin vine to a domestic grapevine. When done properly, the hybrid vine is immobile and weak as a child. Certain strains have grown stronger over the years, though, carrying more traits of their wild ancestors. These wilder strains make undeniably better wine, but harvesting the grapes has begun to require a sickle and a quick step. Not all slaves know this before being sent into the vineyard.

**Obelisk Gardens:** For reasons no one remembers, the traditional gift for visiting dignitaries to bring to Corentyn is an obelisk. Obelisks of rare ore from around the world decorate all parts of the city. The largest and grandest find

## The Nine Forts

Although Corentyn has more than nine forts, the classical listing consists of the following.

**1. Aroden's Redoubt:** This precariously crumbling fortress was the first line of defense against Garundi invasion. The bridge is collapsing under it, and not even historical tours go there any more.

**2. Obrand's Stand:** This castle has great, soaring walls that extend above the city, providing a mile of space for archers to fire on attackers. No invader has ever breached this fort.

**3. Castle Tiapetra:** The five central towers of this wall fortress fly five Cheliox flags in the stiff, salt wind. The buildings are all converted to stables for noble horses, and visitors can stable their mounts here too, for a nominal fee.

**4. Archheathen's Garrison:** One of the clump of buildings dedicated to city administration, this fort houses secret tunnels that run out to buildings all over the eastern Noble Quarter.

**5. Castle Belverio:** This partially ruined fortress has been rebuilt so many times that no one understands why its towers are in their current configuration.

**6. Castle Issonno:** Most foot traffic comes through here, and travels through Easttown and the Noble quarter down to the harbor.

**7. Seaward Fort:** Built on one of the numerous rocky outcroppings that forms Corentyn's harbor, this currently serves as the head of naval command.

**8. Dhoffram Keep:** This was the former lord's residence in Corentyn, before the rise of the House of Thrune. Now it's used solely by the Church of Asmodeus. What goes on inside, they do not tell. Zelkie Park outside the keep is open to all, but few citizens frequent it.

**9. The Penitentiary:** Originally a prison designed for solitary confinement, where prisoners could reflect on their wrongs in silence, this fort is now used to hold visitors dragged out of the West Drenches for minor disturbances, as well as a repository for confiscated religious relics.

a home in the Obelisk Gardens along the Steep Way and in front of the History Museum in the High Quarter. The Gardens are a collection of indigenous plants, growing on and around the plinths which support the obelisks. Some Gardens pieces are carved with Jistkan writing, much older than the city itself.

**The Open Slave Market:** This grim place is located right off the docks; visitors arriving by boat cannot miss it. The sharp-tongued auctioneer, **Cordonikus Mastrich** (NE male human aristocrat 2) has an impressive network of buyers and sellers from across the known world, and canny slave brokers

## Ten Superstitions of Corentyn Commoners

*Birds mean change is coming.* Flocks of birds flying overhead are seen as a sign of change. Birds in a tree nearby mean good change for the viewer.

*Fist to forehead.* Touching your fist to your forehead is an abjuration ward, symbolizing Aroden's protection against anything from thieves to something as cataclysmic as the *Starstone* falling again.

*Five is good, six is bad.* The origin of this numerological superstition is lost, but most commoners avoid traveling in groups of six, or buying half-dozen items.

*Garundi ashore, bolt your door.* A long-standing, irrational distrust of Garundi people remains, probably based on the Arch's double-walled fortifications that prevented their invasion.

*Keep an eye-carved coin.* Some Corentyners carve a human eye on a round coin for good luck. This is probably a bastardization of Aroden's symbol.

*Linen for sickness.* Linen is thought to have medicinal properties, as the loose cloth allows sickness to escape. The congenitally ill sometimes have entire wardrobes of linen clothes.

*The monkeys protect us.* The monkeys on the cliffs around the city are thought to be minor spirits who watch over Corentyn. Hurting one hurts the city.

*Shoes off at the door.* Wearing shoes into the home is said to bring trouble into your house. On a practical note, it also keeps the house cleaner.

*Stars steal your cares.* When looking up at a starry night, it's said that the stars above will take your worries if you give them away.

*Water tells the truth.* The sea has always brought good things to Corentyn, and water is viewed as a good omen and a harbinger of honesty. A water elemental would probably be viewed as a sign of divinity.

purchase prime slaves from him for resale inland. The most valuable and rarest slaves (such as certain monsters or foreign royalty) are offered in private auction. His two chief slavers, **Tyren Melmadas** (NE male human fighter 3) and **Ganarg** (NE male human barbarian 2) keep a lid on uppity slaves, but know to call in the Hellknights to restrain unruly customers. Tyren is particularly useful, since he speaks five languages and understands several more.

**The Roiling Den:** This block of hollowed-out buildings in southeastern Jut houses two full prides of manticores under the keeping of **Lieutenant Frazura Antelo** (LE male human ranger 5). Antelo seems to have a natural affinity for communicating with manticores, and is a loyal servant of Corentyn and Chelias. Like his charges he is fierce and prone to violent outburst. The manticores spend most

days lazing in their den, but occasionally launch north to hunt in the Anferita Woods. Since a dozen circling manticores tends to unnerve the populace, everyone is fine with this arrangement. No one dares ride these beasts, but they spring to defend the city at Antelo's behest, attacking ships from out of the sun. Naturalists deem it impossible for Antelo to control the manticores so well without magical compulsion, but the lieutenant swears otherwise. He teaches his precepts to an apprentice, **Caraldo Thadei** (LE male human ranger 2) who often bears substantial bruises and cuts—not necessarily from the manticores. Both serve in the navy, although the Den enjoys considerable autonomy.

**The Third Wish Inn:** Those looking for finer accommodations should visit this place in the East Drenches. **Pfello Indergrast** (N male human aristocrat 1/expert 1) claims to trace his lineage back to old Chelish nobility, but his story of his family's poor fortune is so wandering and tedious that only history buffs pay attention after the first 30 seconds. His wife, **Shilandra** (N female human expert 1), rescues patrons quickly, and provides comfortable rooms and hot food. The price is expensive, but the accommodations are worth the money.

**The Wicked Fork:** This rough tavern and inn is symbolized by a trident with the central tine broken off. It is located in the West Drenches, run by its talkative, balding proprietor, **Neld Havasavu** (N male human commoner 2). Neld only stops jawing when an official Corentyn presence steps into his tavern, whereupon he begins embarrassing amounts of fawning. Neld knows, or knows about, nearly everyone in town, and is happy to help anyone make connections of any kind. However, Neld has little loyalty, and if aware of any misconduct by the PCs, he sells them out at the first sign of trouble.

## ENCOUNTERS

The following encounters are all appropriate for Corentyn.

**Checkpoint:** Corentyn harbormaster **Simoneto Fosca** (N male human expert 3) spot-checks ships entering or leaving port for contraband and assorted impropriety. The old tangle of harbor laws is detailed in the thick book in his office on Harbormaster Island, but Fosca has enough of it memorized that he rarely needs to consult. Off the top of his head, Fosca can usually find at least one infraction on a ship. The harbormaster and his deputies also enforce the city regulations (as he finds the town guard is useless for this). Most infractions are punishable by fine. Undeclared goods are impounded, and those worth more than a gold piece are punishable by 20 lashes on deck for the offending captain and anyone found in possession of the goods. Fugitive slaves result in a branding for the slave, seizure of the ship, and potential mutilation or execution of the captain and conspirators, depending on severity. Anyone fleeing Fosca is assumed to be guilty.



**Death on Lion's Wings:** A flock of hieracosphinxes (evil, bird-headed sphinxes) has built a nest on the underside of the south end of the Arch of Aroden, and feeds primarily on gulls. They skirt the city to avoid the manticores of the Roiling Den, but they shred sails and occasionally kill a sailor on watch in a crow's nest. The sphinx nests are tucked out of sight, invisible from below, and rooting them out would either require a flying assault or a climbing approach from the top of the Arch, a dangerous task for which no one has yet volunteered.

**Drunken Eagle:** A reputable blacksmith, **Urdu Gravelhands** (N male human rogue 4), runs a small forge in Easttown, making horseshoes and household items. He lives alone, and often strolls down to the Drenches to drink at various swillhouses with anyone handy. The town guard knows him for his propensity to drunkenly wander town after dark; they do not know he is actually a Twilight Talon (a spy for the Eagle Knights of Andoran) with the alcohol tolerance of an ogre and a convincing souse act. Urdu is the main contact for Andoren liberators working Corentyn. The Hellknights would pay richly to learn who keeps sneaking slaves out on their watch.

**Enslaved Fey:** A nymph named **Honeylocke** is for sale at the Open Slave Market, handled by a blind slave. Ropes and Hellknights keep all viewers at least 40 feet away to prevent blindness. A tense bidding war is on for her between a corpulent, fur-clad Katapeshi trader with a retinue of slave pursers, and a lascivious Chelish noble accompanied by an erinyes. A crowd has gathered to watch the action, but no one seems concerned for the nymph's well-being.

**Festival Rebellion:** In the late-summer month of Arodus, Corentyn hosts a week-long *Armasse* festival—originally dedicated to Aroden, now known for raucous celebration. The celebratory aspect of the *Armasse* festival has long outshone any religious significance it had, so the diabolists pay it little mind. However, **Aligreza Tansuro** (NG female human cleric of Milani 4), a charismatic priestess, believes the best time to foment an uprising will be during next *Armasse*. She plans to announce her church to the revelers, who will join her in spontaneous revolution. However, Aligreza has been in hiding for so long she no longer understands the political climate outside the High Quarter. Although she is willing to martyr herself, her plan will bring violent repercussions on hundreds of innocents in the High Quarter, and cancel *Armasse* for the foreseeable future.

**Healing from Hell:** Though some may find the source distasteful, healing and restoration are available from the church of Asmodeus in town, and many sick and wounded people turn to the Lord of Hell in their hour of need. Healing spells are offered to outsiders at a 50% discount over normal spell prices to encourage visiting the Asmodean temple rather than others, though priests may also ask uncomfortable questions about how certain wounds were sustained.

**A Little Friend:** The head of the Thin Wisps (the city's thieves' guild) is **Kantha Elvignon** (N female halfling rogue

7). A freed slave, she seeks out new halflings or rogues who come to town (especially attractive males), and lets them know the "situation" as a professional courtesy. Wisp thieves—and only Wisp thieves—operate under city auspices. They pay taxes and percentages as any guild would. In exchange, Wisp thieves receive only cursory punishment when caught in the act. Wisps identify themselves by leaving a chalk drawing of a ghost at the scene of the crime. Rogues with business in town might convince Kantha to extend temporary guild membership in exchange for full disclosure of roguish activities and a cut of the take. Those who don't shoot straight with Kantha get guild privileges revoked with prejudice.

**Marked for Trouble:** When the PCs' ship approaches the Corentyn harbor, it is ordered to stop and boarded by **Captain Telmarek Vaedith** (LN male human fighter 2/expert 2) of the Corentyn ship *Cormorant*. Captain Vaedith asks the PCs' captain a series of standard questions about the ship's origin, destination, intent in Corentyn, length of stay, passengers, and cargo. Vaedith is curt, but not rude. He expects deference and gets it from knowledgeable sea captains. If any PCs on deck appear strange or belligerent, he asks them the same questions about their personal intent. Anyone who answers inappropriately is splashed with bright blue marker dye (see page 213 of the *Pathfinder Chronicles Campaign Setting*) before Vaedith leaves the ship. The dye marks "troublemakers." Anyone marked is watched closely by town guards, and suffers a -4 penalty to all Bluff, Diplomacy, Intimidate, and Perform skill checks in Corentyn. Picking a fight with Captain Vaedith is sufficient cause for denying port to the entire ship.

**Tellers of Tales:** The Talers are a collection of eight or more imps (no one is sure how many) who lurk on rooftops and watch. They don't admit to having names, and they don't have lairs. They just lurk, picking up stories and secrets of the city. They'll tell them to anyone who asks, but require a personal secret of the asker, commensurate with the magnitude of the secret the Taler reveals. Before talking to a Taler, be warned: as easily as he talks to you, he'll talk to anyone else. And once you bring yourself to a Taler's attention, he'll watch you all the more closely after.

**Terror in the Dark:** Several packs of yeth hounds have found their way from the Outer Sphere and now prowl the southern end of the Anferita Woods. They stalk the farms and vineyards north of the city in search of prey on moonless nights, and their howls terrify the farmers and High Quarter citizens. The city's resident devils find it all very amusing.

**Unusual Suspects:** Barrels in the Warehouse District keep disappearing, and the PCs, either because they were seen near there, or because they're obvious foreigners, are fingered as the culprits. This accusation comes to light only when the PCs are out doing something else they shouldn't have been doing. The accuser is anonymous, but the Hellknights following up are not. The PCs need to think quickly to develop a suitable alibi or find the real thieves to clear their names.



**Chapter Three**

# ILIZMAGORTI

Called the Scum Tide City by the “civilized” nations of Golarion, Ilizmagorti is known to the pirates and scoundrels who frequent her docks as the Black Pearl of the Tropics. That duality defines the city, and is present in almost all aspects of life in the thriving port town. Ilizmagorti is a cesspool that collects the dregs of society, giving them a place to live out their sordid and brutish lives, but some of the most lucrative trade south of the Arch of Aroden passes through its harbor. Its mysterious location is only hinted at on most maps and charts, yet every pirate captain worth the bounty on his head knows the hidden routes that will take his ship there.



Past jagged reefs and treacherous shoals, Ilizmagorti lies on the secluded island of Mediogalti just northwest of the undying hurricane called the Eye of Abendego. Home of the deadly Red Mantis assassins, Ilizmagorti is also a pirate stronghold second only to the Shackles in strength. Its deep lagoon harbors pirate ships that raid the shipping lanes from Varisia to Rahadoum, as well as more mundane merchantmen from across Golarion. Ilizmagorti's azure waters are also home to reefclaws, devilfish, and the Kaneano, a mysterious tribe of shark-men that hunt among the outlying reefs and islets.

Beyond the city's walls, the jungles of Mediogalti teem with all manner of dangers, from hazardous quicksands and carnivorous plants to kobolds, lizardfolk, monkey goblins, girallons, weretigers, and dinosaurs. Ilizmagorti's taverns are full of tales of buried treasure and lost pirate tombs waiting to be plundered by brave fortune hunters in the island's interior. And deep within the jungle, its location a carefully guarded secret known only to members of the sect, stands the Crimson Citadel, headquarters of the Red Mantis.

Wild and unpredictable, the streets and quays of Ilizmagorti are rife with pirates, assassins, harlots, sellswords, and scoundrels from all walks of life. Danger lies right around the corner, menace swims just beneath the surface, and death lurks in the rank jungles beyond its walls, but the city of Ilizmagorti holds the promise of adventure like no other. For a city locked in the grip of an international cabal of feared assassins, its citizens enjoy almost limitless freedoms. A visitor can meet his end at the point of a bloody knife in a darkened alley, or he can rise to the heights of wealth and influence. At its heart, Ilizmagorti is a city of unbounded possibility.

## APPEARANCE

Once through the numerous islets, sandbars, and reefs that guard the approaches to Ilizmagorti, visitors sail past the city's never-used lighthouse, perched atop Mayor's Island in the middle of the sole inlet into Ilizmagorti's harbor. Entering the lagoon, the fresh salt air of the open sea gives way to the reek of fish, booze, and unwashed humanity, with an undercurrent of rotting vegetation mixed with the heady perfume of exotic jungle flowers. Beyond the gardened islands of the Three Sisters, the lagoon is packed with all manner of ships, most flying the skull and crossbones of outlaw pirate crews.

Dozens of docks and piers line the shores of the lagoon, forming Ilizmagorti's almost circular waterfront district, known as the Wharves. Along with ramshackle warehouses, the majority of the city's taverns, brothels, and flophouses are located in the Wharves, servicing the sailors who come ashore. Most of the buildings in the Wharves are made of wood, but beyond the docks, such wooden construction gives way to more sturdy buildings of stone and adobe brick, all surrounded by

a wall of yellow sandstone that keeps the jungle at bay. Where the city has spread outside its walls, construction once more reverts to native jungle woods.

Ilizmagorti is not divided into any official districts, but the city's residents and the pirates who visit it have given certain quarters unofficial nicknames that over time have stuck.

**Dandy:** To the east is Dandy, named for the wealthy merchants and pirate lords whose lavish palazzos and villas line the canals of the district.

**Mainmast:** North of Dandy is Mainmast, the commercial center of Ilizmagorti. Most of the city's trade takes place here, and a variety of shops and merchant houses line the streets. Mainmast also contains the Blood Circus, Ilizmagorti's famed arena, where nightly gladiatorial combats and blood sports draw audiences from across the city.

**Medina:** The Old Bridge over the Silt River leads west to the Medina, Ilizmagorti's old town, a confusing maze of narrow streets, some less than 3 feet wide, peppered with tiny courtyards and fountains. This was the first part of Ilizmagorti settled, and its dark, twisting alleys harbor countless dens of criminals and worse—a place even more dangerous to visit at night.

**Alcasar:** The Medina curves eastward until it reaches the Alcasar, Ilizmagorti's main market square, which lies just under the walls of Ilizmagorti's fortress. This fort overlooks the Red River and is commonly called "Sawtooth Keep" by residents. The citadel is the headquarters of the Blood Watch, whose crimson-armored soldiers patrol the city's streets and man the walls in case of attack.

**Redshore:** Ilizmagorti's primary residential district lies to the south across the Red River, connected to the Alcasar by Yardarm Bridge, where convicted criminals are hanged in plain view of the entire city.

**Bilges:** Southeast of Redshore lies the Bilges, Ilizmagorti's slums, where the truly destitute eke out what existence they can on an island separated from the rest of the city by wide canals. The Arsenal, on the eastern shore of the Bilges, houses the small fleet of ships that make up Ilizmagorti's "navy."

**Jawbone:** East of the Bilges, the district of Jawbone curves back around toward Mayor's Island and Dandy. Those seeking refined entertainment and accommodation (at least, compared to that found in the Wharves) come to Jawbone, whose canals host taverns, brothels, and inns of surprising quality for a pirate port. The Bargemen's Guild does brisk business ferrying visitors and residents alike along Jawbone's canals in their small boats. Jawbone is also home to Ilizmagorti's small but thriving shipyards.

**The Green:** Outside the city's walls are four smaller districts—Norgreen, Westergreen, Rivergreen, and Eastergreen—known collectively as the Green. Most of the Green's residents are hunters or woodsmen who make their living from the jungle, as well as farmers who help supply the city with food from small fields cleared from the surrounding





jungle. In addition, a few malcontents make their homes outside the walls, believing (incorrectly) that this frees them from the watchful scrutiny of the Red Mantis.

## HISTORY

Ilizmagorti's deep lagoon served as a temporary haven for pirates and freebooters for centuries before there was ever a permanent settlement here. Many of the pirate tombs and buried treasure caches on Mediogalti Island date from these times, when possession of the lagoon's anchorages passed back and forth from one pirate lord to another according to the tides of death, conquest, or retirement.

Before coming to Mediogalti, the Red Mantis were based in Rahadoum. From their blood-drenched temple to Achaekek in Azir, the Red Mantis extended their tendrils of fear and assassination throughout the lands of the Inner Sea. The assassins did good business when the Oath Wars spread across northwestern Garund, hiring out their services to the warring clergy of Nethys, Norgorber, and Sarenrae, even while staying out of the direct conflict themselves.

The Oath Wars came to an end in 2560 AR, when the philosopher Kalim Onaku enacted the Laws of Man, forever banning religion within Rahadoum. All of Azir's churches were razed, and the temple of Achaekek was no exception. Like other religious groups, the Red Mantis found themselves banished from Rahadoum's shores.

Following a vision from the Mantis God, a priestess named Ximena, then Blood Mistress of the Vernai, moved the headquarters of the cult to an uninhabited island off Rahadoum's western coast. As they constructed their Crimson Citadel deep in the island's jungle-choked interior, Ximena vowed that never again would the Red Mantis be forced into exile. Members of the sect were sent throughout the Inner Sea to track down any mention of Mediogalti in books, maps, or charts, and remove all traces of the island's location. While they were unable to destroy every reference to the island, over the following centuries the assassins were extraordinarily successful in their mission, to the extent that Mediogalti Island effectively vanished from common knowledge. Those seeking the Red Mantis would have to work hard to find them.

With the loss of a major city as their base, the Red Mantis also lost their most convenient point of contact with potential clients, so Ximena founded the town of Ilizmagorti on the shores of a deep lagoon, where clients could come to meet with the cult to procure their services. Free from the laws of neighboring countries, the pirates that had been using

the lagoon for centuries started arriving in even greater numbers to restock their ships, sell their ill-gotten loot, and generally enjoy all the benefits of a free port. So long as they didn't get in the way of the Red Mantis's operations, the Red Mantis didn't interfere with them.

Since then, Ilizmagorti has grown from a small seaside town into a thriving pirate haven, a city in its own right. The reputation of the Red Mantis is such that no sovereign nation has yet gathered the courage to attack the city in force, and the appearance of the Eye of Abendego a hundred years ago has only further strengthened Ilizmagorti's defenses.

