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VILLAGE BACKDROP: LONGBRIDGE



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VILLAGE BACKDROP: LONGBRIDGE

A hotbed of intrigue and deception, Longbridge is claimed by not one but two noble lords. Sprawled across both banks of a wide, swiftly flowing river forming the boundary between the rivals' lands, the village grew up at either end of a fortified stone bridge of ancient dwarven artifice. A no man's land of sorts, the bridge itself is huge; scores of travellers cross it every day and several businesses have established themselves upon its span to service their needs. Informally led by Einhard Kochel these free traders do not pay tax or offer fealty to either lord and fiercely resist both nobles' overtures.

Longbridge is in turmoil. Rumourmongers whisper bloody war will soon swirl across the span as one noble or the other seeks to settle the matter of its ownership once and for all. Others whisper of hidden stairs in the bridge's pilings plunging deep below the riverbed to secret, noisome catacombs of great antiquity and of the foul, ageless creatures lurking within.

Village Backdrop: Longbridge is designed for use with the 5th edition of the world's most popular roleplaying game.

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Longbridge At A Glance

A hotbed of intrigue and deception, Longbridge is claimed by two rival nobles, Wido Gall and Hilduin Lorsch. Sprawled across the banks of the wide, swiftly flowing Kymi's Run forming the boundary between the lords' lands, the village grew up at either end of a fortified stone bridge of ancient dwarven artifice.

Longbridge is a volatile place. Two noblemen means two bailiffs and two sets of taxes, laws and so on. Many travellers grow angry at paying tolls and taxes twice; heated arguments are commonplace. A no man's land of sorts, the bridge itself is huge; scores of travellers cross it every day and several businesses have established themselves upon its span to service their needs. Informally led by Einhard Kochel, these free traders do not pay tax or offer fealty to either lord. Einhard plots to one day wrest control of the village and set himself up as its new lord.

The village is in turmoil. Rumourmongers whisper that bloody war will soon swirl across the span as either Hilduin Lorsch or Wido Gall settle the matter of ownership once and for all. Other folk whisper of secret stairs concealed in the bridge's pilings plunging deep below the riverbed to hidden, noisome caverns of great antiquity and of the foul, ageless creatures lurking within.

Demographics

Ruler Baron Wido Gall and/or Hilduin Lorsch and/or Einhard Kochel

Government Contested

Population 193 (173 humans, 12 dwarves, 4 half-elves, 3 half-orcs, 1 halfling)

Alignments N

Languages Common

Resources & Industry Farming

Notable Folk

Most of the population are nothing more than hardworking peasants. A few, however, are of interest to adventurers:

Rideth Sehiatyn (location 3; N female half-elf wizard [diviner] 5/rogue 3) Rideth dwells on the bridge and is widely regarded as an expert on the structure.

Donatus Trond (location 6; LE male human rogue 3/cleric 2) Serving baron Hilduin Lorsch, Donatus is unpopular throughout Longbridge.

Einhard Kochel (location 2; NG male human fighter 4/cleric 2): Rumoured to be fabulously wealthy the owner of the Welcoming Hearth plots to claim Longbridge as his own.

Fruen Deadeye (LE female half-orc **veteran**) Owner of the Iron Fist, Fruen is secretly in league with Hilduin Lorsch.

Hilduin Lorsch (LE male human **knight**) Lord of Woodridge, Hilduin favours force of arms in his bid to control Longbridge.

Rilla Omer (location 7; LN female bard 4) The bailiff overseeing Wido Gall's interests, Rilla controls the south tower.

Wido Gall (LN male human **mage**) From his seat in Dulwich, Wido looks east with covetous eyes.

