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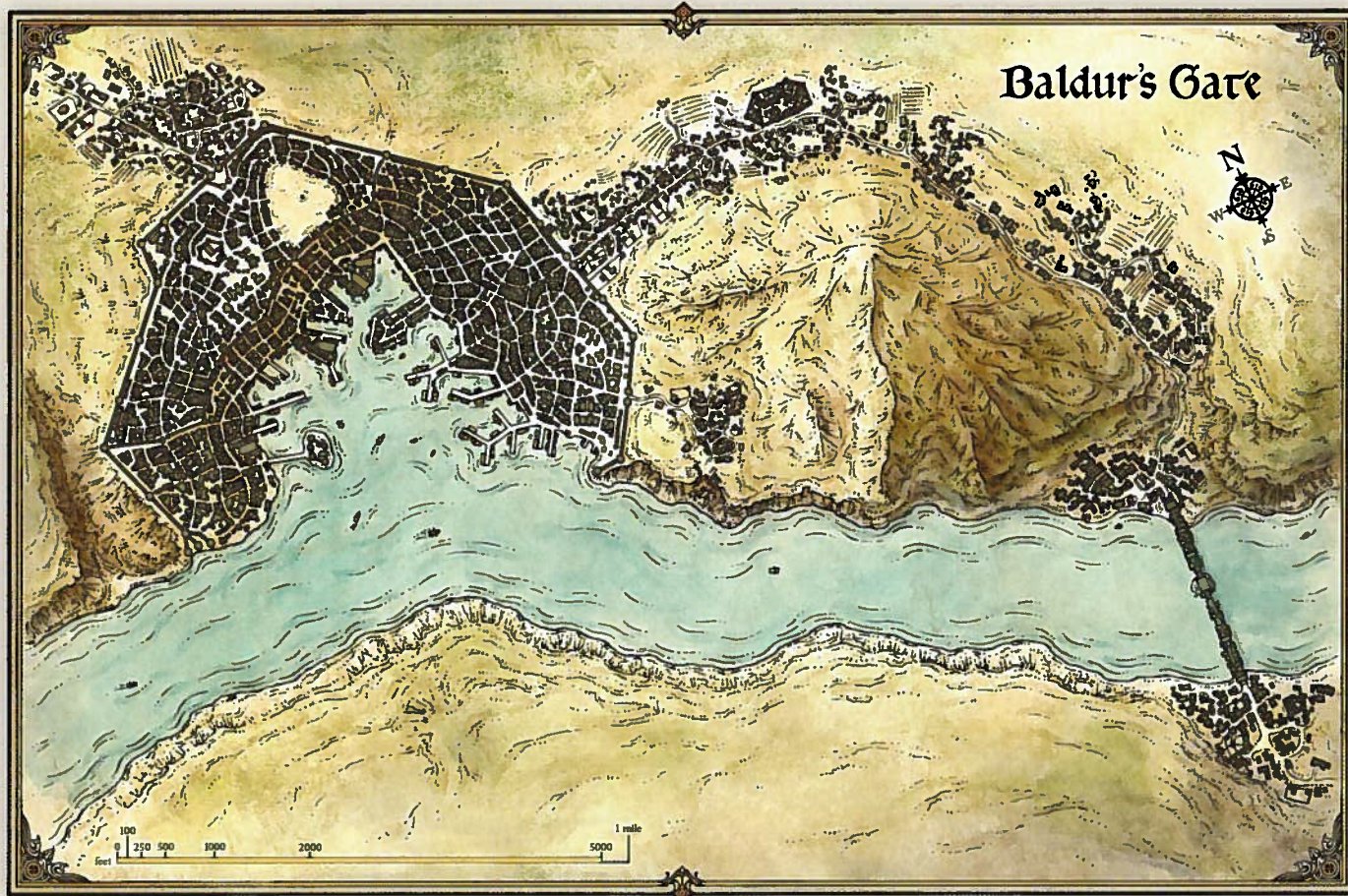


MURDER IN BALDUR'S GATE™

CAMPAIGN GUIDE

FORGOTTEN REALMS®





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BALDUR'S GATE

Cradled in a crook of the Chionthar and often swaddled in mist, Baldur's Gate clings tight to the granite bluffs that channel the river. Trade nursed, the city grew from pirates' port to farmers' fort to the bustling urban center it is today.

Generations have worn smooth the cobbles of its narrow streets, and tens of thousands have lived their entire lives in the long shadows of its walls. The city's stone has soaked in the blood of acclaimed heroes and terrible villains. Alongside and atop such stains, nobles and commoners, rich and poor, have lazed and sweat, ruled and bled, as they've played out the stories of their lives—making Baldur's Gate a place of history and a home to legends.



CITY ON A HILL

Baldur's Gate began its life as a hidden harbor where traders would meet with pirates and “ghost lighters,” folk along the Sword Coast who used lights to lure fogbound ships toward shore, where they would run aground and have their goods scavenged. After hitting their targets, plunderers would journey leagues upriver to the future site of Baldur's Gate, at a turn of the Chionthar that gave good harbor and relatively easy access to the Trade Way, and then sell their booty to traders without fear of meeting the goods' original owners.

In time, industrious traders and herders decided that the excellent, albeit illicit, commerce outweighed the bluffs' poor soil, and they put down roots. Due

in part to its frequent mists and surely its residents' reputations, the settlement became known as Gray Harbor—a name Baldurians still use for the bay today.

The city gained its current name centuries ago when the great explorer Balduran returned from his journey to the other side of Evermeet, the homeland of the elves, where he searched for the fabled isles of Anchorome. He spread around wild stories of his adventures as well as huge amounts of wealth, some of which he spent to have a wall constructed around his oft-raided hometown. Balduran left again for Anchorome and never returned.

Balduran's gate-dotted wall encircled the homes at the top of the bluff but left the harbor and the climb up the bluffs unprotected. This design allowed residents to

COAT OF ARMS

The ship in the Baldur's Gate coat of arms represents both the city's role as a hub for river and ocean trade and its namesake, Balduran, an explorer who sailed west into the unknown and returned with great wealth. The calm sea symbolizes the Gate's intent to be a peaceful power, and the clear, blue sky denotes optimism about its future.

The frequent fogs and drizzling rains put the city's coat of arms at the center of various jokes and sayings, such as "When the arms show true," meaning never or rarely, and "Don't forget your coat," indicating clear and sunny weather. Meanwhile, sayings such as "The seas do roil" and "The ship is tipping" reference present danger or trouble on the way.



tax goods coming to market. Balduran's colleagues, sea captains to whom the harbor was home, angrily insisted the gate by which southern trade and the harbor traffic entered the city was "Baldur's Gate," and they refused to pay. They fought, overthrew the enriched traders and herders, and seized control of the city.

The four oldest captains, their days at sea drawing to a close, turned over their ships to younger sailors, who in turn supported the captains' installation as the fledgling city's rulers. The aging skippers jokingly called themselves "dukes," but the title proved

useful in intercity negotiations. Following Amn's founding, trade boomed in the Gate's relaxed climate, and the city grew. It burst its original bounds, consuming Gray Harbor as it grew up and down the bluffs. The Upper and Lower cities' fates were so entwined the dukes ruled the Lower City couldn't be left exposed to raiders. Thus, Baldur's Gate erected two new wall segments along the bluffs that attached to the Old Wall, which was improved, and also kissed the River Chionthar twice, on the city's western and eastern sides.

Today, Baldur's Gate still refuses to be constrained. People and businesses blocked from residing within the walls huddle against them or sprawl along outlying roads. What once was two communities now feels like three: the privileged Upper City, the hardworking Lower City, and the lawless Outer City.



A FIELDS AND PADDOCKS

The shallow soil around Baldur's Gate makes for poor farming, but the grazing is good, so herders keep sheep, cattle, goats, and horses.

B UPPER CITY

The strictly policed, orderly Upper City is home to the privileged patriarch class. The patriarchs are the oldest families in Baldur's Gate and make up the city's nobility. Living alongside them in more humble, but nevertheless beautiful and well maintained, houses is an upper class of families that boast proud histories as stewards of the patriarchs (tailors, jewelers, head butlers, master chefs, lead gardeners, and the like) and as members of the Watch, a civil police force independent of the Flaming Fist that protects the Upper City.

C TRADE WAY

An ancient path of travel, the Trade Way runs north from Baldur's Gate to Waterdeep. Nearest Baldur's Gate, the road is mostly gravel, but some crumbling, granite-paved segments remain from ancient attempts at empire building. Farther afield, the Trade Way becomes a dirt track that the area's frequent, light rains often reduce to sludge. The old road vanishes in the Fields of the Dead, separating into various trails taken by traders and travelers depending on the season and reports of bandits. When travelers come within sight of Dragonspear Castle, it resumes a more regular course.

D LOWER CITY

The crescent-shaped Lower City rings the harbor and gains elevation up from the river until it meets the walls of the Upper City. Its narrow, cobbled streets give way to flights of stone steps in particularly steep locations.

Laborers and crafters of all sorts, including sailors, salthands, shopkeepers, bakers, and finehand artisans, whose work doesn't require noisy forges or noisome vats or ingredients, toil and dwell in the Lower City's labyrinth of small, often subdivided buildings.

E RIVER CHIONTHAR

The River Chionthar wends west along the southern edge of the Fields of the Dead. Baldur's Gate sits some forty miles from the coast and a few miles east of the head of tide, making its harbor safe from rising waters unless exceptional rains inland cause flooding. Sailing to the city in a seagoing caravel takes about a day.



OUTER CITY

A sprawl of paddocks, dirt streets, shanties, and semipermanent buildings outside the walls, the Outer City accommodates everything the Upper and Lower cities don't. It houses the dirtiest and smelliest trades. Horses, oxen, mules, and other beasts of burden and livestock aren't allowed inside the city's walls, so they are stabled, loaded and unloaded, or butchered here.

Long ago, the Council of Four decided not to pay the Flaming Fist to police the Outer City, so the only law here is what common custom and the Guild—the city's syndicate of thieves, thugs, racketeers, loan sharks, and assassins—impose.

WYRM'S CROSSING AND WYRM'S ROCK

Two bridges meet at a tall, rocky island in the river's center, where a fortress guards passage. Local legend claims that the island, long called Wyrms Rock, was once a bronze dragon's lair, but scholars give the tale little credence. The bridges have thus become known as Wyrms Crossing.

The Flaming Fist, the city's mercenary army and police force, occupies Wyrms Rock. In times of trouble, the fortress raises both spans' drawbridges, leaving Outer City residents who have built their lives atop the bridges to fend for themselves.

BLUFFS

Nearly sheer cliffs border the River Chionthar for leagues east and west of the city. The bluffs are yellow granite, as are the city's walls and most of its buildings. Most Gate roofs are made from gray slate that comes from a Fields of the Dead quarry.

COAST WAY

The Coast Way goes south to Calimshan, passing through settlements the size of hamlets and kingdoms and everything in between.

UPPER CITY

The Upper City exudes wealth. Its buildings' shutters and doors bear vibrant colors and are smartly maintained. Its streets are wide, and its terrain is nearly flat. At night, the magic lamps that hang from ornate arms extending streetward from most buildings keep its avenues well lit. Rain runs off raised roads into drains, rather than pooling or flowing down streets, and sewers carry away waste. Flowering plants that hang from windows and climbing walls—and a ban on smelly businesses—help to sweeten the Upper City's air.

Every Upper City citizen is either a patriarch; a servant of a patriarch, often coming from a proud line of retainers to the nobility; a Watch member, often also a hereditary post; or an affluent business owner. Upper City establishments serve the patriarchs and other wealthy customers almost exclusively. This part of the city has few inns and no public taverns. Patriarchs do their drinking at home, in private clubs, or on overnight soirees into the Lower City. Few doors in the Upper City are open at night, and the streets are devoid of activity except for Watch patrols.

The Gates: The Old Wall, the original wall built at Balduran's behest, contains the Upper City. Six gates pierce it. The Black Dragon Gate protects the northern entrance into the city and is named for the black dragon head a victorious knight displayed there. The head is long gone now, but

a stone replacement projects from the wall above the inner gate's arch in honor of the old trophy.

Originally, the only gate leading to the harbor was Baldur's Gate, the passage that gave the city its name. It is still the only gate in the wall segment separating the Upper and Lower cities through which normal traffic and trade is permitted. This segment is typically referred to as "the Old Wall," even though the original wall enclosed the entire Upper City. Ironically, despite the gate's history as the flashpoint of the tax revolt that established the dukes' control, non-patriarch merchants and travelers passing through the gate are subject to tolls and taxes. The Watch always guards Baldur's Gate, and the Watch and the Flaming Fist use the site to transfer prisoners destined either for trial in the High Hall or confinement in the Seatower of Balduran.



Baldur's Gate

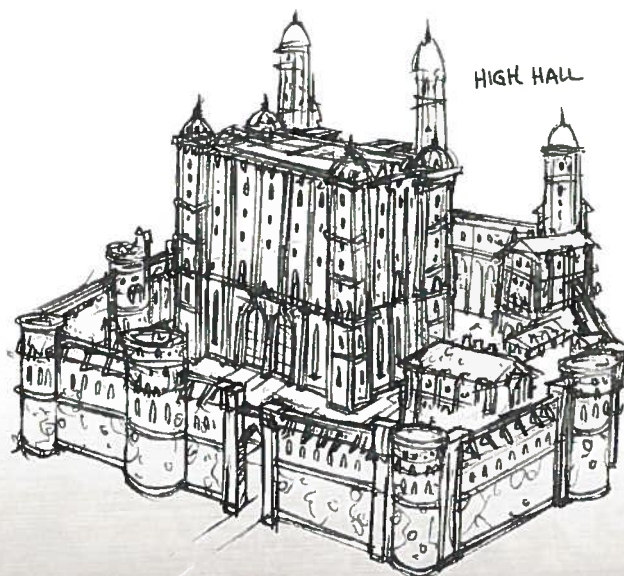
Sea Gate, Manor Gate, Gond Gate, and Heap Gate, the other four Old Wall entrances, are smaller structures created for the patriarchs' convenience after the Lower City was enclosed. Those who are not in the company of a patriarch, not wearing a patriarch's house livery, or not bearing a patriarch's letter of employment must use Baldur's Gate.

The Wide: The Wide is the city's only large civic space and serves as its market. By law, all buying and selling in the city not completed in a licensed and taxed establishment must be done in the Wide. Sellers at the daily market set up their tables, accoutrements, and wares just after dawn. At dusk, the Watch clears the streets of visitors and vendors.

Decorum and order hold sway; street music and noisy activities are prohibited. This rule does not pertain on days when the dukes declare that the Wide be used for civic purposes and traditional market holidays, such as Highharvestide. At these times, vendors suited to the festivities set up on the Wide's fringes while the area's central expanse is given over to dances, contests, and games.

Most nights, the Wide is an empty space whose perimeter (and only that much) is illuminated by light from the buildings that ring it. A patriarch sometimes schedules the space for an evening social event, such as a concert, a grand ball, or a wedding.

High Hall: The building known as the High Hall was once the city's last bastion against invasion, and it served that function again when Balduran's associates led their tax revolt. Since then, alterations to let in more natural light and make the space a more comfortable place from which to govern have weakened



its status as a fortress. The High Hall is used for professional guild meetings, civic events, court trials, tax counting, real-estate and law record-keeping, and anything to do with governance, including meetings of the Parliament of Peers and the Council of Four.

The long-held tradition of the whole citizenry voting to elect dukes to the four lifetime posts ended after an attempted coup. Today, a parliament of representatives chosen from among the patriars and the most wealthy and influential Lower City residents elects new dukes. One of the four dukes holds the title of grand duke and is empowered to break ties when the council's vote is evenly split. By tradition, and in the interest of good politics, one duke is always a high-ranking member of the Flaming Fist, the mercenary company that is the city's *de facto* army.

Watch Citadel: The Upper City's police force uses the Watch Citadel as a barracks and for training, storage, and organizational needs. The citadel has only a few jail cells, which the Watch uses to temporarily hold those awaiting a trial in the High Hall or a transfer to the prison in the Seatower of Balduran.

The Watch staffs the Upper City's walls and runs interior patrols day and night. The Upper City is the exclusive domain of the Watch; the Flaming Fist has no jurisdiction here. And, conversely, the patriars do not call upon Watch members to work outside the area's bounds. Watch members all live in the Upper City, and most belong to families that have a proud tradition of loyalty to the patriars.

At night, the Watch evicts everyone from the Upper City except for residents and their guests. All Watch members know every patriar by sight. Anyone else is detained and politely (at first) questioned. Watch patrols release anyone who has a good reason to be out and is dressed in a patriar's house livery, bears a patriar-signed invitation, or carries a Watch-issued stamped and numbered wooden or silver badge. Passes that the Watch supplies are collected and changed often to foil counterfeiters.

Temples: Most of the city's longest-standing and most influential temples are located in the Temples district. Several shrines and small temples dot the Upper City's other districts, and an oft-frequented temple to Umberlee is located in Gray Harbor.

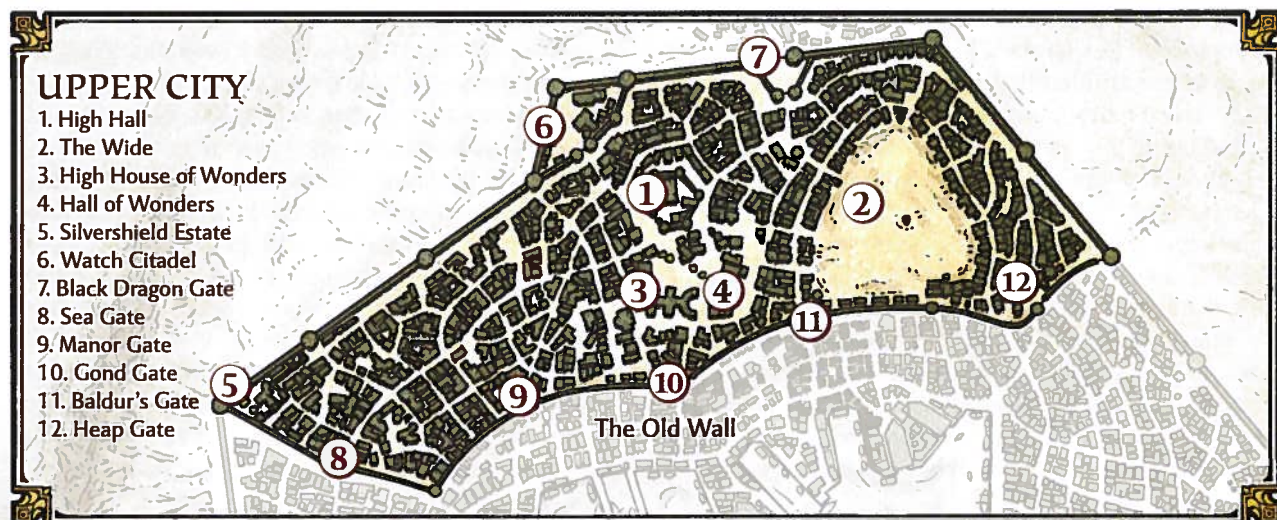
Baldurians of all sorts give honor to Gond, and the temple complex to the god of labor and inventions is the grandest of them all. His primacy has much to do with the city's shipping and shipbuilding industries. Hundreds of rail carts and seventy-six worker-powered, wheeled cranes aid movement of goods in the port, and dry docks outfitted with hoists and pumps of Gond dot the quays.

The High House of Wonders is a vast structure that serves as the official temple and workshops of Gond. The nearby Hall of Wonders is a museum open to the public that displays the clergy's inventions. The influence of Gond's temple in the city has led to many attempts to co-opt its power, most recently by Brevek Faenor, loremaster most high of Oghma. The election of patriar Torlin Silvershield, the high artificer of Gond, to the Council of Four quashed the loremaster's influence and reduced him to presiding over Oghma's old shrine and the library in the High House of Wonders.

Manorborn: The city's nobles have blood ties to the people who rose to power following Balduran's triumphant return. They largely consider themselves the rightful rulers and owners of the Upper City, that being the old city—the true city.

The patriars' palatial homes are found in every Upper City neighborhood, but the grandest residences blanket Manorborn, the Upper City's western district. Most members of the Parliament of Peers and their families live here.

Grandest of all the manors, the Silvershield Estate occupies the district's westernmost edge. It boasts ornamental and kitchen gardens as well as a small orchard. The Silvershield family's reputation and power were established more than a century ago, and High Artificer Torlin Silvershield is the latest member of the family to be elected to the Council of Four.





HIGH HALL

The High Hall once stood as the central bastion in the defense of Baldur's Gate. In its heyday, it was an ugly, powerful, and functional fortification. Its years as a defensive structure ended long ago, though. Since then, so many modifications have been made to the building in the interest of comfort and beauty that the lines of the original fort are hard to see. The basic structure remains, however. The building encloses a central courtyard, which was once a bailey. Graceful windows now pierce the heavy walls, and soaring spires and leering gargoyles stand in place of the original battlements.

Almost all the governmental business of Baldur's Gate is conducted here. The four dukes have sumptuous offices and private meeting rooms in their own wing. The Parliament of Peers has a dozen small meeting rooms and one large chamber for whole-body deliberations. The chamber's gallery seats an audience of three hundred. Those seats are almost always filled when parliament is in session; on rare occasion, though, parliament clears the house for closed-door debate over matters considered too sensitive or inflammatory for spectators.

The High Hall also contains court chambers where the dukes sit in judgment (individually, seldom as a group) over accused criminals. The dukes often assign this duty to proxy judges on a rotating basis. Proxy judges are not paid a salary, yet a temporary assignment to the High Hall's bench is a plum duty for any patriar, because hefty gifts and bribes flow to judges from the Guild, from those grateful to be exonerated, and from those hoping to be exonerated.

Serving as a judge is not light duty. The only cases that require the decision-making of a judge are those that involve real doubt about a defendant's guilt, or unclear points of law. When someone is caught in the act of committing a crime, or close enough to the performance of the act that the presiding officer is reasonably certain that the suspect is guilty, the individual's "trial" boils down to a simple administrative and sentencing process that the Flaming Fist or the Watch directly handles. It's not uncommon for someone arrested for picking pockets in the morning to be already serving a sentence in jail by evening.

Aside from the aforementioned governmental offices, the High Hall is a place that Baldurians can enjoy. It includes a feasting hall that is used for both public and private banquets and a wing of meeting rooms that are available to everyone on a first-come, first-served basis. The courtyard contains a small public garden that features walkways and benches.

Theoretically, anyone is welcome here. In practice, though, hardly anyone except for patriars uses the space. Everyone else is too busy working to spend much time lolling in the High Hall's garden.

The High Hall houses several small libraries tucked in and about the structure on different levels and in different wings. These libraries contain all the city's records going back hundreds of years. Laws, contracts, architectural plans, court proceedings, government appointments, accounting documents, tax rolls, census information, land grants, guild charters, and other documents are packed into rows upon rows of shelves and tall scroll cases.

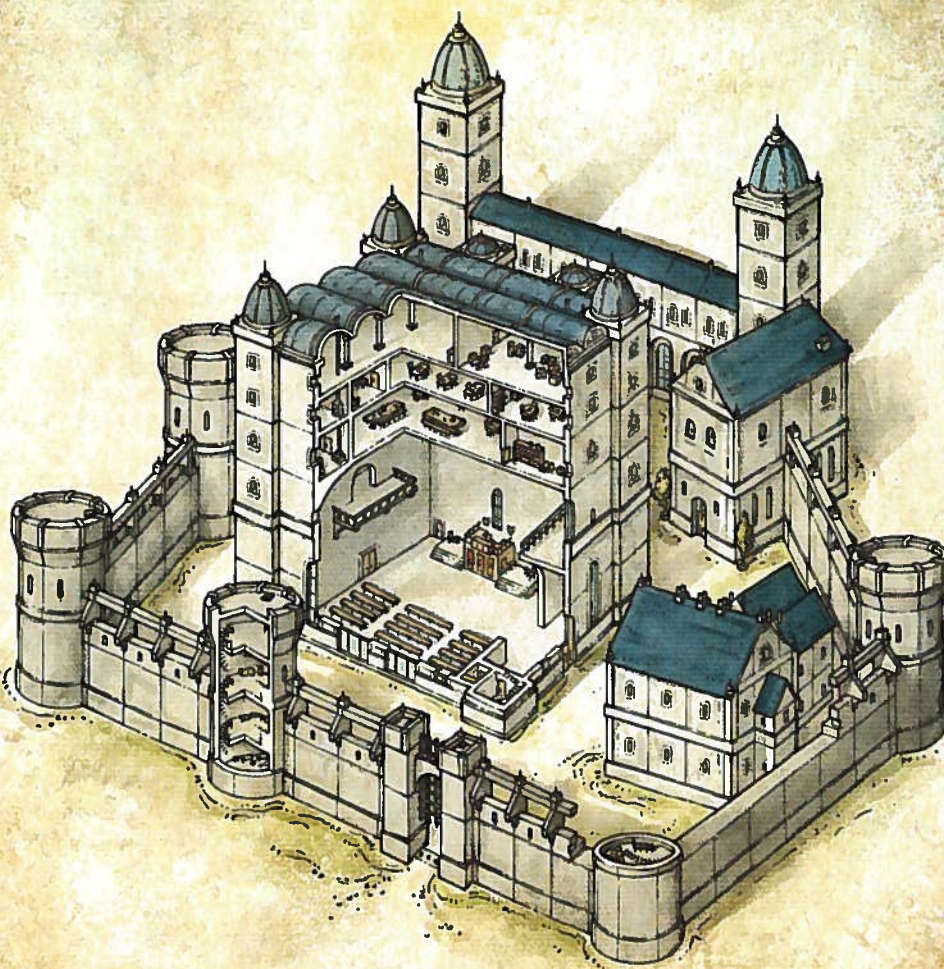
In theory, the libraries are divided by topic of inquiry, but in actuality only the librarians (devotees of Oghma who volunteer their time) can make much sense of them. Some frustrated patriars and various barristers have campaigned in the past to have all the libraries combined and catalogued in a sensible way, but there's never been enough political will behind the effort to dedicate funds for it.

In addition to being a place of civic activity, the High Hall also serves as a kind of secular temple. The ground floor of the easternmost wing is a museum to the history of Baldur's Gate and a mausoleum for its many dukes and heroes. There, a statue of Balduran looms over the city's "holy relics" in a glass case. The items inside are things he supposedly owned: a battered helmet, tattered pieces of a cloak, a longsword in a cracked leather sheath, a steel shield, and, oddly, a butter knife. Lesser heroes recline in marble upon beds of stone or sit enthroned, bronze upon bronze, gazing toward some unseen horizon with resolute nobility, their bones dry as twigs in the caskets beneath them.

All dukes have the right to be buried in the mausoleum, and most of those who are entombed on the site lie under the floor, so that anyone who walks through the room is stepping over graves. Because of the vaulted dungeons beneath the High Hall, those interred in the floor end up suspended somewhere in the stonework between the museum's floor and the dungeon's ceiling. Some graves have collapsed into the dungeons below, a fact detectable from above by the hollow boom of footsteps on particular flagstones. The Parliament of Peers decided not to address the issue of these "fallen heroes," since they were assured by dwarf engineers that the floor of the museum is in no danger of collapse.

The building's entire structure is part of the Gate's advanced water system. Below-ground catch basins collect rainwater that runs off its roof. That water

The High Hall



flows through aqueducts to a cistern beneath the great fountain in the Temples district. Thanks to the innovative pumps of Gond, the Upper City's fountains are both beautiful works of flowing-water art and sources of safe, clean water for residents.

The original fortification's dungeons still exist. Unlike the High Hall above them, they have seen little renovation and no beautification since they were excavated. Under vaulted ceilings supported by thick pillars lie dozens of brick-lined chambers linked by winding, rock-cut passages into a labyrinth that few dare to traverse. Entrance to the underground area can be had by way of a handful of staircases tucked

into odd corners of the High Hall, as well as an unknown number of connections to the Upper City's water system.

A handful of chambers nearest the stairs have been converted into jail cells, but they are seldom used. The near-constant rain keeps the dungeons perpetually damp and dripping. The only dangers in the area come from swarming rats and the threat of becoming lost in the unmapped, echoing darkness. No one knows whether the master of walls, the master of cobbles, or the master of drains and underways should be in charge of the dungeons. Consequently, no one takes responsibility.

THE WIDE

The Wide, a sprawling marketplace, is the eponymous landmark of this Upper City district. Its reputation as a thriving crossroads of trade spans the Sword Coast and stretches as far east as Thay.

During the day, the steamy aroma of roasted, spiced meats mixes with the wet, earthy smell characteristic of Baldur's Gate. Bright, multicolored awnings cover stalls in which tools, textiles, foods, luxuries,



The Wide

oddments, silks, scarves, tobacco, Shining South spices, and all manner of creature comforts from every corner of Faerûn are bought and sold. Prices are lower in the Wide than elsewhere in the Gate, which means negotiations are usually sharper. Not all merchants here are in

the commodities trade. Tattoo artists, fortune tellers, sages, hedge wizards, astrologers, and poets also work in the Wide. At tables throughout the market area, Baldurians mingle to debate city affairs, philosophize, gossip, and conduct business and trade.

Meanwhile, strong, young delivery-makers bull through the shoulder-to-shoulder crowds heading to and from stalls. If not for the tall poles they wear strapped to their backs and shoulders, the goods carried by these young males and females would be easy targets. Atop the poles, out of a human-sized person's reach, swivel and sway baskets and crates full of goods. Seldom do these top-heavy poles collide and become entangled. But when they do, a row inevitably ensues. As soon as pole-carters leave the open air of the Wide and enter less crowded city streets, they lower their merchandise to street level lest enterprising bandits lean out second-story windows to strip them of their wares.

The Beloved Ranger statue is the only permanent structure in the marketplace. All others are collapsible, movable, pitchable, or temporary. Competition for the best stall locations is fierce. Upper City merchants have the upper hand, of course, as do those with plenty of cash to grease the palms of the bailiff of the Wide, his officers, Watch soldiers who provide security, and the dozens of other outstretched hands bearing permits, charters, and signet rings of office. A prime location in the Wide can turn so much profit that almost any amount of graft is justified in obtaining it.

The Wide's market area constitutes nearly half of the district that bears the same name. High-class

shops, well-heeled merchants' residences, trading and insurance offices, the sages' and traders' guildhalls, the Undercellar's public entrance, and Ramazith's Tower fill out the rest of the district.

Bailiff of the Wide

Someone has to record the names and goods of sellers, manage disputes over stall space, and schedule the Wide's nighttime use to balance the concerns of competing patriars. These and many other unenviable tasks falls to the bailiff of the Wide.