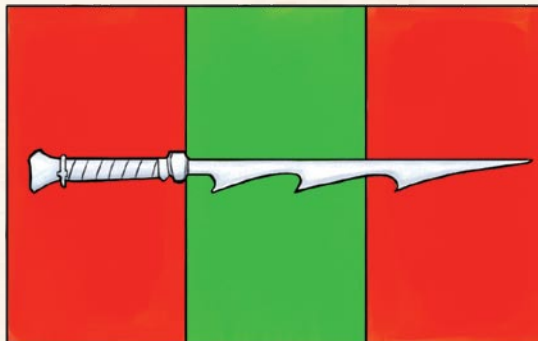
## SOCIETY

Ilizmagorti is a city full of pirates, cutthroats, and above all, assassins. Of course, not every citizen is a cold-blooded killer, but the Red Mantis cult is so well integrated into Ilizmagorti society that there is

simply no way to tell if the crusty old beggar on the corner has a sawtooth sabre hidden under his filthy cloak, or if the buxom barmaid would just as soon slip poison into your drink as flash you a winsome smile.

Everything in Ilizmagorti is owned by the Red Mantis, from its classiest inn to its lowest dockside dive. If the proprietor and staff are not actual members of the organization, they pay for the privilege of operating their businesses. The same holds true for merchants not directly affiliated with the cult. Whether these payments are protection money or simply taxes is a gray area most businessmen choose to ignore.

There are very few guilds in Ilizmagorti; the Red Mantis does not like organized groups who might threaten their control of the city, so most merchants are independent tradesmen. Of the few guilds that do exist, the Sailmakers', Ropers', Carpenters', and Bargemen's guilds have the most influence (though they still pay their protection money like everyone else). While no true wizards' guild exists in Ilizmagorti, the Fraternal Order of Alchemists, a loose "social club" of alchemists, wizards, and other spellcasters, holds regular meetings at the Jade Monkey tavern in the Alcazar where members may make contact with one another and share knowledge. There are no official thieves' guilds in Ilizmagorti either, as the Red Mantis tolerates no other organized crime guilds in their city. However, at least one kobold gang engaging in murder and thievery is known to lurk on the connected rooftops of the Bilges. Also, a small cult of Norgorber is active in the city, illegally practicing their faith beneath a tavern in the Medina called the Twisted Anchor; they secretly offer many services ignored or prohibited by the Red Mantis.





Unlike trade guilds, churches are not as closely controlled in Ilizmagorti. However, few have major presences here. The Pagoda of the Mantis in Redshore, sacred to Achaekek, is the largest temple in the city, though entrance is forbidden to non-worshippers. Many clerics of Besmara the Pirate Queen ply the Wharves as well, inviting potential worshippers to visit her shrines and selling “placations” against their goddess’s temper. In addition to the church of Norgorber mentioned above, persistent rumors whisper of a dark cult gaining adherents in the Bilges, worshipping bizarre beings beyond the realms of sanity.

Ilizmagorti is ruled by the Mayor of Ilizmagorti. No one knows the Mayor’s name, or if this mysterious being is man or woman, human or otherwise. Though anyone can request an audience with the Mayor by joining the line outside the disused lighthouse on Mayor’s Island, the Mayor wears a different face for each visitor, and indeed for each time the same visitor seeks an audience. The Mayor can be a wizened old crone, a handsome elven gentlemen, a twinkling-eyed gnome, or even a child. Yet regardless of appearance, the Mayor always remembers past conversations and judgments. In truth, the Mayor of Ilizmagorti is a shapeshifter (perhaps a doppelganger of great skill or an even stranger creature) and loyal member of the Vernai, the secretive cabal that rules the Red Mantis organization. Like all members of the Vernai, the Mayor has no name other than its title. Its ability to change its shape allows the Mayor to wander the city incognito, giving it unprecedented knowledge of the daily goings-on within Ilizmagorti.

The Mayor delegates Ilizmagorti’s law enforcement and security to the soldiers of the Blood Watch. From their headquarters in the Alcazar, they patrol the city and its walls, easily recognizable by their blood-red armor. With so many of its citizens involved in one way or another with the Red Mantis, Ilizmagorti has few laws at all, and even fewer that need enforcing. Most visitors are exceedingly careful to avoid harming a citizen of Ilizmagorti, as most residents are more than capable of defending themselves. This same courtesy is not extended to other visitors, however, be they pirates or naive visitors, and murders are not uncommon, particularly in less savory parts of the city. Such crimes are rarely investigated however, and the unfortunate and unmourned victims are usually dumped in the lagoon or outside the walls to fertilize the city’s fields.

Surprisingly, there is very little corruption in Ilizmagorti. The Pirate Code is well known to most visitors to the city, and pirate justice is the rule. When the Blood Watch do get involved, they serve as judge, jury, and executioner, as attested by the hanged criminals displayed on Yardarm Bridge.

Unlike other cities, there are few class distinctions in Ilizmagorti, other than perhaps citizen and visitor. Social rank is more dependent on one’s level in the obscure hierarchy of the Red Mantis organization (or lack thereof). However,

several affluent pirate lords and robber barons have retired to Ilizmagorti, and comprise what passes for an upper class in the city. Most live in the mansions and villas of Dandy, but the wealthiest have estates on private islands offshore. In addition, a number of kidnapped aristocratic nobles from across the Inner Sea region make temporary homes in the city from time to time. Captives of pirates, they wait in Ilizmagorti for relatives or friends to pay their ransoms so they can return home. At a casual glance, these hostages appear much like the nobles of any other city, but a practiced eye can often tell they are in fact prisoners.

Drinking and whoring are popular pastimes in the city, particularly among visiting pirates on shore leave. Both visitors and residents alike attend the games at the Blood Circus, from chariot racing and sporting events to more bloody pursuits like gladiatorial contests and slave executions. Battles against dinosaurs and other exotic beasts from Mediogalti’s jungles are particularly popular. For those seeking more peaceful pursuits, sailing among the small isles outside Ilizmagorti’s lagoon proves an enjoyable leisure activity, while the Nymphaleum, an open-air amphitheatre on the Three Sisters, hosts concerts and plays for more cultured entertainment. Finally, sportsmen occasionally venture into the island’s interior on hunting expeditions, and fortune hunters regularly seek buried pirate treasure in the surrounding hinterlands as well.

## RELATIONS

Ilizmagorti’s relations with her neighbors are strained at best, if officially almost nonexistent. Cheliox and Rahadom have the most antagonistic relationship with Mediogalti Island and bear the brunt of Ilizmagorti’s pirate depredations, but almost every nation that sails the Inner Sea is preyed upon by raiders sailing from the city. Both Cheliox and Rahadom would like nothing more than to attack Ilizmagorti openly, removing the double threat of piracy and assassination from their areas of influence. To date, however, the feared reputation of the Red Mantis (not to mention the mystery of Mediogalti’s precise location) has proved an effective deterrent against concerted military action.

Southeast beyond the Eye of Abendego, the Pirate Isles of the Shackles also eye Ilizmagorti with jealous intent. Hurricane King Kerdak Bonefist resents Ilizmagorti’s existence as a free port outside the control of the Free Captains, while at the same time coveting it as a base north of the Eye of Abendego from which to extend his control over the seas of western Garund. Filled with pirate bravado, the Hurricane King does not fear the Red Mantis in the way that more civilized nations do, but his inability to convince the other Free Captains to join him in a campaign has so far prevented him from making a move against Ilizmagorti.

Unofficially, the Red Mantis have built relationships in almost every government, royal court, church, guild,



and merchant house in Avistan or Garund. Very little takes place in the halls of power and wealth that the Red Mantis is not aware of, a fact that is not lost on the same governments and groups that might otherwise wish to eradicate the assassin cult. These contacts are both open and covert, but all pay a price for cooperating with the Red Mantis, whether willingly or not. To most of the world, Ilizmagorti and the rest of Mediogalti Island are a hornet's nest best left undisturbed.

This is not the case for the Aspis Consortium and the Pathfinder Society, however, both of which have tried for years to establish a presence in Ilizmagorti, only to be rebuffed by the Red Mantis time and time again. The Vernai are wary of other independent organizations with international influence, especially as their own attempts to infiltrate both the Aspis Consortium and the Pathfinder Society have also repeatedly met with failure. For now, the three groups are in a stalemate, engaged in a shadowy struggle of infiltration and espionage. When an agent of either the Consortium or the Pathfinders is found in Ilizmagorti, the Red Mantis either deports them or—more usually—executes them. Mantis operatives frequently suffer the same fate at the hands of rivals.

As the only city on Mediogalti, Ilizmagorti does not have to contend with politics on a local or regional scale. Occasionally, orders come down from the Crimson Citadel which are duly enforced by the Mayor of Ilizmagorti and the Blood Watch. On such occasions, it is only the few locals not associated with the Red Mantis and visiting pirates who complain, but there is quite literally nothing they can do about it.

However, a loose confederation of pirate captains calling themselves the Brotherhood of the Black Spot have recently taken it upon themselves to wrest control of Ilizmagorti from the Red Mantis and return it to pirate hands. As all involved know the price of openly opposing the assassins, the Brotherhood has thus far been content with secretly plotting

against the Mayor and the Vernai, but have done nothing to actually realize their goals beyond arguing over half-completed plans and stratagems. In fact, the Red Mantis have already infiltrated their organization, and are simply waiting for the naive pirates to make a move before crushing their fledgling coup.

Outside Ilizmagorti's walls, there is occasional trouble with the indigenous life of Mediogalti. The island's scattered lizardfolk tribes sometimes band together under a charismatic warchief and go to war against the city. Not strong or organized enough to actually breach the city's walls, the lizardfolk are usually content to raid the farmsteads and unprotected houses of the Green until they are eventually driven off.

Such attacks, however, pale in comparison to the rare occasions when dinosaurs burst from the jungle and ravenously attack the city. Again, it is the residents of the Green who bear the brunt of these assaults. In these situations, it is common for the Mayor of Ilizmagorti to offer a bounty to hunters and freeswords to remove the saurian menace, as the Blood Watch is not responsible for anything beyond the city walls—they only get involved in dinosaur attacks when one escapes from captivity and rampages through the city itself.

Most kobold tribes from the island's interior do their best to ignore Ilizmagorti, and the city returns the favor. A few clans, however, regularly engage in trade with a few trusted merchants in the city. The kobolds exchange captive jungle beasts and ore mined from beneath the island's mountains for manufactured goods and luxuries, and seem to have acquired a taste for Vudran curry, which they eagerly acquire.

Finally, there are the Kaneano, a tribe of inscrutable shark-men who live in Ilizmagorti's lagoon and outlying waters. They rarely interact with land-dwellers, but many locals believe they protect Ilizmagorti's waters from devilfish, reefclaws, and sharks, and leave offerings for them in secluded spots. The Kaneano know the reefs and islets surrounding Mediogalti Island better than any pilot or navigator, and a captain is





fortunate indeed if he is able to hire a Kaneano as a guide, something the shark-men infrequently do for their own mysterious reasons.

Occasionally, shipwrecked sailors who have lost their ships on the treacherous reefs claim to have been led to safety by the Kaneano, but just as many are devoured by dangerous sea creatures before ever reaching shore, leaving the veracity of such claims in question. There are also rumors that one can gain the services of a Kaneano shaman by offering a large black pearl of exceptional quality and value. These Kaneano are said to possess the wisdom of the oceans, and some legends even claim they can grant wishes, much like a genie.

## SITES OF INTEREST

Even given its exotic location and nature, the city has a few places that are noteworthy even to longtime residents.

**Bargemen's Guild Headquarters:** Huddled among the fancy restaurants, exclusive clubs, and exotic pleasure houses of Jawbone like an out-of-place peasant in a parade of well-dressed nobles sits the very workaday headquarters of the Bargemen's Guild. Its members ferry goods and passengers across the lagoon and along the canals of Dandy and Jawbone, transfer cargo from ship to ship in the harbor, guide ships past the dangerous shoals outside the lagoon, and salvage ships wrecked on those same jagged reefs. The bargemen know the waters of Ilizmagorti better than anyone other than perhaps the Kaneano, not to mention the flow of goods and traffic throughout the city, and they charge a hefty price for that knowledge. Any punt or skiff over 5 feet in length must be registered with the guild, and its owner must pay guild dues, but all of Ilizmagorti's waterways are then opened to him. The powerful and influential **Bargemaster Hezwah Mitabo** (N human male fighter 1/expert 3/rogue 2) is descended from a long line of Bonuwat (Mwangi) mariners, and runs his organization like the captain of a tight ship. He jealously guards his guild's prerogatives, but scrupulously pays his taxes to the Red Mantis. Mitabo is rumored to have some connection or deal with the mysterious Kaneano people. Such an arrangement would certainly explain much of the Bargemen's Guild's success.

**Besmara's House:** Located in a converted warehouse in the Wharves, Besmara's House is the largest temple in the city after the Pagoda of the Mantis. While the Pirate Queen has few devout or regular worshipers among the freebooters of Ilizmagorti, her temple is a popular place for pirates about to embark on a raid to burn a stick of incense as they make a quick prayer and small offering to ward off the vengeful goddess. Next to the front door is a board where captains-for-hire can post their ship names and berths for interested clients to contact them. Under the leadership of **Priest-Captain Rannos Blackarm** (CN male human cleric of Besmara 7), the clerics of Besmara alternately cajole visiting sailors for donations and threaten them with their goddess's wrath.

The Pirate Queen's clergy have no qualms about selling "placations" to gullible sailors, holy writs that supposedly ensure the bearer's safety from drowning or sea monster attacks. In addition, the House also sells letters of marque and flags of convenience for ships to use in spreading strife while raiding the shipping of peaceful nations.

**Fleshmarket Close:** Accessible only through a long, twisting alley off one of the Alcasar's side streets, the secluded courtyard known as Fleshmarket Close holds Ilizmagorti's primary slave market, where one can purchase chattel from all walks of life. The dwarven slaver **Ruthilda Goldshackle** (NE female dwarf fighter 2/rogue 3) is the mistress of this den of horrors, strutting around her domain like a petty queen with her gnoll slave Tukh always in tow at the end of a golden lead. Ruthilda buys captives from visiting pirate crews, not caring whether they are unfortunate sailors, common passengers, or wealthy merchants or aristocrats, as long as she turns a profit. Ruthilda's wrath is as legendary as the bloodstained whip that is always in her hand, and those slaves not sold quickly enough seldom survive long in her care. Utterly without scruples, Ruthilda has been known to send her burly guards into the streets to replenish her stock with drunken or unconscious sailors whenever it runs low.

**Hospice of Serenity:** Behind high, white-washed walls in the worst of the Bilges' slums is the Hospice of Serenity, an abbey dedicated to an obscure saint of healing and mercy. The Sisters of Serenity administer aid and healing to the poor and downtrodden of the slums, and are easily recognized on the filthy streets of the Bilges by their shaved heads and white clothing. The hospice takes in anyone in need of sustenance, rest, or healing, whether physical or spiritual, and is said to also offer sanctuary to escaped slaves and prisoners. The Sisters request a small donation to their order in exchange for their services, but only if the supplicant can afford it. The small group of novices is led by **Sister Maeri** (LE female human cleric of Achaek 4/rogue 1/Red Mantis assassin 4), a dangerous Red Mantis assassin who uses the order as cover for information gathering and recruitment. In addition, she makes a tidy profit reselling those unfortunate fugitives who seek shelter at the abbey. With the lack of major temples in Ilizmagorti, many adventurers come to the hospice for healing, which allows the Red Mantis to keep tabs on potentially dangerous (or useful) groups within the city.

**Jungle Runners:** The wilderness outfitters and guides calling themselves the Jungle Runners are located in the Westergreen, outside Ilizmagorti's walls. **Erandlon** (LE male half-elf fighter 1/rogue 4/Red Mantis assassin 1) and **Bujkis Tallwoman** (CG female human ranger 6) are partners in this enterprise, and offer guided hunting trips and wilderness expeditions into the jungles outside the city. They do good business with both eager treasure hunters and wealthy nobles in search of dinosaur heads for their game rooms, and have unparalleled expertise on the





many dangers lurking in Mediogalti's jungles. Unknown to Bujkis, however, Erandlon is a low-ranking Red Mantis assassin whose mission is to ensure no clients discover the location of the Crimson Citadel. Thus far, he has led two parties to their deaths, one group poisoned by his own hand, the other in the jaws of hungry dinosaurs. Bujkis doesn't suspect Erandlon's involvement in the loss of the expeditions, but her romantic feelings toward her partner might be blinding her to the truth.

**Murdered Manticore:** A quiet, unassuming pub off a tiny courtyard in the Medina, the Murdered Manticore is the place to go if one is looking to hire mercenaries or adventurers. Run by a retired Andoren adventurer known as **Shark** (LN male human fighter 9), the Manticore serves cold beer, simple but filling meals, and contacts for sellswords looking for work. For a tavern filled with armed men, the Murdered Manticore is a surprisingly peaceful place. You don't have to check your weapons at the door, but Shark brooks no fights in his establishment, and he is more than willing to enforce the rules with the help of his own notched blade on the wall behind the bar. Most of the patrons behave themselves, because once you've been kicked out, that's it—you're never allowed back in again. Rumor has it that the Manticore's basement is flooded and filled with the owner's namesakes, his pet jigsaw sharks. True or not, "going down to Shark's basement" has become neighborhood slang for meeting one's demise prematurely.

**Marketplace:** Beneath the towering red sandstone walls of Sawtooth Keep sprawls Ilizmagorti's main marketplace. A bewildering variety of market stalls and shops fill the open courtyard and its surrounding streets, selling all manner of goods, from nautical gear and fresh seafood to clothing, jewelry, and more. Among the more permanent businesses here is a large general store and outfitter. The proprietor, **Axabbus Fifthrottledig** (CN male gnome commoner 2) sells mundane gear like backpacks, machetes, and mosquito netting, as well as items ranging from the unusual to the frankly bizarre, such as camel saddles, snowshoes, mammoth goads, fake dwarven beards, and spare Galtan guillotine blades. **Arnak Bjornssen** (LE male human warrior 3/expert 2) sells knives, swords, and other blades made to order in his shop. Arnak is a master bladesmith from the Lands of the Linnorm Kings, and he is believed to craft masterwork sawtooth sabres for the Red Mantis in the back room of his forge. High quality leather armors may be bought at a leather shop easily recognized by the stuffed shark outside the door; the shark-leather made here is highly valued by sailors. The owner is the beautiful

and exotic **Zostrana Sebec** (CN female human expert 2/sorcerer 4); rumored to be descended from a marid, she was brought to Ilizmagorti as a pirate captive and decided to make her home here. She decorates all of her work with Qadiran water motifs, and also tells fortunes and performs divinations in a corner of her workshop.

**Obari Imports:** Situated in the heart of Mainmast, Obari Imports is a shop that specializes in the rare and wondrous from across the Inner Sea and beyond. The shop's proprietor, **Sanjeet Ralama Pakhesh** (LN human male wizard 7) hails from the Isle of Jalmeray and supposedly has business connections in Absalom, Katapesh, Nex, and even far-off Vudra and Tian Xia. Obari Imports is a treasure trove of rare components, magic rings, wands, potions, and other eldritch paraphernalia, satisfaction guaranteed. And if he doesn't have it in stock, Sanjeet is happy to import it (for an additional fee, of course, shipping time negotiable). He also buys magic items (preferably in kind, but with gold if necessary), but only from trusted, regular customers. Sanjeet is accompanied at all times by his female bodyguards, twin Vudrani monks.

**The Pagoda of the Mantis:** Located in Redshore, this site is sacred to Achaekek and the house of his worship. Technically anyone is allowed to enter, but rumor has it that the power of the temple instantly marks unbelievers, and the true faithful immediately murder those bearing the god's marker.

**Seaside Betty's:** A lopsided one-room shack precariously perched at the end of a rickety dock contains Seaside Betty's, Ilizmagorti's smallest house of ill repute. The brothel's only employee is old **Seaside Betty** (N female human commoner 2/expert 3) herself. A fixture on the Wharves for years, Seaside Betty is a wealth of information about not only Ilizmagorti's history, but also present happenings in the city, such as the comings and goings of ships and their crews, and all the current rumors. Although the years have taken their toll, Betty still does good business, both in information and in her usual trade. Completely unaffiliated with any faction in Ilizmagorti, her knowledge is such that even the Red Mantis are known to avail themselves of her services.

**The Songbird Preserve:** The three islands in the center of Ilizmagorti's lagoon are collectively known as the Three Sisters, and contain the Songbird Preserve, a collection of beautiful parks and gardens of rare and vibrant jungle flowers, carefully tended by **Jaxira Daralamir** (NG female half-elf druid of Shelyn 5). Probably the only priestess of Shelyn in the entire city, Jaxira is also the



## Top Ten Drinks of Ilizmagorti

Pirates are a thirsty lot, and Ilizmagorti's taverns serve all manner of alcoholic concoctions, from mundane brews to more exotic fare such as Irrisen icewine. The following is just a sampling of some of the more popular cocktails that may be sampled in bars throughout the city.

**Bilgewater Surprise (1 cp):** A favorite of down-on-their-luck gamblers and sailors trying to stretch their last copper, made from the dregs of other drinks and whatever is in the barman's rag.