Notable Locations

Most of the village comprises peasant homes. A few locations, however, are of interest to adventurers:

1. **The Longbridge:** This massive structure dominates the village's landscape and economy. Of ancient dwarven artifice is a vital component of the region's trade network.
2. **The Welcoming Hearth:** Set upon the bridge, this fortified inn offers comfort, security and welcome. Einhard Kochel (its owner) is a charming, well-mannered host.
3. **Rideth's House:** This three-storey building leans precariously out over the river. From her ground floor shop, Rideth offers advice, knowledge and spellcasting services.
4. **Thread & Ball:** Here the fugitive tailor Dricolen Thornhill (LN male halfling **commoner**) mends travellers' clothes while dreaming of again tailoring fine clothes for persons of note.
5. **Maldrec's:** This general shop has suspiciously low prices.
6. **North Tower:** From the north tower, Donatus Trond watches over his lord's domain.
7. **South Tower:** Warding the bridge's southern approaches, it is here Rilla Omer has her seat.
8. **The Merry Traveller:** This raucous tavern is popular with travellers and common folk. It is open very late.
9. **The Iron Fist:** Owned by a retired mercenary, the Iron First is popular with off-duty men-at-arms.

Lords Competing

Ownership and control of Longbridge is contested (openly) by two individuals: Hilduin Lorsch, Lord of Woodbridge, and Wido Gall, ruler of the nearby town of Dulwich. Both desire the bridge for its ability to generate income from the taxes and tolls paid by those crossing the swiftly flowing Kymi's Run.

Each controls one of the bridge's towers, but neither is strong enough to oust the other; of the two, Hilduin Lorsch is the most aggressive and favours resolving the problem through strength of arms.

A third figure, Einhard Kochel the leader of the so-called Free Traders, also desires control of the bridge. For him, it is a religious matter as he worships Behron, god of travellers. Einhard dreams of transforming the whole structure into a temple dedicated to his lord, and is a patient man.

VILLAGE LORE

A PC may know something about Longbridge, its history and surrounds. A PC making a DC 10 Intelligence check knows one or more pieces of information from the list below. A successful check gains all the information revealed by a lesser check.

DC 10: Longbridge is a divided community; two lords claim the village; soon the matter will be decided—probably by force.

DC 15: Named for its largest structure, the village is clustered about a bridge of ancient dwarven artifice. Apparently, hidden stairways lead to caverns below the river itself.

DC 20: Although two nobles argue over Longbridge, a third person—Einhard Kochel—secretly plots to turn Longbridge into his personal demesne.

VILLAGERS

Appearance Dark-haired and dark-eyed, the folk of Longbridge are a stocky people. Many of the men are hirsute; some whisper dwarven blood flows in their veins.

Dress Normally clad in serviceable work clothes, the folk of Longbridge are cleaner than most peasants.

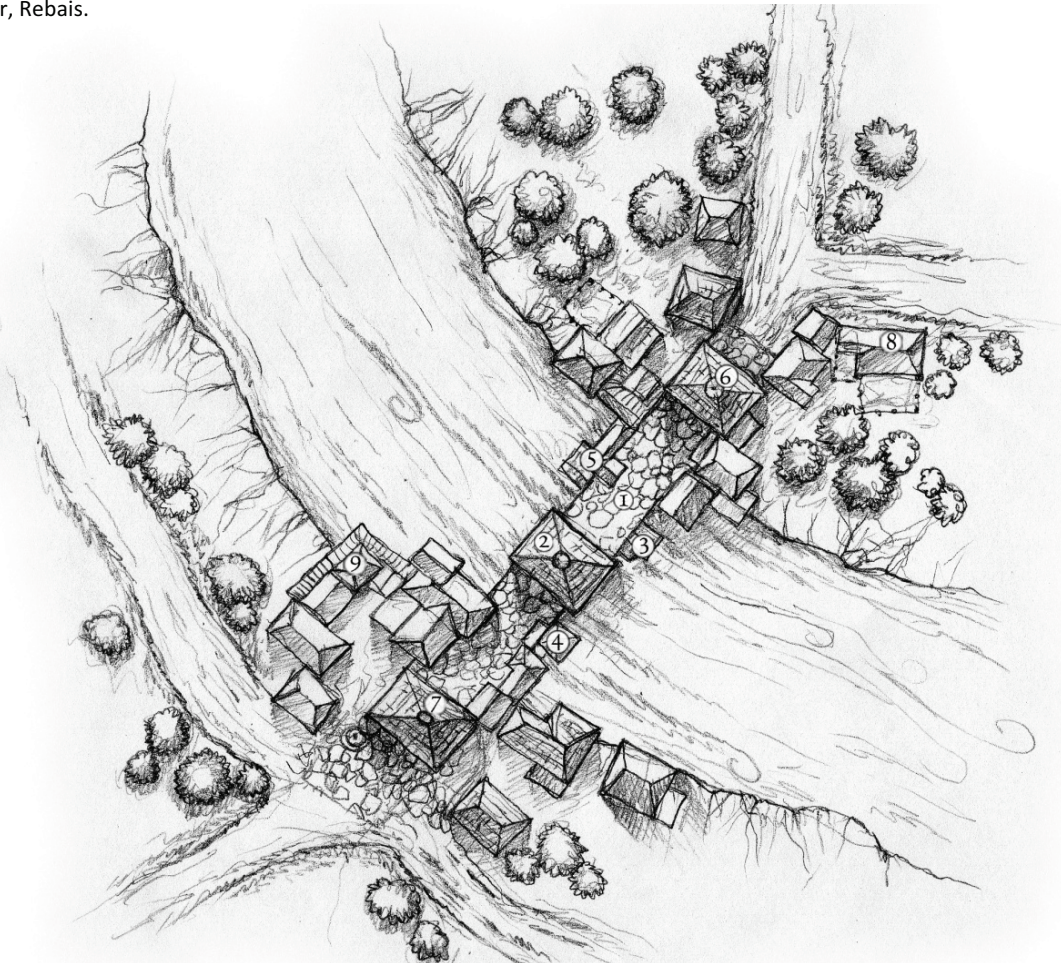
Nomenclature *male:* Arnulf, Drogo, Emmon, Grifo, Lothair, Unroch; *female:* Ada, Della, Idelle, Rica, Velda; *family:* Barisis, Dol, Gall, Omer, Rebais.