Each morning, Bailiff of the Wide Jedren Hiller wakes before dawn, meets his officers and assistants around the Beloved Ranger for a quick discussion of the changes for the day, and then heads to Baldur's Gate. While the assistants scatter across the Wide to mark out stall placements with chalk, half the officers line up around the inside of Baldur's Gate to hand out stall-marker chits while the other half goes to the Black Dragon Gate. Bailiff Hiller then squeezes out through the gate and begins assigning stall space to the merchants who have come for the day.

Merchants who live in the Upper City receive their stall markers early each day by nighttime doorstep deliveries, and they begin setting up as soon as the stalls are chalked. Anyone who forgot to request a stall on the previous day must wait for Bailiff Hiller to pass through the Wide on his way to Black Dragon Gate after he finishes making the Baldur's Gate assignments. The bailiff gives out stall assignments according to a complicated formula that accounts for similarity of goods, the length of time a merchant has been selling in the Wide, one's past infractions such as crossing a stall boundary, and rotating the best sellers through the best locations for fairness. Of course, everyone knows that a little something extra can improve your standing in the Registry, the ledger of the Wide's market and social activity that is Bailiff Hiller's constant companion.

The bailiff of the Wide works under the auspices of Haxilion Trood, the city's purse master. Trood is a meticulous coin-counter, so Hiller has been obliged to turn down cash bribes. But giving him and his hungry crew some samples of food, or making deliveries to his home of various goods "for inspection" is still quite welcome (and often necessary if a merchant doesn't wish to languish in a less traveled area or some other unfortunate locale). What a shame it would be for the Registry to dictate that a perfumer ended up next to someone selling roast meat?

Beloved Ranger

A statue of a powerful warrior in plate armor stands in the Wide. Far from being the typical grim guardian, this warrior wears an enthusiastic grin and cradles a hamster in his hands. The late Orburt Lewel, an eccentric textiles merchant, erected the statue about seventy years ago. According to legend, the featured figure is Minsc, a dull-witted but brave warrior of Rashemen who saved Lewel's life from some forgotten danger. The hamster is Boo, a pet that Minsc referred to as a "giant pygmy space hamster."

The quirky statue is a favorite landmark and meeting spot in the ever-changing sea of market stalls, both because it's easy to spot and because Baldur's Gate loves its peculiar characters.

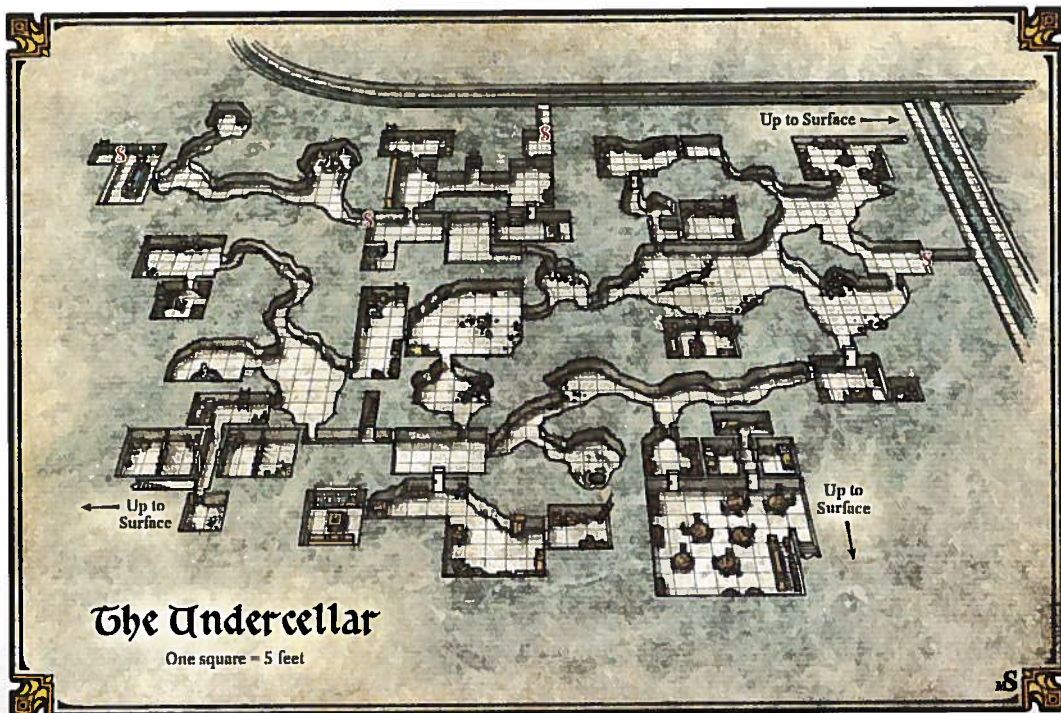
Entering the Undercellar

A clearly marked entrance to the Undercellar beckons on the Wide's southern rim. Most Baldurians view the Undercellar as a seedy yet unique underground tavern and festhall. Its cobbled, vaulted chambers were once the storage cellars of various buildings, many of which still conduct business today. Over decades, the judicious addition of arched doorways and freshly dug, narrow tunnels has strung the cellars together, forming a sizable network of passageways and chambers.

The Undercellar is much more than an idiosyncratic festhall. Its unmapped tunnels are more extensive than most city residents imagine. Dozens of access points reach it. Most of them are unmarked, and owners and overseers of more than a few such sites purposely keep them secret. The Guild directly controls some entrances; others are privately

owned but made available for the Guild's use in exchange for coin.

Only a few people know the whole of the Undercellar's pathways well enough to act as guides (see "The Fetcher and the Tunnel" on page 59), and only a fool would enter the jumbled, lightless spaces without a knowledgeable escort. With a guide, it's possible to travel beneath almost the entire Upper City. While neither swift nor comfortable, such a journey can be made in complete secrecy.



HIGH HOUSE OF WONDERS AND HALL OF WONDERS

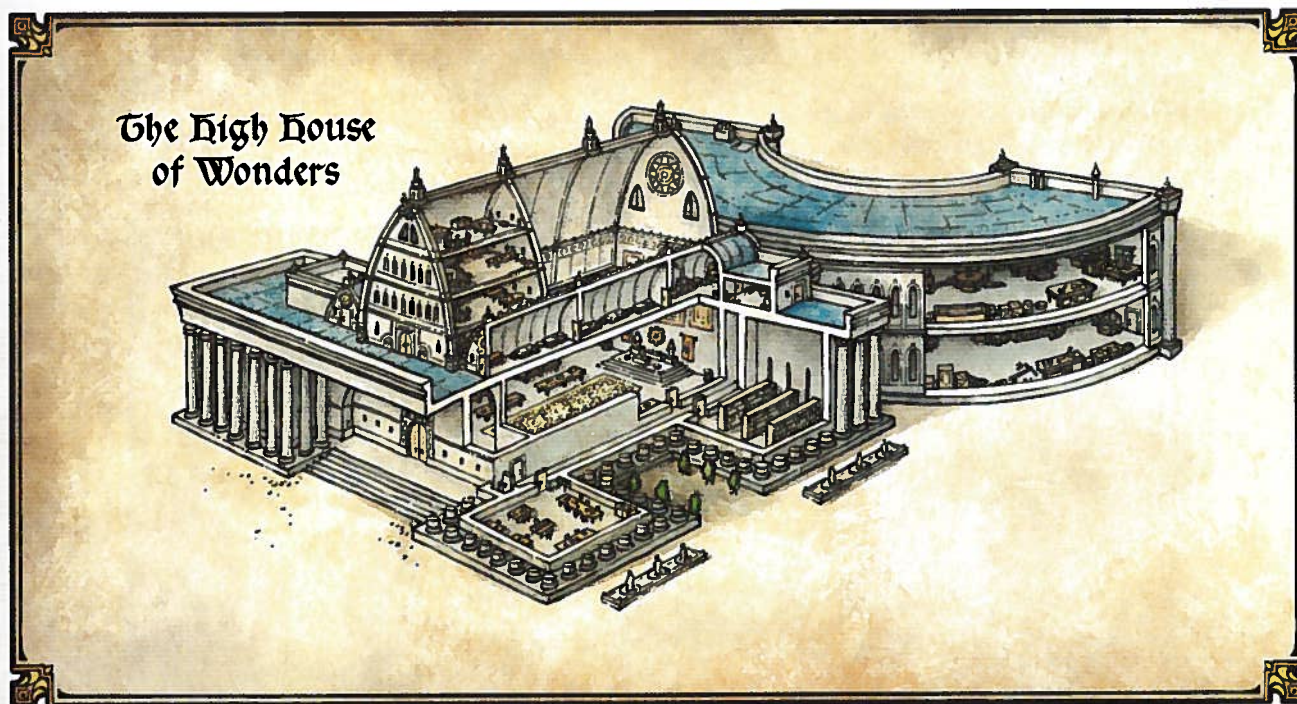
Built from the profits of a lucrative technology deal with the city, the High House of Wonders and the Hall of Wonders stand apart in the Upper City, their pillared marble buildings gleaming white in a cityscape of yellow and gray. Gond's first priests in the Gate took great pains to make the temple as ostentatious as possible, hiring expert masons from as far away as Chessenta and importing Lantanese sculptures and exterior cornices.

High House of Wonders

The High House of Wonders serves as a vast workshop for the many crafters and inventors that the temple houses. To enter the building, a person must pass under three great bronze blocks, or doors, that appear to float in midair. In fact, a system of hidden pulleys and counterweights holds them aloft. Great chimes are hidden within each block, and they ring

the time at the passing of every hour. Releasing the pulley system would slam down the bronze doors. Anyone and anything caught beneath the massive slabs would be crushed. Since the temple is open to inspiration at all hours, the doors have not been closed in living memory. However, if rioting were to threaten the temple, the Gondsmen would seal the High House of Wonders and open it again only when it appeared safe for the people to "return to holy labor."

Each day, the High House of Wonders rings with the clamor of hammer and saw. Acolytes create the knickknacks that are sold in the Hall of Wonders, crafters of all sorts attend master-taught classes, and inventors experiment alongside priests as they build new projects or tinker with old machines. The House has several huge wings, each devoted to a type of work or a scholarly pursuit related to invention and artifice. Silversmiths toil alongside those who cast in bronze, architects draft beside engineers, and carpenters build cranes next to woodcarvers working on jewelry boxes. Everything from ships to siege weapons is built at full size in the great halls of the High House of Wonders and then is disassembled for transport. Of course, the faithful of Gond work on repairs



HIGH CONFUSION

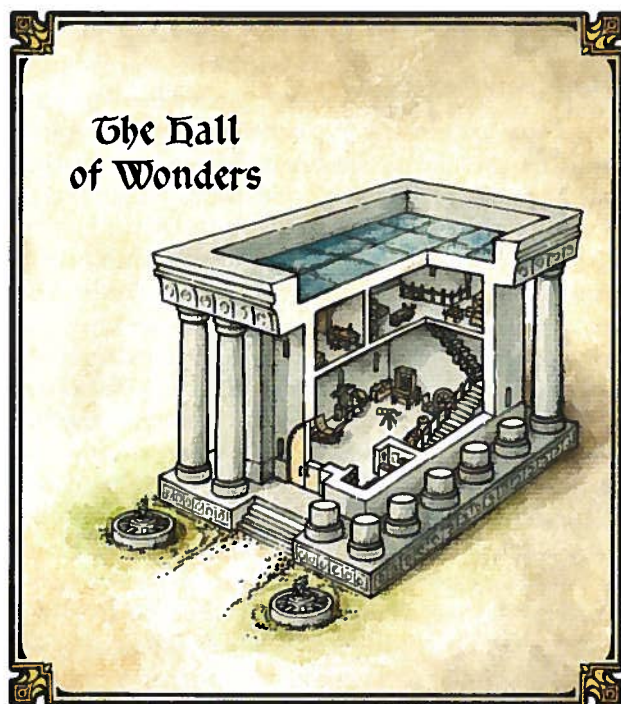
The similar names of the High Hall, the High House of Wonders, and the Hall of Wonders cause endless confusion among newcomers to Baldur's Gate. Baldurians often further befuddle visitors by shortening the last two of these important buildings' names to "the House" and "the Hall." Additionally, the High House of Wonders is sometimes referred to as "the Temple," and the High Hall is sometimes called "the Ducal Palace" or "the Palace."

and building sites citywide. Among other tasks, they replace broken spars in the port's worker-powered, wheeled cranes; erect scaffolding around construction sites; and venture into patriars' homes to fix the plumbing.

The High House of Wonders hosts about one hundred priests and acolytes in its residential wing. By day, up to five times that many faithful fill the temple as people who live in other parts of the city arrive to work and learn.

Most of those who enter the temple every day are long-standing members of the city's various crafting guilds who come to study, experiment, and teach. Some are would-be apprentices hoping to make connections and show off their talents to prospective masters. A few are individuals of great talent but small means. Too poor to afford the entrance and class fees, such people can sometimes find a patron to pay for their tutelage in return for future indentureship.

All these folk are counted among the faithful, and they are literally counted as they enter and exit the House. The many fascinating items in the High House of Wonders are theoretical experiments, early-stage prototypes, or specially commissioned works—not for the eyes of the public. Thus, Gondar door guards politely turn away the curious and those who do not have explicit business in the temple, directing them across the square to the Hall of Wonders.



Hall of Wonders



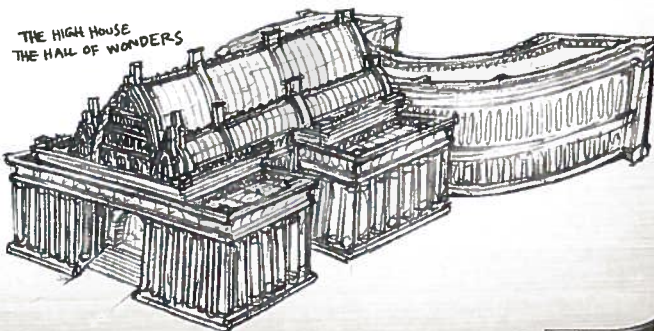
The Hall of Wonders puts Gond's magnificence on full display. This building is as much as a religious site. For 5 cp, a visitor can enter to view—in long aisles and even hanging from the ceiling—a gallery of holy relics ranging from the pragmatic, such as ordinary locks and mechanical lock boxes disguised as furniture and

other household goods, to the scholarly, such as precision water clocks and orreries.

More impressive inventions loom large amid the collection, such as a steam dragon (a steam-operated engine for moving heavy objects), a steam-operated mechanical orchestra, and mechanical scribes that can be linked in sequence to make many copies of exactly what a person writes as he or she pens it. One of the most popular displays among seafaring Baldurians is the collection of nautical tools, such as a gold filigreed, coral-carved astrolabe and one of the first farseers (telescopes). Small signs indicate the purposes and ways to use the items. Since visitors are not allowed to touch the inventions, numerous Gondar acolytes circulate throughout the Hall of Wonders and readily demonstrate the items' uses.

To exit the museum, a visitor must leave through a shop filled with devices for sale. Printed catalogues of additional items and larger devices that can be ordered for later delivery are also on display. Locks, strong-boxes, objects with hidden storage compartments, steam dragons, water pumps, and more can be had for the prices listed.

Because the Gondsmen are given to ostentatious displays of wealth, rumors persist of a treasure vault hidden beneath the temple and guarded by mechanical monstrosities. The rumors are mostly true. Behind the grand altar in the High House of Wonders is a complex pressure-plate system that opens a secret passageway leading beneath the temple. Numerous chambers and storerooms into which the public is never invited exist beneath the site. Whether golems or other automatons guard the rooms is known only to the priests.



SILVERSHIELD ESTATE

High Artificer of Gond Torlin Silvershield stands as the latest in a nearly unbroken line of Silvershields who have been elected to the Council of Four. Power has afforded luxury to the Silvershield family. Its estate, roughly the size of a city block, attests to that. It was built up over several generations on land the Silvershields purchased or were gifted as a show of gratitude or to solicit the discreet Silvershield touch.

The estate is located in Manorborn's western corner. A thick, 12-foot-high wall surrounds the compound before joining the Upper City's walls. Even though the neighborhood is a safe one, Silvershield always assigns a handful of retainers to patrol the estate's periphery for burglars and beggars who manage to sneak past the Watch.

The Silvershield estate dwarfs most other patriars' manors but has little of their coziness. When Silvershield hosts a revel, sounds of music and laughter can seldom be heard beyond the walls of the behemoth estate. Deserved or not, the place has a reputation for unfriendliness.

Armed guards are stationed at the gate of the complex. A white-graveled courtyard extends from the gate to the house's portico, where a beautiful Gondar invention is suspended. This self-refueling oil candelabra is designed to appear as eight miniature geysers spewing gold and silver flames.

A long outbuilding on the manor's northern side houses palanquins and sedan chairs. Silvershield seldom rides in such conveyances, but he strives to provide every courtesy and comfort to his guests.

The grounds' extensive gardens might be the estate's most distinctive and envied feature. The duke is fond of strolling as he meditates, and he often fusses over his garden as though it were a fourth child. The lush gardens have been designed with the cool climate and damp weather in mind so that they display splashes of color regardless of the season. Over the years, the Silvershields have imported flowering plants and colorful shrubs from as far north as the High Forest and sent master gardeners as far out as the Moonshae Isles to collect specimens. Newly arrived plants and those that need special care grow in a glass-walled greenhouse with mirrors set around its exterior to catch and concentrate the meager sunlight. Although few in the city know it, Silvershield uses the greenhouse to grow his own supply of sable moonflower. It's not for his own use, of course—Silvershield doesn't allow himself to become intoxicated—but for the entertainment of certain dissolute guests at revels whose secrets might not otherwise be prized away.

The garden has green lawns with a white gravel path that meanders past exquisite statuary, through flower beds, and around trees and bushes. Peacocks strut freely across the property, and songbirds roost in the trees. Pears and persimmons grow in the compound's small orchard. Silvershield's are the only persimmon trees in Baldur's Gate. Around back, near the kitchens built against the outer wall, the path wends past a small gazebo that houses a shrine to Gond, then leads to vegetable and herb gardens set amid lines of blueberry bushes.

Duke Silvershield is most proud of his estate's topiary maze. He commissioned master crafters

at the High House of Wonders to make several modified, steam-dragon-powered miniature cranes. They are arranged and camouflaged within the topiary, making the necks and tails of the animal-shaped shrubbery move. Silvershield, who claims he animated the topiary to amuse his children and

visitors, enjoys the maze immensely, particularly when his real peacocks investigate and confront their leafy counterparts.

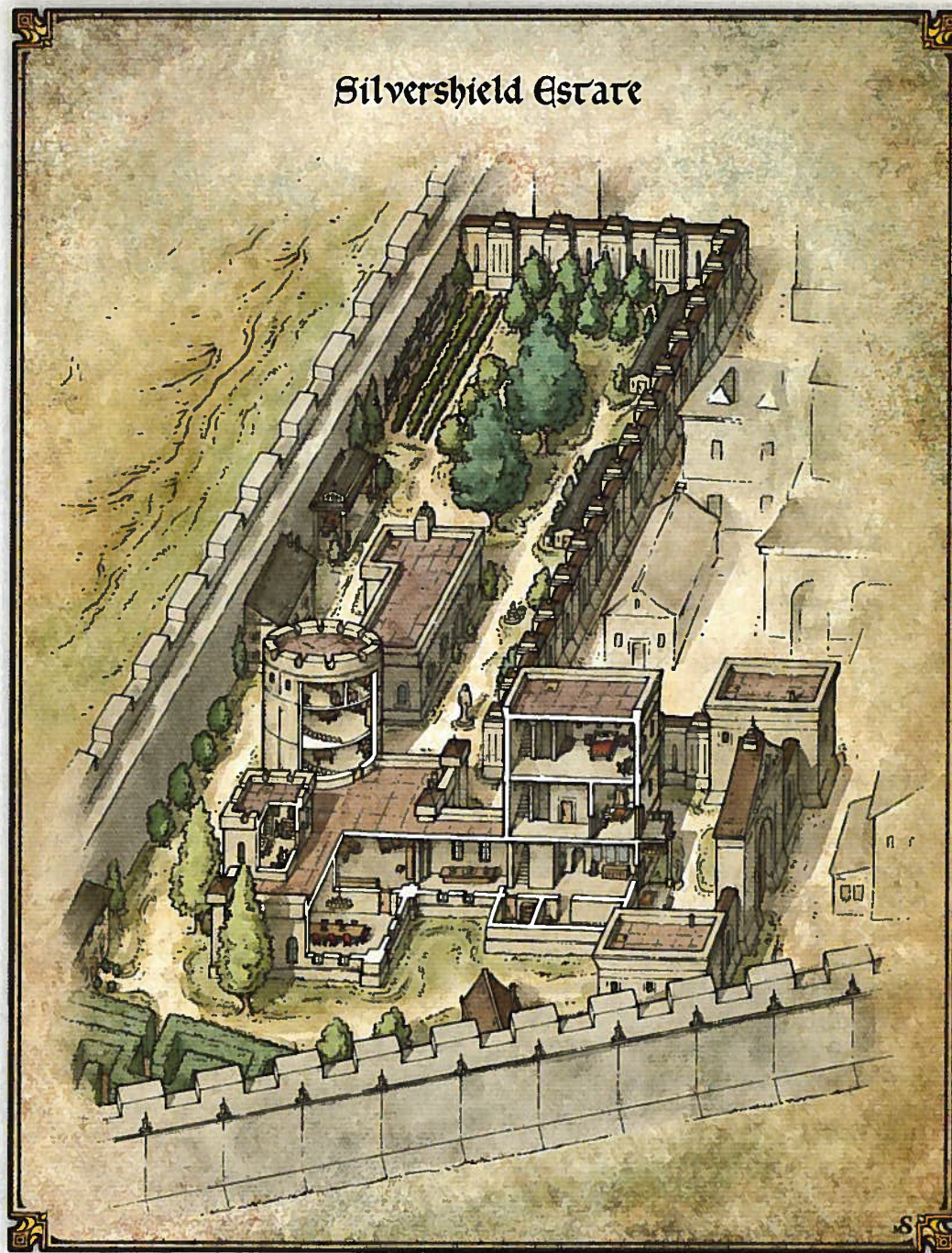
On the manor's ground floor, the Silvershields receive guests, play host to revels, and attend to minor business. The level hums with the soft, whirring sounds of dozens of fragile, intricate clockwork inventions brought here from the High House of Wonders. In the grand foyer, a mosaic depicting the Silvershield coat of arms above the ship from the Gate's coat of arms—chosen to remind visitors whose city they're in—stretches across the room's ornate ceiling. A ballroom and a performance stage dominate the rear of the building, and a handful of sitting rooms and salons complements them. In the western wing, a spacious feasting hall easily seats forty while providing plenty of room for servants and entertainers to move about.

Below the ground floor, servants' quarters provide personal space to maids, valets, retainers, cooks, and the many other staff members that support the patriars' luxurious lifestyle. The manor's wine cellar,



Silvershield Estate

Silvershield Estate



storerooms, and servants' common areas complete the basement level. The estate is in a constant flurry of action, especially down here. The Silvershields have approximately fifty servants on hand at any given time, twenty other retainers and guards elsewhere on the estate, and another ten to twenty out running errands in Baldur's Gate.

The family lives on the manor's upper floors. The floors above the main house contain a private parlor, a nursery for Alana and Entar III, a bedroom and playroom for Skie II, and other rooms reserved for the children when they outgrow the nursery. The round tower has three upper floors and is composed of a small

dining room, a half-dozen guest bedrooms, a guest parlor, a library, and the master suite. Silvershield also maintains a home office in the tower, but he seldom uses it. His real office is hidden behind a second-floor, hinged bookcase that leads out to a private walkway on the manor's roof. Atop the roof, Silvershield has a workshop and study within a small solarium. The family and servants are well aware of the "secret door" behind the bookcase, but the duke prohibits others from walking the roof or entering his hideaway, which is where he conducts secret business and lays the groundwork for his most sensitive schemes.

LOWER CITY

The Lower City, a great crescent of steep slopes descending to the docks, is packed tight with conjoined, slate-roofed buildings that are made of stone and feature window boxes and stout shutters in vibrant hues. The Lower City's narrow alleys access interior courtyards and other streets. Stone buttresses often span its roadways, literally holding apart the upper floors of structures that face each other. Even though some of these narrow supports act as pedestrian bridges, they are most often used by pigeons, gulls, rats, and cats. Lower City citizens are accustomed to their noisy, cramped existence. As the long-ago sage Asturgel of the Gate wrote, "In the Lower City, we live and work atop each other untidily."

Trade is king in this section of Baldur's Gate. Craftwork, repairs, and buying and selling consume the lives of the tradesfolk, shopkeepers, and day servants who dwell here. Commerce in shops and crowded streets begins before sunrise and continues until after dark. By day, each shop's shutters are flung open. At night, they're firmly fastened shut, regardless of whether their windows have iron gratings. Aside from inns and taverns—which are open, well lit, and employ "trusties" to guard against vandals, drunkards, arsonists, thieves, and brawlers—the Lower City is largely dark and shuttered after sundown.

Dark and Foggy Streets: Since the damp clings to the entire city, the Gate's cobbled streets are typically slick underfoot. When traction becomes a real problem, the locals spread straw or river gravel on the cobbles to help folk find their footing.

Communally maintained streetlights dot various crossroads and light the darkest spots beneath the Lower City's many stone support arches. Oil-and-wick copper bowls, whose copper wing reflectors direct radiance, partially illuminate the Lower City's nicer districts. Glassless, tin candle lanterns throw light into its rougher neighborhoods. Both types of lighting are solidly constructed and mounted. Citizens who live near the lanterns light them at dusk and, if wind or rain have not yet extinguished them, blow them out at sunrise.

The open doors of inns, taverns, and late-to-close cafes spill some light into the streets, but most folk carry lamps or hire lamp lads and lamp lasses. These youths carry many-candled lanterns on long poles and, for a few coppers, guide customers through the streets at night.

Gray Harbor: Baldur's Gate has one of the largest, busiest harbors on Faerûn's western coast. The city's independent status and tolerant nature appeal to many

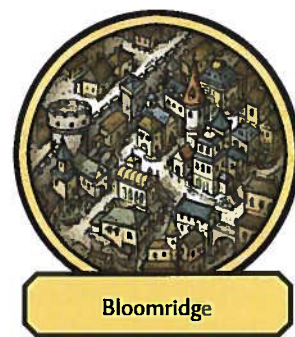
sea captains, who settle their families in Lower City homes. As a result, the Gate handles a wide variety of cargoes. Many pirates looking to fence their latest prizes also regularly tie up in the Gate.

Visitors are often impressed by the harbor's sheer size and level of activity, marveling at its seventy-six enormous cranes and its scoops and cargo carts, which run on rails of steel along the docks and make loading and unloading an efficient process. The dock equipment is operated by Balduran's Honorable Company of Harborhands, but the priests of Gond devised and built it. Thus, Gond's High House of Wonders receives 1 cp out of each fee paid for the use of a cart or a crane. All fees and ship manifests are taken to the Harbormaster's Office, a tiny building with thick walls and barred windows that stands apart from other city structures.

The Water Queen's House is also a solitary structure. It dominates the end of a pier and descends on one side into the harbor. Waves have lapped against this temple of Umberlee for generations. Sailors and their families make frequent small offerings at it to buy the Bitch Queen's favor. Its priestesses can often be seen descending the temple's outside staircase to walk offerings into the river, where they disappear beneath the waves and climb back up empty-handed. What happens to the offerings is a mystery no one in Baldur's Gate has ever dared to investigate, and the wrath of the whole city would surely fall upon anyone who did.

Bloomridge: Lower City citizens generally lead a working-class existence, but successful merchants, ship captains, landlords, and others who have access to wealth try to live as much like patriars as they can. Rich folk sometimes purchase several Lower City buildings, or even small blocks, and either raze the structures or modify and connect them to form a palatial home. Slightly less prosperous folk typically rent expensive, upper-floor apartments, preferring locations that feature rooftop terraces or balconies that offer fine views.

These impressive homes are mostly found in Bloomridge, a fashionable Lower City district dotted with cafes, flower shops, and artisan boutiques. The district's main street runs steeply up from the harbor to the Old



Wall. Numerous structures have exterior staircases and open terraces built into or against the wall.

The only blight in this otherwise upscale area is Mandorcai's Mansion. This structure appeared out of nowhere, fully built and staffed, overnight on a vacant lot. For several tendays afterward, citizens gossiped about Mandorcai, the eccentric, magic-wielding builder of the place, and influential residents courted him, eager to retain the services of such a powerful wizard.

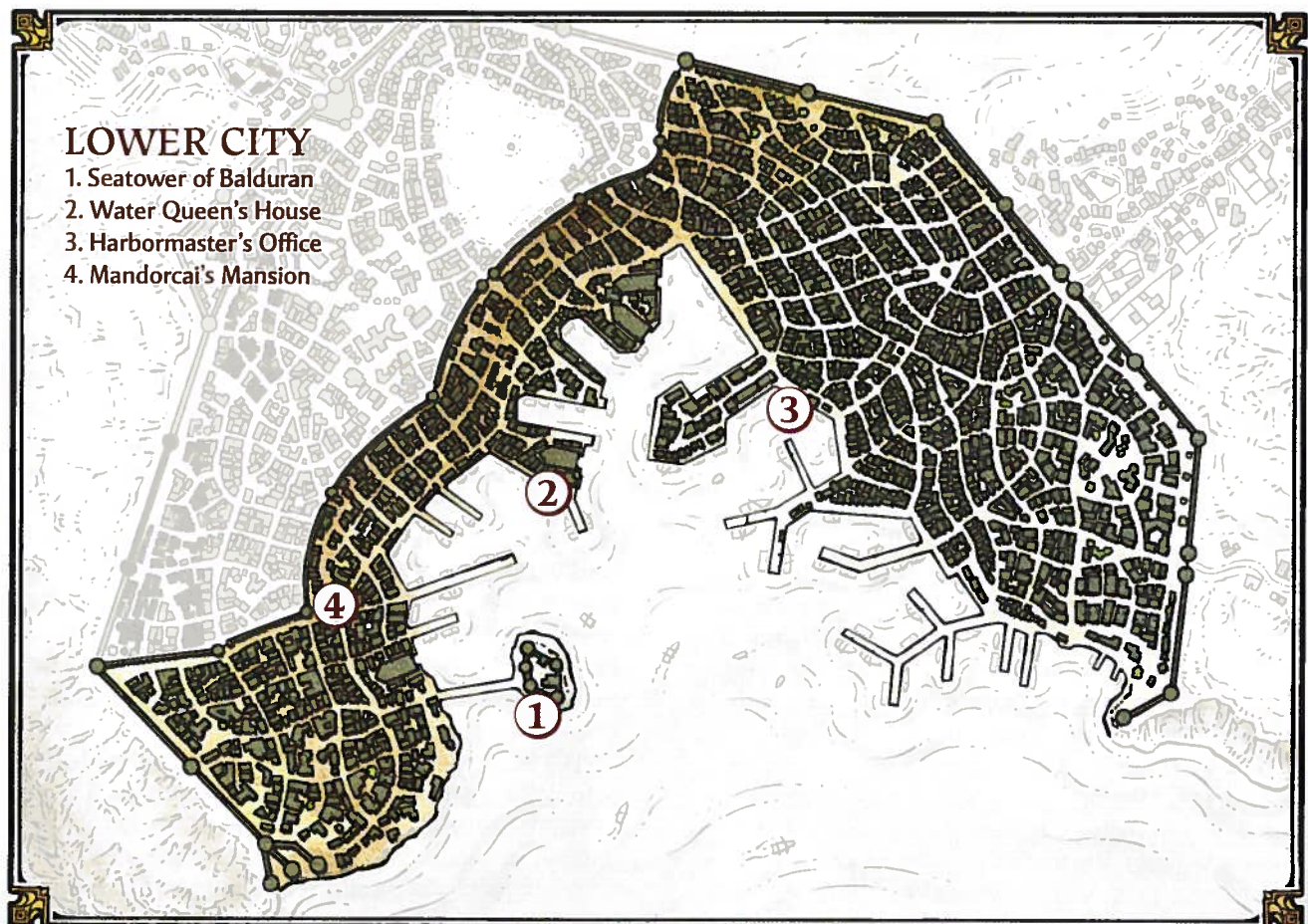
Mandorcai then vanished from public life. No one heard from him except through invitations he sent to various individuals. These peculiar missives were written in silver atop black paper folded into the shape of a pentagon. Those who entered the mansion to keep their appointments were never seen again. After a handful of such disappearances, a Flaming Fist squad invaded the building. Only two of its members emerged, and they spoke of shifting rooms, oppressive chants, and blood-soaked chambers. The Council of Four would like to have the mansion torn down, but no laborers are willing to touch the place. Since the building does not appear to be dangerous as long as no one goes inside it, the dukes have not pressed the issue. Mandorcai and his servants are

still missing, but the odd little black invitations occasionally appear on people's doorsteps when no one is looking.