**Damsel in Distress (6 sp):** Sparkling white wine and pomegranate juice.

**Dark and Stormy (2 sp):** A cocktail made with dark rum and ginger beer with a slice of lime.

**Half a Doubloon (5 sp):** Dark rum, orange liqueur, and apple juice.

**Island Dream (1 gp):** Not a drink for locals, an island dream is a fruity absinthe cocktail that is deceptively strong. A popular drink sold to (or bought for) visitors, who unsuspectingly consume the delicious and refreshing drink, leaving them easy prey for their new drinking buddies to rob blind when they inevitably pass out.

**Kiss of the Mantis (1 gp):** Supposedly made from fiendish giant praying mantis blood (though it is unlikely that Ilizmagorti's masters would allow their sacred creature to be used as a cocktail ingredient), this spicy drink tastes much like vodka, tomatoes, pepper, and some other kind of vegetable.

**Rusty Cutlass (8 cp):** Whiskey mixed with native honey and herb liqueur.

**Three Salts and a Dog (4 sp):** Whiskey, brandy, tequila, and rum, served in a glass with a salted rim.

**Three Sheets (6 cp):** A drink made from at least three different rums (also called an "ill wind").

**Whore's Breakfast (1 sp):** A mug of ale with a shot of rum dropped inside, garnished with a tomato wedge.

most knowledgeable expert on the flora and fauna of Mediogalti Island. She does her best to bring some small amount of beauty to the otherwise grimy pirate town, a fact appreciated by those residents with more refined tastes. The Three Sisters are also home to the Nymphaleum, an open-air amphitheatre that puts on regular performances, along with those of visiting bards. The Nymphaleum's artistic director is **Origent Gamaron** (CG male human bard 6), a Taldan playwright exiled from his homeland for his scathing satires of the Grand Prince of Taldor. Rumor has it that Origent was once invited to perform at the Crimson Citadel, perhaps the only person outside of the Red Mantis organization to do so. Of course, other rumors claim that he is a member of the Red Mantis himself.

## ENCOUNTERS

The following are sample encounters that demonstrate the unique circumstances of the city.

**Attack from the Depths:** Ilizmagorti is assaulted by something from the sea. This could be a bold lizardfolk raid, a maddened dragon turtle, or even the strange shark-men finally revealing their true colors. Whatever the threat, people are dying, ships are in danger, and the Blood Watch is either outmatched or can't be bothered. Sometimes, even pirates and assassins need heroes.

**The Book of Secrets:** The PCs find a water-soaked ship's log that contains clear and detailed charts to Ilizmagorti, maps to several locations of buried pirate treasure in Mediogalti Island's interior, and even a list of purported covert Red Mantis operatives throughout the Inner Sea. Such information would be almost priceless to any number of nations or organizations, but is the logbook real, or an elaborate hoax? Should the PCs look for the treasure themselves, or sell the book to the highest bidder? And what will the Red Mantis do when they discover the existence of the book, and who carries it?

**Bring to Justice:** The feared pirate Ralit Kallinash, captain of the *Bonny Chance*, has finally gone too far. A well-known scourge of the Inner Sea, he has sunk one too many ships and kidnapped one too many hostages to be endured any longer. A consortium of merchants from Absalom has banded together to hire someone to bring Kallinash to justice once and for all. The PCs must find the *Bonny Chance* among the ships docked at the Wharves, defeat her crew, and finally track down Captain Kallinash himself among the upper crust of Ilizmagorti's pirate society. The PCs must capture him and bring him back to Absalom for trial, but Kallinash is a pirate lord with many powerful friends, many of whom might not let him go without a fight.

**Devilfishing:** The House of Sorrento is the best restaurant in Ilizmagorti, but an angry and territorial devilfish has recently taken up residence in the eatery's secret reefclaw fishing grounds and has been attacking the fishermen. As the restaurant is famous for its grilled reefclaw steaks, without fresh reefclaw on its menu, its valued and wealthy patrons may go somewhere else. The restaurant's owner needs someone to kill the feared devilfish before it kills any more fishermen or causes the restaurant to lose all its business—and do so without revealing the location of the fish's lair.

**Dinosaur Eggs:** A sage or wizard's school wants to acquire the eggs of a rare dinosaur from its breeding grounds in the deepest jungles of Mediogalti. Mounting an expedition into the island's interior, the PCs contend with dangerous hazards and fearsome beasts on their way to the breeding site. There, the PCs meet a tribe of lizardfolk who worship the dinosaurs as divine emissaries and do not tolerate anyone trespassing on hallowed ground. To steal the holy eggs, the PCs must



face both the fanatic lizardfolk and the eggs' protective and angry mother.

**Ghost Ship:** A two-masted pirate ship drifts into view outside the city harbor, its sails torn to ribbons by storms and its crew missing. The name "Ximena" is painted on the prow in blood. The pirates are suspicious and think the Red Mantis killed all on board. Is the ship haunted, or is its presence a sign of something stranger?

**Map the Island:** Absalom's assassins' guild, the Guild of Wonders, seeks a foothold in Ilizmagorti and wants information to better compete with the Red Mantis. Through intermediaries, they hire the PCs to map Mediogalti Island, and if possible determine the exact location of the Crimson Citadel. The PCs venture into the dangerous jungles outside Ilizmagorti, fighting through territorial kobold tribes and other jungle denizens as they search for the headquarters of the Red Mantis. Unfortunately for them, the Red Mantis has gotten wind of their mission, and sends a detachment of assassins after the PCs to stop them.

**Pirate Betrayal:** The Brotherhood of the Black Spot tries to recruit the PCs to help them take over the city—perhaps as repayment for a favor the pirates owe the PCs, perhaps as a bargaining chip against future raids on the PCs' allies. Is this a plot by the Red Mantis to force the pirates to take action? Or are the pirates aware of a Mantis agent in their midst and trying to force them to make an error?

**Press Gang:** While wandering through the city, the PCs are accosted by a group of pirate thugs. Their ship has recently lost most of its crew in battle with a Chelish frigate, and the captain has ordered his men to refill the crew roster by any means necessary. The pirates attempt to subdue the PCs and press them into service. If the PCs are defeated, they wake up far from shore, stripped of their belongings, and surrounded by bloodthirsty buccaneers.

**Rescue Mission:** A wealthy noble from Taldor hires the PCs to rescue his kidnapped daughter, who is being held for ransom by pirates in Ilizmagorti. The PCs must track down her location in the twisting streets of the city and defeat the pirates guarding her. Unfortunately, she has tasted freedom far from the stifling responsibilities of family and the labyrinthine politics of Taldor, and has no desire to leave with her rescuers. Additionally, a rakish young privateer has fallen in love with her, and will kidnap her again to keep her safe with him.

**Salvage Operation:** A wealthy merchant ship has run aground on the sharp reefs surrounding Ilizmagorti, and a fortune can be made by those brave enough to join a crew on the Bargemen's Guild's salvage operation. Unfortunately, the reef is a sacred location to the Kaneano, and they claim the shipwreck for themselves, capsizing any boats that approach the reef and drowning their crews. If the PCs are lucky, diplomacy may be able to convince the Kaneano not to kill the bargemen and negotiate a solution. If not, repeated attempts to salvage the ship may drive the shark-men to war with the city.

## Top Ten Brothels, Taverns, and Dockside Dives

Any sailor who's been to Ilizmagorti more than once has probably visited several of these fine establishments.

**Darcy's Demise:** This tavern in Dandy serves as a private club of sorts for retired pirate captains, where they can regale one another with tales of their misspent youths.

**Dead Man's Chest:** Hidden down a winding alley deep in the Alcasar, this small, dark tavern is a well-known fence, the place to go to dispose of stolen or illicit goods.

**The Gouged Eyes:** This dive in the Bilges hosts more bar brawls than any other tavern in Ilizmagorti. The one-eyed halfling bartender keeps a jar of pickled eyes behind the bar, souvenirs from his numerous knife fights.

**House of Sorrento:** The most fashionable restaurant in Ilizmagorti, the House lies on a small island just off Jawbone and is famous for its grilled reefclaw and well-stocked wine cellar. Reservations required.

**Knucklebones:** A gambling den inside a moored hulk in the Wharves, Knucklebones offers all manner of games of chance, from towers to boulder to knivesies.

**The Mermaid's Caress:** The cheapest bordello in the Wharves, the Mermaid's Caress (more commonly known as "Fishy Fingers") still does brisk business, especially with sailors at the end of their shore leave.

**The Old Palace:** Located in Jawbone, the opulent Old Palace is Ilizmagorti's most exclusive brothel, offering discreet and professional companionship to gentlemen and ladies of means.

**The Quarterdeck:** You must be the captain of your own ship to enter this pub in the Wharves. Other ship's officers are politely but firmly directed down the street to its sister bar, the Wardroom.

**The Rat Marine:** Squatting in a crumbling building in the Medina, the Rat Marine is a tavern where one can hire thugs, cutthroats, and freelance assassins. The place also serves breakfast.

**The Second Bench:** A clean, mid-range brothel in Mainmast, this place occasionally offers more exotic pleasures for a price.

**Would-Be Assassin:** The PCs meet a friendly young woman who wants to become an adventurer just like them. She does her best to ingratiate herself with the group, using pity, flattery, or seduction to get close to one of the PCs, and offers to act as apprentice, guide, or squire if she can only accompany them. However, she is in fact a skilled rogue, and her true aim is to join the ranks of the Red Mantis. She plans to murder the PCs when their guard is down, hoping that such a daring massacre will bring her to the attention of the assassin cult.



**Chapter Four**

**NISROCH**

**For thousands of years, Nisroch, the Maw of Shadow, has stood as the ominous guardian and chilling embodiment of a shrouded nation whose people have lived through centuries of servitude to the Midnight Lord. Perched upon the jagged shores at the mouth of the mighty Usk, its cruel spires of basalt and iron lash upward against churning clouds like the ebon fangs of a great venomous serpent. The river divides the city, tearing a gaping hole through the rocky bluffs and vomiting into the open waters as if eating its way free from the shadowed lands beyond. It stands precise, oppressive, and unyielding, encased in the armor of looming black walls, salt-crusted and stained with rust.**

Like much of Avistan's western coast, Nisroch is swept by frigid rains, warring with the Arcadian Ocean's lashing waves as they spit their fury upon its breakwaters. The constant rain, along with menial labor and totalitarian law, keeps its streets pristine and still, while throughout the city, atop its roofs and towers, iron whistles catch the ocean winds and transform them into doleful tones, barely audible, until those hours when the city sleeps, nestled in its ominous and sacrosanct desires. Yet Nisroch seems to embrace the natural gloom, a massive citadel of glistening-wet stone that stands like a defiant tyrant before an angry throng.

The city has long served the Nidalese people as their primary bastion against foreigners who know not the full truth of the country's shrouded deity. The nation's only port, it is one of the few Nidalese settlements that frequently receives foreign travelers, and as such, its citizens have more contact with the outside world than the majority of the nation's populace. Over the years, the city has evolved into a shadowy lure, insidiously beckoning to the curiosity of outsiders. With the influx of foreign trade, Nisroch's populace has swiftly surpassed Pangolais, the nation's capital, approaching 25,000 citizens, including many immigrants. While these foreigners continue to rouse aversion in the locals, by and large native Nisrochis have come to tolerate them as an unpleasant necessity.

Above all else, Nisroch and its citizens remain devoted to the Midnight Lord. The city is a grim place, tainted by ancient forces, terrifying shadowcraft, and torture. Outsiders who have experienced the city remain unnerved when they recall the icy and menacing grandeur of its walls or its silent, somber citizens whose dark eyes stare chilling and hollow as the toll of a funerary bell—sterile, cleansed, and dead. In this way, travelers continue to spread the city's sinister reputation, instilling fear and fascination throughout Golarion.

## APPEARANCE

Nisroch possesses an architectural clash of austerity and opulence. In the Spires, wealthy nobles erect grandiose edifices of granite, basalt, and marble, while in Southbank and Portside, structures feature wood, slate, and cobbles. Wide thoroughfares bisect the city, cutting swathes through clusters of tightly spaced buildings separated by narrow alleys. Great columns and oppressive, leering statues line streets and squares, all designed to make common citizens feel small and unimportant. The massive Usk further divides the city, flowing from Rivergate to the Maw and creating a natural barrier between rich and poor. Small craft frequently travel the river, mostly merchants and fishermen, with all closely watched by the scrutinizing eye of the harbormaster.

**Graveside:** This ward lies alongside the city's east wall, separated from the lower Spires by a wide avenue that leads out of Deathgate. It includes the incinerators, as well as Nisroch's massive cemetery.

**Portside:** The Usk cuts a wide channel into the southern bank, separating a sizable isle from the mainland. Known as Portside, it serves as the foreigners' quarter. Here, foreign merchants can rent wharfage and storage, and trade and sell goods without ever setting foot in the main city. It also sustains a small, but thriving community of immigrants, mostly from Cheliox, who make their living running inns, taverns, and supply shops, as well as performing ship repairs.

**Southbank:** Southbank quarters the common folk and the working class, barely concealing its poverty and showing traces of disrepair in an otherwise immaculate city. Two bridges of dark stone carved with gruesome depictions of bone and chain span the river between Southbank and the Spires. Their high arches suspend heavy iron portcullises, which can be dropped to defend the Spires from the city's lesser citizens.

**The Hovels:** Beyond Nisroch's southernmost walls stretches a vast shantytown of wretched indigents, lepers, and other pitiful outcasts. Perceived by the upper class as a blight upon their otherwise perfect city, these people are occasionally rounded up by the Umbral Court in genocidal sweeps, the government cutting them back like weeds and burning them in the incinerators. Despite these malignant efforts, the Hovels continually resurface, so much so that Nisrochis now refer to the rarely used southern exit as Leper's Gate.

**The Maw:** The jagged coast where the Usk empties into the bay is known as the Maw. A series of rocky islets called the Highs guards the river mouth. To the north rests Clifftown, a small settlement of fishermen and sea-farmers who harvest shellfish, seaweed, and similar city staples. To the south, a sprawling open-air bazaar known as the Witch-Markets caters to common folk and foreigners.

**The Spires:** The north side of the city is known as the Spires. Here wealthy nobles live within towering villas raised upon the ruins of their predecessors. At the district's center, a mountainous rise known as Cathedral Summit serves as the nucleus of the city and church. Overlooking all, the stepped summit is topped by the infamous Cathedral of Bone, where the high priestess of the city (the Over-Diocesan) lives. Walled off from the lower Spires, the north river bank harbors Nisroch's small but well-trained armada and a row of military compounds known as the Block. Officers typically come from noble families, while lower-ranking soldiery come from working-class families. East of the Block sits Waterview, a second series of wharves and warehouses owned by the Nisrochi nobility. These docks harbor merchant ships under noble patronage along with private vessels.

## HISTORY

One of the continent's earliest cities, Nisroch was founded by ancient Nidalese horselords who gathered each spring at the mouth of the Usk to barter for goods, make alliances, seek mates, and trade horses. The origin of the name comes from their ancient tongue and means "Place of the Drowning

# Nisroch

- 1 Brimstone
- 2 Boutique Zeleve
- 3 The Cathedral of Bone
- 4 The Gut and Gallows
- 5 The Incinerators
- 6 The Mausoleum
- 7 The Morbidium
- 8 The Pillars of Howling Prophets
- 9 Red Rodamyre's Burlesque
- 10 The Screaming Wall
- 11 The Torture Choir



Spirits,” for the horselords believed evil sea nymphs haunted the crags at the river’s mouth and seductively lured men into the turbid waters where they drowned them, ate their flesh, and left their bones to bleach upon the rocks.

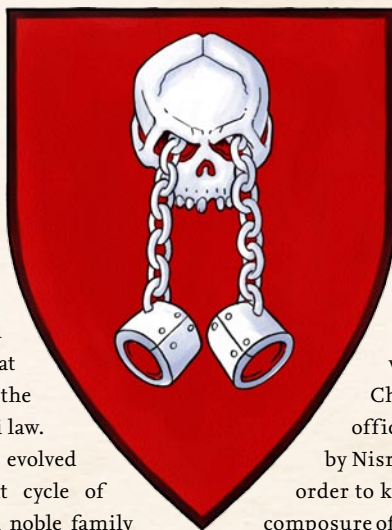
Following Earthfall, the horselords sought salvation by shadow-binding themselves to the Midnight Lord. Despite drastic cultural changes brought about by this allegiance, descendants of the tribes continued to meet at Nisroch to settle disputes and perform gory rituals. There, Kuthite priests erected a temple from the bones of the fallen, which would eventually become the city’s landmark Cathedral of Bone. Formidable lords and their vassals claimed nearby properties and erected massive villas on the bluffs along the northern riverbank. Intertribal conflicts created a brutal social hierarchy, oft contested by violent combat. As Nisroch grew, nobles formed mutually protective alliances and the settling of disputes by martial combat faded in favor of political debate and the duplicitous manipulation of strict Nisrochi law.

Over the next few centuries, Nisroch evolved slowly but definitively upon a constant cycle of construction and demolition. Whenever a noble family toppled, others rushed to seize their properties, tear down their villas, and erect new ones upon their ruins. Those who failed to maintain their status fell into the role of working-class citizens, or worse, became destitute, contributing to an ever-expanding lower class.

In 4305 AR, the Chelish empire launched its first full-scale incursion into Nidal, marking the beginning of the Everwar. Soon after, Chelish warships sailed upon Nisroch. Though it took 3 decades, in the end the bickering lords of the Umbral Court failed to organize an effective resistance against the Chelish forces, and in 4338 AR it fell to the southern invaders. Nisroch became the first of the occupied cities of the vassal nation, and the most deeply influenced by Chelish culture. Nisroch’s strategically located port served Chelish imperialists as a base of operations, and for the first time the Nidalese opened their docks to foreign trade.

When the war ended, Nisrochis sought to reclaim their finances by keeping the port open. Importing and exporting became important work, drawing a number of working-class citizens into the trade industry. Business thrived, and with the redistribution of finances began to support a burgeoning middle class backed by newly created trade guilds. The Umbral Court responded severely, breaking down guilds, dividing up property, and culling citizens to restore order and power to the nobility. A period of extensive lawmaking followed, along with the addition of the Silent Shroud, the city’s merciless security force. Under pressure from Cheliox, the Umbral Court

reluctantly allowed Chelish vessels to make port in Nisroch. Chelish nobles began sponsoring merchant vessels and reaping huge financial benefits from trading with the shadow city. Competition between Nisrochi noble families became fierce, and once again, ancient enmities arose in the Umbral Court. At present, the Umbral Court and church share tenuous control of the city that rides upon a surreptitious undercurrent of duplicitous nobles locked in ceaseless power struggles.



## SOCIETY

Like most Nidalese people, the citizens of Nisroch appear icy and merciless. Nisrochis maintain levels of self-control and emotional discipline unseen elsewhere. They communicate almost silently, with subtle gestures, and rarely stop to engage in idle chat. Conversations are prearranged and held at designated locations with definite purpose, even if only to discuss theological verse or the philosophy of Eistram’s Eight-Chain Extractions. Shadowtongue, the city’s official language, is spoken almost exclusively by Nisrochis, particularly in front of foreigners in order to keep conversations private. The totalitarian composure of citizens extends even to their children, who remain silent, stoic, and focused. Rambunctious children are soundly beaten, while parents tame loquaciousness by stitching their offspring’s lips shut.

Nisrochis follow a rigid caste system led by a ruling class of nobles belonging to the Umbral Court. Formal titles remain hereditary, with the most powerful families able to trace their lineages all the way back to the ancient horselords. The Umbral Court maintains strong ties with the church of Zon-Kuthon, and operates according to ancient and severe theological laws. They maintain a strict order through a loose parliament comprised of the Umbral Court’s most influential nobles. An individual’s political influence is determined by wealth, social status, and standing within the church. Lesser nobles fight for greater influence on the parliament floors, selling convoluted interpretations of the law to the highest bidders. Few decisions are based on precedent. Instead, quietly bickering barristers present arguments to the parliament. Participants sway decisions by currying favors with bribes or making alliances with individual members. During legal and political disputes, thousands of laws and exceptions come into play. The older and more obscure the law, the more weight it holds with the parliament. Barristers often seek to secure long-term positions as court representatives for noble families. These individuals can earn wealth and respect, and a modicum of social mobility. However, knowledge of family secrets also places these individuals at extreme risk, and most only hold these positions for short terms.



While nobles can manipulate the system to attack each other, for common folk the law remains absolute, enforced by a terrifying organization called the Silent Shroud. Under the absolute authority of the Shrouded One (an entity whose true name is known only to the top city official), a sweeping force of brutally violent monks scour the city of criminals. These Silent Enforcers harvest their agents from the lower class, abducting them as children and torturing and training them into absolute servitude. They are taught only to listen and react, to obey and not to think. They are made mute, their voice boxes cauterized with red-hot iron pokers, bearing thereafter an identifying scar upon their throats. None have spoken names, and instead represent themselves only with silent combinations of hand gestures. These individuals emerge into society at adulthood, transformed into profound zealots, their psyches reinforced by violence and psychotropic drugs so far as to place their duty before their own lives. Silent Enforcers carry no weapons or armor, relying entirely on their intense martial training, which includes their secret and much-feared “touch of pain” technique.