WHISPERS & RUMOURS

While in Longbridge, a PC may hear one or more rumours. A PC making a DC 10 Charisma check learns one rumour from the table below. A PC exceeding this check learns an additional rumour for each 5 points by which he exceeded DC 10.

D6	RUMOUR
1*	Rideth Sehiatyn is Einhard's lover and a powerful enchantress. She often robs travellers after befuddling them with her magic.
2*	Something lurks in the river and occasionally creeps forth to feast on swimmers.
3	Hidden staircases set in the bridge's pilings lead to sunken caverns deep under the river.
4	Bloody war will soon come to Longbridge; one or other of the nobles claiming the place is bound to press his claim through force of arms.
5	The folk dwelling on the bridge plot the independence of the village from both local lords. Einhard Kochel leads them.
6	Many of the men working at the Iron First tavern have the air of warriors about them; all are tight-lipped.

*False rumour



NOTABLE LOCATIONS

1: THE LONGBRIDGE

This vast dwarven stone bridge stands at the heart of the village. A great stone tower guards either end of the bridge and another rises from its central span. Several shops and businesses stand upon the Longbridge.

The bridge is ancient, but the dwarf-craft stonework has endured and is in excellent condition. The dwarves hid several stairways in the bridge's structure that lead down to a network of mostly forgotten passages and chambers radiating through the surrounding area. Some are partially flooded—the river finally having broken through, but others are dry. The dwarves used them for storage, covert travel and even linked some to yet deeper passages. Ancient dwarven stories hold it was possible to walk to the nearest dwarven hold (the now ruined, kobold-infested Vongyth) through those passages without ever seeing the sun. None living can confidently confirm or refute these stories.

2: THE WELCOMING HEARTH

Comprising Span Gate tower, the Welcoming Hearth is said to always have a fire burning in the common room. Local legend has it the current fire has been burning for over twenty years. The inn (fittingly) contains a small shrine to Behron god of travellers. The tavern's owner—Einhard Kochel (NG male human fighter 4/cleric [Behron] 2)—worships that worthy power and plots of wresting control from the neighbouring, rival lords and transforming the whole bridge into a temple dedicated to his patron.

- **Food & Drink:** meal (fresh fish with seasonal vegetables) 5 sp, ale 4 cp, wine (pitcher) 2 sp, wine (bottle) 10 gp.
- **Accommodation:** A room—sleeping two—10 sp.