Flaming Fist: The Flaming Fist mercenary company functions as the city's de facto police force and army. At any given time, about three thousand of its six thousand members are out on campaign. Baldur's Gate has long maintained its neutrality in conflicts in the region, but the city profits from them all the same. Even though Baldur's Gate has become more prejudiced since refugees flooded the Outer City, the Flaming Fist continues to draw its members from all walks of life.

The Fist polices the Lower City and Wyrms Rock, and its soldiers stand sentry on the Lower City's eastern and western walls. Their presence, both on and off duty, deters bold crimes. Although some Flaming Fist soldiers live in barracks in the Seatower of Balduran or Wyrms Rock, most have Lower City homes.

The Council of Four renews its contract with the Flaming Fist annually, so the mercenary company is nominally under the dukes' control. The Fist earns income, aside from the contract, from its share of the taxes collected at the harbor, Basilisk Gate, and the Wyrms Rock drawbridges.





SEATOWER OF BALDURAN

The Flaming Fist maintains two bastions in Baldur's Gate, Wyrms Rock and the Seatower of Balduran. If Wyrms Rock is a symbol of the Fist's unbreakable strength, then the Seatower is a symbol of its stature and success.

The Seatower serves the Flaming Fist as headquarters, barracks, naval base, prison, and fortress. The marshal and most of the officers responsible for day-to-day Fist operations typically work from the Seatower.

Its well-stocked armory houses longswords, short swords, cudgels, chainmail, bows, thousands of arrows, pots of alchemist's fire, other assorted tools for waging war and policing the streets, and plenty of stone ammunition for the Fist's three parapet-mounted trebuchets. A stone flung from atop the Seatower, with the added impetus of gravity behind it, is almost guaranteed to crash clean through any wooden-hulled ship it strikes. A capstan at ground level in the tower can raise a massive chain from the riverbed and stretch it taut across the harbor mouth from the Seatower to deep pilings under the easternmost wharf in Brampton. When the chain is raised, nothing bigger than a rowboat can sail into or out of the harbor. Except for drills and maintenance checks, the chain has not been raised for decades.

The last time the chain was raised for defense was to protect against a veritable fleet of Calishite ships. Fishermen and merchants arrived in the evening warning of a flotilla heading upriver, many of the ships flying Calishite flags. The dukes, having heard reports of war in the south but not having been informed by any dignitary of Calimshan's need to use the river, feared invasion. When the ships arrived just after sunset, the chain had been pulled up across the harbor, and ships full of Flaming Fist soldiers floated just beyond it with catapults and flaming arrows at the ready. They needn't have bothered. The ships held no Calishite warriors, just refugees from the war. When the dukes determined the truth of the matter, the chain was lowered and the refugees were allowed into Baldur's Gate. Citizens didn't repel them as invaders, but neither did they make the Calishites welcome. The incident set the tone for relations between the refugees and the people of Baldur's Gate, and led to the founding of the separate settlement of Little Calimshan.

The Seatower is an impressive architectural work looming over the bay. It erupts from a rocky islet in the harbor in such a way that attackers approaching by boat will find few footholds at the tower's base. Five stout towers provide firing lines along all the Seatower's walls and away from the islet in all directions. Specially

made Gondar trebuchets atop the towers can fire thrice the distance of a normal siege weapon, allowing hurled stones to reach atop the cliffs on the opposite side of the river (or even into the Upper City), although such shots must be calculated and "made blind" due to the low elevation of the Seatower.

A 400-foot-long causeway connects the Seatower to shore. No gate or drawbridge along the span exists; its length alone is considered sufficient defense, since attackers would be exposed to archers and missile fire along their entire approach. If enemies come to Baldur's Gate, the Flaming Fist wants them to attack the Seatower, believing that the sooner they do, the sooner they'll be defeated.

The Seatower houses about a hundred Flaming Fist soldiers on a rotating basis, billeting them in levels of the towers not given over to the prison and in the two buildings within the bailey. These buildings are the armory and the officers' tower.

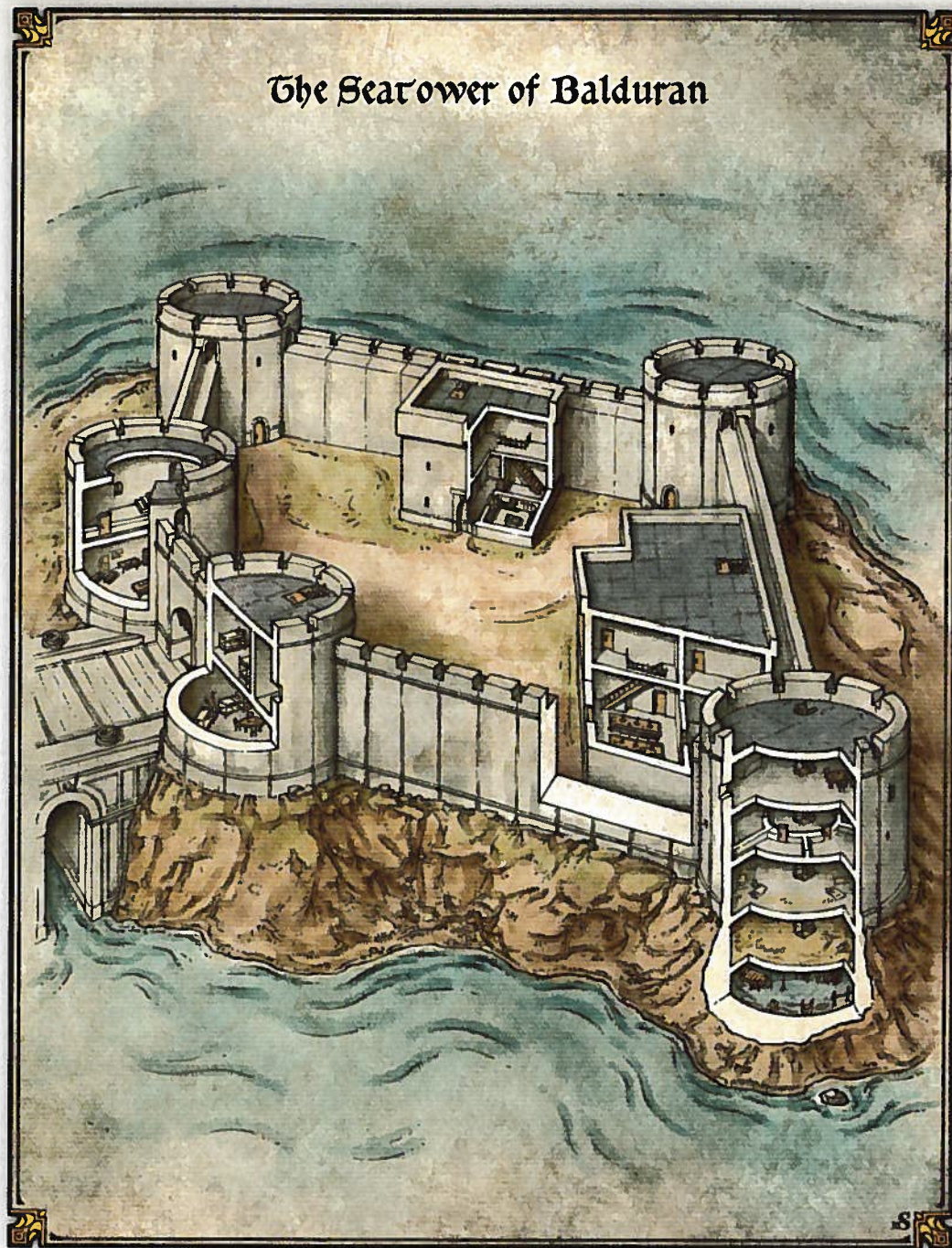
Although small caches of gear and weapons exist throughout the Seatower for ready access, the armory holds most of the Flaming Fist's hoard of war-making materiel. The underground rooms beneath the armory are a virtual museum of every conflict in which the Flaming Fist has engaged. Everything from elephant barding to snowshoes can be found somewhere in the depths of the armory, all of the items carefully catalogued and regularly maintained.

A small section on the first floor is set aside as a gallery. There, on racks and in cases, rest the trophies of battles lost and won: Duke Eltan's sword and armor; a coral trident taken from a leader of the Itzcali sahuagin; a tattered flag from Fort Beluarian; Kingscar, the massive sword of Sothillis the ogre king of Murannheim; and more. The armory also holds the Seatower's kitchens and larder.

The smaller officers' tower serves as the quarters for the marshal and a temporary billet for officers of various ranks. There, the marshal frequently speaks with the officers of current events or plans campaigns. In addition to meeting areas and private rooms, it holds a collection of books and scrolls in a library that the officers can use to study tactics, consult maps, and review contracts. Beneath the officer's tower are the Flaming Fist coffers, in a lead-walled vault separated by yards of solid stone from any other underground area. None but the highest-ranking officers knows exactly where the door to the vault can be found and what the secret is to opening it.

The Seatower's least glamorous role is as the local prison. Long-term incarceration isn't common, but plenty of people need to be locked up for a few days, tendays, or months. Three levels of dungeon extend beneath the Seatower. The two lowest are below the harbor's water level, so they are always frigid and

The Seatower of Balduran



damp. The uppermost dungeon level is divided into small cells that hold one to five prisoners each. The lower levels consist of two large cells apiece. Under normal conditions, no more than twenty-five prisoners are housed together in a large cell. If the situation calls for it, however, up to ten times that many can be crammed cheek by jowl into each of those chambers.

The causeway connects the Seatower of Balduran to the city's Seatower district. The tower affects nearly every aspect of district life. Many of its residents are Flaming Fist members who prefer the comfort of apartments or family homes ashore to the spartan barracks of the Seatower. Many masters and veteran

members of Parliament's Distinguished Union of Metalworkers operate shops in the Seatower district, making it the best place in Baldur's Gate to shop for high-quality weaponry and armor at fair prices.

The high population of soldiers in the Seatower district has inspired its thick concentration of taverns, festhalls, and gambling parlors. These businesses are clustered along the river, as far from the Old Wall and the trendy streets of Bloomridge as possible. On nearly every Flaming Fist payday, Seatower becomes the Gate's most boisterous corner, and Flaming Fist officers field a profusion of complaints about noise and brawling from their Manorbourn and Bloomridge neighbors.



OUTER CITY

Even though the dukes tax the Outer City and nominally rule the area, they rarely exert control over it. Neither the Watch nor the Flaming Fist patrols these poverty-stricken districts. In times of siege, Outer City residents can flee inside the Gate's walls—if they're fast enough. In normal circumstances, Outer City residents must rely on neighbors and friends for justice or pay for the Guild's protection. Despite this state of affairs, the leaderless Outer City is not ripe for conquest, since the Flaming Fist would brutally quash any such attempt. Thus, even though crime and open violence are commonplace in the Outer City, people are still able to do business.

The Outer City sprawls without rhyme or reason, its muddy streets a tangle of shanties, forges, tanneries, dye works, slaughterhouses, stables, stockyards, paddocks, and dung heaps. Its layout and architecture are a mess of unregulated construction and styles. Many buildings are made of wood or wattle. A significant amount of daily trade takes place in this unpoliced, dangerous area, where live "outsiders" (foreigners too poor to lodge in the Lower City, farmers, dabblers in unwanted or illegal trades, and the lawless).

The Outer City threatens to overwhelm visitors to Baldur's Gate. On any given day, a passerby could encounter packs of stray dogs, people hawking wares, stable hands fighting over potential customers, braying animals penned near the road, flocks of chickens and geese, beggars raising their hands and mumbling in unknown tongues, and a riot of pungent scents. Patriars who need to run this gauntlet do so inside closed and curtained carriages filled with fresh-cut flowers or perfumed cushions. Other visitors carry a handkerchief dipped in rosewater or a cut citrus fruit shipped in from Calimshan. Folk who live in the Outer City just get used to it.

Unlike in the Upper and Lower cities, the Outer City's days and nights are much the same. People live in shifts and sleep when they can, so their filthy surroundings are always bustling. For instance, although Hulthar the swordmaker might be unavailable at a particular time of day or night, several of her competitors will be open for business then.

Noisy and Noisome: Businesses considered to be public nuisances because of the sounds or smells they produce are prohibited within the walls of the city, so the Outer City houses the Gate's loudest and smelliest trades. Butchers, blacksmiths, tanners, dyers, masons, animal breeders, and fullers all ply their trades outside the walls and sell their merchandise inside the city's fortifications. The most successful tradespeople have Lower City shops to which they bring their goods; the rest end up selling their wares in the Wide. Of course,

sales to Outer City residents are handled directly, thereby avoiding the city's taxes and tolls.

Despite the reduced costs of operating in the Outer City, merchants still take their best wares inside the walls, leaving the poorest districts to serve as marketplaces for substandard, defective, or stolen goods. Crime pays well in the Outer City, where pickpockets are rampant; undercloak slavers buy, drug, and hide new "stock"; and sellers of poisons make a killing.

Stockyards, Stables, and Storage: Due to the city's narrow and steep streets, and the patriars' desire to keep Baldur's Gate clean, no animals larger than a peacock are allowed within the walls. (The beasts most often seen in the city are cats, both domesticated and feral ones. Baldurians believe it's bad luck to kill a cat, especially since they help to control the ever-present influx of shipborne vermin.)

This ban on large animals means that Outer City establishments are responsible for receiving caravans, unloading goods into warehouses for later portage into the city, and stabling horses and beasts of burden. In addition, flocks of sheep and goats and herds of horses, pigs, and cattle available for purchase are penned in paddocks along the Trade Way. The Flaming Fist pays some Outer City stables and liverys to maintain groups of horses and mules that are kept in reserve for when the mercenary company's members need to ride out.

Culture Cauldron: Baldur's Gate does not take sides in the conflicts of other nations and city-states. Nor does it form grudges or permanent alliances based on the Flaming Fist's actions outside the city. This policy of noninvolvement has earned the city a not-quite-deserved reputation for tolerance and has made it a magnet for refugees looking to escape wars and other disasters.

Battles in Calimshan have driven many of that nation's people north. In fact, the Calishite immigrant population has built a walled-in village in the traditional Calishite style. Baldurians took to calling it Little Calimshan, and the residents eventually adopted the name for themselves.

Similar but smaller communities dot the Outer City, giving immigrants of different sorts pockets of their homeland in which to rest their heads and weary souls. Halflings exclusively occupy a larger tenement on Wyrms Crossing; several half-orcs who work as porters have taken lodgings in Stonyeyes; shield dwarves do farrier and ironsmithing work in Blackgate; and gnomes in Whitkeep perform most of the city's tinsmithing.

The Guild: Like any other conclave of thieves, the Guild tries to keep a low profile, and much of its effort inside the walls deals with policing crime so that the illicit activities don't draw too much attention. The criminal organization doesn't rule the Outer City in

anything resembling the same way, but it's the only group that has any significant control in the area.

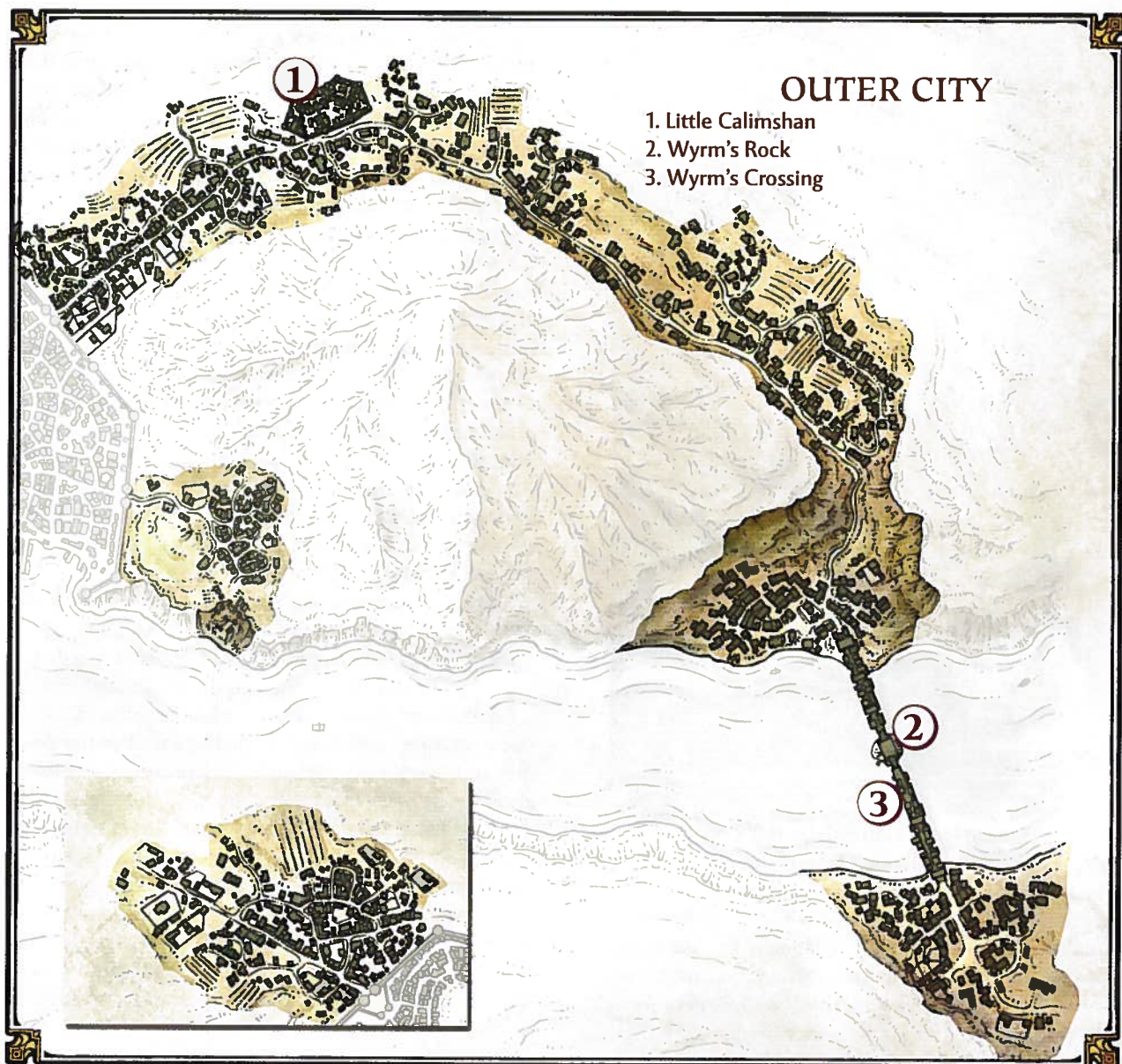
Many Outer City businesses and residents pay protection money to the Guild. In return, these cooperative establishments and people are marked with a special sign as off limits to would-be burglars or vandals, and the Guild makes an effort to hunt down anyone who flouts its decrees. Pleading ignorance earns offenders nothing.

Wyrms Crossing and Wyrms Rock: No laws control construction in the Outer City, including on the bridge spans that comprise Wyrms Crossing. Tenements, taverns, and shops heap up on both sides of these stone spans. Many cantilevered structures extend out over the Chionthar, and others loom above what has become a shadowy and crowded alley down the bridge's center.

Wyrms Rock stands between the bridge's lengths, and land traffic must pass through the Flaming Fist's

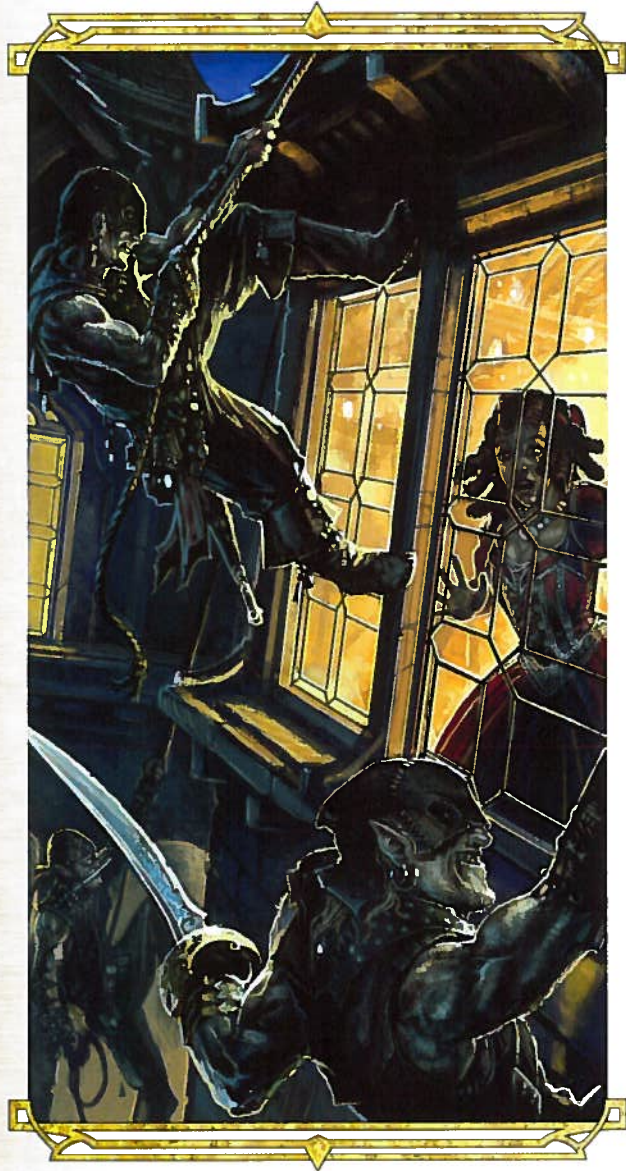
fortress to reach the other side. The fort leaves both drawbridges lowered until dusk, unless an enormous merchant ship in need of quick passage pays a hefty fee to have the northern drawbridge raised.

A stone-lined tunnel, replete with arrow-slits, portcullises, and murder holes, passes through the fort. Before travelers can enter it, they must pay a toll. Folk on foot pay 2 cp apiece, and people traveling with a cart or wagon pay 1 sp. For 1 gp, an individual can buy a writ of passage that allows an unlimited number of crossings for a month. To decrease the chance of fraud, both a court official and the purchaser must sign the document at the time of purchase so the writ holder can be identified.



LITTLE CALIMSHAN

Little Calimshan is often the loudest, liveliest, and most chaotic place in Baldur's Gate, aside from the Wide. The scent of cinnamon and the sounds of exotic, reeded instruments often slip over its encircling walls and draw the curious toward adventure and mystery.



When visiting Little Calimshan, it is best to enter during the day through one of the district's arched gateways. After dark, most of the doors to the outside and many within the district are closed and barred to impede the neighborhood's plague of burglars. Thieves still move around after dark, prowling above the streets along the district's thick walls and crowded rooftops, but at least their paths are made more difficult and visible.

In the Outer City, determining exactly where neighboring districts, such as Whitkeep and Sow's Foot, begin and end is a matter of much debate. Little Calimshan is an exception. Its brick-and-plaster, minaret-topped walls, measuring 15 feet high and 3 to 5 feet thick at the ridge, clearly mark its extent. People move along the wall tops as though they were streets, which they effectively have become.

Little Calimshan is built in the Calishite style, meaning it is organized as a sabban (district), composed of multiple drudachs (neighborhoods). Each drudach is walled off, creating compartmentalized hamlets within the district. Typically, a drudach's inhabitants belong to the same extended family or tribe. The tops of the drudachs' walls are paved so locals can travel easily from drudach to drudach without stopping at gates. From atop the walls, it is relatively easy to spot an intended destination and choose a path to reach it.

A drudach's buildings cluster, as much as possible, along the hamlet's thick walls. Calishite buildings and drudach walls are typically composed of plaster-covered brick. Calimshan's traditional bright tiles and decorative brickwork are less common in Baldur's Gate, since those who build and live in Little Calimshan lack a pasha's resources. Someone familiar with drudach architectural styles would know that Little Calimshan looks ramshackle when compared to Calimshan proper.

Individual drudachs are fairly uniform in their contents, if not their layouts. Most contain at least one religious area, such as a shrine, temple, or other holy site; a place for refreshment, usually a well or fountain but sometimes a tavern, inn, or festhall; a bazaar or a tent market; a handful of service buildings, (smithy, armory, tannery, mill); family living quarters; and an amlakkhan, to house the amlakkhar, a group of a dozen or more young bachelors who police the drudach. Spending time as an amlakkhan has become a de facto path to Guild membership.

The center of a drudach is either its most affluent site or an open courtyard featuring a well or temporary market. Finally, a drudach always contains the abode of its druzir, or leader.

Most Baldurians view the walls of Little Calimshan from the outside and imagine soft-handed Calishite merchants lounging on silk pillows and being fed delicacies while they complain about the cold and rain. After all, the walls arose in what seemed like the blink of an eye, with much gold flowing from Calishite coffers to the local builders' guilds. And the Calishites keep to themselves, treating their domain like a fortress and rarely entering the city proper.

Little Calimshan



Less ignorant people remember the ships that arrived by night. They recall the children's frightened faces and the adults' exhausted resolution. They can still hear themselves saying the inn was full, or claiming not to understand what was being asked for, even though the Calishite's expressions and desperate gestures spoke clearly in every language.

Hustled through the city and taxed for the privilege of being kicked out in the middle of the night, the refugees found their way to the only place that welcomed them: a long-standing Calishite caravanserai on the outskirts of the city. The owner was overwhelmed,

but once he heard his compatriots' description of the wars that had consumed the south, his home became theirs. With every last copper of the wealth the travelers had brought, they paid the inflated prices of the guilds

to construct their homes, building up from the caravanserai as has been Calishite custom for generations. Until they could return to Calimshan, they would live behind the walls, being as hospitable to the Baldurians as the Baldurians are to them. They reside behind the walls still, and few non-Calishites are welcome.



Little Calimshan

The people of Little Calimshan stand out amid other Baldurians because most continue to wear the fashions of the south regardless of the local weather. Speaking their own breathy tongue, Alzhedo, is a point of pride, although nearly all of them can communicate in Common and Chondathan well enough to be understood. These little acts of rebellion against local custom speak both to the continuing friction between their settlement and the rest of Baldur's Gate, and to the desire of many to return to lives in the south.

The Calishites' desire for the goods of their homeland has prompted overland traders from the south to deliver cargo directly to Little Calimshan. This commercial route started with the fortuitous sale of a few things the traders just happened to have, but now caravans are bringing such goods in as much bulk as they can manage. Baldurians who are interested in purchasing silks, Golden Sands beer, items made of Calishite steel, and other esoterica now regularly exit the city to buy from Little Calimshan's bazaars, which open to outsiders for a few hours around midday each day. This turn of events caused some consternation in the Parliament of Peers due to lost revenue from taxes at Baldur's Gate and port fees, but the Council of Four has eased those concerns by instituting a special tax on business conducted in a "fortification within the lands of entitlement."

WYRM'S CROSSING AND WYRM'S ROCK

The first sign of civilization that a traveler boating on the Chionthar or coming overland from the south or east is likely to see is Wyrms Rock, an impressive fort rising high above the surface of the water. Wyrms Crossing, the bridge that arches over the river's slowly flowing water, connects the fort's islet to the Outer City districts of Twin Songs to the north and Rivington to the south.



Wyrms Crossing

Buildings and merchant stalls, ranging from ramshackle to elaborate, pile atop each other along the entire length of Wyrms Crossing, making it impossible to see the water from the narrow, congested roadway that cuts between the structures. Precariously perched establishments that hang over the bridge's

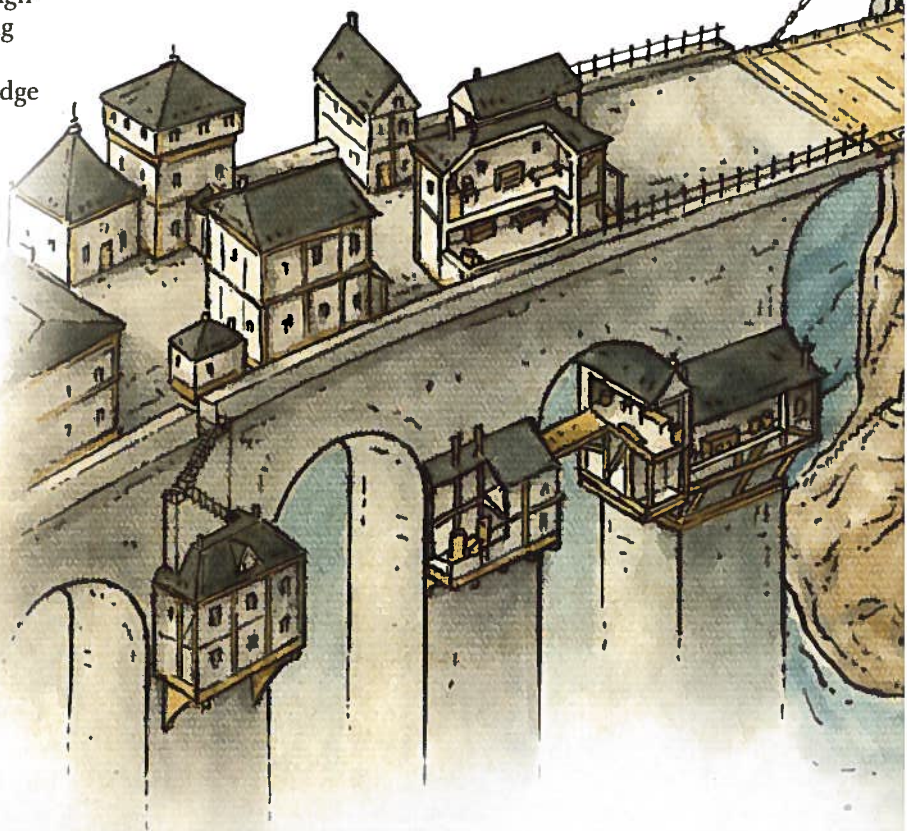
sides occasionally become unbalanced and tumble into the river. Such a structure sometimes pulls its neighbors down with it. Anyone trapped inside a falling building cannot expect any aid.