The city enforces a strict quarantine upon peasants, commoners, and foreigners, none of whom are permitted within the Spires without official accompaniment. Individuals operating on behalf of noble patrons (such as merchants, barristers, and the like) aren't bound by these restrictions, but they too may be stopped for questioning. All servants must carry a writ of patronage to prove their affiliations to authorities; anyone caught without a writ faces a trip to the Pillars, where he endures the hazards of public trial.

Restrictions also apply to weaponry. Peasants cannot carry any blade larger than a fish knife. Consequently, knife fights are common in Southbank, especially among poverty-stricken youths. Stabbings (like most crime in the commons) carry severe legal penalties and usually aren't reported; victims simply stitch themselves up after a fight. Some are bold enough to train with farm tools and other common items, or practice martial arts, but those caught face immediate execution.

With the exception of attending public stonings, crude violence of any sort is forbidden in public. For nobles, committing a violent act can lead to charges of civil disorder or possibly treason. Therefore, few nobles engage in violence openly, and instead hire others to perform any necessary violent tasks. All others caught engaging in violent acts (such as street fighting, protesting, vandalism, and so on) are charged with “inciting a revolt.” Those able to afford a barrister might reduce the penalty to a steep fine by proving their innocent intent, reducing the charge to “reckless behavior.” Otherwise, the penalty is a final stand upon the Pillars.

The Umbral Court enforces a horrid practice known as the Culling. Designed to strengthen society and conserve resources, the Culling is the systematic execution of those people deemed unfit or burdensome. Any citizen who fails to demonstrate his worth may be targeted for culling, including those with mental

or physical defects, the aged, and the sickly. In fact, weakness of any sort is perceived as a disease. Culling applies to all citizens, including the nobility, and those who protest a Culling risk losing their noble status. Among the impoverished live dozens of ex-nobles who attempted to protect or cover-up weakness in their families even though defending weakness is a sure sign of ignoble birth. When the cullers come, most witnesses show no outward sign of empathy or protest.

All property belongs to the nobility. Commoners own nothing—instead, they work as serfs for the right to live on their property. There exist few ways for the middle class to make a living, except in the service of a noble patron or a merchant. Better jobs include box-haulers and dockhands, though competition for these positions makes these jobs temporary at best.

House servants include anyone working directly for a noble house. This extends to merchants, craftsmen, and others practicing skilled labor. Skilled labor is taught using the familiar apprentice-master system; therefore, quick learners hold positions where they can continue to practice and improve, while slower learners are sent back to Southbank. Likewise, the Umbral Court outlaws guilds as the antithesis to both the law and their status quo—power belongs solely to the nobility, not to common workers. Instead, merchants petition for aid from noble sponsors who take a percentage of profits from their ventures. Not surprisingly, the wealthiest merchants work for high-ranking members of the Umbral Court.

Peasants provide the remainder of the city's menial labor force, including dung-shovelers, trash-haulers, cart-pullers, rat-catchers (a position eagerly sought by those unable to afford meat), and other such dirty or backbreaking jobs. They possess no chance of or hope for social mobility and are treated like filth by superior castes. Property tithes are steep, forcing some to drastic measures such as the ghoulish scrounging of graveyards for useful goods, renting themselves for experiments, or selling themselves into slavery to pay family debts. Still, a commoners' life is far better than the decrepit souls of the Hovels.

## RELATIONS

Nisroch serves as the face for its grim and shadowy nation. As Nidal's only major port, it remains the easiest city for foreigners to access and maintains the most interaction with the outside world. Like the rest of Nidal, the city maintains supportive relations with its former Chelish occupants, at least publicly. Still, Nisroch and its citizens bear scars from the occupation, and more than a few Nisrochis still carry resentment for their former rulers. Regardless, they are a stoic people and rarely display their animosity openly, causing many foreigners to question the motives for Nidal's recent alliances. In particular, skeptics within the House of Thrune cast bitter speculation upon the Umbral Court, and remain vigilant for conspiratorial plots against their devil empire. Nonetheless, Nisroch frequently welcomes Chelish ambassadors and merchants within its walls and even the Spires, where these dignitaries are



treated as honored guests. More remarkably, the Umbral Court permits the church of Asmodeus to maintain a small temple within Portside. Again, most suspect the allowance is part of some ploy granting Zon-Kuthon's priests advantage or insight into the workings of their enemies.

With the influx of foreign trade and new immigrants, Portside provides the district with the most interaction with outsiders. Though Nisroch welcomes ships from all over the world, it remains an infrequent stop for most merchant vessels, whose captains tend to favor the wealthier and more hospitable ports of nearby Korvosa and Kitargo. Adding to this discouragement, the city charges a steep docking fee while forbidding foreign vessels to anchor in Nisroch Bay. Any ship attempting to drop anchor off the coast receives an immediate visit by an official emissary of the harbormaster. The offender is issued a 10-minute warning, promptly followed by a brace of Nidalese warships under direct orders to search, besiege, and scuttle the trespassing vessel if it fails to comply. Foreigners within the city consist almost entirely of merchants and sailors from neighboring ports, seeking to unload goods or make repairs. In the past, these visitors were chiefly of Chelish or Varisian descent, though an increasing number of southlanders have made their way to the shadowy port.

Travelers find few allies in the city, or at least few trustworthy ones. Rare exceptions might hide among the common folk, though their deplorable living conditions and profound social mistreatment cause them to behave more as bitter opportunists and survivalists. Portside remains the most obvious place for travelers to seek resources or aid. Regardless, individuals should always exercise caution in their dealings, as none come to Nisroch for its altruism. Finding a healer is especially difficult. Kuthite priests tend to prolong wounds, and church doctrine portrays those failing to bear wounds as weak. In the slums, gangrene runs rampant. One might attempt to procure curatives from peasants who rely on poultices and ointments to fight off infection and disease, and such treatments might also be found at the Witch-Markets, but the legitimacy of such remedies remains questionable. Desna's missionaries prove the safest choice for those in need, provided one can find them. These folk are extremely cautious with their associations, as foreigners tend to attract attention. Permitting only minimal contact, they operate with the utmost secrecy, lest the city's Silent Enforcers sniff them out.

Nisroch has recently taken to harboring pirate ships from the Shackles. Outlawed in neighboring ports, these ships gladly take refuge here despite its docking fees. Its small but thriving black market eagerly purchases their plunder, while pirates can freely barter for food, goods, and entertainment in various dockside shops and taverns. This open-dock policy has aroused the ire of House Thrune, as well as

the enmity of Andoran. In fact, the Gray Corsairs were first to note an increased appearance of suspicious ships along the Varisian coast, and tracked several of them back to the Nidalese port. Upon this intelligence, the Supreme Elect of Andoran immediately issued letters of marque to those willing to hunt pirates in Conqueror's Bay. While the Umbral Court diligently quashes rumors of any formal association with the southern pirates, the Over-Diocesan has taken an interest in expanding her reach, encouraging some of the city's wealthiest nobles to help her convert the pirates to the worship of the Midnight Lord by investing in their ventures and raids.





Other than Cheliox, Nisroch has little contact with its neighboring countries. Previously, the contempt of Molthune's Imperial Governor for Nidal discouraged trade between the two nations. However, his recent proposition to grant citizenship to Molthuni commoners in exchange for military service has caused outrage among his citizens, and in response, many have entered into illicit trade agreements with Nisrochi merchants, providing them with valuable resources and pocketing tax-free profits as an act of defiance. The rest of Nidal views Nisroch as a contemptuous necessity. The Black Triune pays little heed to the demands of the city's members in the Umbral Court. They support the city when they must, though they find the bickering of its petty nobles insipid and their tolerance of outsiders dangerously foolish. Likewise, the high priests of Ridwan scoff at the Over-Diocesan and her ostentatious Cathedral for exceedingly focusing on the sins of the flesh, which they deem an obviously Chelish influence. Despite such harsh views, the Triune acknowledges the importance of the city as a first line of defense against invasion, as well as a primary source for trade and outside resources.

Over the years, Nisroch has become a prize target for Desna's most devoted missionaries. Though the city maintains strict laws about foreigners, in comparison to other places in Nidal, its security is still the easiest to breach. Missionaries attempting to spread the faith travel throughout the city's downtrodden and forgotten neighborhoods. Their growing presence has roused a strong and terrible response from the Cathedral of Bone. Known as Desna Hunters, teams of Kuthite zealots prowl the slums towing massive iron-wheeled cages. Wearing terrifying spike-covered leather masks, they sniff out their quarries, raid homes, and drag the heathen believers to the Pillars of the Howling Prophets to be stoned.

## SITES OF INTEREST

Nisroch holds many secrets for locals and foreigners alike.

**Boutique Zeleve:** In the lower Spires rests the shop of a young Nidalese designer, **Nathalia Zeleve** (LE female human expert 3), who has single-handedly created—and continues to define—Nisroch's latest movement in high fashion: fey-skin. Her bold clothing makes use of impossibly thin, ebon leather sinisterly procured from the tender flesh of nymphs, dryads, and similar creatures. Fey-skin's soft, shimmery suppleness makes it very popular, while Nathalia's creative formfitting designs contort and accentuate the wearer's body most eloquently.

**Brimstone:** A holdover from the days of Chelish occupation, Brimstone features several devilishly themed establishments built within a former Chelish embassy building. Ex-barrister **Nelman Clant** (LE male human aristocrat 1/expert 3) owns and runs the establishment, purchasing it for a song shortly after the occupation ended. Brimstone's main entrance opens into a wide atrium providing central access to each of its establishments. The ground floor includes a tavern and restaurant featuring

Chelish cuisine, while the upstairs features an inn and a pleasure bar. As would be expected, the aesthetics emulate the culture of Nidal's southern neighbors. Though deemed kitschy by the city's nobility, Brimstone remains one of the only establishments in the Spires still frequented by outsiders. As might be expected, the majority of its patrons are Chelish dignitaries or merchants who stay here while pursuing their endeavors. Regardless, all outsiders must possess a voucher from a Nidalese lord in order to rent a room and stay the night in the Spires. Despite the added measure of protection, Silent Enforcers frequently raid Brimstone looking for traitors and spies.

**The Cathedral of Bone:** Atop an immense stone plateau, the ever-growing Cathedral of Bone towers over the city. Entirely composed of human skeletons taken from fallen foes, the 60-foot-tall Cathedral appears both unbelievable and terrifying. It is said that construction of the cathedral is ceaseless, and even during the Chelish occupation priests secretly continued its work in defiance of their overlords. Only a single, narrow path winds to the summit, lined with gruesome roadside shrines in which priests inflict specialized tortures upon petitioners (see sidebar on page 41).

A powerful priestess known as the **Over-Diocesan** (LE female human cleric of Zon-Kuthon 9) runs the Cathedral and commands its extensive clergy. She wears the alchemically preserved face of a virginal girl held taut with steel hooks against her flayed skull and communicates her desires with gestures.

Below the Cathedral lies an extensive dungeon, a torture-garden known as the Hundred and One Chambers. It features a maze-like arena, the Gauntlet of Pain, where devotees are stripped to loincloths and forced to race through halls of broken glass, thorns, and other painful and torturous obstacles.

**Dusk:** Dusk is one of many semi-clandestine highbrow bondage clubs frequented by the Nisrochi nobility. Common within the Spires, these clubs usually have closed memberships and meet monthly at predetermined secret locations. Dusk distinguishes itself as the only club that operates out of Waterview. Under the guidance of Kuthite missionary **Sister Lysarious** (LE female human cleric of Zon-Kuthon 5), priests host nightly events in various secret locations, such as old basements or warehouses. Furthermore, Dusk remains unique in that it occasionally invites foreigners to partake in its decadence.

Club members freely indulge in all sorts of painful acts of sadomasochism. So-called "devil-whores" (tiefling slave-prostitutes) cater to guests, servicing them with brutal and torturous devices. Between chemical abuse and physical violence, it isn't unheard of for patrons to die from overindulgence.

Dusk was an experiment, designed by the Over-Diocesan to attract rich and powerful foreigners into Zon-Kuthon's fold. Thus far, it has proved quite successful and garnered the church many new allies seduced by its explicitness. Unlike similar clubs, its questionable locations, rampant promiscuity, and mix of outsiders creates a truly dangerous environment. Thus the club is exceedingly popular.

**The Cemetery:** Few burial grounds match the unrepentant decadence and splendor of Nisroch's thousand-year-old cemetery. Its expansive grounds are crammed with terrifying and glorious megaliths that tower above its walls. Hundreds of groundskeepers, gravediggers, morticians, and stoneworkers maintain its perfection. These artisans are among the best paid in the city, patronized by vainglorious nobles who attempt to outshine the commissions of their rivals.

**Clifftown:** In the shadow of the bluffs, a colony of austere fishermen and sea-farmers eke out self-sufficient lives as Nisroch's primary food-providers. In addition to fish, they harvest seaweed, salt, shellfish, reefclaws, and cultured pearls in every lustrous shade of black. While these folk do not hold the prestige of the nobility, the importance of services allots them rights denied to most other commoners. Despite a modicum of privilege, they reek of their work, have no place in polite society, and largely keep to themselves.

**The Glut and Gallows:** Perhaps the most notorious tavern in all of Portside is the Glut and Gallows. A raucous, briny pub frequented largely by pirates, here rum flows freely and bloody knife fights serve as nightly entertainment. Appearances aside, the Glut remains a foreigner's best bet for hiring a ship captain that would even consider smuggling goods in or out of Nisroch. A scraggly southlander called **Fritch** (NE male human rogue 6) brokers all such deals in a shadowy corner at the back of the pub.

**The Highs:** The cluster of craggy isles known as the Highs is overseen by the city's enigmatic **Harbormaster Glau** (LE male wight fighter 6). The two larger isles house military bases, while a precariously tall lighthouse of crumbling gray stone stands perched upon the westernmost islet, a warning to larger ships. The remaining islet is forbidden to all but members of the Silent Shroud. It serves as an isolated training facility for the programming of new inductees. Anyone not of the Shroud that sets foot upon the islet is never heard from again.

**The Incinerators:** A charnel stench bellows from the eight black chimneys of rust-speckled iron that rise from a desolate, leering structure flanked by immense columns of dull gray stone. The incinerators operate under the guidance of hooded priests who wait in ominous silence to lead the aged, blind, infirm, insane, and all others who weaken society to their proper disposal.

**The Mausoleum:** The mausoleum is the latest pet project of the rotund and snobbish nobleman **Amrot Lysier** (LE male human aristocrat 5). It features a glass floor through which visitors can view the deceased beneath. The elaborately displayed corpses lie in stone crypts, positioned in various horrifying stages of torturous dissection or floating in vats of chemicals. The whole place reeks of preservative toxins. It is rumored that Amrot pays large sums to any individual desirous of receiving his elaborate burial preparations before death.

**Morbidium:** A cabal of grim, arcane scientists known as the Morbidium of Exquisite Surgeons performs questionable experiments and dissections on corpses to diagram the inner

## Favorite Torture Methods

The Nidalese have had centuries to perfect their torture methods, but some are more popular than others.

**Branding:** Priests scar petitioners with complicated brands. Extreme branders pour molten metal directly onto the scars, allowing it to fuse to the skin.

**Brining:** Petitioners self-flagellate themselves with scourges, sticks, burlap cords, chains, and other such items. Priests then help the bruised and bleeding into large barrels filled with wound-stinging brine.

**Crucifixion:** While some priests practice traditional crucifixions, newer torments include inserting surgical steel or bone bars beneath the skin and propping up the petitioner like a scarecrow.

**Envenoming:** The priest binds the petitioner, coats his naked body with a sticky ointment made from honey or pollen, and then throws him into a pit crawling with fire ants, tarantulas, wingless hornets, scorpions, or other painfully venomous insects.

**Scalding:** The petitioner sits blindfolded while a priest slowly drips scalding hot oil or acid upon various parts of the subject's body.

**Splinting:** The priest hammers bits of obsidian, bone, or reeds beneath the petitioner's fingernails and toenails, or between joints.

**Suspension Meditation:** Petitioners hang themselves upon flesh-hooks for hours until they experience revelation. The pain is so intense it causes severe hallucinations, during which the participants claim they can hear the whispered will of their dark patron.

**Tourniqueting:** Using catgut or fine cords, a priest binds the petitioner into a convoluted knot. Using dowels, he then tightens and loosens various strands, painfully manipulating the petitioner's blood flow.

**Translucening:** Priests treat the petitioner's flesh with acidic alchemical salves until it becomes thin, semi-transparent, and painfully sensitive to the slightest touch.

**Wax Linking:** A priest magically links the petitioner to a wax doll. Anytime thereafter, the priest can jab the doll with pins, or contort its limbs, causing the petitioner extreme pain.

workings of flesh and soul. The elderly **Fyngral Eithasme** (LE male human wizard 3/expert 6), a pallid, corpse-like man with disturbingly long, curling fingernails and a stringy beard, runs the Morbidium. Funded by the church, he provides monthly presentations of his findings. Priests tour their laboratories as Morbidium scholars lecture on what happens to flesh as it burns and freezes, how to peel back layers of skin, the best places to insert tubes, rods, and other devices into a body, and general knowledge of how humans react to pain. Sometimes they work on living volunteers. Such unfortunates include lepers or Southsiders to whose



## Pain and the City

The Nidalese people have long endured the righteous lash of their sadistic god. Drawn to pain as an ecstatic plea for salvation, worshipers build their resistance in order to withstand even greater, more excruciating stimulations of the flesh. Likewise, those among them who merely pay lip service to the Midnight Lord seek to emulate their resistance, if only for survival.

The following feat is common among Zon-Kuthon's devotees, who dub its technique Zon-Kuthon's Kiss. Likewise, many other cultures across Golarion use similar techniques to surpass pain.

### Endure Pain (Zon-Kuthon's Kiss)

Through violent and torturous conditioning, you have built up a resistance to pain.

**Prerequisite:** Survived being tortured 10 or more times.

**Benefit:** If you take nonlethal damage, you may attempt a Fortitude saving throw (DC equal to 10 + the nonlethal damage dealt) to reduce that damage by half. The Endurance feat grants a +4 bonus on this saving throw.

### Heathensnuff

Others lacking the will to harden themselves appropriately turn to alchemical methods to endure. This purplish paste is made from sea urchin toxins and numbs the user's ability to sense pain. Illegal in Nidal, the drug is used mostly by those attempting to emulate true belief in Zon-Kuthon or who anticipate great pain. A dose gives the user the Endure Pain feat for 1 hour, though it also has debilitating side effects and leaves telltale reddish-purple stains around the nostrils for up to one day, easily identified by those familiar with the symptoms. Followers of the Midnight Lord believe using heathensnuff is a sure sign that an individual lacks faith.

Anyone who takes the drug must make a DC 10 saving throw or become addicted. A snuff addict can stave off withdrawal for 5 days by taking a dose; failure means he must save or take 1d4 Dex and 1d4 Wis damage. This save DC increases by +5 for every 5 days since the last time the addict had a dose. If the addict makes two of these saves in a row, he is no longer addicted. *Remove disease* can cure an addict if the caster's caster level check succeeds against a DC equal to the addict's current withdrawal DC. *Greater restoration* or *heal* cures the addiction without requiring a roll.

#### HEATHENSNUFF

**Type** poison, ingested; **Save** Fortitude DC 13

**Frequency** 1/hour for 4 hours

**Initial Effect** Endure Pain feat for 1 hour (see above);

**Secondary Effect** 1 Con damage; **Cure** 1 save

**Cost** 10 gp

families they pay a handful of precious gold in exchange for their participation in their macabre works. Occasionally, the Morbidium publishes their findings in journals as legitimate medical texts. These atrocities sell for exorbitant prices to the academicians of the world.

**Pillars of the Howling Prophets:** On the edge of Southbank lies Prophet's Square, where long rows of stocky, cobbled stone pillars stand 10 feet tall and 20 feet apart. Here, city officials perform a sort of brutal public trial reserved for heathens and commonfolk deemed too vile to set foot in high court. The accused are forced to climb atop a pillar and don shackles mounted to the base. Next, they must summon forth a jury to whom they plead their case. Juries typically turn violent, as the gathered mob pelts the defendant with stones until he confesses his crimes, admits his sins, and espouses the superiority of Zon-Kuthon. Despite a high percentage of confessions, few survive the ordeal and most die upon the pillars.

**Red Rodamyre's Burlesque:** A foul-mouthed dwarf from Andoran named **Red Rodamyre** (NE male dwarf rogue 5) runs lowbrow burlesque torture shows for various Portsiders. He's pushing his luck, however, because he is still an infidel and though his shows celebrate torture, they remain common, crude, and irreverent, with no true respect for Zon-Kuthon.

**The Screaming Wall:** At the end of the Everwar, Silent Enforcers uncovered a rat's nest of Desna worshipers living within the leper colonies outside the city walls; these foreigners were treating the sick and creating an underground supply route to aid the starving people. Soon after, troops of Nidalese soldiers swooped in and rounded up all of them. In a gruesome public display, they were nailed upon the wall overlooking the Hovels. Then, the Shrouded One unleashed a powerful spell, transforming them into a stone fresco. To this day, their perfectly preserved remains hang there, frozen forever in anguish and pain.

**The Torture Choir:** Within a twisted music hall in upper Cathedral Summit, **Doctor Aernrot Malingris** (LE male human bard 4/cleric of Zon-Kuthon 3) has created perhaps the most unforgettably disturbing choir ever assembled. The master torturer has surgically modified each member of his choir to usher forth a single, perfect note. The choir is his instrument, bound in chains and suspended like human lures hanging from a massive chandelier. He forces their cries by tugging strings that tear their flesh with scalpels dipped in acid and salt. While worshipers of Zon-Kuthon revel in the choir as divine, the few outsiders who have witnessed the spectacle are nearly driven to madness.

**The Whispered Song:** Those seeking to bring liberation to the rigid, totalitarian oppression of the Umbral Court are said to sing the Whispered Song—the namesake of a secret society of Desna's most devout followers and allies. Under the work of their leader **Ciarna Aldran** (CG female human cleric of Desna 6/rogue 2), they work furtively to ensure the mutual benefit of its members, providing food and medicines to the poor

and sick, creating black markets of stolen or tax-free goods to thwart taxation, create networks of spies, and help smuggle agents in and out of the city. Recently, the Whispered Song has been lent new support by a group of liberated Silent Enforcers known as the Unsilenced, most of whom worship Desna. Led by perhaps the most wanted man in the city, **Axriel Freeman** (LG male human monk 7), the Unsilenced's primary goal is to abduct Silent Enforcers and deprogram them.

**Witch-Markets:** The coast south of Portside hosts a sprawling open-air market that stretches from the harbor waters to the city walls. Known as the Witch-Markets, vendors from throughout the city erect carts, tents, and booths into an entropic array where customers might find anything imaginable. Dried foodstuffs, old jewelry, reagents and herbs, potions and tonics, leather products, fabrics, and all manner of goods are brought in from Portside and Southbank, while its narrow docks reek of harvests from Clifftown's fishmongers and seaweed farmers.

## ENCOUNTERS

Even in Nisroch, danger and intrigue lurk under the surface.

**The Bloodletters:** PCs investigating the disappearance of several acquaintances are drawn to clandestine dining parties hosted by a prominent shadow sorcerer at his manse in the Spires. Soon after, they uncover evidence that some attendees engage in gruesome acts of cannibalism. Further inquiry leads them into the perverse world of a secret society of "living vampires" who host orgies where participants cut themselves with shards of volcanic glass and drink each other's blood. The cannibals are actually shapeshifters hiding among these bloodletters that seek to manipulate the Umbral Court.

**Escape from Nisroch:** The Whispered Song hires the PCs to help one of their top agents, Belina Ast, escape the city. Belina breached the cloaked secrecy of the Umbral Court as a barrister under the patronage of a wealthy noble family, but the Whispered Song has received intelligence indicating that rivals now plot her assassination. PCs need to track down Belina, stage a fake assassination, and abduct her before her rivals do away with her for good.

**Gangs of Southbank:** The criminal activities of Southbank's most notorious street gang suddenly escalate from knife fighting, food smuggling, and petty theft to brazen acts of terrorism. Rioting, arson, and open attacks on city officials prompt the Silent Enforcers to initiate brutal crackdowns on residents throughout Southbank. The PCs need to find the gang and convince them to cease their activities before half the ward is hauled off. This task is difficult because the gang's brash, charismatic leader is possessed by a devil with whom he made a pact in exchange for power.

**The Heist:** Silent Enforcers raid a Portside Inn, rounding up a dozen foreigners, including the PCs. All are charged with the theft of a large cache of weapons stolen from one of the military storehouses in the Blocks. Facing a grueling trial upon the Pillars, the accused are given the chance to prove

## Arms and Armor

Nisroch's military is known for its exquisite armor and weaponry. Nisrochi swords are perfectly balanced and hold a razor edge, while Nisrochi armor is precisely fitted down to the smallest detail. Their craftsmen produce only masterwork weapons and armor (as commoners aren't permitted to carry weapons), using a mysterious technique they call shadowforging. Although they sell their finished weapons, Nisrochi smiths are willing to kill to protect the secrets of their creation. Nidalese design is easily identified by its shadow-tinted alloys and the grim motifs of its intricately detailed etching.

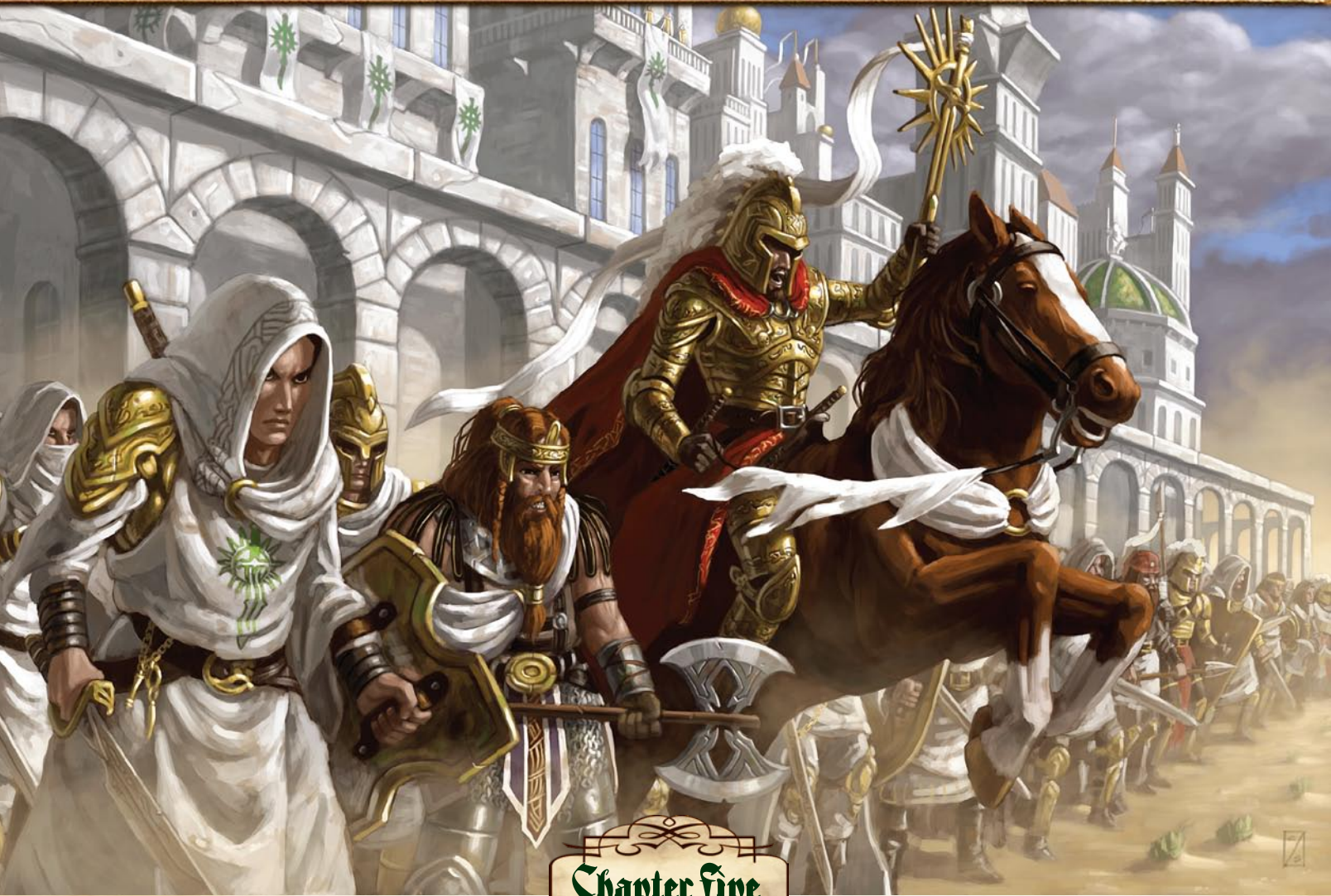
their innocence by finding the real thieves. The other suspects accept the challenge, seeking to pin the blame on the PCs. In truth, the weapons were stolen by the Unsilenced; the PCs must decide whether to expose the rebels or find a way to clear their own names without risking anyone else.

**The Lady's Rose:** Garundi pirates under the command of a sadistic captain known only as the Prince of Hooks recently commandeered the Andoren vessel *The Lady's Rose*. The Gray Corsairs tracked the ship to Portside; believing traitorous crewmembers aided the pirates, they hire the PCs to go undercover to attempt to determine who betrayed the vessel and, if possible, steal it back. The Prince of Hooks is a zealous disciple of the Over-Diocesan who converts pirates to his faith.

**Mercenaries:** A lesser nobleman of the Umbral Court hires the PCs to avenge him against a rival who stands poised to lay ruin to the remainder of his family's fortune. As it turns out, the rival is not only a popular socialite, but also a vampire. To defeat him, the PCs must work their way through the tight-knit social circles of Nisrochi nobility and root out the vampire's thralls in order to uncover his secret lair and defeat him.

**The Plague:** A new and deadly disease tears its way through the slums of Southbank and the Hovels. Agents of the Whispered Song have determined the disease is of unnatural origin, and need the PCs to find its cause. The trail leads them to a diabolical priest whose minions have been abducting peasants and dosing them with a virulent alchemical concoction he's created. The injections produce contagious, disease-like symptoms, intended to cull back the growing throngs outside the Screaming Wall and Lepersgate.

**Torture Menagerie:** In the shadows of Nisroch's narrow alleys, the PCs face a violent encounter with a twisted aberration. The pitiful creature turns out to be a lobotomized dockworker whose body has been broken, bent, and surgically reconstructed into a horrifying beast by the Morbidium's most celebrated necrosurgeon. After years of practicing his depraved techniques on expendables, he has created an entire menagerie of similarly tormented creatures. Recently they broke free and killed their creator, and now make nightly forays about the city in search of prey.



## Chapter five

# VIGIL

Established at the height of Taldor's Golden Age, Vigil was to be a glorious symbol of triumphant imperial power, literally the "last wall" of the empire. Defiantly erected within sight of where the Whispering Tyrant lay imprisoned, Vigil exemplifies that mere mortals, possessed of honor, bravery, and good will, can stand up against the power of death. Through thankful years of peace and trying times of war, Vigil has endured, bloodied but unbowed. Vigil is the shield of Lastwall, and Lastwall the shield of the world, crafted to be an indomitable redoubt of strength and hope, meant to stand forever.



**M**ore than just a fortress, Vigil is a city of music, joy, faith, and the simple miracles of life—proof positive that all can endure no matter how grim the odds. Even as the empire which sired it fell into decadence and decay, Vigil stayed true to its mission. When the empire fractured under the weight of its own corruption, the people of Lastwall knew their watch over Gallowspire must endure, and looked to Vigil as their guiding light—and Vigil answered. To this day, warriors of good heart are still drawn to Lastwall—to take their place in the line of defense, to stand in the breach—and Vigil is the beacon that draws them. Whatever the cost, whatever may shift and change in the world around them, in Vigil the watch is kept, sword and lance and arrow still kept sharp. In Vigil, prayers and hymns are raised, spirits lifted, and hope renewed. Here the mission is never lost, nor does remembrance fade. The smallest child in Vigil knows that victory is bought dearly with the blood of the fallen, and every citizen knows his duty to keep the faith and hold the line.

## APPEARANCE

Vigil's concentric walls march a nearly complete circuit around the city, leaving only a narrow gap into the small, fortified harbor. The thick outer walls and towers are of stained granite quarried in the nearby hills, and an inner wall rises yet higher, with crossbowmen ready to shoot enemies that escalate the lower rampart, or rain fire upon enemies and siege engines beyond the outer wall. The towers of the inner and outer walls bristle with ballistae, catapults, and trebuchets, with pacing guards on constant patrol. The north and south gatehouses and the six towers of the outer wall are always bathed in glorious light, as *hallow* spells fixed with *daylight* banish the shadows nearby.

While the outer wall bears the scars of many assaults, the inner wall and all of the city within, including Castle Overwatch, are kept whitewashed, lending a stark and gleaming contrast to the drab outer ramparts and the neatly laid orchards, garden plots, animal pens, and sheds that lie between the walls, tended by Erastil's faithful and bountiful through frost, drought, storm, and siege. The alleys and streets are kept clear of the piles of refuse that often clutter the byways of other cities. Market stalls and carts abound during the day, replete with smells of meat pies, roasting vegetables, and moist pear-cardamom cakes, but by nightfall all are packed, covered, and transported from the thoroughfares, and the streets are usually empty save for patrols of the Watchknights and the ever-present street-sweeping wagons removing the dross of the day.

Much of Lastwall's architecture is blocky, solid, and utilitarian, but some examples of the Chelish Old White style can be found, such as the five Tribune Halls and the Pathfinder lodge. Rising in the city's center is the Watcher's Tor, with hedgerows of hardy dawnroses, ivory-white and

salmon-pink petals edged in scarlet clinging to its manicured lower slopes, and wild climbing roses scaling even the steeper scarps below the central keep and the towering citadel itself. This awe-inspiring fortification, its hallowed battlements a halo of golden flames by night, offers a commanding view of the surrounding countryside.

Vigil's most famous building lies at the foot of Watcher's Tor: the magnificent Cathedral of Sancta Iomedaea. Contrary to later Iomedean tradition, this first and greatest of her temples is Vigil's only building that is not whitewashed. An architectural marvel of golden marble, stained glass, onyx and porphyry inlays, and intricate carvings, its 40 mutually buttressing domes rise in glorious succession, supporting a central dome 50 paces across, pierced with crystal veins that bathe the interior in shafts of beatific light. The cathedral's great bells thunder the dawn watch and peal at sunset, with smaller chimes marking other ceremonies. More than any sights or smells, the soul of Vigil is told in ringing metal, from forge hammer, tinkling earring bell, jangling harness and shop-door, and over all a soaring chorus of bells from steepled shrines and the great cathedral itself.

## HISTORY

Vigil was founded by Taldor at the conclusion of the Shining Crusade, though records in Caliphas place a long-lost trade village called Rookmin at the site an age ago, where the inhabitants worked the first salt mines in the nearby hills and later quarried fine granite to be sent downriver across Lake Encarthan. When the Whispering Tyrant raised the orc hordes of Belkzen in 3203 AR, Rookmin was quickly overrun and the mines and quarries abandoned, and no settlement survived here for more than a few generations until the advent of the Shining Crusade.

In 3820, the crusaders established Fort Lorrin to serve as a supply depot in the area. When the Whispering Tyrant slew Arazni the warrior goddess 3 years later, the crusaders were driven back in disarray, and it was here that the mortal Iomedae rallied the Knights of Ozem and launched the counterstroke that broke the enemy's advance, annihilating their vanguard at Vaishali Pass and routing the survivors back to Gallowspire, where after a 3-year siege the tyrant was overthrown. Taldor chose this auspicious location to establish a new city, one unburdened by past allegiances and corruption and looking toward a future of sober watchfulness. Thus was Vigil born. Artisans from across the empire were brought to work on the new city, including the founding of a grand cathedral dedicated to Iomedae, the Sancta Iomedaea, upon her ascension as Aroden's Herald in 3832. The marvelous edifice took 30 years to complete, and even when an earthquake just 18 years after its consecration collapsed part of the cathedral's main dome, donations poured in from across the empire for its swift reconstruction. Older crusaders who had fought alongside Iomedae herself



1. Northgate
2. Sophronia's Steeple
3. Cathedral of Sancta Iomedaea
4. Watcher's Tor
5. Crusader War College
6. Castle Overwatch
7. Tribune Hall (Magic)
8. Wizards' Guild
9. Market Square
10. Tribune Hall (Farms)
11. Tribune Hall (Trade)
12. The Drakkar
13. Tribune Hall (Mines)
14. Tribune Hall (Faith)
15. The Ironworks
16. The Saltworks
17. Pathfinder Lodge
18. The Mourners of Arazni
19. The Legendary Playhouse
20. The Lady's Shield-Hand
21. Southgate
22. The Strand





nicknamed it the “Church of Our Lady,” and the name has stuck with locals ever since.

Vigil has changed remarkably little in population or layout over the years, as the dangers of the frontier have curtailed the urban sprawl that more settled cities typically acquire. The city has never fallen to invaders, though in the still-legendary Wolf Winter of 4450, the Path River froze and the werewolf lord Thortaad and his pack terrorized the city for 40 nights before he could be trapped and executed on the cathedral steps. In the wake of Aroden’s death, the entire city was ravaged by fire during the abortive coup of the zealous Iomedaeen priest Jesca Malvaney (the so-called “Whiteblade War”) in 4619, and some credit this shocking strife within the Inheritor’s faithful as an important cause for the calling of the first Mendevian Crusade, providing a way to move radicals and those weary of Lastwall out of Vigil and into a new mission. While Vigil has

rebuilt over the near-century since, some worry that fewer now come to keep the mission strong, and that evil may eventually overwhelm them at last. However, the people of Vigil continue to trust in their mission, their leaders, and their fellows, and few have disappointed or failed in their trust. Like its people, Vigil has weathered every storm, and its residents trust that they will always be replaced by a new generation dedicated to keeping the watch.

## SOCIETY

While Vigil is fairly homogeneous ideologically, it is quite ethnically and racially diverse, as that very ideology, which scoffers call the “magnificent madness” of Vigil, has drawn crusaders from every land, race, and people, even from nations unsympathetic to the crusade. While Gorumite crusaders clamor for aggressive offensives and Iomedaeen ones focus on sustainability and defense, from across Avistan and beyond come all types to honor the duties of the vigilant. First among the crusaders is **Watcher-Lord Ulthun II** (LG human male paladin 6). The grandson of refugees from Nidal, his inexperience and youth surprised many when he was selected to command. Ulthun was deemed the knight who best exemplified the crusader ideal, combining skill at arms with vision, faith, purity of heart, and clarity of mind. Advised by the Tribunes and Precentors Martial, Ulthun has ruled just over a year but already has impressed with his sound judgment, quick mind, and willingness to listen, yet can still be decisive when needed. The handsome 19-year-old has attracted many suitors from Lastwall and abroad, but

so far has focused on mastering the arts of rulership before dealing with matters of the heart.

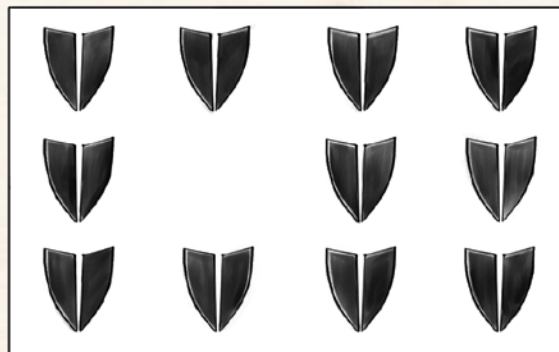
Below the Watcher-Lord, five Precentors Martial govern military affairs and five Tribunes have charge of civil matters. The Tribunes manage and adjudicate issues regarding Trade, Mines, Farms, Faith, and Magic (respectively), with all five meeting in council to decide matters of general concern. The Precentors Martial (overseeing Cavalry, Infantry, Garrison and Siege, Scouting, and Magic) can appropriate civil resources, as can the Watcher-Lord (who possesses final authority “over all matters relevant to the prosecution of the Crusade”), but they rarely interfere in civil affairs except during major conflicts.

These officials also control citizenship in Vigil. Supplicants must first present themselves to a Tribune, state their reasons for desiring citizenship, and receive the Shield-Mark, a *mark of justice* upon the right palm in the shape of a Lastwall shield, sealing their oaths of loyalty to support

the crusade and its ideals, and swearing to treat citizens and strangers alike with fairness, honesty, and respect. Aspiring Vigilant soldiers must approach a Precentor Martial in the same way, receiving the Sword-Mark, a second *mark of justice* upon the left palm in the shape of Iomedae’s symbol, swearing to faithfully serve their commanders, to protect the life of any citizen in danger (even at the risk of their own), and to temper justice with mercy and uphold the best of the crusader ideal.

These are hard oaths, and no one is required to swear them, but the Oathless cannot own property or businesses in Vigil, nor can they walk armed or armored but for a dagger or staff, and must store other armaments with the Watchknights at the city gates. Citizens with the Shield-Mark may own and keep weapons but rarely go armed except during times of alert. Vigilants with both marks may go freely armed at all times. In Vigil, these marks are a sign of security, recognition of kinship in the mission of the city, but also a marker to outsiders that in a world colored in shades of gray, the honesty and trustworthiness of Vigil and its people is unquestionable.

While their commitment to the cause is absolute, Vigilants are not joyless, pious drones, and though the worship of Iomedae dominates, the city is dotted with small-steepled chapel-shrines to Gorum, Erastil, Shelyn, and Kurgess the Strong Man. Vigil boasts solid yet beautiful architecture and lovely music, not only the ubiquitous flutes and drums but marketplace musicians as well. Vigilants love theatrical performances of heroism and romance, tales from faraway





places, and familiar crusader epics. The citizens tend to be temperate, but happily raise pints of dark stout or bitter ale at a popular tavern called The Lady's Shield-Hand, or the Ulfen-built Drakkar, renowned for its honeyed mead, glazed roasts, potent spirits, and the occasional brawl.