The Fist requires that all buildings on the bridge be constructed from light timber or wattle and daub, lest one of the spans collapses under the weight of the structures it holds. However, the trade-off is that fire is a constant concern.

The bridge's two spans extend from shore directly to Wyrms Rock. The river's depth and the bridge's high arches allow most ships to pass unhindered. However, the largest sailing vessels must pass on the northern side of Wyrms Rock, where the water is at its deepest. The best time to make this passage is at night, when both drawbridges are raised, but ship captains in a hurry can request daytime passage. This special service requires paying a fee to the Flaming Fist, which the mercenary company splits with the city. For captains seeking to meet a deadline for a high-capacity trade mission, the inconvenience is often worth it.

Wyrms Rock is a formidable fortress. Arrow-slits dot its foot-thick granite walls, promising a stiff challenge to anyone foolhardy enough to assault the structure from the water. The fortress occupies most of the islet, leaving only the narrowest shelf between its sheer walls and a plunge into the river below. The area's near-constant rain and river currents have worn smooth the islet's sides, which are almost always slick with algae. Attempting to scale the small island while under attack from the fort's archers would be a suicidal endeavor.

When the drawbridges are raised, the only way to enter Wyrms Rock is by climbing up a steep set of exposed stairs to a staunchly barred sally port. And



spotting its tiny jetty, which is set below a long, steep, and exposed set of stairs, is a challenge at a distance.

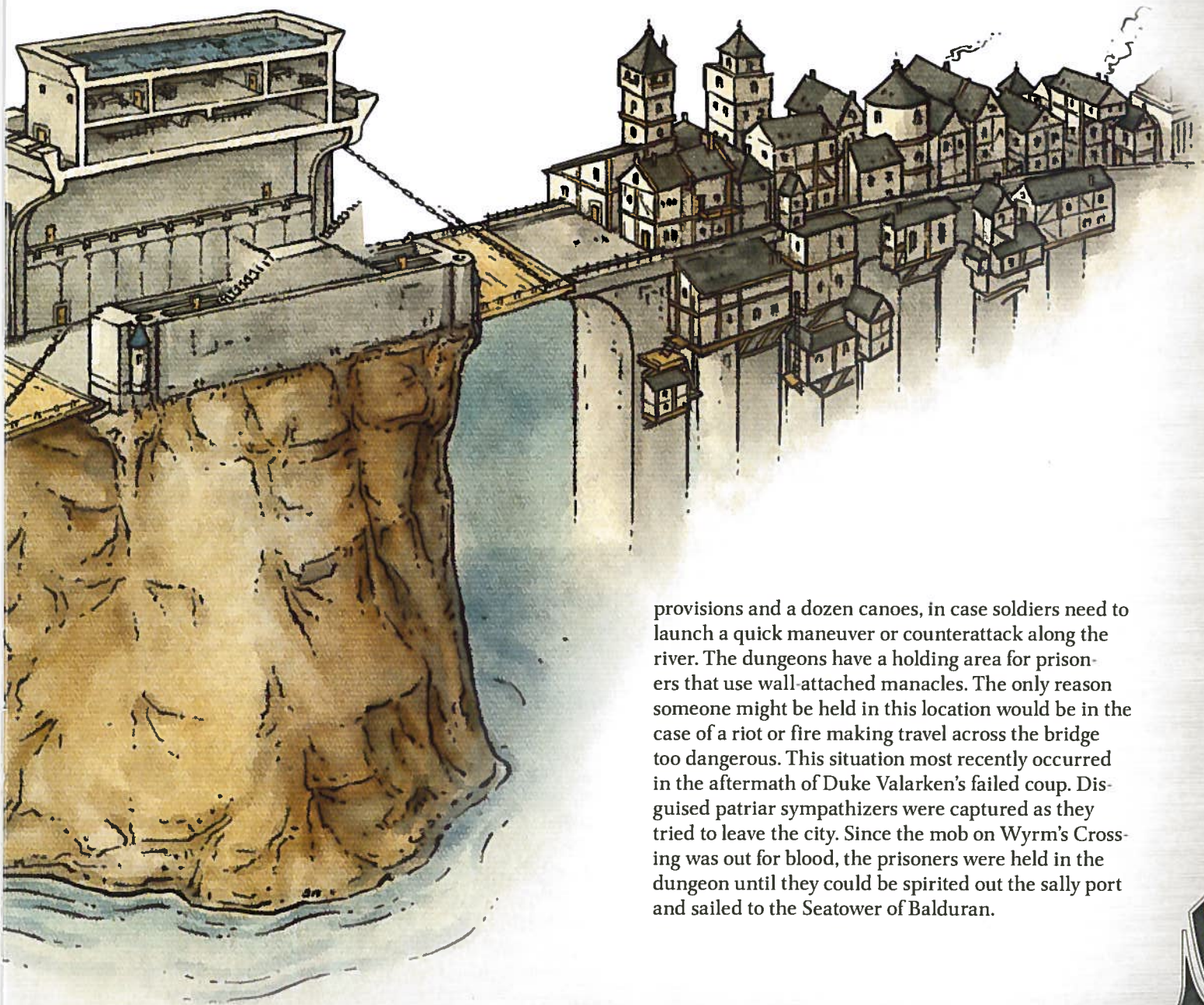
No roadway around the fort exists; all traffic looking to cross to the other side of the bridge must pass through the fortress's guarded tunnel. A painted board featuring the emblem of the Flaming Fist hangs above the tunnel's entrance. The tunnel dominates the fort's first floor and is one long gauntlet of murder holes and arrow-slits. Several offices and chambers that support toll collecting and provide some comfort to the guards complete the tower's first floor.

The second floor of Wyrms Rock is an armory well stocked with oil, rocks, javelins, arrows, and other implements designed to kill invaders. Guests on their

way to the second floor are warned to watch their step, lest they break an ankle stepping into a murder hole. (This warning is just entertainment for bored guards; all the murder holes are kept covered under normal circumstances to prevent such accidents and to keep travelers from dropping trash through them.)

Above the armory are the officers' and enlisted mercenaries' quarters. A shooting gallery encircles each level of barracks. In a pinch, Wyrms Rock could uncomfortably garrison about a hundred soldiers. Typically, between twenty-five and fifty mercenaries are present here.

Below bridge level in Wyrms Rock, a high-ceilinged dungeon is used as a storeroom. It holds



provisions and a dozen canoes, in case soldiers need to launch a quick maneuver or counterattack along the river. The dungeons have a holding area for prisoners that use wall-attached manacles. The only reason someone might be held in this location would be in the case of a riot or fire making travel across the bridge too dangerous. This situation most recently occurred in the aftermath of Duke Valarken's failed coup. Disguised patriar sympathizers were captured as they tried to leave the city. Since the mob on Wyrms Crossing was out for blood, the prisoners were held in the dungeon until they could be spirited out the sally port and sailed to the Seatower of Balduran.

A DAY IN BALDUR'S GATE

A typical day in Baldur's Gate dawns chill and damp, its wan gray light filtering through the night fog. The mist lingers until the sun rises high, keeping the Lower City shrouded long after the Upper City has cleared.

First light finds the Upper City almost in silence. Only a few black-clad Watch patrols sidle along the streets, moving as soundlessly as drifting ghosts. As the foredawn tints the darkness, fires are built up, lanterns are allowed to gutter out, delicious cooking smells strengthen and drift through the streets, and liveried servants emerge to run urgent errands for their masters or head to the Wide to await merchants' arrivals.

Kitchens in the grand homes have been bustling through the night. Servants use hand pumps to draw water from cisterns in cellars and on roofs, heat it using coal or wood hauled in the previous day, and then pump the heated water into bath and kitchen basins. Downspouts and underground drainpipes, rarely large enough to be thought of as sewers, drain away used water.

On the other side of Baldur's Gate—the great dark arch in the old city wall for which the city is named—merchants and their assistants stamp their feet and mutter in the cold gloom, trying to keep warm as they wait for the gate to be opened so they can start selling in the Wide. They hold their carts, covered trays, and cloak-bundled warm foods, and they wear carry sacks and folding stools slung on harnesses.

These merchants and assistants have been awake for hours, preparing and loading their wares in the Lower City. If they sell out before highsun, or noon, they'll have earned a little leisure and sleep—after they buy or fetch from storage the ingredients and other raw materials they'll need to make the next day's wares. Afterward, they'll seek early beds so they can rise in the middle of the night, sup on long-simmered tea and stew, and prepare their wares all over again.

When the gates to the Upper City open to merchants and travelers, the Lower City's steep streets remain shrouded in shadow. They stay gloomy until the sun climbs high enough to lance over the bluffs and shine down into the steep-sided crescent of crammed-together, motley buildings that descend to the tall and narrow dockside warehouses, which the mists surrender last of all.

As merchants set up their stalls in the Wide, servants of the wealthy mingle among them to purchase


the choicest products and freshest food. These servants shop in the Wide throughout the morning. Their masters rise late and rarely emerge out of doors before highsun, when their working days begin—if they work, that is.

Most Upper City patriars linger over their morning feasts and contemplate the coming evening's social engagements. Entrepreneurs among them wake early and dine on sideboard meals of hot, smoked flaked fish or eels and fresh-baked nut buns slathered in flavored butter. Then they set out to see to their investments and make deals, often in Lower City trading houses or small upscale taverns, where outsiders come to negotiate. In the afternoon, the late-rising patriars leave their homes to shop, make business deals, and inspect new wares or hear proposals. The rounds of dining and revelry that dominate the lives of the Gate's wealthy and powerful start in early evening and often continue late into the night.

The leisurely lives of the wealthy take place in the eye of a storm. Around the patriars, servants bustle continually. By dawn, kitchen fires have been burning for hours. The daily flurry of cooking, cleaning, fetching, and organizing of affairs begins before first light as well and continues throughout the day, out of sight of the servants' masters.

In the Lower City, shops and cafes open their doors for business while other Baldurians begin their daily routines. The city clogs with people climbing and descending the steep streets. In the harbor, the docks never sleep, but daylight brings with it increased ship traffic and movement of goods between ships, warehouses, shops, and the Wide.

Just as merchants wait for dawn to enter the Wide, peddlers, travelers, and day laborers pack the northern road outside Black Dragon Gate, awaiting entry into the Upper City. The Upper City acts as a toll stop on Trade Way traffic, halting southbound travelers in Blackgate while those who journey north can enjoy the Lower City's hospitality all night, unless they did not make it through Wyrms' Rock before nightfall. The fortress raises its drawbridges at dusk and lowers them again when the morning's light first strikes the top of its towers.



Most merchants traveling the Trade Way or the Coast Way use the city as the end point of their journeys, unloading goods and picking up new cargo for their return treks. Caravans that pass through the city use Baldur's Gate as an opportunity to exchange beasts of burden. They leave their horses or mules in Blackgate or the Outer City, have their goods hauled through town, and pick up new animals on the other side. Indeed, they must do so, since animals larger than a peacock are banned within the city's walls.

By the time the land routes into the city are opened at dawn, business in the port has been roaring for hours. Never truly at rest, work in Gray Harbor picks up in the misty predawn shadows as the previous day's fishing fleet returns and cargo vessels awaiting morning entry jockey for the best available dock. Soon the sounds of rumbling carts on quay rails, creaking worker-powered crane wheels, rattling and snapping ships' rigging, and squawking gulls and harborhands mingle in the unmistakable hubbub of the city's port.

As any day unfolds, Baldur's Gate becomes steadily noisier and more bustling. The bulk of business is conducted in the middle of the day, so sit-down high-sun meals aren't common in the city. Patriars living their lives of leisure, however, do dine at midday, drinking cordials, or watered-down wine or fruit brandy, and nibbling on handtarts. These small pastries have either sweet or savory fillings. By tradition, the savory hors d'oeuvre are diamond-shaped and the sweet are round.

Most everyone else spends the day in hard work, buying and carrying food with them to eat at random times "on the hob," a common saying that refers to the hobnailed boots most Lower City residents wear to lessen their chances of falling on the slick, cobbled streets. Baldurians who have time to spare typically frequent cafes and relax with a cup of tea or coffee and a bit of sweet bread.

City happenings reach a frantic peak just before dusk. The last deliveries to Upper City mansions are hastily made, the Watch begins clearing the Wide, the most fearful citizens work to finish their chores before

darkness descends and "the wrong sort" emerges, larders are hastily inventoried, and runners are sent to make last-minute purchases or place orders for goods to be delivered on the morrow.

Bakers who first threw open their shutters to sell steaming pork buns or dusky rolls (the latter are filled with chicken, turkey, or game bird, such as pigeon) to fellow Lower City folk in the foredawn are preparing to close up shop. Their runners bring the last deliveries of rolls and loaves to cafes, inns, and taverns as bakers wrap up leftover merchandise to sell at discounted rates the next day.

Patriars dine again near dusk. Then they either go out to feasts or revels or engage in leisure pursuits, such as reading, acting, listening to music, gaming, and wooing. Quiet evenings are enjoyed at home or another's manor. If the latter, Watch soldiers later escort sober visitors home while drunken ones typically sleep over. Meanwhile, patriarch revelers dance, drink, nosh, chatter, and engage in "sport," such as putting on plays and solving in-house, arranged mysteries. Drunkenness and debauchery, considered scandalous at other times and occasions, are perfectly acceptable at such fetes. In contrast, strict etiquette prevails at patriarch feasts, which involve political conversations, business proposals, metaphysical discussions, and entertainments featuring bards, musicians, or actors.

Sunset sees the closing of most shops. But trading appointments that often involve complicated patterns of knocks or pass-phrases ensue, and Lower City and Outer City folk who have the desire, energy, and coin head to taverns, such as Elfsong Tavern and Jopalin's, and other entertainment locales. During "the winding down," as most locals call this time of day, hired musicians give brief street performances to hook the ears of passing folk and entice them inside the taverns, inn lounges, and clubs. Stiff drinks, large bowls of hearty stew, bread and apples, and fried fish are staples in such establishments.

Afterward, the Gate's workers return home to fall asleep—sometimes on the floors of their own shops—and do it all again the next day.

A NIGHT IN BALDUR'S GATE

Thick fog swirls in the damp, chill night. Echoes of soft footfalls and the sharper, heavier sounds of barrels and crates being unloaded or doors slammed rebound eerily in the night. They seem to come from everywhere, including the barely seen night sky above, where a few bright stars wink through the mist. And always, the soft scurrying of countless rats can be heard.

Though it's hard to see past the end of a quarter-staff—or even a bargepole, of which there are hundreds in use down on the docks—the city is alive by night. Except for the Upper City, which “sleeps” largely by moving all activities inside its tall, grand structures from which only feasting smells and the rare blasts of fireworks escape into the quiet streets. Otherwise, Baldur's Gate is a city that doesn't shut down. It gets quieter than by day and a trifle more private, in part because the bustle of shipping and shopping in the streets dies down, but primarily due to the fog.

Unless a storm is raging or “new weather is blowing in” (local parlance for a front of warmer or colder air moving through), the winds around the city tend to die down at night, which causes the river mists to coalesce into a soup of fog. In the Lower City, visibility drops sharply to about 60 feet in lantern light or the length of a sailor's arm in full darkness. Unless accompanied by intense heat that is warm enough to evaporate the fog, such as that generated by a burning ship or building, all smoke is trapped, thickening the fog and making it smell strongly of whatever's burning. In damp, chill Baldur's Gate, a lot of hearths, stoves, and ovens are in use, sending smoke out into the roiling atmosphere.

Through this damp world of muffled smells and hampered vision, Baldurians move cautiously, often resorting to lanterns and traveling in groups. The Watch and the Flaming Fist patrol heavily, and many folk are out on the streets, some engaging in legitimate business and others in illicit pursuits.

Any Lower City citizen who hears three sharp, swift raps on his or her door or shutter, followed by a fourth and heavier blow, knows that someone outside is willing to pay 2 cp or more for “burl,” or swift, temporary shelter from either the Flaming Fist or someone they fear. Some residents of strategically located buildings, such as those on sharp bends along the steepest Lower City streets, along narrow alleys, or near city gates, make a living from such fees.

Anyone who requests burl and then attacks or steals from the citizen giving shelter is marked citywide as a “drowner,” someone no better than a rat that should be drowned. The betrayer instantly becomes ineligible for guild or coster membership, unacceptable as

a signatory to any contract, and unworthy of receiving burl in the future. So, those who violate this code must leave no survivors and be seen by no one who can identify them. And in the crowded city, sounds of fighting always cause someone's shutters to creak open. Anyone seen wearing a mask who is not patronizing a festhall or attending an Upper City revel arouses instant suspicion.

On a typical night, when the Lower City is shrouded in fog, the mists are lighter in the Outer City and lighter still in the Upper City, where moonlight makes the thin fog glow milky white, outlining the figures of moving or standing people within 140 feet or more. Watch-escorted apprentice wizards make rounds to recast any failed or dispelled light spells, ensuring that the Upper City is always well lit and Watch patrols can see anyone they encounter out of doors.

The one place where hand lanterns aren't needed in the Lower City is down on the docks and amid the surrounding warehouses, where large, permanent oil lamps burn to aid in the ongoing loading and unloading of ship cargo. These lamps are affixed to log “booms,” or cranes and mounted on an axle between two upright posts, either at dockside amid building fronts or actually rising up among wharf-edge pilings. Usually, locked chains control the angle of the boom, so the lamp can be lowered for refilling and raised to various heights to light specific spots. Most of the oil used in such lamps comes from fish or whales and is both smoky and reeking.

The waters of the harbor and the river are apt to be as busy as the docks by night. Large shipping vessels rarely arrive to moor in the hours after sunset, but rowboats take sailors to and from ships anchored in open water, and fishing vessels set out downriver in hopes of reaching the sea before dawn to make a good catch and return by dawn the following day. The poorest city youths use the night hours to gaff fish and the occasional seal attracted to lamp light, to net gulls as they sleep atop pilings, and to go “bobbing” for eels, usually using as bait a cluster of dead rats tied together by their tails or the severed head of a beast too rotten for a stewpot.

Many of those who aren't working seek out the city's night life during the dark hours. A green-glassed lamp above an establishment's door signals that the place—perhaps below street level but more often just indoors—is open for business. It could be a tavern, an eatery, or a festhall. Such establishments range from the “highcloak,” or socially important, Elfsong Tavern down to dingy rooms in which small, established groups of Baldurians meet for their evening gossip and games. Such groups often engage in low-stakes gambling over cards or dice. A lot of informal face-to-face business, whether outside the law or legal, goes on in these places.

Day laborers dominate the traffic of the first half of any night when they visit such places to get their main meal of the day, indulge in gossip or flirtations, and look for someone to hire them for the day to follow. As the night wears on, lowlier Baldurians who rise in the evening to work the dark hours arrive for their breakfast. The din of their indoor work can be heard for the latter half of every night in the Outer City, but laws limit noisy dark-hours labor in the Lower City and ban it altogether in the Upper City. Other individuals gather for meetings and meals throughout the night—hard drinkers, criminals of all sorts, the dejected, and anyone looking for a dry spot on a wet or cold night end up being the last patrons of any place of business still open in the hours between midnight and dawn.

So busy are the Gate's less honest residents by night that the Flaming Fist-controlled drawbridges of Wyrms' Rock are raised at sunset to cut off bridge access through the fortress until dawn. Timid shopkeepers and those who have the most valuable and vulnerable wares—notably jewelry, perishables, and weapons—close at sunset, typically clearing their shops aided by loaded crossbows or Flaming Fist assistance, if suspicious individuals seem unwilling to leave. They lock their doors, chain the handles of any double doors together, shoot bolts, and drop stout wooden or metal bars into place inside cradles, thus barring cross hinges and door frames as well as doors.

Windows, which rarely contain glass except in the Upper City, are covered with stout, swinging shutters

and then barred on the inside in the same way as the doors. In the most dangerous areas of the Outer City, grates of welded bars are then affixed into place inside the windows. Bars and grates are often chained to handles, railings, stout furniture, or “dogs,” which are metal pins slid into holes in walls, floors, or ceilings, to keep them from being forced aside.

Baldur's Gate is famous for its shopkeepers setting up interior crossbows on trip cords to “ventilate the unwanted.” Some establishments deal with security in quite another manner: They never close and hire toughs to provide armed security.

By evening, the Upper City is at its social height indoors. The streets are deserted except for frequent Watch patrols and the occasional patriar entourage traveling from house to house with liveried servants and a respectful Watch escort. Anyone who shouts while out in the Upper City at night is likely to be clubbed silent by the Watch for failing to pipe down when ordered to do so. (Of course, if the boisterous one is a patriar, that worthy will be hustled indoors instead.)

When the time comes to sleep, patriars retreat to their homes or enjoy the hospitality of a friend. Many of Baldur's Gate's shopkeepers, laborers, and craftworkers grow accustomed to napping in odd moments by day (which is the real reason why most city shops have a bell or a chime that sounds when the front door opens) and sleeping when there's noise and bustle all around. This ability affords them the opportunity to rest for only a few hours at night and still get up in the predawn darkness to prepare for the next day. Many harborhands simply lie down atop cargo that won't soon be disturbed in warehouse lofts and sleep until they are roused for their next shift. Others retreat to their homes and apartments, often sleeping in crowded rooms occupied by an extended family, multiple families, or multiple renters. Those who have no bed for the night will seek out any dry spot where Flaming Fist patrols are unlikely to notice them.

As the night wears on, different Baldurians rise in their separate but linked cycles of waking, working, playing, and resting, and the whole machine of a living city runs on for another day.

HISTORY OF THE CITY

The Sembians have a saying: "Whoever holds the Gate holds the goods." Baldur's Gate sits midway between Waterdeep, known as the Jewel of the North, and the merchant kingdom of Amn. It controls the mouth of the River Chionthar, which the heartland kingdoms of Cormyr and Sembia depend on to quickly and reliably reach Waterdeep and Amn. Baldurians have done very well hosting, resupplying, and taxing such travelers and traders.

Despite these attractive qualities, Baldur's Gate was an unremarkable dot for most of history, an insignificant hamlet among dozens along the savage Sword Coast. Had any histories been written, they would have told of dastardly pirates, daring smugglers, and heroic farmers struggling to survive while fending off barbaric orcs and raiders. The great city that the Gate has become was made possible through the philanthropy of its namesake, Balduran.

When Balduran returned from Anchorome, he freely and equitably gave away his wealth, requesting only that a portion of it be used to construct a great wall to protect his hometown, then called Gray Harbor. The great explorer was not one to drop anchor for long, and he set sail on a second voyage to Anchorome from which he never returned. Regardless, Balduran's entreaty for a wall was respected, and a magnificent and strong granite bulwark was built around the hilltop settlement overlooking the harbor.

The hamlet of Gray Harbor swelled as people flocked to its safety. The harborage was good, and the site proved an excellent crossroads for trade between the North, South, and central Heartlands. Wealth flowed in with the people. New buildings were erected until the city spilled over its wall and spread down the steep, crescent-shaped hill toward the harbor below. Residents began calling the original city "Old Town" and the area outside it "Heapside," after the way its buildings were piled atop each other. The descendants of Gray Harbor's original inhabitants and residents who were wealthy enough to buy property within the walls became today's patriarch families. Those left outside the wall, including sailors, peasants, and crafters, supported the growing city.

Tax Revolt

As the influx of outsiders grew, Old Town began taxing all the goods and people that passed between the harbor and the town. The sea captains who had sailed alongside Balduran protested the tax and organized the Heapside residents' opposition. Leaders among the commoners asserted that the wall was a gift from Balduran to all area residents, so the use of Baldur's Gate to pass into Old Town should be free to all.

The conflict played out in the court of war. Sailors, pirates, and hardy Heapsiders battled farmers and merchants. The latter group would have crumpled immediately if not for the wall, a fact that later led to the formation of the Watch. When the rabble and their rousers finally broke through Baldur's Gate, the fighters intended to attack the High Hall, where the defenders and their families had taken refuge—but the four eldest sea captains argued for clemency. A vote was taken, the result of which showed that the captains' stirring words had inspired a truce.

This moment lies at the root of how Baldur's Gate is governed today. The whole citizenry elected the sea captains to be the city's governing body. The four were respectfully dubbed "dukes," though they were not true nobility, and the appellation stuck. The first dukes became known as the Council of Four and served lifetime terms in which they discussed city affairs and made decisions jointly. When one died, a citywide vote elected a new duke.

Although the issue of taxation was put to rest for a while, the dukes came to see its necessity, especially when raids on the growing Heapside community necessitated the construction of additional protective walls. Thereafter, residents stopped referring to the two districts as "Old Town" and "Heapside" and instead adopted the monikers "Upper City" and "Lower City." By then sailors had taken news of the city's struggle to other lands, and the city became known to most of Faerûn as "Baldur's Gate."

Flaming Fist's Founding

The Lower City struggled as a lawless area until a warrior named Eltan, a native son of Baldur's Gate, founded the Flaming Fist mercenary company in the city—and in so doing unified the many small mercenary organizations throughout the Sword Coast region. Fighters eagerly enlisted, expanding the fledgling group to almost two thousand members.

The power and political leverage that the Flaming Fist gave to Eltan earned him a position as one of the council's four members. In one of his first acts as duke, Eltan quickly put Flaming Fist soldiers on police duty, making the unpatrolled Lower City his top priority. He used a portion of the taxes the dukes collected to pay the mercenaries. The establishment of the Flaming Fist gave Baldur's Gate considerable standing as a military power on the Sword Coast, expanded the city's tax revenue, and brought badly needed law and order to the Lower City.

Other than tripling in size to its current membership of nearly six thousand, the mercenary company has not changed much since its early years. It still forms the core of the city's military strength.

Bhaalspawn and the Iron Throne

During the Time of Troubles, when Ao the overgod forced the gods to walk among their mortal followers, Bhaal foresaw his own death. So the god of assassins enacted a plan to escape his doom. After adopting mortal form, Bhaal mated with many females throughout Toril. These unions conceived the Bhaalspawn, beings imbued with a spark of their sire's divine essence. The offspring were gifted with unusual powers and unnaturally long lives and were behaviorally inclined toward violence and murder. Such feelings were particularly strong when the spawn were around each other, as Bhaal had envisioned. From the outset, the Lord of Murder had intended for his spawn to kill one another, with each surviving offspring absorbing more and more of Bhaal's divine essence.

Bhaal's most fanatical worshipers hunted the Bhaalspawn, trying either to kill them or to reveal their nature so others would slay them. Their actions aligned with Bhaal's plans, which required Faerûn's righteous mortals to persecute, cast out, and murder his children, and thus unwittingly free his essence and bring about his rebirth.

Nearly a century ago, it seemed the plan of the Lord of Murder might come to fruition in Baldur's Gate. At the time, the Iron Throne, a merchants' consortium, contrived to cause an iron shortage throughout the area in order to enrich its members. Sarevok, the adopted son of an Iron Throne leader and one of the Bhaalspawn, took over the organization and sought to assassinate the dukes. His ultimate aim was to provoke a war with Amn and use the bloodshed to ascend to his true father's throne.

The Bhaalspawn Abdel Adrian and his handful of comrades averted the war and brought Sarevok's villainy to an end. After many more years of adventuring and a period of reflection, Adrian retired to Baldur's Gate and served as both the Flaming Fist's marshal and a duke, ultimately becoming the city's most beloved citizen.

Few know of Bhaal's plan in these events. Among those who do, many believe that the plot collapsed forever when Adrian slew Bhaal's last high priestess and denied acceptance of the accumulated power of Bhaal, instead choosing for himself a mortal life.

Those who believe that fable are fools. The Lord of Murder is in darkness, but he waits only for two victims—the last victims—to reclaim his throne of blood.

Failed Coup

After Adrian's heroics, life in Baldur's Gate settled into a relatively peaceful bustle. Wars and other cataclysmic events left the city unscathed, and its reputation as a safe harbor in the storm of the times drew many to it.

This situation changed a few decades ago when Grand Duke Valarken and his Band of the Red Moon lycanthrope supporters led a coup to establish Valarken as the city's sole leader. They succeeding in killing two dukes and nearly slew Grand Duke Dillard Portyr. But the Flaming Fist and the Watch banded together to save the young duke and drive Valarken and the surviving lycanthropes out of the city. They disappeared into the Wood of Sharp Teeth, which many now avoid and justly call "the Werewoods."

With the unprecedented simultaneous election of three dukes in the offing and the knowledge that many Valarken loyalists were still at large in the city, the patriars pressed Duke Portyr to form a parliament of "trusted people" to pick the next rulers. Of course, until the new dukes were elected, the new Parliament of Peers would help carry the burden of decision-making and maintaining the rule of law. The patriars also suggested to the young leader that he should serve in the role of grand duke, in effect relegating the other three dukes to advisory roles unless all of them united to oppose him. New dukes were chosen to once more fill out the Council of Four, but the Parliament of Peers has yet to relinquish its extraordinary powers.



BALDUR'S GATE TODAY

Today, Baldur's Gate is one of the most populous cities in Faerûn. The last census indicated a staggering population, even without accounting for the people living in the outlying villages and miles of farmland that spread beyond the city. Baldur's Gate claims the region within twenty miles of its walls as "lands of entitlement" over which it asserts "economic eminence," a term that gives the city numerous privileges but does not saddle it with many extra responsibilities. In actuality, Baldur's Gate is now the *de facto* authority along the Sword Coast for more than one hundred miles in any direction.

The Gate's position as a nexus for sea trade colors its people and culture. Many Baldurians make their livings as sailors; shipwrights; harborhands, who unload river boats and stow goods in sea galleons; merchants, who outfit trade vessels and their crews; bankers, who fund trade missions; and accessory servicers, who supply the suppliers, including the farmers, woodcarvers, coopers, brewers, millers, and smiths that are part of urban life.