Vigilants also love their horses, central as they are to the crusader tradition. Legendary for its thick-legged chargers and destriers, Vigil is equally accomplished in breeding swift coursers and rounceys, popular for scouting, pursuit, and racing. Civilians love the smooth, ambling gait of the sleek palfrey and the compact Taldor-bred jennet, now a rare line but much-loved for their gentle disposition. Vigilants proudly recite the lineages of their favorite horseflesh, matching wits and wagers on the monthly Strander Stakes run along the Path River, and the grueling Sophronia Steeplechase held every Midsummer's Day.

Trade guilds in Vigil are small and closely watched by the Tribunes. Most are headquartered in Vellumis, where guildhalls are little more than offices in the homes of local guildmasters. There is no thieves' guild as such, though many rogues work as couriers for other guilds. The Precentor Martial for Scouting, **Keyron Saiville** (CG male human ranger 2/fighter 4/low templar 3), also engages those skilled in stealth and forest lore for covert missions. A devout Gorumite, he keeps the details of these missions deliberately vague to placate the more delicate sensibilities of his Iomedaeen colleagues.

Vigil has two wizards' guilds, if one counts the Battlemage Academy of the War College led by the dynamic fire-haired Precentor Martial of Magic **Veena Heliu** (CG female half-elf sorcerer 8). An ostentatious nonconformist, Veena is the darling of many in the crusade for her aggressiveness in war and in her personal affairs. More than one fistfight has erupted when Veena's lovestruck partisans have referred to her as "Our Lady," a term traditionalists reserve for Iomedae herself.

The civilian Wizard's Guild is run by the elderly **Ren Dendarvi** (LG male human wizard 5/lore master 4), a retired researcher from Taldor who wears his silver beard long in defiance of Taldor's tradition for men of humble birth. Dendarvi and the guild sell low-level potions and scrolls, and also accept commissions to create minor magical items, particularly weapons and armor. Magical goods, secrets, and lore are also traded through the Pathfinder Lodge managed by Venture-Captain **Evni Zongnoos** (NG female gnome cleric of Desna 5/harrower 3), a renowned fortune-teller.

## RELATIONS

Vigil is something of a closed city, where security is high and relationships with outsiders are always at arm's length, its people watchful for treachery and impatient with long-winded formality. There is a certain pride that comes from "standing the line," the term Vigilants use for living so near

the frontier, whether in Vigil, Castle Firrine to the west, or any of the countless border forts from the Tourondel River and the verges of the Fangwood to the frontiers of Belkzen and Ustalav. Some in Vigil look down on the "shieldless" who live far from the front lines, always willing to venture their ideas for how things should happen in Vigil but far less willing to put themselves in harm's way. Still, hauteur has little place in Vigil, and arrogance is rebuked, for the ethos of Vigil has always been that valor and courage are their own reward. "In life and in death, the honor is mine," is a statement of pride; service is not just a duty but a privilege. Those who refuse to serve have deprived themselves of the honor that is there for the taking.

Naturally, some citizens of Vellumis, Lastwall's chief port and largest city, consider Vigilants self-righteous and self-important. Theirs is hardly the only mission for good or the only way in which to serve the crusader ideal. Also, the battalions that Vigil rotates away from the front lines are only too happy to avail themselves of some of the luxuries the rearward areas afford, so Vellumians see a touch of hypocrisy in their northern neighbors' attitudes. Those in Castle Firrine and the border forts, where Gorum is more popular than Iomedae, sometimes think their commanders in Vigil have become too safe, too staid, and too worried about maintaining the status quo, and these dissenters have loud advocates in Vigil in the Precentors Martial for Cavalry and Infantry. Even so, those critical of Vigil are a minority in Lastwall, as all who choose to live in this land are here because they too embrace the crusader ideal, and most still look to Vigil as the great light and hope of Lastwall, a source of pride and inspiration.

To citizens of other nations, Vigil is known mostly by reputation. Druman merchants, Razmiri proselytes, officious Molthuni diplomats, and travelers from beyond Lake Encarthan are politely but firmly funneled away from Vigil and into the embassies and marketplaces of Vellumis to do their business and be on their way; those who want to venture into the hinterlands are invited to take the Shield-Mark oath and join the crusade. Exceptions are regularly made for Nirmathi scouts and hunters in the Fangwood, pilgrims to the Sancta Iomedaea, and invited guests or registered traders, but Lastwall in general and Vigil in particular have no tolerance for potential espionage and little patience for vagabonds, troublemakers, or the overly curious. Travelers to Vigil had best have a good reason and be ready to identify themselves to patrolling Watchknights.

The orcs of Belkzen draw much of Vigil's attention, especially as in recent decades their onslaughts have become far more careful and calculating campaigns. The proliferation in the last few generations of Gorumite icons and warpriests among the orc foes has caused no small amount of consternation in the Crusader War College (to say nothing of the Church of Gorum in Lastwall, centered



at Castle Firrine). Many formerly despised half-orcs have asserted themselves as leaders within Belkzen, bringing with them cunning, tactical acumen, and a respect for the crusaders' skill at arms that has had to be grudgingly reciprocated by those in Vigil. At the same time, however, Vigil must keep a wary eye on the hinterlands of Ustalav, continuing its monthly patrols to the ruins of Gallowspire and when necessary scouring the ruined hill country of Virlych. While these rugged heaths have been devoid of civilization since the Whispering Tyrant's fall, all too many fell creatures still prowl within.

Other threats are less obvious. Relations with Caliphaz and the rest of Ustalav are cordial but cool, with constant suspicion that Vigil's enemies find safe harbor among their neighbors to the north. Unlike the brotherly kinship with Nirmathas, hands are never far from their swords when folk of Lastwall and Ustalav espy one another across the Path River. The mercenary bands common in Ustalav also draw Vigil's ire, frequently accused of raiding across the border, the most infamous such band being the Catspaw Marauders. These brigands and their cowed captain, Avinash, have been a thorn in the side of Vigil for over a century, often raiding across the Belkzen frontier but maddeningly able to penetrate deep into Lastwall's interior, evading every border patrol. They are fierce fighters, but more than once they have been defeated, their leader thought slain, before rising once again. Hearsay has it that crusaders in Mendev have encountered a nearly identical band, most likely a copycat group.

Vigil is also sometimes troubled by the werewolves of the Holtgrieve Wood southeast of Vigil. Rumors in Vigil say that entire families of the bloodthirsty lycanthropes can be found across the Ustalavic borderlands between the river and the hills. The werewolves are said to ally with the vodyanov, a group of malign watermen (supposedly able to transform into fish) blamed for many abductions, drownings, and disappearances along the river. Given their ability to hide among the animals or even local humans, these creatures have proven impossible for Vigil's knights to extirpate. Ships and barges heading downriver from Vigil are always heavily guarded, and most upriver traffic eschews the river entirely, rather taking the Crusader Highway from Vellumis to Vigil.

## SITES OF INTEREST

Most notable locations in Vigil relate to religion or the military.

**Castle Overwatch:** The old Fort Lorrin was a riverside stockade and keep, with but a single watchtower built upon the adjacent rocky schist at the bend of the river called the Watcher's Tor. When the city of Vigil was being planned, that high ground was chosen as the site of Castle Overwatch, the pinnacle of Vigil's defense. A soaring tower was raised

over a hundred paces high to provide a commanding view of the Belkzen frontier, upriver and down, and even the mist-shrouded Virlych hills. By night, the great whitewashed tower and the turrets of the keep below were wreathed in a golden flame, a beacon to allies and a warning to enemies, and able to shed light enough around the city to destroy any advantage the shadow-loving Belkzen orcs and Ustalavic horrors might otherwise enjoy over the city's defenders. As a monument, the original watchtower still stands enshrined within the great hall on the ground floor of the massive new





## Vigil Feats

The armored cavalrymen of Vigil are renowned for their skill in battle, and often possess the following feats.

### Indomitable Mount (Combat)

Your skill at riding helps your mount avoid attacks.

**Prerequisites:** Mounted Combat, Handle Animal 5 ranks, Ride 5 ranks, Lastwall affinity.

**Benefit:** Once per round when your mount must make a saving throw, you can make a Ride check as an immediate action. Your mount makes its save if your Ride check result is greater than the DC of the opponent's attack.

### Mounted Onslaught (Combat)

You and your mount can shatter an enemy's line with your unyielding assault.

**Prerequisites:** Mounted Combat, Trample, Ride 5 ranks, Lastwall affinity.

**Benefit:** On your turn you may overrun more than one creature. Each overrun combat maneuver check beyond the first has a cumulative  $-5$  penalty. If you fail to overrun a target, your movement ends. Your mount may only make a single hoof attack against one target that is knocked prone by your overrun (not one per prone opponent).

**Normal:** You can only attempt one overrun per round.

### Wheeling Charge (Combat)

Your mount moves with ease across battlefields.

**Prerequisites:** Mounted Combat, Ride-By Attack, Ride 5 ranks, Lastwall affinity.

**Benefit:** When you are mounted and use the charge action, your mount can make one turn of up to 90 degrees as part of the move, as long as each part of the move is at least 10 feet. You may make an attack during any part of this move. Your total movement for the round can't exceed double your mounted speed. Allied creatures do not impede your charge, though you cannot attack from or end your move in an ally's space.

**Normal:** You cannot turn when making a charge.

tower, along with the *Shattered Shield of Arnisant*, the holiest relic of the crusade.

The central citadel of Castle Overwatch is home to the Watcher-Lord, while the Crusader War College fills most of its outer bailey, developing strategy and tactics and mastering the arts of battle. Here horse and rider learn to fight as one, welded into a devastating fusion of sword and hoof, and crusaders learn to fight with weapon and shield as well as more exotic skills, from magic to siege warfare—all integrated to maximize their effectiveness against their usually numerically superior enemies. Cavalry training at

the war college is some of the finest in Avistan, ranking with the finest warrior academies.

Castle Overwatch also boasts an enormous extradimensional stable, akin to a *magnificent mansion*, where hundreds of battle-ready mounts are kept and tended (the stable can hold up to a thousand mounts but is rarely kept completely full). This magnificent stable can be connected to either the south gate or the north gate of the city, enabling an immediate response to a threat from either direction. Most of Vigil's horses are boarded elsewhere, usually within a day's ride, but the magnificent stable provides a key strategic reserve and preparation for surprise attack. The "magnificent prison" is a similar extradimensional space accessible only through Castle Overwatch, but rather than hosting battalions of war-mounts, it is a safe place to store up to a thousand criminals, miscreants, or enemy soldiers.

**Cathedral of Sancta Iomedaea:** This massive cathedral, built upon the foundations of Fort Lorrin, was the work of a generation of Taldor's finest architects and artisans at the height of their powers, many returning with their children after the earthquake of 3880 to repair and even improve upon their work. The cathedral's ingenious construction carries the central dome's weight to four great pillars and 39 mutually buttressing sub-domes, creating a vast airy chamber 60 paces high. A sword of golden light, a divine manifestation of the blade of Iomedae, appeared at the occasion of the cathedral's dedication and hangs beneath the dome, illuminating intricate geometric mosaics and heavenly frescoes, ornate stonework and statuary, and inscribed scriptures from the *Acts of Iomedae*. Second Sword Knight **Aylunna Varvatos** (LG female human cleric of Iomedae 9) has presided over worship for 10 years.

The cathedral's four towers hold paragons of the bellmaker's craft, the deep-toned bells that toll by morning and evening to mark another day that the crusade endures. The cathedral's fonts have anointed more paladins than almost anywhere else on Golarion, and many anointed elsewhere make pilgrimage to its hallowed halls to visit or to serve. The great crypts of the city are laid beneath the cathedral, as are the ossuaries that now hold most of Vigil's honored dead. The skull-lined corridors are a morose counterpoint to the beauty above, and yet are equally representative of the honor and valor of Iomedae's faithful.

**Hallein Town:** While but a tiny settlement, perched at the foot of a high tarn rising from the shores of Lake Hallensee some 4 miles east of Vigil, Hallein Town is nevertheless an important component of the city. Virtually inaccessible by land, Hallein Town hosts the workers for the salt mines in the Virlych hills. In generations past, salt was carried across the lake by boat and brought down to the river by mule, but this became a dangerous route in winter because of **Kaltia, the Haunter of the Hills** (CE female dwarf vampire expert 4), a



haggard winter spirit of a long-lost dwarf-clan, accursed and murdered by her own people for trying to make peace with the orcs of Belkzen. Though she's been slain repeatedly by the crusader knights, her resting place has never been found, and she returns again and again to menace the salt-bearers, especially in the winter months.

**The Legendary Playhouse:** This theater, first built by impresario Karl Ceztulk over a century ago, fell on hard times and sat shuttered for a decade until a crusader immigrant named Sehaye Kinfu reopened it, producing exotic tales from his parents' homeland in Nex. His elaborate spectacles did well at first, but as the novelty wore off, he was barely able to stay in business by showcasing his daughter, Sharina, a dusky-skinned beauty of considerable talent. Sehaye died just over a year ago and his daughter took over the theater. Granted a tax reprieve during her time of mourning, she recreated herself as **Sharina Legend-Singer** (CN female human bard 6), a composer of songs about local heroes. Not only did she reinvent classic tales of stolid crusaders, she also discovered new heroes and lionized them in song. Adventurers, scouts, soldiers—all were fair game, and the captivated public could not get enough of Sharina's beauty, talent, and knack for finding thrilling stories and presenting them with spectacular showmanship. In truth, Sharina uses her skills, contacts, and the aid of her genie lover, **Gha'zali** (CN male jann) to instigate dangerous incidents and then set adventurers on the road to intervene, manufacturing "heroic" deeds for them to perform while she accompanies them (or uses Gha'zali as an observer). However, she is pushing the limit of what her Shield Mark allows her (as presenting someone with increasingly dangerous challenges isn't very fair or respectful), and if someone dies because of her meddling, it will certainly trigger her Shield Mark's curse.

**The Mourners of Arazni:** Vigil, a city strongly identified with Iomedae, also contains an unusual legacy of her predecessor as Herald of Aroden, Arazni the Warrior-Goddess. In the years after her fall, some of Arazni's followers could not quite part with their love for her. Struggling to deal with their desolation, they gathered and sought ways to comfort one another, and to comfort all who had suffered great loss. Calling themselves the Mourners of Arazni, they performed tragic plays and hosted near-silent balls to mournful accompaniment. In darkened corners and brocaded chambers, they engaged in more intimate joinings, seeking to expunge their sorrows in the unity of passion and the striving to reawaken wounded spirits. Their unique ministry combined public theatrical tragedy to draw forth tears with private ministrations intended to wipe them away. Anyone who was hurting was welcome in

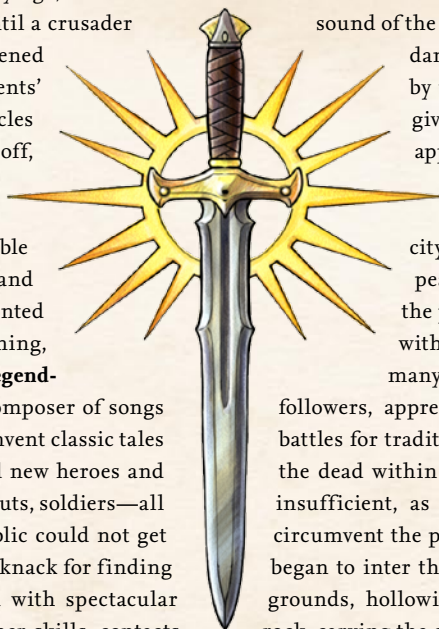
the mummers' chambers, and some who were healed by their touch joined and renewed their ranks.

Over time, most of the Mourner societies faded away, but in Vigil the vivacious **Mistress Shirline** (CG female human bard 5) presides over the elegant Mourners' Manse. This gilded theater, flanked by curtained corridors and velvet and silk-draped rooms replete with mirrors, pools, and entertainments of all kinds, hums with a quiet music, the sound of the nearby cathedral's tolling bells magically dampened. Some Vigilants are scandalized by the Mourners, but city leaders have long given tacit approval to the Mourners' unique approach for dealing with the stress and loss that are a fact of life in Vigil.

**The Ossuaries of the Fallen:** As a city that has known precious few years of peace, Vigil has from its earliest days faced the problem of what to do with its dead. Even with the fall of the Whispering Tyrant, far too many of his necromantic and necrophagic followers, apprentices, and minions survived the final battles for traditional burials to remain inviolate. Laying the dead within hallowed or consecrated ground proved insufficient, as necromancers and death-priests would circumvent the protective magic. Eventually Vigil's rulers began to inter their dead in crypts beneath the cathedral grounds, hollowing their burial niches from the living rock, carving the crypts ever deeper as the dead mounted.

In 3559, however, the Precentor Martial for Magic, Emad Balazinska, was possessed by a demon and released the wards on the crypts, raising an undead legion that butchered a third of the city's population on what became known as the Night of Bones. To prevent this happening again, it was decreed that citizens from highest to lowest would lie entombed in the crypts for a year and a day, after which their skulls would remain intact, engraved with names and dates of birth and death, but all other remains would be cremated or ground to powder and placed in common ossuaries. The walls of skulls lining the ossuaries are a grim reminder that there is often no respite even in death when evil is allowed to endure.

**Sophronia's Steeple:** At the tip of the long strand that runs along the river's edge lies a high wooden steeple that was once part of a chapel-shrine to Kurgress built by Taldan knight Sophronia Sandhu in 3829. Perhaps the finest rider in the crusade, Sophronia loved competition and sponsored regular horse races for the entertainment of troops on garrison duty while the city was being built. When the city design was finalized and the cathedral laid down, Sophronia was mortified to learn that her chapel was not within the walls. The city founders assured her it was protected by the river; determined to prove them wrong, Sophronia leaped into the Path River in full armor and swam across, then



## Hymn of Sancta Iomedaea

The bells of Vigil's cathedral inspired renowned chorister Loher Angin as the perfect accompaniment for the swelling climax of his masterful paean, the "Hymn of Sancta Iomedaea":

*Iomedae, be with us now  
Give us your judgment clear and strong  
Before your sword, we all shall bow  
That right may triumph over wrong  
Give strength to those whose hearts are true  
And give the guilty one his due  
O let your will to us be known  
Wisdom is found in thee alone  
Wisdom is found in thee alone  
O now we pray thee  
Show us your light  
Iomedae  
Defend, defend the right*

demanded a knight on the far bank give her his bow. Her command refused, she bested the knight in a duel, taking his bow and firing a shot clear across the river into the steeple of her own shrine. She then outran a dozen watchknights up to and across a makeshift bridge, cutting it behind her and causing it to break apart. Stealing a horse, she rode a circuit of the entire city before she was stopped at the door of her chapel by a superior officer.

Though she spent a month in the stockade for reckless disregard of standing orders, Sophronia became a folk hero in Vigil, and later unorthodox crusaders would be said to have the "spirit of Sophronia." While her chapel was eventually burned in an orc attack from the river (just as she predicted), the steeple survived, and was repaired and converted into a lighthouse overlooking the harbor's mouth. The Steeple is also a marker for the start and finish of Vigil's famous Sophronia Steeplechase, held each year on Midsummer's Day. Hundreds of contestants try their skill at archery, dueling, swimming, and running, before lining up for a grueling staggered-start equestrian race replete with fences, hedges, and water-filled ditches mimicking Sophronia's mad dash around the city. Winners and their mounts are honored in a citywide celebration, but their medals are only a secondary reward compared to the privilege of carving their names into Sophronia's Steeple.

## ENCOUNTERS

There is always some kind of excitement in Vigil, not all of it having to do with the ongoing war effort.

**Curious Followers:** As outsider travelers are somewhat uncommon in Vigil, visiting PCs attract the attention of young folk of the town eager to hear news and stories of their travels and adventures. A bright but curious teen, **Nella** (LG

female human commoner 1) and her younger brother **Aishem** (LG male human commoner 1) begin trailing after the PCs, eavesdropping on them or spying in windows, turning up again and again, and possibly stowing away (if the PCs own a wagon or extradimensional space large enough). Their father, **Eiric Sonnel** (LG male human expert 4) is a scribe for the church of Iomedae; he apologizes profusely when his children are returned, but Nella and Aishem continue tracking the PCs as long as they are in the city.

**Dangerous Mob:** With word of an orc horde on the march, the PCs witness a shabbily dressed half-orc being accosted by a lynch mob outside the gates of the city. He protests that he is a Vigilant scout and shows both Shield- and Sword-Marks, but egged on by a Gorumite priest, the mob is convinced he is a fake and a spy. The party must intervene to rescue him, or at least contain the mob long enough for the Watchknights to arrive.

**A Death in the Family:** The casualties of battle are drawn together through the streets in silver-belled, white-draped wagons. In the Vigil tradition, their whitewashed, wooden coffins are painted with a simple shield (for the Shield-Marked) or sword (for those who bore the Sword-Mark as well). All are invited to follow the mourners to the Sancta Iomedaea for a solemn requiem and a tolling of the cathedral bells, once for every life lost. Citizens and honored guests may accompany the dead to their rest in the crypts, and as they are laid in repose, an equal number of honored dead are reverently removed to the ossuaries.

**Dragon Pranks:** Precentor Martial of Magic Veena Heliu claims her sorcerer powers come from a draconic bloodline (specifically a copper dragon), and has been trying to convince the other Precentors Martial that forging an alliance with dragons, even young ones, would greatly aid the city. Her belief is that the dragons could scout, provide air assault, and in general bolster the city's defenses with their magic and physical prowess. The other Precentors Martial are concerned that a lawful dragon might have its own agenda (pointing at the mysterious gold dragon Mengkare of Hermea and his plans to breed a perfected humanity), and a chaotic dragon is likely to be a significant disruption and interfere with proper discipline among the troops. Undaunted, Veena has arranged for a pair of orphaned copper dragons to enter the city. It is unknown whether these hidden dragonlings can behave themselves long enough to prove their value to the city, or if incidents with them will turn public opinion against her.

**Fire in the Sky:** In the wake of a recent victory by Vigil's forces over an orc infiltration from Belkzen, a pair of erinyes appears suddenly in the skies over Vigil at sunset. They remain only long enough to trace fast-fading runes of red flame in the sky, promising the swift and terrible vengeance of Champion Ghroumni, presumably an orc tribal leader. Before teleporting away, the erinyes hurl dozens of egg-sized black stones upon the city, which sublimate into fetid clouds that infect people with devil chills.



**The Huckster:** A bald dwarven peddler named **Koss** (LN male dwarf fighter 1/expert 4) has been acting suspiciously, selling discounted +1 shields from his *bag of holding*. The shields are barely good enough to hold any magic within them, but the items are legitimate. Most of the sales have been to younger crusaders of moderate income who cannot afford such items at the normal price; the whitewashed shields are painted with the Shield of Lastwall in black, and Koss apparently has sold dozens, with no apparent end in sight. In truth, Koss is a disguised merchant from the duergar city of Fellstrok, trying to unload the shields for a quick profit so he can use the money to finance better equipment for his fellows in their battles to clear monsters from the tunnels under Belkzen. The Trade Tribune hasn't been able to pin any illegal activity on him (he carries no weapons and conducts his trade outside the city walls) but is concerned about his goals and how they may affect the city.

**Magical Spying:** PCs arriving in Vigil are greeted by a friendly peddler who offers to give them a friendship medal in honor of their visit, engraved with an eye over a tower. While such medals are common in Vigil, those the PCs receive are items created by a witch in league with the vodyanov, used to spy on the city. PCs discovered with the witch-eyes may be arrested as spies. Investigation reveals the city has been flooded with hundreds of these items, and the PCs must help find the witch's charmed minions and hidden infiltrators.

**Moat Monsters:** The PCs encounter rare giant pike while traveling along the river to Vigil. When PCs arrive in the city, they discover that Vigil's leaders have started offering a bounty on the vicious fish for those who bring them to Vigil to stock the city's moat.

**Parade of Nations:** The PCs encounter a festal procession through the city streets. For heroism and devotion, black-bearded **Tore Jagannath** (N male human fighter 6) has been awarded the Order of Light and promoted to Infantry Brigadier. He has the honor to lead a procession of the banners of every nation that is a part of the crusade, each flag carried by crusaders from that land. Anyone from Tore's ancestral homeland of the Lands of the Linnorm Kings may wear a crown or wreath of roses and come to a banquet in his honor at the foot of Castle Overwatch.

**Racing Day:** The monthly horse races are approaching and Vigil is in a festive mood. A dozen horses and their riders, mostly halflings and human youths in bright silks, are ferried to the Strand by Sophronia's Steeple. The walls from the Strand to Southgate teem with spectators, as do scores of small boats anchored off the beach. Friendly wagers abound, but most of the smart money is on **Evan Veeru** (LG male halfling ranger 2/monk 2) and his undefeated brown mare Vigil Slew, defending champions of last year's Sophronia Steeplechase.

**The Shyster:** The Tribunes have been hearing conflicting reports about various merchants trying to sell questionable goods, ranging from a splinter from the *Shattered Shield of*

## Vigil's Greatest Horses

Vigil's love affair with horses dates back to its crusader origins and continues to the present day. Bearing names as prosaic as Arrow or Scout or as fanciful and varied as the many tongues of Golarion, certain horses have left a lasting legacy in Vigil, both in their legends and in their offspring.

**Caileigh:** The most successful racer in Vigil's annals, this sleek black mare won 17 races in her career.

**El-Mehrik:** Arriving from Qadira to great fanfare, this brown finished last in the Steeplechase but went on to win 7 Strander Stakes.

**Halamay:** A swift-footed black, the favored mount of Sophronia Sandhu.

**Jasper:** Thinking his rider was in danger during a Steeplechase swim, Jasper dove in and swam all the way across the Path River before he could be corralled. The next year, blinders were made mandatory for horses in the Steeplechase.

**Lancer:** This spotted brown won 27 consecutive Strander Stakes and carried three different riders to Steeplechase victories, records which have never been equaled.

**The Maxim:** Three different riders won one race with this horse and fell in their next race; considered jinxed, he was never raced again.

**Miles Ivory:** Ridden to victory by Declan Urvatar in the first Sophronia Steeplechase in 3850.

**Roderick Rightmire:** This proud destrier slew a dozen orcs on his own after his rider had been knocked unconscious in battle.

**Stryjak:** Iomedae's white-maned charger, ridden when she was still mortal.

*Arnisant* to the skull of the Whispering Tyrant as a child. When questioned later about these items, the shopkeepers have no memory of trying to sell them to anyone and the actual items are merely glamered fakes. The creature responsible for the confusion is a shapechanger named **Gaun** (CE doppelganger sorcerer 6) who is trying to inspire the people of the city with false hope and false icons so his mysterious masters (possibly demons from the Worldwound) can break their will and defenses in preparation for an attack on the city.

**Unbroken Horses:** PCs purchasing high-quality mounts in Vigil are surprised the first time they enter battle as the mounts go berserk and attack enemies, other horses, and their riders with a carnivorous and even cannibalistic fury. Investigation reveals entire stables have been subtly fiend-tainted, with a rash of misshapen, fanged foals being birthed. PCs must find a way to reverse the taint and put a stop to the nightmarish corruption or entire herds will have to be slaughtered, hobbling Vigil's cavalry for years.



Chapter Six

# WHITETHRONE

“Surviving a visit to Whitethrone is a lot like surviving a visit to Baba Yaga’s dancing hut. I’ve done both, and I’ll share with you the trick: you must obey the smallest rules of etiquette, demonstrate unfailing politeness in the face of contempt and condescension, and most of all evince no surprise at the most egregious suspensions of common sense. Anything less may find your bones ground into meal. Follow these instructions, however, and you may find your visit quite profitable, and in quite unexpected ways.”

—Dyso Vadrasethi, *Almanac of Nations: Avistan*





Visitors are wise to remember that Whitethrone is inhabited primarily by monsters and people from another world. The descendents of Baba Yaga, the *jadwiga* (meaning “children of the witch-mother”) came from an unknown realm far beyond the stars or planes, and while they are identical to the humans of this world, their ways are not entirely the ways of Golarion. The *jadwiga* rule Whitethrone absolutely, each in his or her own ruthless ways. What makes life in Whitethrone both bearable and dangerous in turn is that these descendents are not always aligned with each other, and sometimes oppose each other directly. To survive in Whitethrone for any length of time outside of the tight strictures and closed world of the licensed merchants, visitors must learn the trick of playing these forces against one another, using them to block potential enemies and in turn shelter themselves and their plans. When not dodging *jadwiga* and their plots, adventurers can try their hands at coexisting with a variety of monsters who would ordinarily consider them food—for snow goblins, ice trolls, and winter wolves dwell in Whitethrone as citizens.

Another important point to remember is that Whitethrone is not intended for outsiders. The city is the hub of a network of world domination and a playground for the families of the ruling daughters of Baba Yaga. Heroes are typically seen as part of the world to be dominated or toys on this playground, so PCs would be well advised to spend their time in Whitethrone making sure their actions have some direct benefit to someone more important than themselves. As far as the rulers of Whitethrone are concerned, utility is the only reason humanity has a place in Whitethrone and not the Bone Mill (see page 60). A clever group of visitors can fit in long enough to do their business and get out—for longer stays in Whitethrone almost always end in tragedy.

## APPEARANCE

Arriving overland, travelers know they’re approaching Whitethrone the same way they’d find out they’re nearing Baba Yaga’s hut: after sojourning through a winter-shrouded forest of conifers, they suddenly find themselves surrounded by beech trees. These leafless trees aren’t dead, but they might as well be, for there will never be another growing season in Irrisen, and these trees will never bear another leaf. After half a day of ghostly white, the travelers come to a tall wall made of giant femurs, each sharpened and topped with a skull. This is an illusion, or a trick of the eye—as the travelers near, they note that the walls aren’t actual bones, merely bone-white. A looming gate opens onto a breathtaking prospect: a city of whites—ivory, snow-white, and the blue-white of ice palaces and statues. The main thoroughfare winds gently downhill to the edges of tall cliffs, where it turns into a delicate and impossible span connecting to a shimmering, many-faceted palace made entirely of ice. Gatehouse denizens and loiterers are quick to take note of the reaction of visitors to the site;

those who stare with jaws agape are obviously new blood—first-time visitors, and easy marks. There is plenty of bustle in Whitethrone, and travelers who haven’t heard the stories may make it as far as a few blocks before realizing that they’re walking on a roadway made of human skulls.

While other colors are in evidence throughout the city, the most popular styles of architecture incorporate the heavy use of white, with various pastels employed for accents. Monumental domes are often touched with light pink or green, and the ice structures show bluish-white in the sun. The Merchant’s Quarter is more colorful, with bright signs and awnings, but even here permanent buildings are likely to be more somber, with whitewash, half-timber, or pale granite being the order of the day. Most of the city’s monstrous denizens favor white and gray clothing, the better to blend in with their surroundings. The *jadwiga* wear whatever strikes their fancy, though they often prefer pastels in cool colors. Merchants wear ordinary traders’ clothes, but local workers generally dress in drab browns, greens, and other typical peasant colors.

While the color scheme would not seem to allow for much individuality, the *jadwiga* and prosperous slaves decorate their wooden dwellings extensively with delicate woodwork, known as locally as “gingerbread,” often involving layer upon layer of different shapes. An observer would be hard pressed to find any but the poorest houses boasting identical trim. Whitethrone is home to some of the most skilled woodworkers on Golarion (though the land’s eternal winter means they must import much of their wood), and because their apprentices cut their teeth on low-cost projects for the lower-class humans, the city is covered with gingerbreading. Consequently, a house of plain construction is a fashion statement of the boldest sort.

## HISTORY

In the year 3313 AR, Baba Yaga swept south from the Crown of the World with a large army of ice trolls, winter wolves, and other monsters of the cold. She shattered the eastern reaches of the Lands of the Linnorm Kings, slaying all who stood in her way. This Winter War lasted only 23 days, and at the end Baba Yaga had sole control over a realm as large as Ustalav but almost empty of people. She put the remaining barbarians to work, raising the foundations of her new capital, Whitethrone. Soon after the foundations were laid, Baba Yaga returned to the mysterious realm from which she came, installing one of her numerous daughters as queen in her place. The new queen set about increasing the size and wealth of Whitethrone to enhance her own acclaim. After 100 years, Baba Yaga came back, reclaimed her daughter, and put a new daughter on the throne—a process which has continued every century since. Each successive daughter has achieved much as her predecessor, slowly adding to the grandeur and wealth of Whitethrone for her own glory and that of Baba Yaga.

# Whitethrone

- |                        |                             |
|------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. The Bone Mill       | 12. Market Square           |
| 2. The Crooked House   | 13. The Merchant's Quarter  |
| 3. Eyefang Arena       | 14. The Observatory Arcanis |
| 4. The Floes           | 15. Porcelain Street        |
| 5. Frosthall           | 16. Rimerest Cemetary       |
| 6. Frosthall Theater   | 17. The Royal Palace        |
| 7. Hammerdown Fountain | 18. The Snow Goblin Warrens |
| 8. The Howlings        | 19. The Troll Quarter       |
| 9. The Iron Barracks   | 20. Two Hill                |
| 10. Ironside           | 21. The Water Palace        |
| 11. The Iron Tooth     |                             |



Queen Elvanna, more than 90 years into her reign, has begun her own bid for immortality. She has raised the taxes on a variety of goods and services to previously unheard-of levels. Some of that money goes to the pet projects of her daughters, but the majority just disappears. Whatever she's doing with it is kept so tightly under wraps that even the most notorious gossips haven't been able to speculate with a straight face. With as much gold as Elvanna's taken out of circulation, anything less than an utterly Irrisen-changing event seems unlikely.

## SOCIETY

Like most other cities, Irrisen is divided up into several social classes. The divisions in Irrisen are largely determined by birth, however, which lends the hierarchy more the aspect of a caste system than a traditional class system. At the top of the heap are the *jadwiga*, those descended from Baba Yaga. The children and

grandchildren of the current queen, Elvanna, are given pride of place and accorded the highest status, while descendants of earlier queens form the broad upper and middle classes. Baba Yaga's monstrous allies—the ice trolls, winter wolves, and snow goblins—make up the next class of citizens, given precedence over all humans but those of Baba Yaga's blood. Merchants and foreigners fall somewhat below these monsters, but their importance to Irrisen's economy keeps them from feeling the brunt of their low status. All other humans in Irrisen are slaves—descendants of the barbarians who surrendered during the Winter War or were stolen from other nations.

## Jadwiga Elvanna

The *jadwiga* Elvanna are the children and grandchildren of Queen Elvanna. They form the aristocracy of Irrisen and of Whitethrone, making up most of the officials of the government and almost all of the officers of the Iron Guard. The *jadwiga* Elvanna wield extraordinary power in Whitethrone, and many use that power in cruel and capricious ways. The fact that the *jadwiga* Elvanna spend much of their time plotting against each other and jockeying for position means that outsiders who don't watch their steps may find themselves in situations where they're guaranteed to anger at least one of Elvanna's kin. The *jadwiga* Elvanna have but a short time remaining in their rulership of Irrisen, and will either leave Golarion when Baba Yaga comes again or be reduced in social status as the next queen's children come to power. They seem to be making the most of the time they have remaining,

and numerous monuments and tributes are in the works, threatening to crowd out and overshadow efforts at immortality by previous *jadwiga* cohorts.

## Lesser Jadwiga

Descendants of previous daughters of Baba Yaga have a lower status than the *jadwiga* Elvanna, but in some ways bear a more impressive pedigree. Many important and enduring traditions are carried on by lesser *jadwiga*, including the post of Mistress of Gardens and ownership of the Crooked House (see page 60). While the *jadwiga* Elvanna have less than 100 years of history in the city, other *jadwiga* families have more than 1,000. This long history helps Irrisen keep continuity as ruling castes come and go. While lesser *jadwiga* are not usually as extravagant and capricious as *jadwiga* Elvanna and are more likely to treat the monsters and merchants of Whitethrone with respect, they still see no kinship

at all with the slaves, and treat them even more cruelly than the higher-class *jadwiga*.

## Monstrous Allies

The ice trolls, winter wolves, snow goblins, ogres, and frost giants that call Whitethrone home occupy a position slightly outside the human caste system. By tradition, they are seen as allies of Baba Yaga as much as they are subjects, maintaining some separation from the human society. Most *jadwiga* treat the monsters with respect, at least in part because of a widespread (and carefully cultivated) belief that monsters have short tempers that can get the better of them. The *jadwiga* belief that monsters can't always be held responsible for their outbursts guarantees that humans step softly around even monsters of somewhat lower rank.

## Merchants and Foreigners

Outsiders in Whitethrone, whether merchants, scholars, or adventurers, fall somewhat below monsters in terms of respect received from the elite. Mostly this means that merchants try to interact with the monsters as little as possible, which is not difficult within the Merchant's Quarter but almost impossible anywhere else in the city.

Adventurers may be attracted to Whitethrone because of the opportunities for quick but dangerous profit in the service of various *jadwiga*, or because the surrounding areas of Irrisen are so wild. They do well to remember, however, that many of the monsters beyond the city wall are allies or relatives of monsters within and indiscriminate monster-slaying may be treated as murder.



Visitors who interact with monsters, especially the proud winter wolves, must be careful to show respect, but the varying customs of different species can make that difficult: dealing with an ice troll with anything less than steely resolve is seen as an insulting level of weakness, while ogres like a bit of sniveling from their partners in conversation.

### Slaves

For the past 1,400 years, the descendents of the land's previous inhabitants have had the unique culture of the Linnorm Kings wrung out of them, and must now subsist on the cultural leavings of the jadwiga. Slaves are expected to obey the mores and cultural norms of their masters, and most slave housing carries at least rudimentary gingerbreading, a formal gate, and other trappings of jadwiga culture. The jadwiga expect slaves to be as unobtrusive as possible, and so slaves generally dress and talk in the same manner as their masters, albeit in a humbler fashion appropriate to their station. Irrisen slavery is a low-key, individualized

affair, with no slave-pits or block auctions, but plenty of individual sales and loans.

### Trade

Whitethrone suffers from a condition familiar to everyone in Irrisen but unknown to most of Golarion: in this land of eternal cold, there is no growing season. Other subarctic regions make up for long winters with brief, intense summers, but the sun of the boreal summer cannot penetrate Baba Yaga's powerful magic. This means that every plant and tree that lives today in Irrisen existed 1,400 years ago when the enchantment was placed upon the land. Only conifers continue as before, with deciduous trees in permanent hibernation and all lesser plants long dead. Consequently, the ecosystem is severely diminished, and keeping Whitethrone supplied with food is a daunting challenge. The city's monstrous inhabitants are used to fending for themselves in such conditions, but for humans, an elaborate support network has sprung up to keep them in their victuals.

The cornerstone of the Whitethrone diet is fish. Fishing is good in Glacier Lake, and numerous fishing camps dot the shore. The typical Whitethrone resident dines on fish at least twice a day. Other meat is supplied largely by migratory fowl and mammals, notably mammoth herds that cross the border from the Realm of the Mammoth Lords (in accordance with various treaties). Staple grains such as wheat and corn are bought in bulk from points south, and local bread uses bone meal as a filler when flour is scarce. Most commoners have barely enough fruit and vegetables for basic health, all bought dearly at the market or from the Hidden Gardens.

The jadwiga, especially the jadwiga Elvanna, generally have the wealth to ship in their food. Their diets tend to consist of exotic delicacies from other lands and the fresh fruits and vegetables grown in the Hidden Gardens. They avoid local fish as a display of status, preferring instead to import all of their meat, and the richest and most powerful of the jadwiga can afford to have food shipped in from the far corners of Golarion or created magically.

Whitethrone has a strong manufacturing base. The largest share of imports is food products, and in exchange Whitethrone produces a plethora of finished goods. Whitethrone's delicate but sturdy wooden furniture is prized throughout Avistan, and the city produces high-quality jewelry as well. There is also a small but lucrative market in bonewear: furniture, tools, and utensils made of human bone. When a party of adventurers stumbles upon a grisly candelabra made from a human pelvis, chances are it originally came from Whitethrone. Several artisans specialize in making ceramic utensils, plates, and bowls from pulverized human bone, and these items are prized for their delicacy.



## DISTRICTS

Whitethrone is divided into seven districts, some safer than others. Visitors are generally advised to stick to the Merchants' Quarter, but there aren't any laws against touring elsewhere—just the law of self-preservation.

**The Floes:** The city west of the Water Palace is riven with numerous streams, fresh from the hot springs and still steaming as they rush toward the cliffs. This district is home to many of the *jadwiga* Elvanna and other government functionaries because of its proximity to the Royal Palace. Also crowded onto the islands are some of Whitethrone's heavy industries and foundries which use the rushing waters as motive power for their great wheels and pistons.

**Frosthall:** The northwest quarter of the city is among the most prosperous, featuring the homes of many *jadwiga*, along with those *jadwiga* Elvanna who don't reside in the Royal Palace. The streets are lined with fashionable shops selling a variety of luxury items. The centerpiece of the district is the elite Frosthall Theater, where the great theatrical works of Golarion are performed on ice for the Whitethrone nobility.

**The Howlings:** The Howlings district spans the world both inside and outside Whitethrone's walls. In fact, a gap in the wall allows the winter wolves something no other visitor to Whitethrone enjoys: unfettered entrance and egress without the inconvenience of guards and customs officials. The winter wolves don't take too much advantage of the situation, and the amount of smuggling that goes on is manageable—a small price to pay for keeping key allies happy. Furthermore, when Baba Yaga ordered the construction of Whitethrone, she crafted a powerful enchantment: in the Howlings, any wolf can walk as a man, the better to deal with the humans of the city. Winter wolves in human form may be noticed by silver or white hair, and sometimes unusually large canines, but otherwise appear fully human.

**Ironside:** The intimidating structure known as the Iron Barracks looms above Whitethrone's southeastern wall, and the grim, duty-bound aura of that edifice pervades the entire quarter. Ironside residences tend to be austere and utilitarian, and the decorative touches are fewer than elsewhere in the city. While the *jadwiga* residing here tend to be lower in rank and class than those living in Frosthall, they are the backbone of the human ranks of Irrisen's military and see themselves as the backbone of its culture as well.

**The Merchants' Quarter:** Surrounding the Market Square lies the Merchant's Quarter, originally set aside to allow merchants a safe place to reside during trading missions. Unlike the rest of the city, the Queen's monstrous allies are supposed to step lightly here, so as not to scare off the foreign custom that is Whitethrone's lifeblood. While no winter wolf or ice troll would stand still for an insult even here, they are much less likely to pick a fight or order around those humans who get in

## Ten Ways to Appease an Angry Ice Troll

Ask 10 residents of Whitethrone how to deal with an ice troll, you'll get ten different answers... some of which may be more helpful than others.