The influx of immigrants to the Gate has greatly augmented the traditional Baldurian lifestyle. Visitors can now hear traditional Halruaan drinking songs in the taverns, taste spicy Calimshan food at a fullbucket eatery, and purchase a water clock as good as any crafted in Neverwinter.

At the same time, the rush of exciting, enjoyable new ideas has also brought with it cultures and practices that many Baldurians find distasteful or frightening. This reaction led to the founding of Little Calimshan, a neighborhood literally walled off from its neighbors. The Outer City also hosts the district of Twin Songs, a sprawl of tiny temples and shrines, where sites dedicated to dark entities such as Loviatar, Hoar, and Beshaba stand unchallenged.

The Gate's population has stabilized following the recent migrations, but no consensus has been reached on how to incorporate the Outer City slums into the walled Upper and Lower cities. Meanwhile, the huge sprawl that is the Outer City, which includes the long string of settlements running north and south on the Trade Way, goes unpoliced since the Parliament of Peers and the Council of Four will not provide the funds to expand either the Flaming Fist or the Watch.

The Outer City's lack of authority and its infusion of desperate refugees have greatly strengthened the shadowy organization of thieves and thugs known simply as the Guild. Bolstered by new tactics, ideas, and victims on which to prey, the Guild now reaches its tendrils into every Gate enterprise, lowly and vaunted alike.

Thus, the Outer City's grim refugees who brought along their grimmer gods grow poorer, and their resentment toward the Upper and Lower cities' rich patriars and fat merchants festers. Meanwhile, tax and toll collectors harry the Lower City's industrious crafters and traders, who are looked down upon by the patriars and envied by the Outer City's teeming poor. The rich are tempted to sin, and the righteous dare not leave their homes for fear of robbery and harm.

It's only a matter of time before something snaps.

GOVERNMENT

Prior to Valarken's coup, Baldur's Gate ran surprisingly well on the strength of gold-greased consensus. When a grand duke died, anyone—citizen or not—could stand for election, adopting a color or a set of colors as his or her campaign's identifier. After no more than a tenday, during which candidates would make speeches on city streets and at various guildhalls and manors, votes were tallied in polling stations. To vote, each citizen would place 1 cp in the preferred candidate's colored box.

Of course, patriars used their influence to sway voters and elect dukes, but so did anyone else who wanted to capture the citizens' attention. The four dukes, holding lifetime posts, would then debate proposed new laws, vote on them, and issue, or not, decrees based on majority opinion.

Today, the government looks much different. Those in the Parliament of Peers would say it is more effective and efficient. Composed of the heirs of the first peers, Parliament meets most afternoons in the High Hall to oversee the business of governance and justice. Even though the peers' discussions are often contentious, loud affairs, majority opinion eventually rules on any matter. The peers' decisions are then put before the Council of Four, now composed of three dukes and one grand duke.

Each member of the Council of Four has one vote. In the case of a tie, the grand duke's vote counts as two. In theory, the council's vote then determines a decree's final outcome. In practice, though, most of the dukes' votes have already been purchased. The Parliament of Peers has chosen three of the four sitting dukes—and Grand Duke Portyr, who has been in power since before the Parliament of Peers was formed, has remained a malleable tool in the peers' and city guilds' hands. He is content to wield little real influence as long as he retains his luxuries and the people's admiration. Duke Abdel Adrian, on the other hand, is a frequent dissenter. Even so, the peers don't go out of their way to cross him on serious issues, fearful of his influence over the Flaming Fist and the citizenry.

STRICT LAWS, SWIFT JUSTICE

Baldur's Gate keeps an extensive legal code in triplicate in three separate High Hall libraries, in case of fire. Various patriars and Upper City barristers also retain backup copies. A complex web of regulations, decrees, contracts, and treaties comprises the code, but most citizens never see it and wouldn't understand it if they did.

In practice, the legal code gives the most rights and protections to the patriars and Watch. All other citizens receive far less deference. Outer City residents are classified as "visiting economic interests," which affords them some rights. However, with a word from a duke or a peer, that classification could change to "visiting diplomat," which offers numerous perks, or "invader," which is essentially a death sentence.

Flaming Fist mercenaries are subject to the company's military law, but the organization is beholden to the Council of Four. Thus, any Fist soldier can be charged and arrested for civil crimes, such as breach of contract.

Meanwhile, the code grants Watch and Flaming Fist soldiers the authority to mete out immediate punishment, up to and including execution, to criminals caught in the act. However, soldiers avoid doing so when patriars or politically connected individuals are the ones nabbed. Anyone caught in the commission of a lesser crime can expect swift punishment without a trial. Thievery or violence typically earns a public maiming, such as a whipping or the loss of a finger. Disrupting the peace or wantonness earns public embarrassment, such as being locked in stocks overnight or being marched through the streets with one's hands chained to a iron mask. Breach of contract earns forced labor, such as working as a rower or for a guild.

If guilt is unclear, if a public outcry ensues, if a patriar complains, or if the soldier involved doesn't feel confident meting out punishment, the accused criminal's case goes to trial, which a duke, or a proxy from among the peers, judges. Which duke or peer depends on the clout of the accused and his or her enemies. The accused can speak in his or her own defense or have someone else do so. The amount of time given to present one's defense is up to the judging duke.

Although professional barristers operate in the city, only the wealthiest citizens can afford to hire them. Thus, the best commoners can hope for if they're brought to trial is that the Flaming Fist's duke takes an interest in their case. Otherwise, trials are brief affairs that usually serve the judge's interests.

THE COUNCIL OF FOUR

When the events of *Murder in Baldur's Gate* take place, the Council of Four consists of the people described below.

Duke Torlin Silvershield

Leader of the city's greatest patriar house, duke on the Council of Four, and head priest of its grandest temple, Torlin Silvershield is one of the most powerful people in Baldur's Gate. Decades ago, Silvershield helped defend the city during Valarken's coup and assisted in founding the Parliament of Peers. He is a descendant of the great Entar Silvershield, a grand duke at the time when Abdel Adrian defeated Sarevok.



Torlin Silvershield

Silvershield sees himself as the embodiment of the best of Baldur's Gate. As such, he takes great pains with his appearance to present a proud example for others to follow. The duke fasts for long stretches and exercises daily, giving him a gaunt but fit physique. His black hair has grayed at the temples, and he wears a well-trimmed salt-and-pepper beard.

The high artificer resides in the traditional Silvershield estate in the southwestern corner of the Manorborn district with Evelyn, his wife; their two daughters, Skie II and Alana; and their son, Entar III. The other members of the family keep low social profiles so as to stay out of the duke's way. Silvershield is considering quietly sending his children to Waterdeep, Selgaunt, and Athkatla, where they can be educated in any field they choose before being married in arrangements that benefit Baldur's Gate.

Torlin Silvershield believes that his nobility and birthright give him a divine obligation to rule with justice. Like many worshipers of Gond, the god of innovation and technology, the high artificer sees wealth as proof of the god's favor and firmly believes in fair rewards for labor. So Silvershield never appears in public without displaying excellently crafted High House of Wonders items and jewelry. Additionally, the Silvershield estate is adorned in fine art and technological marvels.

The best interests of Baldur's Gate are foremost in Silvershield's plans, even trumping the concerns of Gond's temple. The duke didn't seek power within the temple hierarchy for its own sake, his sake, or Gond's sake. Rather, he viewed his religious service as the best way he could serve Baldur's Gate. He sees

no hypocrisy in this outlook. To Silvershield, the ends always justify the means.

Thanks to a nobleman's education and masterful control over his voice and demeanor from a lifetime of sermonizing, Silvershield is a natural diplomat and a consummate actor. The patriarch is neither vain nor greedy, but he has an all-consuming drive to realize his visions for the Gate's future, no matter the cost. He is fearless and clear-headed in a crisis, and he is always thinking at least three steps ahead.

The duke detests patriarchs who abdicate their duties as rulers and abet the Guild, and he truly despises Lower City denizens who subvert the gods' divine intent and aspire to rise above their station to meddle in the city's governance.

In recent months, Silvershield has grown increasingly grim and unscrupulous in his scheming. He believes that the Outer City's unchecked growth is dragging Baldur's Gate down into violence and a lower standard of living. He sees all-out war against the Guild as inevitable and the Guild's extermination as the city's paramount task. He knows the Guild has wormed its way into every aspect of city life, arranging matters for its profit and daily convenience.

Silvershield appreciates the Watch but resists turning its full force against the Guild, because he believes that doing so would only drive the Guild to strike at innocent civilians in retaliation. Instead, he believes it is time to fight fire with fire. He is on the lookout for suitable adventurers to hire to battle the Guild. Such a group, provided with covert aid from the dukes and an understanding that, if necessary, the courts would find in their favor, could accomplish far more than the Watch or the Flaming Fist.

Duke Belyenne Stelmene

Once a vigorous and formidable politician, Belyenne Stelmene recently suffered a seizure and a long period of unconsciousness, after which she awoke a changed woman. Half of her handsome face is paralyzed now, and an uncertain gait and a constant tremor in her left arm have replaced her once legendary grace. Stelmene's mind also suffered. Even though she continues to perform her ducal duties and jealously guards her privileges, her thinking seems slow, and her words come even more slowly.

Duke Stelmene leads the Baldur's Gate branch of the Knights of the Shield, a secret society of Sword Coast nobles, merchants, and traders that uses information passed among its members for their mutual enrichment. She has managed to hold onto that position because, in the privacy of her home, she remains a skilled negotiator when it comes to commerce and continues to effectively influence city businesses and acquire more wealth and property.

The duke is conservative and unimaginative in all matters except for trade strategies and financial maneuvers. She has made few pronouncements or controversial court judgments since her illness. Due to her wealth and business connections, most Gate power players consider her a valuable ally or a pawn rather than a target.

She is indeed a pawn. A mind flayer provoked the duke's "seizure" when it took mental possession of her, and the illithid kept Stelmene comatose for many days as it stood invisibly at her bedside to psychically interrogate her. Duke Stelmene's will remains strong, however. Since she awakened, her mind has been a constant battleground between her own psyche and the illithid—except when she conducts business on behalf of the Knights of the Shield. At these times, the illithid's interests and her own converge, and she regains much of her normal vigor.

Stelmene does not know what the illithid's ultimate aims are. Nor has she found a way to break its grip on her sufficiently to signal for aid. She has learned that the more she attempts to exercise her will, the less capable she appears to others, a perception that ultimately threaten her status. So, behind her distant expression and stuttering words, the duke is ever watchful for something that might break the stalemate with the evil entity inside her.

Grand Duke Dillard Portyr

Dillard Portyr is a short, portly man in his sixties. His once black hair is now gray and sparse, and he wears a shabby wig out of habit rather than vanity. A veteran investor, shipping-fleet owner, and trader, Portyr recently pulled back from the business world following a string of sour deals. Now he is using his time to enjoy the comforts that his wealth and title have provided him. Having outlived two wives and three sons, Duke Portyr now lives quietly in a relatively unassuming manor in the Temples district that a handful of devoted servants maintain.

Portyr doesn't like conflict and avoids stress. In social situations, the grand duke is likable and entertaining, spending much of his energy to make sure others feel good and are having fun. As a leader, Grand Duke Portyr is a weathercock, turning whichever way the wind blows. Even though his Council of Four vote breaks ties, he's never had to use that authority.

Anyone who attempts to appeal to Grand Duke Portyr to solve a problem might come to realize that the city's leader is putty in the hands of the powerful. He is known for listening with concern, showing an earnest desire to help, making promises to look into things—and then doing nothing, if doing something would mean facing conflict.

Duke Abdel Adrian

Among Baldurians, Duke Abdel Adrian is universally considered to be the city's greatest hero, second only to Balduran the Brave.

The wizard Gorion raised Adrian in Candlekeep, but Adrian, a child of Bhaal, was swept up in a series of deadly events orchestrated by his half-siblings, the Bhaalspawn. Adrian's life as an adventurer became notorious when he saved Baldur's Gate from the Iron Throne's machinations and killed his half-brother Sarevok to avert a war with Amn.

Afterward, Adrian fought countless battles against people seeking to use his Bhaalspawn blood for nefarious purposes. Baldurians know little of these adventures, and few people alive today comprehend the meaning of Adrian's status as a Bhaalspawn. Most people believe the God of Murder is long dead and, if they know anything of Adrian's story, that their beloved duke made certain Bhaal remained dead.

Following his adventuring days, Adrian lived for a time in contemplation in Candlekeep. He eventually decided to settle in Baldur's Gate, which had become his second home.

Adrian joined the Flaming Fist as a private and quickly ascended through the mercenary company's ranks. Lower City citizens respected his courage and dashing ways, and Outer City residents loved him for his charitable works. After Valarken killed the Flaming Fist's marshal, who was also a duke, Adrian replaced him in both positions. He originally tried to turn down his ducal nomination, but public acclaim was too strong, and the military leader reluctantly accepted the post.

Adrian is more than a century old, and his divine heritage has kept him well preserved. He appears to be in his sixties, and his body retains the strength of youth. At nearly 7 feet in height, Adrian towers over most Baldurians. Black hair frames his unrelenting eyes and slightly wizened face. Unlike other dukes, he wears comfortable, plain garments and shuns jewelry. The only time he dresses as a state official is for parades.

Adrian rarely speaks at council meetings. But when he does, his voice for moderation carries tremendous weight. Most days, Duke Adrian walks the city's streets, talking with citizens; helping them in their daily labors; and offering charity, an encouraging word, or a stern reprimand as needed. He sometimes seems grim and lost in thoughts, perhaps of days past, but the Flaming Fist marshal and Council of Four duke is also known to break out in great guffaws when the occasion arises.



Duke Abdel Adrian

OFFICERS OF THE CITY

The Council of Four appoints deputies to oversee important city functions. These five officers in turn employ all the civic bureaucrats, negotiate with the guilds for labor, and oversee the needs of the city. The current titles of these deputies, which speak to their responsibilities, are Harbormaster; High Constable and Master of Walls; Master of Drains and Underways; Master of Cobbles; and Purse Master.

Harbormaster Erl Namorran

The Harbormaster of Baldur's Gate is Erl Namorran, a stern, no-nonsense, by-the-book guy who served with distinction in the Flaming Fist before retiring. As the befitting jest about him states, "Only once did he ever make a joke, and that unknowingly." At that time, it is said, Namorran unwittingly whispered an inappropriate comment about Evelyn Silvershield's corset to Duke Adrian during Duke Torlin Silvershield's speech at a state event. Adrian's ensuing uproarious laughter brought the patriarch's speech to a halt, but Adrian never disclosed what triggered the outburst. Shortly thereafter, at the next Council of Four meeting, Adrian recommended Namorran to fill the open position of harbormaster.

Namorran is highly intelligent and a capable accountant, which makes him well suited for the post. At the same time, he lacks social polish and willingly sacrifices common sense when it contradicts the rules.

High Constable and Master of Walls Osmurl Havanack

The high constable and master of walls functions as the Watch Citadel's castellan. While the Watch's two oversars oversee patrols, the escorting of patriarchs, and parade duties, the dwarf Osmurl Havanack manages the Citadel and makes certain the Flaming Fist upholds its contract to maintain the Lower City's wall additions, Wyrms Rock, and the Seatower of Balduran. He also ensures that the Citadel is provisioned, that pay from the purse master is distributed correctly, and that Citadel and Old Wall maintenance needs are assigned and completed.

In addition, High Constable Havanack acts as warden for the few cells in the Watch Citadel that are used to temporarily hold those awaiting trial in the High Hall or the occasional Watch soldier or patriarch servant who needs to be quietly disciplined. Havanack is stolid, wary, and always prepared.

Master of Drains and Underways Thalamra Vanthampur

Master Thalamra Vanthampur is an acid-tongued, shrewd, aggressive old woman, the matriarch of the Vanthampur family. Her office oversees all sewer, water pump, pipe, and cellar maintenance in the city.

Vanthampur's post is at the same time one of the least and most desirable positions in Baldur's Gate. The technical nature of the office's responsibilities place them beyond the understanding or inclination of most aristocrats. The master of drains and underways, however, typically does very little work other than appointing knowledgeable underlings from the ranks of her family to keep things running. Of course, if those subordinates fail in their duties, the repercussions could be disastrous.

Master of Cobbles Esgurl Nurthammas

The master of cobbles attends to road and bridge construction and the maintenance of all public stonework that is not a city wall, a drain, or an underways. The post can be a lucrative one, since crafters sniffing after city building contracts are always willing to spend gold to catch the master's attention.

Esgurl Nurthammas is young, nervous, and eager to please. He belongs to one of the poorest patriarch families and hopes to parlay a good record as master of cobbles into a Parliament of Peers seat.

Purse Master Haxilion Trood

Haxilion Trood is a world-weary, jaded, cynical, sarcastic-to-the-point-of-cruelty, sour-faced, and sour-thinking man. He never forgets a face or a detail, and his reputation for rudeness is born from his blunt, honest-to-the-core observations.

The dukes unanimously appointed Trood as purse master. It is the hardest position to earn in Baldur's Gate, because everyone in this merchant city has to trust the purse master with all the gold. The office's record-keeping and bureaucracy are the most extensive in the city. Purse Master Trood manages tax and toll collection and records; investment of city funds; and distribution of pay to all city offices and officials, including the Watch. The purse master is also responsible for ensuring that the Flaming Fist takes no more than its proper share of the taxes it collects.

Unsurprisingly, the purse master wields incredible power, is hated by many, and is under constant scrutiny for signs of graft and Guild influence. Trood's nonpartisan politics and integrity were the biggest factors leading to his appointment.

PARLIAMENT OF PEERS

The Parliament of Peers consists of about fifty Baldurians, most of whom are patriarchs. A dozen or so powerful Lower City representatives, including guild leaders and other wealthy individuals, are also peers. Only the least successful patriarch families do not have at least one member among the peers. So far, parliamentary seats have been mostly hereditary. By unanimous decree, the peers have created and filled a few additional seats. City law does not address how to fill these seats, so the peers do as they like.

Parliament officially meets every day. Attendance is not mandatory, though, so only about twenty or thirty peers show up unless a session is scheduled on important political or monetary concerns. Although the Council of Four officially controls the city, the Parliament of Peers first discusses and then recommends a course of action for virtually every city decision. In other words, every topic from toll rates to Flaming Fist contracts is argued on the floor of the parliament chamber in the High Hall.

Two important members of parliament who are not from patriarch families are described here.

Coran

The elf-adventurer-turned-upstanding-citizen known as Coran, formerly a bold fighter and thief, currently occupies himself as a merchant and an information broker, and is well known as an infamous celebrity at patriarch revels. Coran relishes being in the know and playing the sardonic, world-wise observer.



Coran

The many debts the patriarchs owed Coran bought him a seat on the Parliament of Peers long ago, and such "deferred favors" continue to earn him invitations to many patriarch feasts and revels. He appears at all the choicest fetes with wineglass in hand and a dazzling young companion on his arm.

Even though elves do not become obese, Coran's sumptuous lifestyle has produced what some would call pudginess, especially around his face. He typically wears bright and gaudy garments, elegant jewelry, and exotic costumes.

Coran is now too old—or, more to the point, too closely monitored by the Watch and Fist—to take part in daring robberies, but he still craves excitement. So the lively socialite sponsors, manipulates, and goads others into attempting incredible feats of burglary and

infiltration and into furthering the elf's age-old rivalries with other retired thieves. Coran makes and takes bets on the outcomes of lawless activities, and he covertly invests in goods that he knows will experience near-term shortages. These wagers and schemes provide him with the income to support his pampered lifestyle.

The former adventurer enjoys playing puppet master just as much as, if not more than, he delighted in executing his own escapades. Now he serves as the witty voice of experience, dispensing advice and pointing the clueless toward clues, the stumped toward solutions, and the in-over-their-heads toward local experts. Coran always knows where someone can obtain a sleep poison, a love potion, an impersonator, or a kidnapper. What some call manipulation, he calls guidance. Everything he does is geared toward his own amusement and profit.

He befriends and shamelessly manipulates adventurers, which is not necessarily a bad thing for them, since Coran provides tremendous aid to friends who find themselves in trouble in Baldur's Gate.

Imbralym Skoond

This greedy, amoral, young wizard is graceful, charming, and darkly handsome. He was a dancing master in Athkatla until he discovered his aptitude for the magical arts and began dreaming about the immense wealth that a successful wizard could amass. He left his home to seek out a well-heeled sponsor among the upper crust of Baldur's Gate. Thanks to his charm, a talent for magic, and no apparent scruples, Skoond quickly attracted Duke Silvershield's attention as a threat and then, when Skoond proved amenable, as a subordinate. Silvershield used his influence to have Skoond made a peer (parliament's most recent appointment), and the wizard has been the duke's lapdog ever since.

With the first earnings he received from Silvershield, Imbralym bought the leaky, drafty Seskergates mansion in the Bloomridge district. The place was on sale for a song, since it's adjacent to Mandorcai's Mansion. Since he moved in, Skoond has heard a few strange sounds from Mandorcai's but nothing to indicate any danger to him. As an added bonus, fear of Mandorcai's Mansion has helped keep snoops away from his own residence.



PATRIARS

Although heroics or wealth could once propel someone into the nobility's ranks, nowadays ancestry and tradition define who is or is not a patriarch. Today's lords and ladies of Baldur's Gate are the descendants of the city's earliest inhabitants.

Most reside in grand Upper City manors that their families have lived in for generations. All such homes have beautifully maintained facades, even if a floundering family must strip its insides bare. No one among the gossipy patriarchs is fooled, but they all believe that keeping up appearances is a civic duty.

The upper crust's social activities include gossiping; small contests of skill, such as board games or darts; an endless cycle of dances and revels; "enthusiasms," such as creating collections or attending learned talks on various subjects; and gambling. Virtually all patriarchs are compulsive bettors. They wager on races, such as those featuring snakes or weasels; fighting, including arm wrestling, full-body wrestling, and matches between animals; and duels.

Two types of duels are legal, buff-pole and blunt-sword contests. In the former, youths joust without saddles or reins, using blunted and padded buff-poles. In the latter, adults use blunted swords to score hits against their opponents while dueling in a small, bare room or enclosure. The victor is the opponent who scores the most hits. The duel begins when an unlit lantern filled with fireflies is opened and ends when the last firefly exits the lantern, whether that is seconds or hours later. Because of the duel's random length, contestants have occasionally been beaten to death when their strength flagged and they collapsed during a long match against a ruthless opponent.

Below are descriptions of two patriarch families from opposite ends of the Upper City social spectrum.

Dlusker Family

Lord Norold Dlusker is caught in the middle of the growing tension in Baldur's Gate. He has ties to the peers, the Flaming Fist, and the Guild, but has the respect of none of them. Most patriarchs snub the Dlusker family because they were prominent supporters of Duke Valarken before the attempted coup.

That history only primed the pump for Norold Dlusker's real troubles, however. After his older sister died mysteriously from mummy rot and her husband, along with the family's fortune, disappeared in Waterdeep, Dlusker suddenly found himself the patriarch of an impoverished, disgraced family. He is deeply in debt; his meager income derives from sheep-folds beyond the city, a Lower City textile mill, and a handful of Outer City slaughterhouses.

Norold's younger sister, Guinever, is the lord's only heir. She is married to one of Wyllyck Caldwell's sons in an apparently happy union.

Caldwell Family

Lord Wyllyck Caldwell is the patriarch of one of the city's oldest and richest families; of course, their great wealth still cannot rival the Silvershields'.

Vast apple and pear orchards south of the city were the Cawdwells' source of income. But about fifty years ago, a rotting disease struck the trees. Wyllyck, then a young, talented alchemist, searched for a cure. He never found it, but the disease ran its course, and the orchards recovered. Fortuitously, during his research, Wyllyck discovered a wood-treatment method that safeguards timber from water better than any paint or polish.

Wyllyck's wife, Lady Abelea, recognized and exploited Wyllyck's discovery, and the Caldwell family now owes the bulk of its financial success to her. Abelea has since managed the expansion of the family's operations. Now, in addition to business from their orchards, the Cawdwells import raw timber and supply cut lumber to most of the area's carpenters, coopers, wheelwrights, shipbuilders, and builders, as well as the priests of Gond. Additionally, the Cawdwells are expanding into general river shipping and have purchased two caravels, *Sweetseed* and *Abelea*, the latter named after Wyllyck's wife.

The Cawdwells are well regarded citywide. Wyllyck and Abelea are proud of their charitable works and Lower City business investments. They donate generously to the High House of Wonders, the Watchful Shield, the Shrine of the Suffering, and the Church of Last Hope.

Caldwell is a modest man who recognizes that his alchemical research would not have been possible without his family's legacy, and that his business success is due to Abelea's management sense. He ignores invitations to patriars' galas, because he believes his peers are too concerned with their own pleasure and too removed from the troubles of the Lower and Outer cities. In leisure times, he prefers to read in his study or discuss alchemy with colleagues at tables in the Wide.

OTHER PATRIAR FAMILIES

Below are the names of and a few details about many of the other patriar families in the city.

Belt owns horses for sale and exchange to travelers on the Trade Way.

Bormul is related to the Bormul nobility in Amn and has interests in southern silver mines and vineyards.

Durinbold is related to Waterdeep nobility and owns large sheep herds.

Eltan has an ancestral link to the grand duke who formed the Flaming Fist but sold its interests in the mercenary company to pay debts.

Eomane owns the most elite perfumery in Baldur's Gate as well as fish- and whale-oil processors that make lamp oil.

Gist owns much of the city's dye production.

Guthmere owns butchery and tannery facilities.

Hhune has ties to Tethyr nobility and the Knights of the Shield (see "Gargauth" on page 51).

Hlath owns several cafes and is awash in gambling debts.

Hullholllyn owns a merchant fleet and has a trade truce with the Irlentree family.

Irlentree owns a merchant fleet, has a trade truce with the Hullholllyn family, and has membership in the Merchant's League.

Jannath owns tin and copper mines.

Jhasso is part owner of the struggling Seven Suns Trading Coster, a long-standing trade organization.

Linnacker collects income from gem mines in Tethyr.

Miyar controls much of the city's businesses that supply and repair caravans and individual wagons and has membership in the Merchant's League.

Nurthammas invests in businesses involved in supplying ships for long voyages.

Oathoon imports wine and spirits.

Oberon owns most of the port's dry docks.

Provoss is nearly destitute after losses to its cattle herds.

Ravensshade trades in gems and jewelry.

Redlocks has secretly financed piracy and smuggling for a long time.

Rillyn invests shrewdly and frequently hires Guild legbreakers to collect debts.

Sashenstar owns shipping, mining, and textile operations; has membership in the Merchant's League; and has a famous ancestor who "discovered" Sossal.

Shattershield is the only nonhuman family among the patriars, was instrumental in building the Gate's original walls, and is distantly related to the dwarves who built Sarbreen (now Raven's Bluff).

Tillerturn is related to one of the first four grand dukes and owns and leases out many buildings in the city.

Vammass controls the majority of trade from Chult.

Vannath are newly arrived nobles who fled Neverwinter's disaster and married into the patriars to elevate their status.

Vanthampur specializes in civic engineering under the purview of family matriarch Thalamra Vanthampur, the master of drains and underways.

Whitburn owns the slate quarry east of the city.

THE WATCH

The Watch is the official constabulary of Baldur's Gate. Although the Watch is technically the Gate's only civil authority, its soldiers rarely leave the Upper City. Most of the police work in the Lower City is conducted by the Flaming Fist, and the Outer City is left to fend for itself. The Watch is limited to civil police work, which means it has no jurisdiction outside the city. In wartime, its soldiers are prohibited from fighting outside the city and its immediate environs. Such "foreign duty" is in the purview of the Flaming Fist.

The Watch continually patrols the Upper City's walls. It's said in Bloomridge that you can tell the passing of a quarter hour, day or night, by timing the interval between Watch patrols marching past a certain point.

At dusk, the Watch evicts everyone from the Upper City except its residents and their invitation-carrying guests and liveried servants. Watch soldiers, many of whom are lifelong Upper City residents, pride themselves on recognizing every Upper City citizen on sight. They also know every detail of how true patriars talk and behave, so they can often identify nighttime interlopers by watching suspects for a few minutes, getting a good look at their faces and garb, and asking a few questions.

The Watch is the only organization allowed to keep warhorses within the city's walls. The Watch's stables are in the Citadel. Its small, elite corps of knights responds quickly in times of crisis.

The Watch has nine military ranks. In ascending authority, they are shield (private), sarmar (sergeant), vigilar (lieutenant), sword (captain), havilar (major), commandal (colonel), highsword (major general), and oversar (general). Six officers hold the rank of highsword, and two hold the rank of oversar. An oversar is always on duty and reports directly to the grand duke or the rest of the Council of Four if the grand duke is unavailable.

The Watch employs around a thousand members, and a duty shift lasts for eight hours, so one-third of the force's total strength, roughly three hundred soldiers and officers, is on active duty at any moment. Most patrol the Upper City's streets while their remaining comrades-in-arms stand sentry on the walls, train in the Citadel, or perform the hundreds of mundane tasks involved in keeping a police force functioning. A street patrol is composed of four to eight soldiers. Every Watch member carries a brass whistle with which to call for help if needed . . . and the nearest guard detachment is never very far away.

In times of crisis, bells at the High Hall and the Citadel are rung simultaneously. If the pealing continues for more than fifteen minutes—the time it should take a force to assemble at the Citadel and march to

Black Dragon Gate—every Watch member is required to rally at the Citadel or along the Upper City's walls. The bells are rung only in emergencies that threaten the entire Upper City, such as an invading army, a city-wide fire, or any scenario that threatens to overwhelm the soldiers on duty.

The Citadel, the Watch's headquarters, is a massive keep built at an angle into the Upper City's walls. The Citadel has its own water supply and is amply provisioned to withstand a months-long siege.

Long ago, the Citadel's dungeons were the only prison in Baldur's Gate. They are seldom used now, and only for the purpose of housing suspects awaiting trial in the High Hall or sequestering patriars or their servants when such imprisonment must remain quiet. All other prisoners are locked up in the Seatower of Balduran.

Vigilar Lenta Moore

Lenta Moore serves as a Watch vigilar. She wanted to join the Flaming Fist, but her elderly father, a wealthy Upper City merchant and a Parliament of Peers member, protested, worrying she would be "sent away to die in some desert battle in Calimshan."

Moore commands a troop of thirty shields and three sarmars. She has a reputation as a deadly swordswoman who has killed in the line of duty.

On her shift, she oversees the inspection of all handcarts and cargoes that pass into the city through the Black Dragon Gate. Utterly incorruptible, she arrests anyone, regardless of social status, who offers or accepts a bribe within her earshot. Duke Silvershield demoted her from the rank of sword after her harsh treatment of a young patriar in this regard. (All four dukes can dismiss, recruit, promote, or demote Watch members.)