1. Maintain eye contact—trolls see meekness is seen as a veiled insult.
2. Bare your teeth and grimace mightily (builds camaraderie). Works best for half-orcs.
3. Offer an alternate target for the troll's anger, such as a nearby gnome.
4. Grovel.
5. Give the troll a handsome gift, such as food or a healthy female.
6. Speak the ritual phrase, "I seek no mates or food in your territory."
7. Maintain an insouciant manner as you strut past.
8. Keep your eyes on the ground—trolls hate humans who don't know their place.
9. Eat a leaf to show friendliness and herbivorous nature (untested rumor).
10. Use the services of a trusted and well-regarded go-between who can bridge the cultural gap for reasonable prices.

Compiled by Sigax, proprietor of Troll Quarter Excursions

their way. Most visitors to the city can be found here, and several restaurants and taverns that cater to foreign tastes base themselves in the Quarter.

**The Troll Quarter:** Trolls make up a significant portion of Whitethrone's population, and are allotted living space disproportionate to their number. Though only one in 20 residents is an ice troll, the Troll Quarter spreads over more than a tenth of the city, along the southern wall. The ice trolls follow very strict customs and mores to prevent the naturally territorial males from killing each other off. Females run the district, and male trolls are usually given the most physically grueling tasks—the better to sweat out their aggressive impulses. In addition, an ongoing fighting tournament operates in the quarter, designed to allow males to fight out their grudges in the arena rather than the street; the Eyefang Arena is host to nightly ranked fighting, with the rankings used to award housing and other scarce resources, and females tending to prefer high-ranked males for mates.

**Twohill:** Whitethrone is mostly flat, sloping gently down toward the cliffs. The high points of the city are Observatory Hill and Veskaya Hill, the dual foci of the Twohill district. Around the hills lies a quiet neighborhood characterized by the shops of master woodcrafters and the studios and lofts of visiting scholars.

## SITES OF INTEREST

Whitethrone as a city has a myriad of interesting and disturbing features, but most of these lie outside the safety of the Merchant's Quarter. A visitor out for adventure might elect to skip the market entirely in favor of other parts of the city.

**The Bone Mill:** Tales of Baba Yaga often end with some unfortunate having his or her bones ground into meal to make her bread. In Whitethrone, that grisly end isn't merely a punishment, but a natural part of the end of life. While *jadwiga* have a plot waiting for them in the Rimerest Cemetery, slaves and any outsiders who can't secure a burial are used to help further the tenuous ecology of Whitethrone. The Bone Mill performs more functions than its name implies. In the starkly clean compound, some bodies are rendered down for candle tallow, others are preserved for necromantic studies, and remaining bones are ground into meal. **Lord Igorin** (LN male human expert 4/wizard 2), one of Elvanna's many capable grandsons, runs the Bone Mill with an eye toward maximum efficiency. Often new candles and batches of meal can be purchased "next-day," and some of the more macabre or superstitious Whitethrone residents purchase small bags of meal to memorialize friends or loved ones, which have been processed separately for this purpose.

**The Bone Road:** Stretching from the main gates all the way to the Royal Palace barbican, the Bone Road is a grisly memorial to the triumph of the Winter War. The entire street is paved with skulls, almost all of them from the barbarians killed during the war. The street has been widened and mended with the skulls of criminals and, when necessary, with less meaningful skulls from the Bone Mill.

**The Crooked House:** Veskaya Hill is home to the largest wooden structure in Whitethrone, the Crooked House. Owned by **Tatyana Rekyanova** (CE female human sorcerer 2/expert 7), the last of a long line of woodworkers, the Crooked House is a massive demonstration piece, boasting gingerbread and detail work of every variety and style. Tatyana or one of her children spends every fifth year traveling the world looking for new and interesting woodworking techniques, which are then immediately employed somewhere in the several stories of the house. Enhancements put into place long ago to allow easy access to any part of the house have become eccentric and unreliable, occasionally causing visitors to become lost or even go missing entirely. Of course, rumors abound that the visitors who have gone missing haven't done so by mistake, but by design. Given the slightly sinister nature of the house and the emphasis on gingerbread in its decoration, it is a common theory among folk scholars that the gingerbread house in which many a fairy-tale witch resides had its genesis here.

**The Fishcamps:** The diet of the average Whitethrone resident relies heavily on fish. The high cliffs upon which the city perches aren't useful for fishing, so the fishermen

congregate miles away in shantytowns to the south. The Fishcamps, as they are called, are rife with the smell of fish and desperation. **Marcian Enarxion** (LE male human rogue 6), an exiled Taldan, dominates the political life of the Fishcamps, extorting money for "the Fishcamp Guards"—his personal protection racket. He lies low and provides the right bribes when the Iron Guards come around and otherwise rides herd over his charges with impunity.

**Frosthall Theater:** The most famous cultural accomplishment of Irrisen, the Frosthall Theater performs all of the great works of Avistan and beyond—on ice. **Lady Ilya** (N female human bard 6/expert 1) runs the theater with a single-minded intensity, doing all of the arrangements herself. Ilya converts opera, comedies, broadsides, and even "the Andoren Heresy" into ice-ballets in a frivolous pursuit that only a *jadwiga* Elvanna could get away with, and the end result is surprisingly good. In fact, the troll's share of visitors to Whitethrone who aren't there to trade are there to attend the Frosthall. Lady Ilya has no shortage of talented men and women who want to perform in the shows, but occasionally a script requires an unusual personage—a dwarf or a *Mwangi*, for instance—and Ilya goes to great lengths to procure someone fitting the role, offering large payments or other inducements. Eagerness to get the best talent can sometimes push her to take harsh actions she wouldn't ordinarily consider.

**Hammerdown Fountain:** In the center of conservative Ironside lies Hammerdown Fountain, originally the haunt of blacksmiths resting after a hard day's labor. Now the blacksmiths have found other places to relax, as the square is dominated by a group of young *jadwiga* who call themselves *stilyagi*—youths who reject the culture of Irrisen in favor of the more "modern" cultures of southern Avistan. *Stilyagi* are excited to hear anything new about the outside world, but approaching them is dangerous. The Iron Guard watches them closely and doesn't like outsiders "giving them ideas."

**The Hidden Gardens:** The perpetual winter of Irrisen means that nothing grows outside. While trade and magic bring in a variety of foodstuffs, fruits and vegetables only remain fresh if preserved by magic or grown locally. The answer to this conundrum is the Hidden Gardens, a vast greenhouse complex surrounding the Spring Palace. The roofs of these greenhouses are made out of transparent ice which acts like glass to trap heat inside. The warm air within slowly melts the ice, watering the plants in the process. Many areas of the gardens are multileveled, with sun-hungry plants at the highest level and tiers of shade plants farther down, proceeding all the way to the mushroom beds of the basement level. Excess water from each layer drains down to the next, with the result that very little manual watering has to be done. The roofs are replenished by a complex and carefully placed series of pipes that funnel the runoff from

the Spring Palace out onto the roofs of the Hidden Gardens, freezing there and replenishing the ice even as it melts from the inside. The Mistress of Gardens, **Ilyena Tetrovna** (N female human expert 6), is perhaps the most powerful lesser *jadwiga* in the city—her influence over the content and distribution of her produce gives her a measure of influence usually reserved for *jadwiga* Elvanna. Further cementing her status, no one but she and her children know all of the details necessary to operating the greenhouses. The position of Mistress of Gardens has been in the same family for several hundred years, and most *jadwiga* Elvanna regard Ilyena as much too valuable to trifle with.

**The Iron Barracks:** One of the most imposing sights in Whitethrone is that of the Iron Barracks. They stand against the southeast wall of the city, overtopping it by several stories. The Iron Barracks are the home of the Iron Guards. In peacetime, the Iron Guards serve as the city guard of Whitethrone, with small detachments stationed in other major settlements. The Iron Guards are fanatically devoted to Baba Yaga and spend considerable effort chronicling all that goes on in Irrisen so that when their witch returns, she shall have a full accounting. Some of the more decadent *jadwiga* try to keep the guards at arm's length to avoid scrutiny, but since nobody knows what Baba Yaga does with her children once they leave, no one is sure exactly what sort of depravities might draw her wrath or her approbation. **Lord Oryo** (LE male human aristocrat 2/fighter 7) has been captain of the Iron Guards since coming of age, and rules them with an implacable will. He has been thoroughly indoctrinated into the culture of the guard, showing deference to Queen Elvanna but steadfastly compiles his archives in preparation for Baba Yaga's next homecoming.

**The Iron Tooth:** Of the many projects and monuments intended to assure immortality to the *jadwiga* Elvanna, the most massive is the Iron Tooth, a enormous, in-progress structure that casts its shadow halfway across the city during the short winter days. The Iron Tooth is the personal project of Elvanna's youngest daughter, **Lady Tetra** (NE female human aristocrat 5), a technically talented but aesthetically eccentric architect. The audacious plans call for a 500-foot-tall structure, all of iron, with over 1,000 rooms, though it isn't clear what the rooms are intended to hold or how that capacity could be filled without a massive migration into the city. Those 1,000 rooms are all above ground, but rumor has it that the completed Iron Tooth is to extend as far below the ground as it does above.

**Observatory Arcanis:** Observatory Hill is the home of the Observatory Arcanis, the powerful magics of which allow scholars to view the stars and planets with astonishing clarity. Much of Golarion's modern knowledge of the heavens stems from here, and scholars continue to flow into, and back out of, the Observatory. The only permanent resident scholar of the Observatory is **Tretin Kurutska** (LE

## Stilyagi

Young *jadwiga* men and women who care more about the outside world than their own society, *stilyagi* eschew the somber clothing of their relatives and neighbors in favor of handmade flamboyant and extravagant styles that have just gone out of fashion in Oppara or are completely imaginary. Merchants and outsiders are encouraged not to mingle with these odd youths, so for most *stilyagi*, their ideas about the outside world are out of date or completely wrong. The *stilyagi* play music and dance in ways not seen elsewhere, mimicking the complex court dances of Taldor or, more scandalously, the veiled dances of Qadira. The ideas and attitude of the *stilyagi* fly in the face of all that Irrisen stands for, but their high social rank and the essential harmlessness of their actions have thus far kept the Iron Guard from coming down on them. A couple more scuffles between *stilyagi* and off-duty Iron Guards could change all that, however. *Stilyagi* tend to form gangs (the "Pactmasters," the "Hellknights," and the "Ruby Princes" are currently popular). *Stilyagi* are led, if not in name, by a charismatic young *jadwiga*, "**Prince**" **Paval Turosky** (CN male human bard 2/rogue 2). He has a shrewd mind for politics and has managed to keep the *stilyagi* just one step away from crossing the line for longer than anyone has expected.

male human wizard 5/expert 2), one of Avistan's foremost experts on the planets. His divinations and observations have left him somewhat untethered from earthly reality, and his slightly surreal company may explain why visiting scholars cycle through so quickly.

**Rimerest Cemetery:** The only cemetery in a city where most of the dead are bound for the Bone Mill, Rimerest Cemetery is as much a work of art as a burial ground. Large and elaborate ice sculptures serve as tombstones and, in some cases, as mausoleums. Baba Yaga and her daughters have never allowed Pharamasma's clerics access to the cemetery, and most agree that there must be something sinister going on within. The cemetery is run by an aged *jadwiga* icemage named **Urian Petresky** (NE male human sorcerer 8). He creates most of the ice sculptures himself, allowing other icemages to assist only for especially large or complicated pieces.

**The Royal Palace:** The most physically impressive building in Whitethrone, the Royal palace sits atop a 200-foot-tall pillar of ice rising from the surface of Glacier Lake. It is a marvel of facets and planes, and the towers and spires ascend in seemingly natural crystalline formations. The palace rises to a height of ten stories at its highest point and its dungeons extend at least that far down into the pillar on which it rests. Some speculate that there are chambers as far down as the level of the lake, and point as evidence to the fact that the lake remains perpetually unfrozen near the base of the

## Ice Mages

Every generation, the jadwiga produce a small number of ice mages, powerful sorcerers who have an instinctive way with ice, water, and cold. Ice mages rarely branch out much beyond evocation and transmutation spells involving their specialized talents, but their intense focus lends them a nearly uncanny ability to shape and manipulate ice to suit their whims. The great ice palaces, sculptures, and greenhouses that dot Whitethrone are all the work of gifted ice mages working with specialized architects. In between major architectural projects, many ice mages go off on sojourns into the wilds of Irrisen, returning weeks later and speaking but grudgingly of their experiences. Other ice mages find steady employment at Frosthall Theater, shaping ice on the fly for the scene changes and battle scenes of Lady Ilya's infamously technical ice ballets.

## Irrisen Icemage

You were born with the power to drive ice and snow as others drive their slaves.

**Prerequisites:** Sorcerer, Irrisen affinity, may only be taken at first level.

**Benefit:** All of your spells with the cold descriptor are cast at +1 caster level. Any spell with a different energy descriptor is cast at -1 caster level. Three times per day you may alter a spell you cast to deal cold damage instead of its normal damage; your +1 caster level for this feat applies to this variant casting.

pillar—something must be producing a lot of heat to keep the thick lake ice from forming.

The entire palace is made of ice, though this magic ice does not melt short of oven temperatures. For comfort, many of the walls and floors on the interior have been finished with wood, and heavy tapestries and carpets trap in the warmth. In the numerous unused parts of the palace, however, such accoutrements are entirely absent, and one can walk for hours through corridors without coming upon anything but ice. In these far wings it is unwise to loiter long, for some creatures that shun the heat of the populated wings might enjoy eating a warm-blooded creature. The Royal Palace is the seat of Queen Elvanna's power, and anyone who has caught her interest enough to be invited must be mindful to offer nothing but the most punctilious politeness. The deep political currents of the palace can overcome even the most deft courtiers, causing the palace to be perhaps the most deadly place in the city.

**Porcelain Street:** Of all the industries of Whitethrone, the most iconic is dollmaking. While the woodcrafters make more money and produce more volume, the eerily delicate dolls of Porcelain Street are made nowhere else. The open secret of their construction (not discussed by the many

connoisseurs outside Irrisen's borders) is the use of refined bone meal in the process. The closely held secret is the use of children's souls to animate some dolls with specific tasks—from intelligence gathering to border watching to playthings for the most wealthy and decadent of the jadwiga Elvanna and a select few others across Avistan.

**The Ratnest:** Home to Whitethrone's snow goblin population, the Ratnest is a twisted maze of aboveground shanties and belowground passages. Nobody travels in the Ratnest without good cause; for one thing, the ceilings are too low—for another, the inhabitants can be murderous. The most notorious reason to visit is the Tunnel Run, an annual event in which **Lord Gregorin** (NE male human aristocrat 4) pays outlandish sums of gold to anyone who can get from one end of the Ratnest to the other without seeing the light of day.

**The Water Palace:** The hot springs that form the source of the ice floes hit the surface in this giant bathhouse. In the central chamber, full of steam and geyser-like waterspouts, air elementals ride the currents in a perpetual and beautiful dance. Most of the pools in the Water Palace (sometimes called the Spring Palace) are placed in such a way that they have at least a partial view of this chamber, as the dance of the air elementals is one of the great wonders of Whitethrone. The Spring Palace is only open to jadwiga and the richest merchants and most well-connected guests, though similar warm bathhouses nearby cater to the lower classes, and are connected by service ways. The most decadent of the jadwiga meet their servants and business partners in the Spring Palace, lounging in the hot water as their counterparts stand awkwardly at the side of the pool. The scalding water of the central springs serves to heat many of the nearby buildings, including the Hidden Gardens and many of the great residences of the jadwiga.

## ENCOUNTERS

In a city where trolls, wolves, and goblins are full citizens, trouble is only a heartbeat away.

**Above the Hidden Gardens:** A caper gone wrong means the PCs must escape quickly—across the roofs of the Hidden Gardens. The ice is slippery and thin, providing just enough support to keep the PCs or their assailants from falling through to the gardens below—provided they stay near the obscured support structures. Partway through their flight, an enterprising guard sets the re-icing system into action, covering the roofs with slippery, flowing water and obscuring steam.

**Escape from the Crooked House:** The PCs are invited to meet a contact in the Crooked House, because of the privacy afforded by its miles of woodwork sample rooms. Tatyana Rekyanova, the mad proprietor of the house, takes a liking to them and decides that she wouldn't mind having them around for a very long time. To avoid being Tatyana's guests



for the next decade, the PCs must find their way out of the magically twisted and altered hallways, meanwhile dealing with Tatyana's previous guests, all of whom have gone insane with the years of musty confinement.

**Ivaneshko's Stolen Property:** Ivaneshko Lie-on-the-Stove is a half-wit son of Elvanna, fond of loafing and practical jokes. His high birth has kept him alive and kicking through many a foolish or disruptive jape that would send anyone else to the Bone Mill. The PCs' activities are interrupted by Ivaneshko, who bursts into their presence, gives them a mysterious package, and commands them to bring it back to him the next day. It becomes immediately apparent that whatever is in the package is quite valuable—and also quite stolen—and a ruthless search is on to retrieve it.

**Last Rites:** A friend or ally of the PCs has died. For religious reasons, his body is best disposed of by burial. That isn't the common custom in Whitethrone, where most bodies are processed into meal or tallow at the notorious Bone Mill. The party must trace their friend's corpse through the disposal system and retrieve it before it is turned into food and goods for the lower classes.

**Misfortune-Teller:** While the *jadwiga* Elvanna have control of Irrisen's sorry citizenry, sometimes they want to exert dominance over stronger minions. When the PCs are lured into a meager fortune-teller's hut, they find themselves in a struggle for control of their minds and futures with a sadistic and vindictive enchantress armed with a full compliment of compulsion spells.

**Replacement Skull:** The Street of Skulls is magically warded to prevent wear, but sometimes the wards break down, as the heaviest PC discovers when his boot goes right through a paving-skull. The PC is jailed and eventually finds out from an Iron Guard lieutenant that the penalty for breaking a skull on the street of skulls is to provide a replacement—either the PC's own or someone else's, due in 1 hour.

**Survive the Ice Dungeons:** The PCs have done something that's angered one of the *jadwiga* Elvanna. While they await an unknown fate, they do so in the Ice Dungeons, a natural series of ice caves in the pillar beneath the Royal Palace. Many consider the ice dungeons to be a death sentence in themselves, inhabited as they are by giant vermin, feral ice trolls, and other hazards. If the PCs wish a chance to extricate themselves from trouble they've gotten into, they need to survive the dungeons with whatever gear they can scavenge from their fallen opponents.

**Troll Fight:** The Troll Quarter is known for its constant arena fighting, which allows male trolls to deal with their aggressive urges and vie for dominance without killing each other. Due to some misunderstanding or perhaps an ill-considered boast, one of the PCs finds himself included in one of the tournament listings. Alternatively, the PCs are roped into a "nonlethal" battle against a troll gang, with gamblers on both sides taking bets on the outcome.

## Mirrors in Irrisen

Some of Irrisen's folklore revolves around mirrors that betray or otherwise thwart their owners. *Jadwiga* and other Irrisen humans avoid doing anything in front of a mirror that they wouldn't want seen by *Baba Yaga*, and a particularly intimate or iniquitous moment is often prefaced by turning the mirror to face the wall. This superstition is rooted in a spell commonly used by the ruling family to keep tabs on the population; some copies have made it into the hands of foreigners as well.

### IRRISEN MIRROR SIGHT

**School** divination (scrying); **Level** sorcerer/wizard 3

**Casting Time** 10 minutes

**Components** V, S, F (a mirror)

**Range** see text

**Effect** magical sensor

**Duration** 1 minute/level

**Saving Throw** none; **Spell Resistance** no

This spell lets you look into a mirror near you and see an image that is reflected in another specific mirror (chosen by you) or an individual reflected in any other mirror. This works like a *scrying* spell, except you can only view creatures on the same plane as you. Each time you cast the spell, you can choose to see one of three types of reflections in your mirror.

*Known Mirror:* The current reflection in another mirror with which you are familiar.

*Known Person:* The current reflection of a person you know well, assuming that person is near a mirror.

*Known Place:* The current reflection of a place you know well, assuming the location is being reflected in a mirror.

You receive only visual information through this ability. You can choose to transmit information both ways so that a person reflected in the remote mirror can view whatever appears in the mirror you are using.

For example, *Urion Petresky* knows that *Queen Elvanna* keeps a mirror in a hall near her throne room. He can look through his own handheld mirror and see into this hall, even if the queen is not there. Alternatively, he can attempt to find the queen (wherever she is) by looking into his mirror; if, at that moment, the queen is near any mirror at all, he can see her. He may instead cast the spell and try to see into her throne room, hoping that someone has brought a mirror there. If any of these conditions fails, *Urion* sees nothing but his own reflection.

This spell works with intentionally fabricated mirrors only; it is not effective with other reflective surfaces, such as still pools or polished metal shields. Effects that block *scrying* block this spell.

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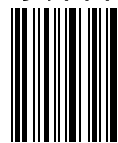
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