Nine-Fingers, the leader of the Guild, has on numerous occasions considered eliminating Vigilar Moore to make the Black Dragon Gate a friendlier place for Guild operations. She resists doing so because the vigilar's father, Reavus Moore, is solidly in the Guild's pocket—and his support would certainly be lost if something tragic happened to his daughter and the Guild was implicated. Nine-Fingers is now leaning toward pulling a few strings to get Lenta reassigned to a less bothersome post or promoted to a position where she can't interfere so directly with Guild interests.

FLAMING FIST

The Flaming Fist was founded in Baldur's Gate and has ever since been headquartered in the city. Since its inception under Grand Duke Eltan, the mercenary company has been tightly entwined with the city's rulers, a connection that has become stronger in recent years.

The Flaming Fist has prospered as the guardians of the city. The Council of Four pays the group, and the Fist also receives a share of the taxes collected on goods and ships that enter the harbor and from people who use the Basilisk Gate or travel along Wyrms Crossing.

While the Watch polices the Upper City, the Flaming Fist watches over the Lower City. The Fist has nominal authority over the Outer City, too, but its patrols are already hard-pressed to fulfill their duties in the Lower City and on Wyrms Rock, much less regulate the sprawl beyond the walls. Even though the organization hasn't grown as swiftly as the city's population, the number of Fist mercenaries has tripled to six thousand since the company's founding. Of that number, fewer than half are in the city at any time. The rest are stationed in fortifications elsewhere or are out on active campaign.

Even though the Flaming Fist acts as the city's army and Lower City police force, Baldur's Gate remains stolidly neutral in external conflicts in which the Fist participates as one side's hired muscle. Many people believe this stance is a ridiculous fiction, pointing out that the highest-ranking Flaming Fist officer is usually also a duke on the Council of Four, and that patriars earn profits from their mercenary-contract investments. But most Baldurian commoners view the separation of army and government with pride, and much ceremony is made when the city renews its contract with the Flaming Fist.

Fortifications

The Flaming Fist builds or acquires fortifications in the theaters of war in which its soldiers operate. After a conflict, unless long-term economic or political reasons exist to maintain such outposts, the Flaming Fist abandons them to local control once its mercenaries have fulfilled their contracts.

Currently, Fort Beluarian is the only location the Flaming Fist permanently occupies outside Baldur's Gate. This trading outpost in Chult has fallen twice to Chultan attacks, claiming numerous lives and loss of capital each time. Regardless, money-hungry patriars are unwilling to abandon the settlement, thereby relinquishing the area's trade opportunities.

In Baldur's Gate, the Flaming Fist occupies the Lower City's eastern and western walls as well as the

Seatower of Balduran and Wyrms Rock. The great granite edifice of the Seatower stands atop a rocky islet in the harbor, and a causeway links it to the western shore. The Flaming Fist uses the Seatower as a barracks, a naval base, a prison, and a fortress. The Fist's headquarters also boasts a full armory and tower-top trebuchets with which to battle hostile ships. A massive chain that stretches from the Seatower to pilings under the easternmost wharf in Brampton can be pulled taut at the water line to block invaders' access to the harbor or prevent a ship from sailing out.

The Flaming Fist also controls Wyrms Rock, a fortress that perches atop a towering stone jutting up midstream in the Chionthar River a short distance upriver from the city's harbor. The structure occupies the entire island, leaving nowhere for an enemy to gain a foothold on the rock. The two spans of Wyrms Crossing connect Wyrms Rock to the river's southern and northern shores.

Being in charge of both fortifications means that the Flaming Fist can control river traffic heading in either direction. Thus far, the company has not used its position to tax ships on the Chionthar that bypass the city. Since virtually all ships make a stop in the city, such measures have been unnecessary.

Members

Most Flaming Fist soldiers were raised in the Lower and Outer cities and were invited by a ranking officer to join the mercenary company. Others were once prisoners of war. The Flaming Fist holds no grudges, and defeated soldiers whose vanquished masters are unlikely to pay ransom for them often see the benefit of joining the mercenaries. Some Fist recruits are adventurers who were passing through Baldur's Gate but hungered for a stretch of stable pay and steady work. Typically, adventurers' varied experiences and skill with arms lead to quick promotions. Such heroes form the nexus of the Fist's officer corps, but only those who have extensive battlefield experience reach its highest stations.

Beyond basic qualities of competence and physical hardiness, prospective Flaming Fist members must show a capacity for strong loyalty and stronger morals. Discipline is important in a field soldier, but training can instill that. Otherwise, race, gender, and age matter little.

The Flaming Fist's hierarchy is relatively simple. Only six ranks are recognized, including fist (private), gauntlet (corporal), manip (sergeant), flame (lieutenant), blaze (major), and marshal (general). Ranks often have an attached title that describes a duty, such as fist sapper, a private who has expertise in siege demolition; blaze captain, a major who is also a ship's captain; and flame jailer, a lieutenant who serves as captain of the guard in the Seatower's dungeons.

The Fist does not house most of its soldiers. The Seatower of Balduran and Wyrms' Rock have barracks large enough to accommodate members of their permanent garrisons as well as new recruits who are undergoing training, but most Fist soldiers live in their own Lower City apartments. The Seatower district has many inns that cater to the large number of Flaming Fist soldiers residing in the area.

Blaze Ulder Ravengard

Blaze Ulder Ravengard is the incarnation of militarism. The only beauty he appreciates is precision, and the only quality he values is utility. He believes that personal ornamentation other than military insignia is a waste. A meticulous man, he forgets nothing and forgives less. Ravengard has never married and has no interest in domestic matters. Everything about him is geared toward practicality. Someone might consider him handsome, if not for his constant scowl and many scars.

Blaze Ravengard is Marshal Abdel Adrian's right-hand man. He is both the second-highest-ranking officer in the Flaming Fist and the warden of Wyrms' Rock. Ravengard's soldiers do not love him. They do respect his leadership, however, and pay for it with their obedience, which is exactly how Ravengard prefers things.

Ravengard is the fourth son of a lowborn Lower City smith. Since he had no hope of inheriting his father's property, he decided to join the Flaming Fist. His discipline and meticulous nature helped Ravengard prove himself in battle and when handling day-to-day details for Adrian.

Naturally stolid and terse, Ravengard is slow to speak and make decisions in any arena except the battlefield. Once he decides on a course of action, Ravengard is relentless in its pursuit. He believes the Flaming Fist is the Gate's backbone and the key to the city's strength and superiority over its competitors.

Even though his rigorous self-control masks the depth of his feelings, the mercenary soldier seethes over the eagerness of ill-doers to control others, steal the fruits of honest folk's labor, and otherwise misuse hardworking people. Therefore, he is determined to ground the Guild into dust. Ravengard believes that the criminal organization is waging a war against Baldurians, and he is determined to win it for them. He knows as well as anyone else, though, that wars aren't won without casualties or collateral damage.



Blaze Ulder Ravengard

What Ravengard doesn't realize, however, is that he has a subconscious blind spot: He excuses all actions taken for the public good while simultaneously deploring identical deeds that others carry out for less altruistic reasons.

Exchequer Favil Blanche

It would shock many Baldurians to learn that Favil Blanche is a member of the Flaming Fist, mainly because he lacks the disciplined, law-and-order aura that defines most of the mercenaries. Blanche is a pudgy man in his sixties who is widely believed to be too fond of dwarven brews. He manages the Flaming Fist's finances and can usually be found at the Counting House or the Blade and Stars.

Much about Blanche remains secret. A few of the Fist's officers are aware that the exchequer used to be a Fist spymaster. But Blanche alone knows that he is a Rivington-born ex-Guild member who formerly went by the name "Gold Lahar."

Forty years ago, Gold Lahar was an outstanding Guild burglar and bookmaker. Then a disagreement put Lahar on the outs. Desperate to avoid a knife in the dark, he disappeared. Lahar's associates assumed he had fled or been cornered and "gone to see the river," a Baldurian phrase that refers to being bound and tossed from Tumbledown's bluffs into the Chionthar. No one suspected that Lahar had adopted a disguise, changed his name, and signed on with the Flaming Fist.

Within six months of Lahar's disappearance, any Guild members who had known him had either been arrested and executed, been cut down in an apparent gang murder, or disappeared. No one in the Fist connected the murders and disappearances to Blanche, and at the end of this time no one in the Guild who had known Lahar remained alive.

In the following months, Blanche's inside knowledge of the Guild proved invaluable and led to raids on several Lower City operations. His acts of service and his uncanny instinct for uncovering secrets hastened Blanche's steady advancement through the ranks.

Blanche sees his escape from the Guild to a new life with the Fist as a sign. He worships Torm now and regrets having lived the life he left behind. But he has never lost the conviction that the Guild exists as a reaction to the city's many social injustices that support the patriars while shackling the less fortunate. He understands the frustration that drove him to the Guild and realizes that feeling is probably what sends many young folk into its grip today. Thus, he is one of only a few Fist officers who have any sympathy for Guild operatives.

THE GUILD

Cutpurses, loan sharks, killers, thugs, con artists, grave robbers, cat burglars—the Guild unites virtually every crime and criminal under one organization's rule. For more than a century, the greedy, violent, and desperate in Baldur's Gate have come together to form a fluid hierarchy of loose associations overseen by the Guild's mysterious leaders.

"The Guild keeps the gutters clean" is a phrase underworld denizens use to refer to the contract killings of wayward Guild members. The metaphor is true in a larger sense as well. The Guild monitors and controls crime in Baldur's Gate and its environs. Thus, it serves the densely populated city by keeping illicit activities quiet. Much credit is given to the Watch and Flaming Fist for keeping the city's cobbled streets free of open crime. But bold, daylight robberies and slaughter in the streets would invite too much attention from the authorities, so the Guild has "outlawed" such action unless Guildmaster Nine-Fingers sanctions it.

Governing the Guild

The Guild is a syndicate of loose-knit groups under the authority of local kingpins. Nine-Fingers and her Lady's Court head the criminal organization. A web of favors, duties, debts, intimidation, patronage, and gratitude hold the network together.

Each of the city's districts roughly correlates to one kingpin's territory. The different gangs and kingpins compete, usually bloodlessly, for influence and territory. Nine-Fingers discourages arson, flagrant murder, and other indiscriminate actions that would anger or kill bystanders or upset the general populace. The most prominent gangs include Shar's Serpents in Blackgate; the Bloody Hands in Stonyeyes; Ganthall's Gallants in Whitkeep, dubbed "Gallant" for never stealing from females; and the Rivington Rats in Rivington.

Even though the Guild has only a few players in its upper echelons, operations in each district have a strict hierarchy. In ascending order of status, the ranks of the Guild include clients, assets, footpads, enforcers, operators, and kingpins. A foul-up at any level can lead to disgrace or death for the responsible party.

Clients: People indebted to the Guild are termed clients. These include shopkeepers who haven't paid their protection fees, gamblers who are in too deep, and everyone for whom the Guild has performed a favor. Clients are not Guild members per se, but the organization often protects them: Clients are investments. Of course, the Guild does occasionally have to cut its losses, sometimes literally, but it's best for everyone if a client sees the relationship as beneficial in some fashion. To understand the Guild, one must first comprehend the cabal's relationships with its clients.

In the Upper and Lower cities, clients are typically folk whom the Guild is blackmailing or who owe money or favors to Guild members. In contrast, the entire Outer City depends heavily on the Guild as a governing force, since the area lacks formal law enforcement. An Outer City resident who has a complaint against a neighbor—a charge of theft, fraud, or assault, for example—must confront that neighbor directly, because no police or courts are available to aid him or her. In that situation, if the accused is stronger than the victim, the accused wins. And no one can prevent that neighbor from robbing, beating, or defrauding others at will.

But instead of simply putting up with things, a victim can approach the local Guild kingpin and ask for assistance. If the kingpin chooses to intervene, the victim might receive some sort of compensation from the Guild to offset losses. More likely, the accused will be beaten, have fingers broken, or wake up chained to a millstone—all of which are designed to encourage the accused to make his or her own reparations.

In exchange for this favor, the original victim—the client—now owes a favor to the kingpin, which the area crime boss can call in at any time. The client might be required to cater a party, hide contraband or house a wanted criminal, give up part ownership of his or her business, or arrange for a family member to be wed to a Guild enforcer. People who have little to offer, such as gamblers or sable moonflower addicts, might be asked to undertake some dangerous action, such as distracting a Flaming Fist patrol or taking the fall for someone else's crime. Becoming indebted to the Guild is a risky move, but the cabal's interventions have saved many lives, kept businesses operating, and punished innumerable villains who would otherwise have gotten away with their crimes.

This same structure of favors operates within the Guild, too. Members seldom work for pay. Instead, they perform favors for each other and pay them off by doing clients' favors—when they aren't actively committing crimes for their own enrichment.

Assets: Anyone the Guild compensates who isn't a member becomes an asset. Most assets are informants, such as harborhands, beggars, festhall workers, and laborers, who are paid to keep their eyes and ears open and report anything that might interest their handlers. Assets also include people who are powerful in their own right and are paid to keep the Guild's best interests in mind while doing their jobs. This group includes corrupt city officials, Parliament of Peers members, and Flaming Fist and Watch soldiers.

Assets are indispensable to the Guild, but they get little respect from inside the organization. They aren't members, have no authority within the Guild, and are told nothing they don't need to know. The bailiff of the Wide, for example, knows which merchants'

stalls should not be inspected too closely, but not why. The Guild prefers for outsiders to remain in the dark, because bulging purses easily sway their loyalty.

Footpads: Cutpurses, con artists, alley thugs, bookies, and the like rank as footpads. Most want to move up the chain because they know they're only slightly less expendable than clients. Footpads don't pay regular dues, but most provide tokens of esteem to their local kingpins to curry favor, secure protection, and demonstrate their usefulness.

Footpads represent the part of the Guild that most resembles a traditional thieves' guild. Their work isn't particularly profitable, and their association with the Guild makes the organization less popular among the commoners who are often the footpads' victims. But footpads serve an important purpose. Their constant thrum of low-level activity keeps the Flaming Fist and the Watch focused on petty street crime instead of on racketeering and smuggling, which are how the Guild makes its real profits. Fist and Watch crackdowns cause high turnover among footpads, which serves to weed out the careless and the stupid.

Enforcers: Guild enforcers are the group's muscle and backbone. They aren't trusted with high-profile jobs or delicate assignments, but they're reliable workhorses for daily chores. Enforcers handle the Guild's essential rackets in smuggling, protection, and gambling. They work as bouncers at gambling halls, go door-to-door through the Outer City collecting Guild fees, and make a fuss when a client doesn't pay those fees.

Operators: The Guild calls on its operators when it needs mastery or finesse. For example, an operator steps in when a hard-to-frighten shopkeeper or public official defies the Guild and needs reminding of his or her place, when a burglary requires a master thief, or when the Guild needs to negotiate with a shrewd merchant. Because of their intelligence and skills, operators usually fill vacancies caused by retiring (or expired) kingpins. More often than not, ambitious operators use assassinations or bloodless coups to hurry those above them into retirement.

Kingpins: Kingpins function as the organization's crime bosses. Each controls crime in one of the Gate's districts. Kingpins compete with each other for prey and territory in subtle ways, avoiding bloodshed when possible. They work hard to always be in the know in their districts, and they succeed most of the time.

Kingpins who claim territory in the Upper and Lower cities don't rule in the same ways that Outer City kingpins do, because the Flaming Fist and the Watch reduce those populations' reliance on the Guild. Without an army of clients to manipulate and milk for favors, kingpins inside the walls must create specialized systems, such as the Fetcher's army of spies and runners (see page 59).

Guildmaster: The guildmaster heads the cabal. He or she ties the kingpins together and addresses city-wide problems. Many Baldurians, including low-level Guild members, are not convinced that a guildmaster really exists. The kingpins know the truth, however.

The guildmaster's position and power derive from the same system of favors that fuel the rest of the organization. The figure known as Nine-Fingers is currently guildmaster because through favors performed and owed, debts, and blackmail, she has personally broken and tamed most of the Parliament of Peers members, scores of Watch and Fist officers, and more merchants than all the kingpins combined. When a kingpin needs a law amended, a valued operator released from the Seatower of Balduran, or a ship offloaded without anyone noticing what's inside the crates, Nine-Fingers can make it happen. When she does, that kingpin owes her a favor, and the system continues.

Day-to-Day Operations

The Guild's daily operations revolve around running its rackets in protection, gambling, and smuggling.

Protection: Groups of two or three armed enforcers make once-a-tenday calls on all Outer City shops to collect a share of the establishments' profits. Shopkeepers who fork over this fee also purchase Guild-guaranteed protection. The amount each merchant pays is modest, but when multiplied by the number of shops, merchants, and bookmakers being skimmed, the total amount of cash flowing into the Guild's coffers quickly becomes impressive.

When someone claims to have had a bad tenday of profit, enforcers check in with their informants to confirm how many customers entered the place of business since their last visit. Enforcers rarely make allowances for anyone. A proprietor who falls behind on payments can seek a loan, legally or from a neighborhood loan shark; accept the Guild as a full business partner; or visit his or her district's kingpin to ask for more time. Holding out on the Guild might not cost in the short term, but it almost always turns out badly in the long run.

When enforcers finish their day's collections at five to ten businesses, they return to whatever shop, office, or home is their current front; pool their coin with other enforcers' takes; pocket their cuts; and then spend the evening gambling, drinking, and making small talk. Most Guild "offices" are in client-owned businesses. Restaurants, taverns, barbershops, bathhouses, pawnshops, moneychangers' establishments, and funeral parlors are favorite locations.

Groups of three to six operators move the enforcers' hauls from neighborhood headquarters to safe houses each night. One day's haul from one collection point might bring in as much as 100 gp. The Outer City

alone has nine districts, and each has a dozen or so collection points. Protection is a lucrative racket.

Gambling: Contests and games of chance are rampant in the Outer City, but making a decent profit off gambling in those districts requires grinding through thousands of low-coin bets. The real money in gambling is made in the Upper City, where patriars bet ridiculous sums on formalized games and anything else that catches their fancy, such as which captain's ship will return from sea first or whose glass of wine a fly will settle on. Races and boxing or wrestling matches are hugely popular, as are dice games, spinning wheels, stick drops, card games, and guessing or bluffing games between professional teams. The Guild rigs these contests whenever it can, both to maximize its profit and to reward clients with payoffs that don't need to be concealed.

Smuggling: One of the busiest smuggling routes in Baldur's Gate runs between Rivington and Brampton. Anything moving by land to or from Rivington gets taxed at Wyrms Crossing and again at the Basilisk Gate. To avoid paying that double fee, smugglers haul goods by night along the river between Rivington's and Brampton's quays, hiding them in weighted nets dragged behind boats. Near the pier, underwater ropes are hooked to the nets. Other Guild members wait in a waterlogged tunnel that connects to a nearby building's cellar to pull those caches under the pier, through the tunnel, and into the building.

From Brampton, the smuggled cargoes mingle with honest ones and make their way through Baldur's Gate to the Wide. The Guild's river smugglers charge less than the toll collectors and the porters combined, making the smuggling route highly desirable for those bringing goods into Baldur's Gate from the south.

"Nine-Fingers" Keene

The current master of the Guild disdains flashy garb and appearance-improving magic, so the world sees her as she truly is—an unassuming, brunette woman of middling height and build. Neither plain nor beautiful, Nine-Fingers is completely indistinctive. Her forgettable looks, far from being a drawback, were a great asset during her years as a thief. Nine-Fingers has a knack for avoiding attention. She drifts into and out of rooms, unregarded until she speaks. The guildmaster never forgets a face or a name, and she is a shrewd judge of people. Within minutes of meeting someone, she can correctly assess the person's motives, ambitions, and fears and how far that individual can be trusted.

Few people know her given name. To the Gate, she is simply the notorious "Nine-Fingers." The story of her nickname and her rise would be a popular tavern tale if it were widely known. When Astele Keene was five years old, a one-eyed elf kidnapped her, sliced off the little

finger of her left hand, and sent the digit to her parents along with an exorbitant ransom demand. Little Astele's parents borrowed the money from family and friends and bought back their daughter, but Nine-Fingers never forgave the elf—and never forgot his coppery hair and single eye.

Years later, when she was a rising Guild operator, she found her kidnapper in a pipe den, where he was feeding his sable moonflower addiction.

Nine-Fingers blinded his remaining eye and cut off all but the little fingers on both of his hands. She then bought the pipe den and instructed its proprietor to make sure the elf always has enough food, drink, and smoke to stay alive and maintain his addiction. The addict's sable moonflower is laced with the dried yolk of cockatrice eggs, which Nine-Fingers procures at great expense, to transform his smoke dreams into nightmares. Because he's an elf, Nine-Fingers expects her kidnapper to outlive her, so she has made advance payments to ensure that his torture endures throughout his natural life.

Nine-Fingers is now patient and calculating; the passion of her youth has faded. She seeks revenge for offenses against the Guild only when doing so will increase the cabal's profits. A meticulous planner, Nine-Fingers anticipates treachery. She pits troublesome Guild members against each other to blunt any internal threats while simultaneously discouraging open bloodshed.

The guildmaster never goes anywhere without her personal bodyguards, whom the kingpins call the Lady's Court. The six women—two wizards and four accomplished warrior-rogues—are utterly devoted to Nine-Fingers, and she lavishly rewards their loyalty. She prefers anonymity, so her bodyguards accompany her invisibly, sometimes in disguise and sometimes at a distance. When Nine-Fingers speaks with a kingpin, a patriar, or an underworld figure, she often appears to be alone, but she almost never is.

Under her guidance, the Guild has become an integral part of the city's businesses and politics. It polices its own activities to minimize interference from the Flaming Fist and the Watch, and Guild enforcers keep unsanctioned crime to a minimum. Nine-Fingers has invested her substantial wealth (or the portion of it left over every month after she pays off politicians, patriars, judges, and officers) in numerous legitimate businesses. In a city full of spies and informants, her intelligence network is unequalled. Nine-Fingers can guarantee a majority of votes in the Parliament of Peers on any



subject, including the selection of a new duke. Her tools against the patriars include coercion, manipulation, graft, and the threat of exposing their secrets, both true and false. The last thing Nine-Fingers wants is open confrontation with the Fist or the patriars, which would mean blood in the streets. Blood is hard to control and bad for everyone's profit margins.

Rilsa Rael

When Rilsa Rael joined the Guild, she had nowhere else to turn. The Flaming Fist had hanged her father for harboring her uncle when the mercenaries were after him. So her beautiful mother had become a patriar's courtesan to support Rael. When the man's wife discovered the trysts, she demanded that Rael's mother be imprisoned in the Seatower of Balduran, where the woman wasted away and died while her lover went unpunished. Left on her own, Rael joined the gang in Norchapel, where her mixed Tethyrian and Calishite parentage and language skills gave her a natural advantage in bringing Little Calimshan fully under the Guild's influence.

Rael's talent at going unnoticed and her skill with a knife earned her a position on the Lady's Court as one of Nine-Fingers' bodyguards—the guildmaster's favorite, in fact. Her loyalty, ruthlessness, and inventiveness in discreetly solving problems fueled her rise. Acknowledging Rael's potential, Nine-Fingers removed her bodyguard from the court and installed her as Little Calimshan's kingpin. Rael's status as Nine-Finger's favorite hasn't changed, making her heir presumptive to the Guild leadership.

Rael learned how to exploit others from Nine-Fingers, but she does not use intermediaries and scapegoats to insulate herself from her affairs as Nine-Fingers does. Instead, she takes a personal hand in most matters. She moves openly through the Outer City, alternating between helping the poor, slinging insults at any Fist patrols moving between Wyrms' Rock and the Lower City, and occasionally breaking the nose of a reluctant shopkeeper. She even holds a public audience at her headquarters in the Calim Jewel Emporium to hear the complaints of Outer City residents.

Rael's opinions of the Gate's leaders and institutions were formed during her rough childhood. She thinks the Flaming Fist is cruel and uncaring, and the patriars are hypocritical and self-serving. She sympathizes and identifies wholly with the poor in the Outer City



and blames the Fist and the patriars for the terrible conditions there—and the fact that, in her words, “The people need the Guild to protect them from the city and from themselves.”

Fruward the Nail

Few members of the Guild know Fruward except by reputation. They know only that “the Nail” works for the Guild, and that you’ll know him when you see him because of the nail driven right into his forehead. The three-inch-long spike has a wide, square head, the gleam of which Fruward keeps hidden under a handkerchief he wears beneath his battered hat.

Fruward came by his strange injury due to a disagreement with members of the Builders Guild. What Fruward was told would be a late-night negotiation over work contracts in the dry dock where he worked turned out to be an ambush. He was held down, hammered in the head, splashed with ale, and then laid on his face among his tools so that his death could be called an accident.

Later that night, the young Nine-Fingers entered the dry dock to hide from a pursuing Flaming Fist patrol that had spotted her climbing out of a window. She happened upon Fruward lying facedown and heard him struggling to breathe. She turned him over to find him miraculously alive despite the nail in his head—and then Fruward awoke while his head was cradled in her hands. That’s when the doors of the dry dock rattled open, and the Fist patrol entered along with Fruward’s would-be murderers. Disoriented but enraged, Fruward leaped forward, incoherently screaming accusations. A battle ensued, and Fruward escaped with his life only due to the aid of the one who would later become master of the Guild.

Returning to a normal life wasn’t an option—not after killing some of the Flaming Fist and his enemies in the Builders Guild—and the despondent Fruward began to wish the nail had killed him. But Nine-Fingers helped him again. She set him up with a place to live and provided him what he needed to keep going until he came to terms with his new life—as a secret member of the Guild.

The Nail is unflinchingly loyal to Nine-Fingers and carries out her commands without comment. He acts as a buffer for Nine-Fingers, arranging things when she would prefer that her name or the Guild not be directly involved. Few in the Guild recognize Fruward after meeting him unless he reveals the nail in his forehead to them. His face is otherwise unremarkable, and the nail tends to attract the eye, so that the rest of Fruward’s features fall away from memory.

Despite their close association for several years, Fruward and Nine-Fingers now rarely meet. The Nail receives most of his orders by way of message spells cast by a member of the Lady’s Court.

THE GATE'S DEITIES

Baldur's Gate is the site of a large number of temples and dozens of shrines. Some of those shrines, such as the Watchful Shield, have stood for centuries, and others have arrived on the backs of refugees in recent years. Individuals looking for magical services, such as cures or potions, must visit one of the three powerful temple houses within the city. But for those who can pay only with prayer, the Twin Songs district hosts many priests who aspire to increase their followings so they might ascend to grander places of worship.

Most worship in Baldur's Gate centers on three deities—Umberlee, Tymora, and Gond—who have held primacy over the city's prayers for generations. As a port for river and sea traffic, Baldur's Gate has long maintained a temple to Umberlee. The myriad issues that can affect a merchant's fortunes, and the patriars' gambling traditions, made Tymora's worship an important part of city culture. Finally, Gond's priests established themselves as a key cog in city life more than a century ago when they equipped the Gate with the cranes, rail carts, and dry dock facilities that turned this former smugglers' haven into one of the busiest ports on the Sword Coast.

Gond

Duke Torlin Silvershield is high artificer of the High House of Wonders and leader of the Gondar. Even though Silvershield has his hand in everything, the temple verger, Andar Beech, manages its day-to-day affairs. Beech has misgivings about Silvershield's involvement in politics, but the greatest sacrament to Gond is industrious labor, and Silvershield could never be accused of laziness. When civil unrest disrupts work, Beech, Silvershield, and the rest of the Gondar step up.

Beech is a devout servant of Gond who thinks that many Outer City residents reject the joyful yoke of labor in favor of sinful sloth. He is an outspoken critic of the Guild, who he says "steals the labors of others." He isn't sympathetic to the Upper City's citizens, either. The slender verger believes that many patriars are every bit as parasitic as the Guild, since they contribute nothing while resting on the laurels of their assiduous ancestors. In Beech's opinion, the chief difference between the patriars and the Guild is that the patriars worsen the city's problems while the Guild's members cause them.

Umberlee

Umberlee's following in Baldur's Gate was established among the pirates and smugglers who first used the bay as a harbor. While many think of Umberlee as an evil goddess who delights in drowning sailors, the

people of Baldur's Gate know her as a mother—an imperious and fickle one, but a mother nonetheless.

The Water Queen's House stands atop an enormous pier. The Queen's Favor, a huge fountain that rises out of a 6-foot-deep pool, splashes above the harbor near the pier's far end. Its central marble statuary depicts the stern of a life-sized sailing ship, sculpted to appear as if the vessel is sinking. Water spews from holes in its hull, and other streams regularly lash its deck. To power the fountain, Gondar engineers installed pipes between it and the bluffs' reservoirs, such that the downhill descent pressurizes the stream. In public ceremonies, the ship's deck serves as the temple's altar.

Beyond the fountain, the temple crouches on the edge of the pier. The structure's southern portion disappears into the water in a cascade of steps that waveservants (the temple's priestesses) descend when they bring offerings to Umberlee. The Water Queen's House is the city's oldest temple, and segments of it—deep in sodden halls beneath the harbor's water level—boast the oldest stonework still standing in Baldur's Gate. Only the waveservants have seen these ancient tunnels. Indeed, few Baldurians have even stepped inside the Water Queen's House. When someone rings the temple doorbell, two waveservants answer. One takes any offering inside, while the other delivers a short prayer beside the supplicant. Then the remaining priestess goes inside and shuts the doors once again.

Sailors, anglers, harborhands, merchants, seafarers' relatives, and everyone else who depends on the river or the sea offer up whatever they can spare, such as food, a few coppers, or an old ring. People who can give more usually do so, hoping their lavish gifts meet with Umberlee's favor. The priestesses seemingly must receive a portion of this wealth, but these mournful specters have never been spotted buying extravagant items when they're out shopping. Most Baldurians believe that Umberlee takes away what they give to the temple, and that it's bad luck to look at the water when waveservants descend into it with an offering.

Allandra Grey holds the title of Flood Tide in the temple, leading roughly a score of priestesses and following in the traditions of her mother and grandmother. The temple gains most of its clergy from among widowed females whose husbands were lost at sea or young girls orphaned by water-related tragedies. This practice strikes some observers as odd, but the priestesses (who can sympathize from similar experience) are glad to take in, feed, and clothe individuals who are suddenly rendered homeless.



Water Queen's House

Some waveservants believe that working in the Water Queen's House brings them closer to their lost family, and some worshipers descend the temple's steps to join their drowned loved ones. Grey does not promote this traditional practice; nor does she seek to prevent it.

When civil disorder or enemy attacks endanger Gray Harbor, Flood Tide Grey and her waveservants side with whichever faction promises to best protect sailors and anglers. Then they mobilize to save the lives of those folk, ignoring threats to ships and cargo.

Tymora

Since it was seafaring traders who founded Baldur's Gate, clergy of the goddess of good fortune and risk-taking found fertile ground for establishing a temple to Tymora in the city's early days. The Lady's Hall, made of local granite, roofed with slate shingles, and featuring a modest spire, rises only slightly above the Upper City's already tall buildings. Unlike the High House of Wonders and the Water Queen's House, this unassuming building blends nicely with the city's other architecture.

Within the Lady's Hall, statuary and artwork depict scenes that tell tales of pluck and luck winning the day at sea. The temple's art has been accused of catering to the passions of seafaring Baldurians. In actuality, the Tymorans inherited both the artwork and the building, which had served as Valkur's temple in the city's earliest years. After Valkur's priests, or wavetamers, established the temple, a series of infamous sailing disasters sparked a riot in which residents demanded that the wavetamers protect ships from Umberlee's wrath. When another ship sank, killing all aboard it, rioters captured Valkur's priests and threw them—bound and weighted—down the steps of the Water Queen's House. The site of Valkur's temple was considered cursed after that episode, but the Tymorans recognized a great opportunity to challenge the rumors of haunting spirits in the place, and Tymora rewarded their gamble.

Tymora's temple might seem underwhelming, but the building is used only for religious ceremonies, which her devoted care little about. To do Tymora's bidding, her priests, or luckbringers, preside over much of the city's gambling. Rather than participate, they impartially judge races, wrestling matches, cock-fights, and other contests of chance and skill.

The priests work in various gambling halls and gaming establishments and run contests at city festivals. Tymora's luckbringers also act as talent agents for people who have exotic or exceptional abilities, and they help supplicants who need anonymous problem solvers. For various reasons, many Baldurians won't confide in or work with the Guild, the Watch, or the Flaming Fist. So the temple fills that niche for them,

accepting requests, and large donations, to broker solutions. Its clergy recognize the danger of stepping on the Guild's toes, but the priests are firm believers in the mantra "Nothing ventured, nothing gained."

Gunnar Thrune, a transplant from Gundarlun Island in the cold northern sea, is the loud-voiced and ever-smiling temple patriarch. Boisterous to a fault, Thrune can be found wherever betting is fast and furious, egging on gamblers with shouts and hearty backslapping. In times of crisis in the Gate, Thrune immediately encourages and presides over bets regarding the involved parties, his actions effectively proclaiming the temple's neutrality.

Major Shrines

The Upper and Lower cities both contain shrines to particular deities. Unlike the temples, the shrines are single-room buildings or open structures without doors. When a deity's worship is popular, a priest at the favored shrine typically gains the service of numerous acolytes and caretakers, all of whom live near the holy site. But when enthusiasm fades or a priest dies or travels elsewhere, the shrine's upkeep falls to faithful from elsewhere in the city.

Ilmater: The shrine to Ilmater, the god of martyrs and patient endurance, stands in a small, quiet square in Heapside. The Shrine of the Suffering is an unremarkable stone structure. Here, the poorest Baldurians can receive free meals and enough coppers to pay their way through the city's gates.

The structure stands on the entrance to a series of crypts. For a small donation, anyone can have a dead friend or loved one interred in the vaults, where corpses fester in the dark and feed the hundreds of sewer rats that enter through wall chinks. When a person's bones are clean, a worshiper of Ilmater takes them into the attached ossuary chambers, where they are stored by type. It might seem an ignoble end, but for many impoverished residents, the shrine offers the only kind of holy-ground burial they can afford.

Kindhearted citizens from all ranks of society donate small amounts to pay for the shrine's upkeep, supplies for its ministries, and the livelihood of its priest and his two acolytes, who are also his children. Even after ten years, Brother Hodges acutely feels the loss of his beloved wife, but he bears it well with the aid of his younglings, Hansen and Sissa, who are not yet old enough to marry. The community treasures all three. The Gate's poorest residents especially enjoy chatting with Brother Hodges or his offspring, even when the priest has no food or coppers left to give.

Whenever discord takes over the streets, Brother Hodges does his best to help anyone in need. If circumstances in the Outer City worsen, the priest

petitions the dukes, the peers, and the Flaming Fist to be merciful in their judgments and actions.

Lathander: The city's shrine to Lathander, called the Rose Portal, is a sculpture located in the Wide. An arch of rose-hued stone, it stands on a plinth several steps above the street. By long tradition, no structures are built east of the shrine, so nothing but the city wall and the fog stands between the Rose Portal and the first rays of the rising sun.

A handful of priests of Lathander once presided over the sun god's shrine, which virtually all travelers and entrepreneurs visited. Many folk exchanged marriage vows at the arch as well, passing through it to signify a new beginning in their lives. Since the priests' departure, the Rose Portal has fallen from favor—but Baldurians still believe that climbing the shrine's steps and passing through its arch bring good luck.

Oghma: The Unrolling Scroll, Oghma's shrine, stands in stark contrast to the surrounding buildings of yellow stone and slate roofs. Like the High House of Wonders and the Hall of Wonders, its pavilion is made of white marble, but its arched roof is a vibrant red outlined in gold leaf. A wide reflecting pool rests in a deep basin under its roof, and a podium for speeches projects slightly into the water. The shrine's unusual construction efficiently projects the words of a person who speaks from the podium throughout the area.

Loremaster Most High Brevek Faenor, a man in his late forties, officially oversees the shrine. For some time now, he has been lax in his duties, allowing use of the shrine to secular performers and anyone who has news to spread. Oghma is the god of knowledge, inspiration, and ideas, and the shrine was built to be a place to share such things. However, the loremaster has had his eye on the High House of Wonders since he moved to Baldur's Gate. Thwarted in his recent attempt to gain control of Gond's temple, Faenor can now be found studying books in Gond's library or near the Unrolling Scroll glumly listening to Baldurians complain about the shrine's posted speaking schedule. Meanwhile, Faenor keeps his ear to the ground as he awaits another chance to gain the highest seat in the High House of Wonders.

Helm: In the past, Watch members, Flaming Fist soldiers, bodyguards, caravan guards, and anyone who felt the weight of a duty to protect people or things often frequented the Watchful Shield, a shrine to Helm. Since the death of the God of Guardians, however, the small chapel and its porch-like, watch-post wings have stood empty as a form of monument to a god who died doing his duty. Rumors persist that ghosts guard the shrine at night, but the Upper City youths who visit the Watchful Shield in search of adventure typically find an angry Watch soldier instead.

Minor Shrines

A well on Windcobble Street has Eldath's face carved upon it, and folk touch it before drawing water in the morning to bring peace throughout the day. In a graffiti-scrawled dead end that never sees full sun, the destitute take solace in the shadow of a wall on which the black disc of Shar is inscribed. A small oak, one of only a handful of trees in the Lower City, struggles skyward from a crack in a low wall; on Greengrass and Highharvestide, folk string it with bread and fruit for birds in honor of Silvanus. The gauntlets of Torm and Helm are carved above each door in the towers of the city walls. These images flank the city's heraldry and serve as an ever-present reminder of a soldier's duty to protect the city.

Hundreds of these modest, makeshift shrines exist in streets, on buildings, and within homes throughout the Upper, Lower, and Outer cities—as they do in many other Faerûn locales—but a few objects of reverence warrant special mention.

Siamorphe: The title and incarnation of Siamorphe, the exarch of nobility and the hereditary right to rule, has passed from one worthy noble to another throughout the history of the entity's worship. Long ago, the patriars of the Gate worshiped Siamorphe's last male incarnation. But the patriars' shift in attitude, wherein they began to believe that their right to rule gave them the right to profit from others rather than the responsibility to lead well, caused a decline in the worship of Siamorphe, whose dogma has as much to do with responsibility as it does with entitlement. Hundreds of years ago, at a time when little real worship of Siamorphe occurred in Baldur's Gate, the exarch reincarnated, becoming a female Waterdeep noble.

Yet even today shrines of Siamorphe remain in many patriarch estates. Statues of Siamorphe as a regal, richly dressed man who has a sharp beard and balding pate reside in neglected corners, dusty attics, and statuary rooms crowded with capering satyrs, nobly fallen warriors, and ships in the grips of krakens. At the Silvershield estate, a statue of Siamorphe gazes out of a cloak of clinging clematis flowers, decorous but forgotten.

Lurue: The Knights of the Unicorn began as a lark of romantically minded sons and daughters of patriarch families. They took the goddess Lurue as their mascot and went on various adventures for fun. The reality of the dangers they faced eventually sank in, as did Lurue's tenets, including that life is to be relished and lived with laughter; quests should be taken on a dare; impossible dreams should be pursued for the sheer wonder of their completion; and everyone should be praised for their strengths and comforted in their weaknesses.

Since the days of its formation, before the membership of the Knights of the Unicorn spread far beyond

Baldur's Gate, the Helm and Cloak has been the group's de facto headquarters. The establishment's common room still displays a marble carving of a unicorn head with a bronze horn. Many patrons touch or kiss the horn for good luck, and their attention has kept it gleaming for much of its length.

Gargauth: The mysterious Knights of the Shield has long counted many patriars and Gate merchants as members. One long-ago leader of this secret society, Duke Inselm Hhune of Tethyr, married one of his nephews into a patriar family. The duke then bought the family's estate and turned it into a palatial mansion for the local chapter of the Knights. His actions also established the Hhune family as a patriar line.

What few in the Knights of the Shield knew then, or know now, is that Hhune had been consulting with the Hidden Lord of the Shield, a magic shield that would speak to Hhune when he touched it. This shield was not the long-lost *shield of Silvam* from which the group takes its name. Nonetheless, one of Hhune's ancestors proclaimed it as the new totem of the Knights of the Shield, unaware that it was a repository for the spirit of Gargauth, a devil who sought to be worshiped as a god.

As Gargauth began exerting control over Hhune, the duke was compelled to build secret chambers of worship, and sewer entrances to them, beneath his mansion. After Inselm Hhune's death, "the Pit" became an item of dark family lore that most Hhunes preferred to forget about. Its current state is unknown to today's family members.

Twin Songs

This Outer City neighborhood holds shrines to more gods than most people know of—at least until they pass through the place. Refugees from foreign wars or disasters who come to Baldur's Gate by way of Wyrms Crossing often leave tokens of thanks to their gods upon their safe arrival. Tokens became displays, which then gained signposts, and awnings over the signposts to shelter the contents. In time, it became a Baldur's Gate custom to make certain that one's favored gods are represented among the riot of shrines, booths, idols, altars, and temples that sprawls over the Chionthar's northern bank.

Church of Last Hope: This modest Twin Songs chapel professes allegiance to no deity, but it offers the suicidal a reverent end to life through a ritual of reverie. Those who suffer from depression as well as the horribly ill or maimed receive invitations from temple staff, who ascribe their knowledge of those in pain to divine inspiration. The fate of the souls that pass through their hands remains unknown.

MERCHANTS AND TRADE

Many outlanders think of Baldur's Gate as a noisy, crowded, bustling, stinking, and often fogbound port city that never sleeps. They say it is a place where everyone works hard at trade and craftwork, coins are king, and there's no shortage of muscle and gumption.

And they're right. The Gate is a city of traders through and through, and most Baldurians take to heart the motto "Claw hard, or fail and be forgotten." It's one of the busiest Sword Coast ports. It processes streams of nigh countless goods that constantly flow through it in all but the coldest winters, when the Chionthar ices over and Trade Way travel trickles to a stop.

Most days, though, trade is in full swing. Merchants and couriers in the Wide carry goods in baskets atop tall poles, which they harness to their backs and shoulders, to keep their wares out of the way of bustling crowds. Bulk goods that can't be carried in this fashion, such as coal, firewood, potatoes, and casks of drinkables, are often sold sight unseen from shops in the Wide or the Lower City and delivered in handcarts.

As a way to pinch coppers, some Upper City citizens send servants with carts to fetch items rather than have tradesfolk make deliveries to their doors. Nevertheless, when the gates to the Upper City open at dawn every morning, porters flood in, hastening to Upper City addresses to make the day's first deliveries. The moment the flood of deliveries passes, a reverse flow of Upper City servants converges on the Old Wall gates to run errands in the Lower City.

Citizens of the Gate see themselves as vital to commerce, prosperity, and fulfilling the needs of the wider Realms. New ideas, new technologies, and new wares flow through Baldur's Gate. It is where fashions begin or are anointed and where dreams are dashed or forged into real wealth. Baldurians are proud of being at the heart of it all, and they loudly assert their superiority over their rivals in Waterdeep and Athkatla. Locals sneer at the so-called City of Splendors, calling it a place of leisurely trade, where decadents play at being merchants rather than really working at it. And they deride folk in Athkatla as being too wealthy to know enough about the world, real work, or how to be good traders.

Professional Guilds

Baldur's Gate is home to almost ninety professional guilds. Most guildhalls are located in the Lower City, even when their members keep shop and live elsewhere. Since the troubles involving the Iron Throne, the Council of Four has required all guilds to acquire and maintain official charters, and it has outlawed unofficial associations. Such charters must be renewed every year.

The three classifications of charters and the divisions within them create a structure among the professional guilds based on their wealth, traditions, and members' social status. Those that provide goods and services to the Upper City have the "Council's Eminent Fellowship" honorific, those belonging to the Lower City use the "Parliament's Distinguished Union" honorific, and those belonging to the Outer City have the "Balduran's Honorable Company" designation. For example, the bakers, millers, and salters were granted their charter in the Outer City, so they are known collectively as Balduran's Honorable Company of Provenderers. Membership in a professional guild is mandatory in the Lower City, strong in the Upper City, and considered entirely optional in the Outer City.

The city's official professional guilds are organized in the structure outlined below. Each guild is grouped according to the classification of its honorific, and the guilds within a united group are arranged in hierarchical order from the top down within each category.

Council's Eminent Fellowship of . . .

Seafarers (includes ship captains, pilots, navigators, and cartographers)

Traders (caravaneers and guides)

Financiers (bankers, moneychangers, and minters)

Healers (alchemists, surgeons, apothecaries, botanists, and herbalists)

Furriers (furriers and skinners)

Sages (sages and wizards)

Parliament's Distinguished Union of . . .

Clerks (barristers, accountants, scribes, bookbinders, and printers)

Handlers (butchers, woolers, chandlers, fishmongers, and beekeepers)

Metalworkers (blacksmiths, goldsmiths, silver-smiths, armorers, and weaponsmiths)

Shoemakers (cobblers and cordwainers)

Master Builders (architects, engineers, stonemasons, glaziers, and plumbers)

Clothiers (tailors, milliners, weavers, dyers, and perfumers)

Balduran's Honorable Company of . . .

Brewmasters (vintners and brewers)

Publicans (innkeepers and tavernkeepers)

Builders (bricklayers, plasterers, joiners, and roofers)

Leatherworkers (tanners, saddlers, and curriers)

Artisans (painters, sculptors, poets, jewelers, and mosaicists)

Vesselmakers (potters and coopers)

Tinkers (tinkers, toolmakers, locksmiths, braziers, glassblowers, and smelters)

Woodworkers (shipwrights, carpenters, wainwrights, and woodcarvers)

Lothemasters (mathematicians, philosophers, astrologers, astronomers, and seers)

Outfitters (ropemakers, sailmakers, wagoners, and wheelwrights)

Provenderers (salters, bakers, and millers)

Harborhands (porters, sailors, harborhands, and couriers)

SECRET GUILDS

The establishment of laws for professional guilds officially ended the public presence of the Iron Throne in Baldur's Gate, but it didn't spell the end for the organization. Similarly, the Merchant's League was originally based in Baldur's Gate, and even though prominent patriarch families such as the Irlentrees, Miyars, and Sashenstars disavowed the group, its influence remains.

Iron Throne: The Iron Throne has always focused on control of weapons, armor, and trade in iron. After the trouble in Baldur's Gate many decades ago, a crisis in its leadership led to its decline for a time. But it now secretly maintains a controlling interest in arms and armor made for the Watch and the Flaming Fist.

Merchant's League: The Merchant's League was once fully backed by the Council of Four, but its growing control over trade in the city and its failure to effectively counteract the Iron Throne caused the dukes to ban the organization. Although officially dissolved, the Merchant's League continues to do business through its member families, which control the Seafarers, Traders, and Woodworkers guilds.

Knights of the Shield: The Knights of the Shield is a vast secret society to which nobles, traders, and shopkeepers belong. Members pass information that seems like it might be economically useful to other members and up the chain of command so all can profit. Its members have kept a low profile throughout the group's existence, and they intend to keep things that way.

SHOPS AND OTHER BUSINESSES

The Upper City boasts decorous storefronts, chic artisan studios, and the Wide marketplace. Meanwhile, the Lower City is chock-full of shops and workshops, and the area's rapid growth has pushed many other businesses into the Outer City. The first floors of most Lower City buildings contain businesses of some kind or at least maintain street-frontage shops.

Describing the vast variety of Gate establishments could fill its own book, so we encourage you to consult the *Murder in Baldur's Gate* Dungeon Master's Screen when you need to generate a shop name and describe its services or wares. The entries below describe a handful of notable businesses in Baldur's Gate.

Baldur's Mouth

Baldur's Mouth, the city's news carrier, provides a great service to people at every level of society. Town criers and printed broadsheets are its two methods of spreading news.

The city has used Baldur's Mouth many times to spread word of new laws that the Council of Four passes, to broadcast holidays, and to communicate election results. Criers announce news of the affairs of kingdoms and nations throughout Faerûn, opening every declaration by shouting, "Harken, people of Baldur's Gate, to Baldur's Mouth! The land changes, and Baldur would have his people know!"

Ettvard Needle, the son of a wealthy Lower City tailor, founded the Mouth. After growing up watching Upper City citizens compel his father to bend and grovel, Needle decided to give power to the people in the form of information. So he began paying lamp lads and lamp lasses to shout his stories of various injustices during the day. Since many of his employees were illiterate and had to memorize his news articles, Needle decided to teach them to read so he could give them written copies. As his expenses mounted, Needle sought out sponsors, which led to his attracting advertising and diversifying his criers' stories.

Baldur's Mouth now earns its keep through advertising and is a functioning business. Formerly, to publicize his sponsors, criers would hand out wooden chits that afforded the recipient a discount when redeemed at a particular shop or merchant stall. Now, Needle uses several mechanical scribes that he purchased from the Hall of Wonders to rapidly produce pamphlets and broadsheets that have advertisements in them.

USING BALDUR'S MOUTH

You can use the Gate's news service to give your players a sense that city happenings are continuing in their absence while their characters are engaged elsewhere. You can also use Baldur's Mouth to express how the heroes' actions make news. For instance, if the characters are successful in aiding or thwarting one of the factions in a public incident, they could hear about the situation when they pass a crier in the streets.

From time to time, the broadsheets of Baldur's Mouth have included caricatures of important citizens, such as dukes or parliament members. As the adventure progresses, this practice of satirizing important people happens more often as the city veers out of control. Characters might even find flattering or unflattering images of themselves in the paper, depending on what they've been up to lately.

Baldur's Mouth also has a darker element to it. Even though Needle dislikes the Guild almost as much as he loathes the patriars, he is a good friend and an admirer of Rilsa Rael. Her commitment to the Outer City's residents impresses him, and the newshound hopes to persuade the Guild kingpin to help transform the Guild from a predatory criminal organization into a mercenary citizens' watch not unlike the Flaming Fist. He continues to support Rael through Baldur's Mouth unless someone persuades him that she is causing more harm than good. That task wouldn't be easy to accomplish, since Needle chooses not to acknowledge the Guild's role in the city's growing instability.

Candlekeep Chandlery

On the signboard hanging above its door, the Candlekeep Chandlery proudly advertises the "Longest Lasting Lamps and Magically Made Missives in the Lower City." Marcela Idhra, the proprietor of the place and a wizard of some talent, came to Baldur's Gate from Candlekeep when her magical research and experiments became too disruptive for the other scholars there.

Her shop sells candles, soaps, and cosmetics to well-heeled customers in the Upper City. Her claim to fame is her whispering candle. Each such item has a fire mephitis magically trapped in its tallow. As the candle burns, the mephitis continually voices back whatever sounds it heard while the tallow was being prepared, in the voice of the speaker. Different voices can be recorded in different candles, so that when they are all burned they can make the sound of a conversation or musicians playing together.

Many people find this feature both charming and useful. Whispering candles are popular at patriars' galas; one candle burning at the entrance can welcome guests as they arrive, and many can be placed around

the wings of a ballroom to whisper pleasant reassurances or create an air of mystery. The Watch uses whispering candles with imbedded commands to time its shift changes. It has long been a fashion among patriars to record their wills in whispering candles.

The candles are also appreciated by those who need to communicate discreetly. The Guild, the Flaming Fist, and the patriars use whispering candles to communicate with agents, spies, and secret lovers. The chandlery has a secure room where messages can be whispered through a speaking tube into the boiling tallow. Once a candle is formed, the only way to release the message (and return the mephit to its home plane) is by burning the candle normally. If the candle is destroyed—smashed underfoot, for example, or tossed into a fire—the message can't be recovered, even if the tallow is re-formed into a new candle.

Candles that contain vocal performances by noted bards or readings of epic poems are popular items in the shop. Idhra also carries a small line of novelty candles that unexpectedly utter the roar of an owlbear, for example, or some embarrassing sound. The price of a whispering candle depends on its size, the circumstances of its recording, and the beauty of the candle itself. The smallest and plainest whispering candles, which burn for only a minute, cost 25 gp. Grand and complex arrangements of candles, such as the operatic chandelier employed at the cotillion ball of Duke Silvershield's daughter, cost several thousand gold pieces.

Counting House

The Counting House has stood as a center of trade and business in the city for centuries. A thick-walled and heavily guarded edifice on the waterfront, it serves as the primary location for exchange of currency and valuation of gems and jewelry.

Its owner, a stern and aloof dwarf named Rakath Glitterbeard, holds the key positions of treasurer for the Council's Eminent Fellowship of Financiers and is also the kingpin in the Steeps for the lawless Guild. Loans and other debt markers, both legal and otherwise, that he holds make certain no one in the city dares to challenge Rakath's positions or attempts to rob the Counting House.

Danthelon's Dancing Axe

This new but widely known business on Wyrms' Crossing is named for its owner, the jovial seller-of-sundries Entharl Danthelon. The blond-bearded dwarf deals in assorted quality secondhand goods, ranging from pots and pans to rope, armor, and weaponry.

A flying, animated, double-bladed axe that obeys only Danthelon is said to guard the shop at night. The proprietor tells anyone willing to listen that a grateful elf princess who was also a peerless sorcerer gifted

the axe to him while he was on a daring adventure. The truth is a lot less romantic. The "dancing axe" is an illusion-cloaked, tamed stirge. Danthelon looses the creature when he closes the shop. Appearing as a double-bladed axe, the stirge can be glimpsed through the cluttered windows of the shop as it flits around the darkened interior.

The two crammed floors of Danthelon's shop contain items that an adventurer might need, including empty barrels and cages of all sizes, just-for-show armor, peddler's carts, folding boats with oars, and large lanterns fitted with candles the shopkeeper guarantees will burn for an entire day and night.

Danthelon's has a third floor and an attic, both of which are occupied by a tenant, Yssra Brackrel. The half-elf is small and gaunt, and looks as if she might be starving. She has glittering eyes, disheveled black hair, and a habit of humming to herself. Fierce "Yes!" and "No!" whispers punctuate her wordless tunes.

Brackrel advertises herself as a makeup artist and hairstylist; a sign dangling from the stairs that run up the front of Danthelon's building says as much. Brackrel has those skills and often uses them to maintain her charade, but she makes her real living as a wizard for hire, and is often in the Guild's employ.

Felogyr's Fireworks

Avery Sonshal sells pyrotechnics out of the four-story workshop in the Steeps known as Felogyr's Fireworks. The business has been in his family since Felogyr Sonshal founded it and gave it an alliterative name more than a century ago. Customers often call Sonshal by his ancestor's name, and he never bothers to correct them, believing there's no sense in changing a recipe that works—especially when dealing with smokepowder.

Sonshal has a plump, young-looking countenance and shaves his head. If not for his thick, mutton-chop sideburns, he might be considered baby-faced. A wizard and an alchemist who is a member of the Council's Eminent Fellowship of Healers, Sonshal detests the presence of nonmagical hangers-on in the guild, such as botanists and surgeons.

Felogyr's Fireworks has retained a monopoly on smokepowder production in the city since the business's inception. Even the priests of Gond come to Felogyr's to fill their needs. In exchange, Sonshal has never sold smokepowder to anyone not of the temple of Gond or the Council of Four, except in the form of fireworks. The shop does sell other items to a broad clientele, specializing in torches and candle wicks whose flames burn in various hues; smoke and flash effects for stage productions; and various flashfire rubs, which are spread on meats before they're set alight to add distinctive smoky flavors.

Torches that burn a rosy red are Sonshal's top-selling item. Baldurians use them to illuminate a traditional cobble party, or outdoor storytelling session. When passersby see a rose torch lighting a street corner, an alley, or a courtyard, they recognize that the symbol signifies an opportunity to hear and tell tales of all kinds. The stories can be true or fiction. By custom, cobble parties are quiet and polite affairs that do not involve drinking or music.

Hissing Stones Bathhouse

In Seatower squats a low, stone structure built in the classic Chessentan style. When the High House of Wonders and the Hall of Wonders were erected, an enterprising Baldurian decided to capitalize on the popularity of all things Chessentan and built a bathhouse, complete with hypocaust floors, mosaic tiling, and artfully painted walls. The bathhouse was hugely popular for a time. After changing fortunes and hands over the years, it's now enjoying a renaissance due to Duke Abdel Adrian's practice of visiting the location.

The Hissing Stones Bathhouse is built around a central cloister that encloses its cold baths, which are beautifully decorated. An impressive mosaic in the center of the cold baths dominates the scene. It shows an arresting image of a wizard grappling with a dragon as the two fall through the clouds. The dragon is wrapped around the wizard's body, and the wizard's free arm is pointing a wand into the dragon's roaring mouth. Refracted light and rippling water seem to animate the figures, as though wind were ruffling the wizard's robe and the dragon's wings were moving.

The Hissing Stones offers a number of amenities in addition to its cold baths. Steam rooms are available in its western gallery and hot baths in its eastern gallery. A day at the baths costs 5 sp. For 1 gp, a customer can purchase time with a sinew soother, who relieves knotted muscles. For 2 gp, a patron can soak in a curative salt bath, which is said to help ward off or remove illnesses.

The Hissing Stones has a special niche in city politics as a neutral and safe meeting place. Its proprietor, a moon elf named Merilyn Allaryr, doesn't allow patrons to bring anything inside the baths other than the cotton and silk bathrobes she provides, which lack pockets and folds. All patrons must entrust Allaryr with all the belongings they bring with them, including garments, jewelry, arms, armor, potions, tools, magic items, and anything else they happen to be toting around.

Allaryr won't be bribed, and she makes absolutely no exceptions to this policy. She arranges a lot of important business meetings and knows that the success of the Hissing Stones depends on its reputation as a safe place. Allaryr also pays her stewards and aides well enough that they are unlikely to accept less than

a mound of gold to break the rules. Even if one were persuaded to do so, the attendant still wouldn't allow inside anything that might be used violently, since each acts as the sole custodian over his or her designated chambers and would be instantly implicated in any incident.

Sorcerous Sundries

The tall, round building currently known as Sorcerous Sundries has the most magnificent roof in the city, a vast dome seemingly made entirely of stained glass. Inside, arched stonework that supports the roof above the uppermost floor compromises the illusion, but its effect is impressive nonetheless.

Over the years, the structure has been employed as a residence, a clothier's shop, a restaurant, a greenhouse, and a flower shop. Its current owner has returned the building to its original purpose, doing business as a magic shop.

The ground floor, the only area into which patrons are permitted, is awash in silk curtains, thick rugs, and luxurious furniture. Magical symbols liberally adorn the Sorcerous Sundries' decor, and a sign inside the entrance assures customers that the symbols are protective in nature. The ceiling is

made of multicolored glass, as are the outer rims of the structure's upper floors. When light filters through the stories of the building, moving rays and splotches of multicolored light dance in the shop. Minor enchantments enhance the effect, making for captivating skygazing as patrons wait for the proprietor to fetch ritual components or consult otherworldly entities.

The wizard in residence, an aged human who calls himself Rivalen Blackhand, claims to have come from Halruaa. Blackhand says he was once capable of mighty magic before a battle with a demon blackened and withered his right hand, forcing him to end his adventuring ways.

Now Blackhand earns a large, steady income from the import and sale of components for rituals and spellcasting, dubious fortune-telling, and even more-dubious spells of good luck or greater skill. Blackhand flatly refuses to sell spells, and he denies having magic items for sale. However, to keep the rumors alive and his prices high, the wizard sends his apprentice, a gnome named Gilligunn, to contact seekers of such items and make transactions "away from the master's eye."



CAFES, INNS, AND TAVERNS

The Gate's economy relies on and caters to traders and travelers who journey to the city by land and sea. Thus, the city has an expansive array of cafes, inns, and taverns from which to choose. Most such establishments are both inn and tavern, as the tavernkeepers and innkeepers guilds dictate. Cafes remain outside the guild system and sell only alcohol-free beverages, snacks, and other light fare.

The Blade and Stars

This inn is named for its unusual signboard, an enchanted shield that was looted from a ruined village in Amn following an old trade war. A circular piece of wood painted black, its front displays a curved silver saber and a female's pale, slender arm whose long fingers grip the hilt of the blade. The enchantment on the shield, still strong after decades of hanging out in all weather, causes glimmering motes of light to wink on and off as they travel across the saber. Many local legends have sprung up about the shield's power and the saber depicted on it, but the inn's proprietor insists that the illusion of "stars" is the shield's only magic. Meanwhile, the shield still does what the inn's founder intended it to do when she brought it back and hung it above the door: It draws business.

The interior of the Blade and Stars is an unremarkable yet comfortable inn. Lacking a tavern and a dining room, the long, tall building is filled with bedrooms and small apartments in which travelers can stay for fair prices and have food and drink sent up to them. Many of the rooms have private balconies overhanging the street, providing visitors with a great place to stay while watching the city in full swing.

Because eating requires renting a room, locals avoid the Blade and Stars unless they need space for a private gathering. The inn's current proprietor, a Turmian female named Aurayaun, is happy to rent rooms for a few hours, provided that the renters also place a large order of food and drinks.

The Blushing Mermaid

The Blushing Mermaid is a noisy establishment whose clientele is known to break into brawls over a spilled mug, a funny look, or an ugly face. It's infamous throughout the Sword Coast as a place to do illicit business. Baldurians often warn travelers against visiting the Blushing Mermaid unless they're well armed, know how to use their weapons, and bring plenty of like-minded, trusted friends.

The Blushing Mermaid consists of a confusing maze of wings and oddly interconnected floors. It

has at least four levels of cellars. Its rooms are low-ceilinged, dingy, and furnished with mismatched, secondhand items. Its windows have iron bars on the outside and heavy wooden shutters with wooden bars on the inside. Patrons are told, "The boards are there to use. Management is not responsible for losses of any kind, including life and limb." Not many people actually sleep in the Blushing Mermaid, since raucous bar fights are liable to erupt at any hour.

The lobby is the only high-ceilinged room in the place. A life-sized, crudely carved, wooden mermaid hangs above the reception desk. A score or more shriveled, blackened hands are nailed to the mermaid's body. According to the staff, "Folk who forgot their coin purses donated 'em."

Most of the Mermaid's patrons are old, scarred sea dogs who whittle away the day and night nursing drinks and swapping tales. Each one is a contact for this or that cabal, thieving brotherhood, smuggler, bandit group, fence, panderer, or some other shady dealer. Some work for the Guild. Negotiations with such contacts begin with a palmful of silver to loosen one's memory. If such a contact pushes a tankard toward a visitor during an interview, the sea dog is looking for a refill, but not of ale.

The fare prepared at the Mermaid is simple and filling. It's all decent except for a vile stew based on pickled fish. Many sailors order crusty nutbread rolls with thick gravy ladled over them or handwheels of cheese. The Mermaid also serves raw fish on wooden platters, a tradition its chef (born in Kara-Tur) brought to the tavern. Its house beer is a thick sea ale that's more bitter than most tongues find enjoyable. The establishment also serves stout, a Mintarn lager, and whiskey strong enough to strip paint from wood.

Elfsong Tavern

One of the most well-known establishments in Baldur's Gate is located a few blocks from the Basilisk Gate in Eastway. The name



of this tavern comes from its unearthly tenant—a disembodied elven voice whose song occasionally fills the tavern. The singing isn't loud enough to disrupt conversation, but it is clear, beautiful, and lamenting. The ballad's lyrics make clear that the ghostly lady is lamenting a lover lost at sea,

but no one is sure how she came to haunt the tavern.

The song often moves folk to tears, even when they can't understand the archaic dialect. Many customers frequent the tavern just to hear the melancholy ballad.

During the song's infrequent occurrences, a customary hush overtakes the crowd, and any noisy patrons find dangerous looks leveled at themselves. Customers are expected to be armed, and the known custom is that all patrons need to watch their backs except when the sad lady's singing.

Elves hearing her song for the first time often appear stunned. By tradition, the bartender silently serves a first-time elf customer a free tallglass of elverquiss. First-time customers of any race who weep upon hearing the song usually find regular patrons putting comforting arms around them. By tradition, music of any sort is not sung or played in the tavern. The ghostly lady has the audience to herself.

The Elfsong Tavern's ground floor is a taproom that serves hearty, salty meals and saltier snacks—to encourage drinking, of course. Blue-glassed lanterns with blue flames (a Felogyr's Fireworks product) light the dark interior. Several cramped, twisting stairways lead from the taproom to upstairs meeting rooms that can be rented by the hour. Staffers politely warn occupants when time is running short.

Alan Alyth, the tavern's handsome, graying proprietor, has run the establishment for decades. His half-elf mother's elven blood has kept him living longer and looking better than full-blooded humans his age. Alyth continues his mother's tradition of offering patrons an informal, secret banking service. He provides an extension of sorts on bar tabs, enabling customers to deposit money or take out loans, if Alyth trusts them enough.

The Helm and Cloak

Located at the heart of the Upper City, just steps from the High House of Wonders and the High Hall, the Helm and Cloak serves the upper crust and has prices to match. Its food is excellent, and its accommodations are sumptuous. The Helm is a fashionable place to dine and chat. Patriars and Lower City residents who have lofty social ambitions favor it.

Unlike other high-priced establishments, the Helm and Cloak doesn't follow the latest fashions. Its proprietors devote themselves to providing patrons with a warm and comfortable environment in which to stay, conduct business, or have a quiet meal or drink. Traditional good taste, plush furnishings, a quiet atmosphere, and attentive service keep the Helm and Cloak busy.

The upscale inn and tavern consists of two connected buildings. The Helm is an old rooming house that faces Gond's High House of Wonders. A massive iron helmet once worn by a titan (according to the wait staff) shadows its entry. The smaller Cloak, an old house that fronts a courtyard off Windspell Street, faces the High Hall. A cloak hangs over its porch. As the story goes, a priestess of Sune once owned the

house and had lurid pictures painted on its ceilings. The original cloak was hers, but many mantles of different colors and fabrics have been displayed above the Cloak's door since then.

The Helm's common room holds a marble unicorn bust whose bronze horn is touched for luck. The statu-ary is a symbol of the Knights of the Unicorn (see page 50), a group of chic-younglings-turned-adventurers who used the Helm and Cloak as an informal headquarters.

A Cormyrean husband-and-wife team runs the inn and its large staff with smooth efficiency. Unknown to most, Vedren and Halesta are retired members of the Knights of the Unicorn. The organization has grown far beyond its humble beginnings and now boasts members across Faerûn. After Vedren and Halesta's adventuring party fractured, the two humans came to Baldur's Gate to share a less dangerous life together. The unicorn bust is a reminder of what brought them together. Still, old habits die hard, and the innkeepers keep their ears to the street and their swords sharp.

Jopalin's

Once a seedy dockside tavern catering to sailors with thin purses, Jopalin's transitioned into a café when coffee and tea drinking became fashionable—and as membership fees increased for the tavernkeepers guild. The low-ceilinged eatery and its dockside seating is now an establishment that sailors largely spurn. Merchants and traders frequent Jopalin's when they want to appear fashionable and sophisticated but are too busy to leave the port to take meals elsewhere. Jopalin, the café's owner, is the half-elf son of the tavern's founder, after whom he was named.

The Low Lantern

An aging, three-masted merchant ship rocks gently in the water alongside the Stormshore Street dock on the harbor's east side. Ostensibly a festhall, a tavern, and a gambling house, the Low Lantern also serves as a place for covert meetings in which sensitive and illicit plans can be discussed without fear of eavesdroppers.

The open upper deck is a place of hanging lamps, genteel repartee, smoking, and drinking. All the wilder goings-on at the place normally happen belowdecks, but special parties can be arranged to take place in the rigging and sail booms for those who are willing to brave the heights and able to pay the high fee.

Most patrons arrive armed, and rowdiness is common, but the Low Lantern's ex-pirate "crew" moves quickly to quell large brawls and prevent fires. The "Lady Captain" Laraelra Thundreth—a gambler, a sorcerer, and a secret Guild member—owns the oft-leaking and hastily repaired vessel.

The Splurging Sturgeon

The Splurging Sturgeon struggled as a threadbare tavern for decades until its most recent owner, Hennut Griot, took its humorous name seriously. Originally from Ormpur, Griot discovered that her traditional fish dishes were too spicy for the local palate, so she hired Baldurian cooks to teach her Sword Coast recipes. After she mastered those and earned a stellar reputation, she expanded her menu to include dishes of her own for locals to try out. That success led Griot to hire a series of cooks from many lands, and from them she learned to prepare exotic fish fare.

Now the Splurging Sturgeon cooks just about anything that's pulled out of the river or sea, and in dozens of ways. The Splurging Sturgeon rotates its dishes based on popularity and availability. It also offers specials for the adventurous eater.

Three Old Kegs

One of the most cozy, welcoming, and tolerant establishments in Baldur's Gate, Three Old Kegs is named for its sign, featuring three lashed-together barrels hanging from a pole. The place is immensely popular, so much so that regular wayfarers' donations have rebuilt the business after fire gutted it on three separate occasions.

The current Three Old Kegs features a large, central feasting hall whose entrance faces the bar and opens directly into the main common room. The Kegs serves hearty, simple food and good brews and wine. The establishment also rents out two private dining rooms, which are flanked by the kitchen and the pantries. Three of the Kegs' floors are open to patrons, and its small, spartan guest rooms boast individual chimneys. The Kegs is known for the welcome it gives to travelers, and it offers mending, laundering, and weapon and tool repair and sharpening services to guests. The building's two levels of cellars and its attic serve as housing for the staff and as storage and work areas.

The first of the fires toasted the Kegs' original thick rugs and wall hangings, which have for the most part not been replaced, but the beloved inn and tavern offers just as many crowded bookshelves as its predecessors did. The Kegs remains a quiet establishment that patrons seek out as a refuge from revelry and the bustle of the streets. A popular spot for reading, napping, and idle gambling, the Kegs prohibits rowdiness. Patrons may wear weapons only in their rooms and in the arming lobby adjacent to the structure's entrance.



Roisterers are warned that Three Old Kegs has a resident population of more than a dozen full-season renters who are retired from the Flaming Fist. These "weather eyes" won't set foot outside the Kegs on anything called an adventure, but they do defend the inn staff, keep order, and dispense advice and useful contact information to guests who seem in need of it. They make their coin as recruiters and watchers for the Flaming Fist, message holders, and occasional armed escorts for merchants who are transporting goods.

Alstan, Brunkhurn, and Klalbrot Wintersides, known collectively as "the Old Toads," own the Kegs. Kindly but gruff, the three wart-covered brothers work tirelessly and watch over the two-score world-wise widows and middle-aged females who work for the Kegs as maids, cooks, and servers.

Unknown to most patrons, the Old Toads are not wholly strait-laced. Deep inside one of their locked keg cellars is the Big Hollow, a huge empty barrel that sports a concealed door and vent holes. The Wintersides rent it as a hidey-hole for brief periods. Anyone who uses the Big Hollow to imprison or mistreat someone is reported to the authorities.

The Smilin' Boar

The Smilin' Boar was once a failing tavern, until its new owner, Jentha Allinamuck, took advantage of its Bloomridge locale to convert it into a trendy cafe. The enterprising halfling knocked down a wall to create harbor-view seating. She bought and demolished an adjacent street-front shop and installed a veranda whose comfortable and colorful dinette sets are almost always filled.

Allinamuck kept the old tavern's name and its rude sign of a grinning boar mounting a sow. To play up the silly sign, the proprietor has stocked her cafe with tea and coffee mugs in the shape of pigs' heads and crafted a menu whose light appetizers have names such as sow's delight, three pigs in a blanket, and corkscrew sausage.

The Undercellar

A cluster of chambers in a warren of storage cellars beneath the city has been used as a seedy tavern and festhall for most of the Gate's history. Archways, some with iron-barred, lockable gates, link the cobbled, vaulted chambers of the Undercellar. At least two dozen ways in and out of the popular establishment exist. About half of them connect to other buildings. Not all are widely known, and a few are purposely kept secret.

The affable Heltur "Ribbons" Ribbond, a gaunt, bearded man, runs the Undercellar. Ribbons is always smiling, has never publicly lost his temper or shown fear, and throws daggers and bottles with deadly

accuracy. His cadre of toughs, which everyone calls “the Cellarers,” guard the festhall.

It’s rumored that Ribbons is actually a front, the fall guy in case something untoward should happen. According to gossip, a shadowy owner known only as “Tallhat” employs Ribbons. Some whisper that Tallhat is really Duke Silvershield, while others say Tallhat is the wizard Lorroakan (see page 63), or is actually Guildmaster Nine-Fingers.

The Watch and the Fist never police the Undercellar. Thus, the underground locale serves many unsavory characters, functioning as a meeting place for the Gate’s underbelly professionals and bottom feeders. Visitors are routine in the festhall’s popular areas, but anyone who wanders farther afield quickly runs afoul of the Cellarers. If Ribbons doesn’t recognize someone, he pointedly questions the patron about his or her business in the Gate’s belly.

Several notorious characters, such as the Fetcher, have put down professional roots in the Undercellar and have created Guild-approved corner offices for themselves. The Fetcher is almost always in. Ribbons directs many patrons to the Fetcher’s private chamber. It’s rumored that he’s a Guild agent whose hands dance as he attends to numerous dirty strings, which happen to be attached to Baldurians in the highest and lowest of places.

The Undercellar is also a place of business for Alfrus Manyblades, a fly-ridden, scarred, rasping old dwarf who sells weapons to anyone; Vug Gorkul, a sophisticated, effete yet monstrously large half-orc herbalist who purveys potent medicaments, exotic liqueurs, and vitiating toxins; and Nasparl Nintanter, a sardonic male half-elf who wears an eye patch and sells disguises ranging from the simple to the elaborate.

As a festhall, the Undercellar isn’t riotous or obviously bawdy. Its public areas function mostly as guarded gambling dens and dining areas in which “sociable friends” lounge, chat, and sip drinks that their suitors buy them. For private liaisons, companions sashay their suitors over to the Cellarers, who escort the participants to secluded quarters. Mistreatment of a sociable friend results in a Cellarer immediately whisking the victim away and deserting the offender in the perilous maze of darkness that is the Undercellar’s undercellar.

THE FETCHER AND THE TUNNEL

The Fetcher is an unflappable, obese, middle-aged man named Osgur Hallorn. This walrus-mustached puppetmaster runs gangs of street urchins as spies and couriers. The latter fetch and deliver items for the Fetcher’s high-paying clients.

The Fetcher is a man whose big head, hands, and shoulders make his bulging belly not seem so protuberant. He has a large, beaky nose. Half his scalp is covered in messy, dark curls; the other half is naked except for a gnarled, old burn scar. He rarely shows fear or anger, preferring to be jovial; he drawls calmly in the face of danger. The choreographer of urchins spends most hours each day in the Undercellar, where he has a back-corner office. Gangs of waifs and rascals drift about the city doing his bidding, which includes spying on figures both prim and feral and delivering items that range from flowers to rubies.

The Fetcher is always armed and protected. His walking stick fires darts from one end when he triggers certain studs. Shadowing their provider, the man who has kept them fed and clothed when no one else would, are a score of acrobatically vicious street youths who carry knives fashioned from glass shards. While the Fetcher is in his office, a dozen or so devoted cats perch on an unlit lamp wheel above his head and pounce on anyone who menaces him.

The Fetcher is genuinely kind unless he is forced to be ruthless. Usually rumpled and sweating, he drinks a prodigious amount of wine daily without becoming inebriated. Some folk believe that the Undercellar serves him rosewater in wine bottles, so he’s actually sober.

The Fetcher is a Guild kingpin in the Upper City. He maintains his status by squatting on the Guild’s best resource for its actions in the swanky portion of Baldur’s Gate—a secret tunnel beneath the Old Wall, which spans the dividing line between the Lower and Upper cities. The exact path through the cellars and sewers of the passageway is known only to the Fetcher, a handful of his most trusted operators, Nine-Fingers, and (unknown to the Fetcher) Rilsa Rael. The Fetcher or one of his operators brings other Guild members through the tunnel blindfolded and deliberately takes false turns to confuse them.

The Fetcher has no ambition to rise higher in the Guild. He measures his wealth in terms of influence, not coin. He’s addicted to information and needs to be thought of as “in the know,” someone folk listen to and respect. He often orders his gangs to aid a promising prospect on a short-term or long-term basis as an investment in the person’s future and to gain the individual’s good favor. He lives in the cellars of more than a dozen city buildings he owns, rotating between them as he sees fit, and none of his tenants have any idea their landlord has secret rooms beneath their own.

CITY GATES

The commercial blood of Baldur's Gate is channeled through its guarded gates. Eight gates allow traffic through the city walls. Three face outward from the city, five face inward toward the harbor, and one protects the Watch Citadel. Only the Citadel Gate houses no tax or toll collectors, because its use is restricted to the Watch. The gate toll is a trivial amount for anyone of even modest means—a few coppers at most—but it does curtail the comings and goings of beggars and the very poor. Merchants who pass through a gate pay taxes on the goods they bring to market. All these fees are low individually, but so much commerce moves through Baldur's Gate that transit fees fund much of the city's needs.

Citadel Gate: Citadel Gate is the only entrance to the Watch's fortress and barracks, which nestles in a salient of the Upper City's landward wall. The gate has Watch soldiers on duty day and night. The Citadel is one of the few places inside the city walls that has stables. The Watch maintains a small cavalry force, nominally for defense and crowd control, but its chief function is riding in parades and providing honor escorts for aristocrats and visiting dignitaries.

Black Dragon Gate: Facing the Outer City neighborhood of Blackgate, Black Dragon Gate is also called the Landward Gate and the Wrist of Baldur's Gate, the latter being a poetic reference to the city's shape curving around the harbor like that of a hand grasping for gold. The great Trade Way to Waterdeep and the north passes through Black Dragon Gate. Outside the Upper City, the road extends through miles of sprawling slums, paddocks, cut-rate inns, and stockyards.

The gate takes its name from the story about a Knight of the Unicorn adventurer who triumphantly displayed a black dragon's head above the structure. As the tale goes, a dragon had threatened the city to gain food and gold. A knight hid among the offered tribute, supposedly covering his scent with pig dung, and ambushed the dragon as it slept. After birds picked clean the creature's head and souvenir hunters snatched most of its teeth, the Council of Four elected to have a sculpted stone black dragon head installed over the gate's inner entrance. Persistent rumors claim that the head can magically spew acid at attackers during a siege, but no one can prove to have seen it do so.

Baldur's Gate: Despite being the city's namesake, Baldur's Gate is the oldest and least impressive of its entryways. The gates that lead out of the city are necessary for its defense and thus have been well maintained and bolstered through the years. The Old Wall's other gates were built later, at the behest of wealthy patriars who could afford to lavish them with fine doors and carved stone. In contrast, Baldur's Gate

looks much as it did when the Old Wall was first built, although the tread of millions over the centuries have worn smooth the cobbles running under it.

Public vehemence against taxation at this gate sparked the popular revolution that led to the installation of the first dukes centuries ago. Yet now the gate is a collection point for taxes that help fund the city government, because the original Council of Four instituted taxation at the gate soon after the rebellion. The irony of this situation is not lost on the citizens, but it provokes little bitterness; as the saying goes, "The insult to history is history."

Old Wall Gates: Four smaller gates pierce the Old Wall within the city. From west to east, they are the Sea Gate, Manor Gate, Gond Gate, and Heap Gate. During the daytime, small Watch detachments guard these gates to ensure that only those under a patriar's order use them, and to protect the ubiquitous tax and toll collectors. These gates are guarded more closely at night, because no one is allowed into the Upper City after dark unless in a patriar's company or livery or in possession of a patriar's invitation or Watch token.

Basilisk Gate: Piercing the city's eastern wall, this gate connects the Lower City to the road that stretches through the Outer City slums and southeast to Wyrms Crossing. The route eventually reaches the great Coast Way that leads south to Amn, Tethyr, and Calimshan.

The many statues inset in the walls and looming from the battlements above earned the gateway its moniker. After an effigy of the first Duke Silvershield was installed near the gate following his death, it became popular among the patriars to place statues of family members at the gate or to fund carvings of heroic historical figures. The display became cluttered, though, and fashion turned against the custom decades ago.

Cliffgate: This minor gate gives access to the Tumbledown district and the cliffs overlooking the Chionthar River upstream from the harbor. Long ago, the Szarr family, whose members were merchants and farmers, owned an expansive holding that sprawled over the area. But on a frosty, mist-shrouded night, a rival family crept inside and slew them all, looting and burning as they abandoned the scene. Now tales abound about ghosts of the Szarr family wandering Tumbledown's streets on murky nights to steal folk away. Sheltered from landward winds by the hill, Tumbledown is often fogbound, which would seem an environment conducive to ghosts. But a more likely explanation for those who mysteriously vanish are rough handling, followed by tight bonds, a thick gag, and a brief fall into the river.

DEATH AND TAXES

Baldur's Gate has become home to vast numbers of refugees who sought to escape a brutal regime, a deadened economy, war, miserable family politics, or any number of other social issues. But just like in the home they left, death and taxes await them in the Gate.

Cemeteries and Tombs

As in most walled cities, the most valuable commodity inside the walls of Baldur's Gate is space. As such, traditional graveyards are a luxury that the Upper and Lower cities can't afford. The High House of Wonders entombs its greatest leaders and saints in catacombs beneath that edifice. Most smaller temples and some of the large family estates in Manorborn have burial niches in which patriars enshrine the cremated ashes of their revered dead for posterity. Everyone else who dies is left in the paupers' ossuary in the Shrine of the Suffering (see page 49) or buried outside the city.

Small cemeteries dot the crowded neighborhoods of the Outer City. Most are disorganized affairs hemmed in by rough stone walls or encroaching buildings. A shared respect for the dead keeps people from living in or building over cemeteries, but it doesn't stop them from grave robbing. Thus, few Baldurians bury valuables along with their dead.

The largest cemetery is on a sprawling plot of land near the cliffs in Tumbledown. This resting place has grown up around the tomb of the Szarr family, which had claimed the area before the Outer City expanded over it. A few decades ago, some of the cliffs fell away, dropping portions of the family's plots into the water below and revealing crypts embedded in the cliff that were apparent to anyone with a vantage from the river. Tomb robbers have come and gone, so now only bats and cliff-dwelling birds haunt these crypts. Even so, eerie red and green lights are sometimes spotted in the exposed chambers.

Hauling the Dead: For as long as anyone can remember, the Candulhallow family has operated the city's dead carts. Bodies of the dearly departed are loaded onto these hand-drawn wagons and carted to the Shrine of the Suffering or outlying cemeteries.

The Candulhallows, meanwhile, have a secret smuggling arrangement with Nine-Fingers to conceal goods in the shrouds and funeral wrappings of corpses in transport. Guards and toll assessors never search the dead, so this scheme has worked flawlessly for years. The discovery of this closely guarded secret would rock the city as well as ruin the Candulhallows.

Funding the City

Entry into Baldur's Gate comes at a cost—literally.

Everyone pays 2 cp to enter the city through either the Basilisk Gate or the Black Dragon Gate. Folk looking to cross through Wyrms' Rock must pay 2 cp apiece if they're on foot or horse or 1 sp apiece if they're hauling carts or wagons. Sailors don't pay a landing tax, but ships do pay 1 gp for any day in which they load or unload cargo.

Everyone who leaves the city with a handcart or carrying a litter pays 1 sp—even if the cargo is nightsoil, goldflow, or trash. Or a person can pay 1 cp to exit "unladen" with whatever goods can be carried in hand or on one's back.

People exiting with handcarts or litters pay additional taxes based on the amount and the nature of what they carry or haul. Nightsoil carriers pay the lowest taxes, often amounting only to 1 cp more than the usual exit fee. Goldflow is useful for various manufacturing work, so exiting with it costs an additional 3 cp. Trash is judged based on its potential resale value. Those who can't pay are turned back or have some of what they carry confiscated as payment. Needless to say, many of the Outer City's poorest residents never see inside the city's walls.

Even though tolls apply to the patriars, too, most of them typically give collectors a sizable, one-time bribe and never pay again, simultaneously gaining the right to skip to the head of the queue.

Inside the city, anyone bringing goods to sell in the Wide, through Black Dragon Gate or Baldur's Gate, must pay half of what the cost would be to take the merchandise outside the city as a fee for a stall space in the Wide. Thus, to avoid doubling up on fees, merchants try to sell all their goods in the Wide each day, and the last hours before dusk are a frenzy of deal-making.

Twice-Yearly Taxes: The Watch and the dukes provide no law or civic services outside the walls, but that doesn't stop the Council of Four from sending tax collectors to all Outer City building owners on a biannual schedule. The collectors also circulate through the Lower City, but their Flaming Fist guard contingents are much smaller inside the walls. The collectors' take varies by building size.

Upper City citizens and businesses pay biannual taxes, too, but they negotiate their levels of taxation, deferment, and tax forgiveness in private meetings. Patriar families pay the highest taxes in Baldur's Gate. As a way of legally buying power and influence in the city, many wealthy families regularly cover the tax burdens of their servants and favored businesses as well.

DRAINPIPES, CISTERNS, AND SEWERS

Baldur's Gate is blessed with plenty of rainfall—too much, according to some. The disadvantages of all that rain are that wooden buildings deteriorate faster than they would in a drier climate, many buildings feel perpetually clammy inside, the Outer City's unpaved streets are often rivers of mud, and the Lower City's streets are always slick. Benefits of the abundant rain include the city's beautiful window gardens and the fact that the Upper City can collect plenty of clean drinking water in rain-catching reservoirs instead of carrying or pumping all its water up the hill from the river.

Above Ground

The roofs of the High Hall, the High House of Wonders, and the Hall of Wonders are all efficient rain-catchers, thanks to the engineering skill of the priests of Gond. Over many years, the system expanded to include most of the Upper City's large buildings. Clean water runs from hundreds of roofs through intricate downspout systems into aqueducts coursing beneath the streets to four separate, underground catch basins. Two are located beneath the streets of Manorborn, one beneath the Temples district, and one beneath the Wide. Atop each cistern is a monumental fountain from which residents draw water. Several of the largest estates in Manorborn have their own similar but separate catch systems built around cisterns fed from slate roofs.

The plentiful rain also provides natural flushing for the Upper City's sewage system. The sewage tunnels are much older than those of the drinking-water system. The two systems are mostly, but not completely, separate. A few underground sites exist where a person can cross from one set of tunnels to the other. Ideally, of course, water flowing through the sewage lines doesn't cross into the aqueducts.

Even with plenty of rain and the expert engineering of Parliament's Distinguished Union of Master Builders, the Upper City's sewage system still depends heavily on physical labor for most of its maintenance. It functions remarkably well, provided that the laborers—all of whom live in the Outer City—stay on the job.

The Lower City's sewage system is comparatively primitive. Most Lower City residents set their garbage and sewage in the streets each night and morning. They depend on, and pay fees to, collectors of nightsoil, goldflow, and refuse. However, rain washes anything that isn't disposed of or collected appropriately down the steep streets. Because the Lower City is built around a crescent's inside arc, everything drains

naturally into the harbor, floats from the harbor to the river, and drifts down the river to the sea. Meanwhile, Lower City citizens catch most of their clean water in rain barrels. The area also boasts a few small wells and fountains, which are replenished by runoff from the Upper City.

Rain barrels are common in the Outer City, too, but the area's topography also allows people to dig wells. Refuse is another matter entirely. Everything ends up tossed into the streets or "gutterbrooks," which are dug haphazardly between buildings to drain standing water.

Below Ground

The sewers and aqueducts beneath the Upper City are much the same in design. Most pipes and channels are small enough to be a tight squeeze for a cat, while many others are just big enough for a human to crawl through.

In one of the large tunnels, a water channel runs down the center or along one side, and a narrow walkway spans one or both sides. The tunnel's ceiling is arched and about 6 feet high. Such tunnels are never more than 10 feet wide and often are smaller than half of that.

Locked iron gates are meant to bar residents from entering the sewers. But no one worries much about people sneaking into the sewers, so the locks of these barriers are mostly rusted into uselessness and the gates are sometimes lashed open to prevent them from rusting shut.

The aqueducts are a different story. To safeguard the public, the master of drains and underways ensures that the aqueducts' gates and locks are well maintained. Every entrance to the aqueduct system is locked, and iron gates close off the tunnels every 400 to 500 feet. Only the master of drains and underways and the highest-ranking High House of Wonders priests have keys to the system.

The Upper City's four water-storage cisterns are cavernous, brick-lined rooms that house deep, circular, artificial lakes at their hearts. As many as eight water channels enter one of these chambers. Iron gates block the tunnels, and pumps of Gond send cistern water up to street-level fountains.

MYSTERIOUS LOCATIONS

Baldur's Gate is home to many strange locations, such as Mandorcai's Mansion (page 18), Ramazith's Tower, and Seskergates mansion. A few of its more notorious sites, including the Undercellar (page 58) and Wizard Cave, reside under the city's skin.

Ramazith's Tower

Ramazith's Tower is a six-story, pagoda-style, cylindrical structure of brick. Its numerous roofs jut from the building every half floor, and a pointed roof tops the structure. Whether the tower is a unique Baldur's Gate landmark or a deplorable eyesore depends on one's opinion.

The tower is named after Ramazith, the sailor-turned-wizard who designed and erected it. During his days as a mariner, Ramazith acquired vast knowledge of the sea. He became a full-fledged wizard to



Ramazith's Tower

further his interest in what lay beneath the waves. He must have discovered something of great value in the watery depths, because he had never been known as a wealthy person before construction began on the tower that would bear his name and whose exotic architecture would

remind him of his home in faraway Durpar.

Eventually, Ramazith disappeared. No one knows where or how, but the most popular rumor is that he met his doom during an ill-advised dalliance with a nymph.

The tower is now home to Lorroakan, a young, short-tempered, red-haired mage known for having expensive taste and being chronically short of funds. He is a recent arrival from Athkatla. Some Baldurians gossip openly that he is the mysterious "Tallhat," reputed owner of the Undercellar. Others whisper cautiously that he is an exiled Cowled Wizard and a fugitive from the arcanist cabal's founders, House Selemchant in Amn.

Even though Lorroakan performs almost any magic service for pay, he most often enchants clothes to make them water- and mildew-repellent, which is quite handy, given the Gate's constant rain and moisture. Lorroakan refuses to sell the ritual to anyone.

Seskergates

For more than a century, this tall structure adjacent to Mandorcai's Mansion housed the Sesker merchant family. The reclusive Osimund Sesker, the last of his line, died alone in this mansion two winters ago.

Imbralym Skoond, an aspiring young wizard from Athkatla, bought Seskergates to use as his home and magic workshop. Before doing so, Skoond arranged to be introduced to Torlin Silvershield. The duke immediately saw a use for the man's ambition and amorality and seized the opportunity to gain a completely loyal "personal wizard."

After Skoond purchased the Seskergates mansion, popular gossip held that the gaudy manor was a perfect match for his outlandish, foreign customs. Its garishness was only part of its appeal to Skoond, though, whose real interest lay in the structure's history. Entwhistle Sesker, a successful smuggler who made his home a warren of secret passages, hidden rooms, false walls, and concealed entrances and exits, built the mansion in the Gate's early years. By Skoond's time, all but a few of the house's more whimsical secrets had been generally forgotten. Skoond, however, sought out the manor after reading about it in an old history of Baldur's Gate.

Skoond's tall, narrow mansion is barely furnished. The wizard uses it only for sleeping and storage; he eats his meals out and spends every waking moment running Silvershield's errands and furthering his own plots. The young peer also secretly houses several alchemists and guards in Seskergates, using an alley behind his home to cover their comings and goings.

Wizard Cave

Rumor has it that a tower of stone, whose origin is unknown, stands on the brink of a vast crevasse somewhere deep beneath the Upper City. A wizard who used it as his home reportedly spoke of it on his infrequent trips to the surface. No one has seen the wizard in thirty years. Now his tower stands empty in the dark, awaiting anyone brave enough to search for the secret sewer-to-cavern path leading to the structure. Baldurians call the tower's location Wizard Cave, and the term has become synonymous with "a fruitless and foolhardy endeavor." For example, "So you're going looking for Wizard Cave?" or "Steal from the Counting House? That's a Wizard Cave!"

Few believe the rumors. But the tower and cavern do exist, and the wizard did die . . . after a fashion. The magic of the tower's mysterious builders has trapped the wizard's spirit in undeath within the structure—to what purpose, no one knows. Perhaps the tower was originally a conqueror's vanguard outpost, or maybe the structure stands in defense over such a location.