3: RIDETH'S HOUSE

This three-storey building leans precariously out over the river. Standing next to the Welcoming Hearth, it appears as if it is about to tumble into the waters below. Rideth Sehiatyn (N female half-elf wizard [diviner] 5/rogue 3) uses the ground floor as her consulting chambers wherein she dispenses advice and information on many subjects to her clients.

Rideth has a great interest in the bridge itself. She knows the rumours of hidden stairs in the Longbridge to be true and has even dared to explore small portions of the network below.

4: THREAD & BALL

A sign depicting a needle and thread hangs above this small building's front door. The owner, Dricolen Thornhill (LN male halfling **commoner**), is a fine craftsman, but normally ends up repairing traveller's clothes (much to his chagrin). He remembers fondly the days of crafting fine clothing in nearby Languard and bemoans his fate—forced to flee here when his brother got into too much debt and the moneylender decided his family should honour his obligation.

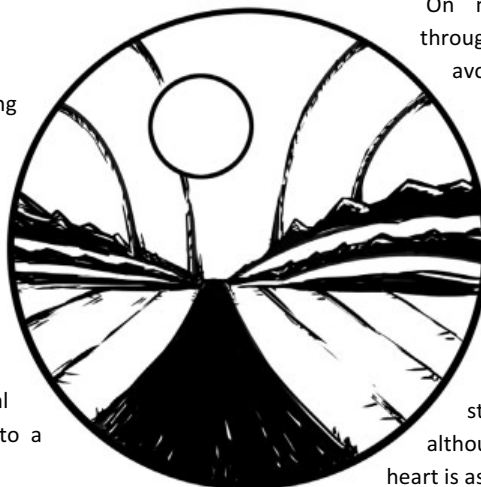
5: MALDREC'S

Tarl Maldrec (N male half-elf **spy**) owns this large building. At first glance the shop seems gloriously unorganised, but Tarl knows exactly where everything is stored. He has an impressive collection of traveller's gear for sale: tents, bedrolls, iron rations—everything a traveller needs to journey in comfort.

On moonless nights he "imports" goods through a large trapdoor in the floor, thus avoiding paying tax on his wares. His prices are suspiciously low.

6: THE NORTH TOWER

Controlled by Domatus Trond (LE male human rogue 3/cleric 2) the north tower wards the approach to Hilduin Lorsch's lands. It is heavily fortified—he has installed several ballista atop its battlements—and strongly garrisoned. It is a grim place and although Domatus is outwardly charming his heart is as cold as the gold he covets so much.



KYMI'S RUN

Kymi's Run has its headwaters somewhere in the storied Forest of Gray Spires many miles to the south. From these shadowed depths it flows passed the ruined, kobold-infested dwarven ruins of Vongyth before passing under Longbridge's impressive span. Downstream, it slows somewhat and widens out as it flows through the sluggish, noisome depths of the Salt Mire before it reaches Hard Bay's briny waters.

The bridge at Longbridge is a vital link for the local trade routes linking Dulwich to the network of surrounding villages and the only safe place to cross the upper stretches of the river (which are steep-banked and swift flowing).

Sometimes, the remains of fell things are washed out of the Forest of Gray Spires and these have given rise of many rumours about that strange, fantastical place.

7: THE SOUTH TOWER

The twin of the North Tower, the South Tower is under the control of Wido Gall's bailiff, Rilla Omer (LN female bard 4). Rilla is very aware of how vital the bridge is for trade (and her lord's finances) and wrings every last coin she can legally extract from travellers. She is scrupulously honest, if a little lacking in imagination, and does not see Domatus' true nature.

8: THE MERRY TRAVELLER

This raucous tavern is popular with travellers and common folk. It is open very late and often travellers staying here end up lingering longer than planned as they recover from the last night's epic drunk. The landlord, Kuno Segnii (CN male human **guard**), is a heavy drinker who loves his job. He loves sharing a drink (or four) with his customers and never closes until the last have left (or collapsed into dribbling unconsciousness). His wife—the long suffering Gunda (N female human **commoner**)—despairs of her husband's drinking; arguments between the two are common.

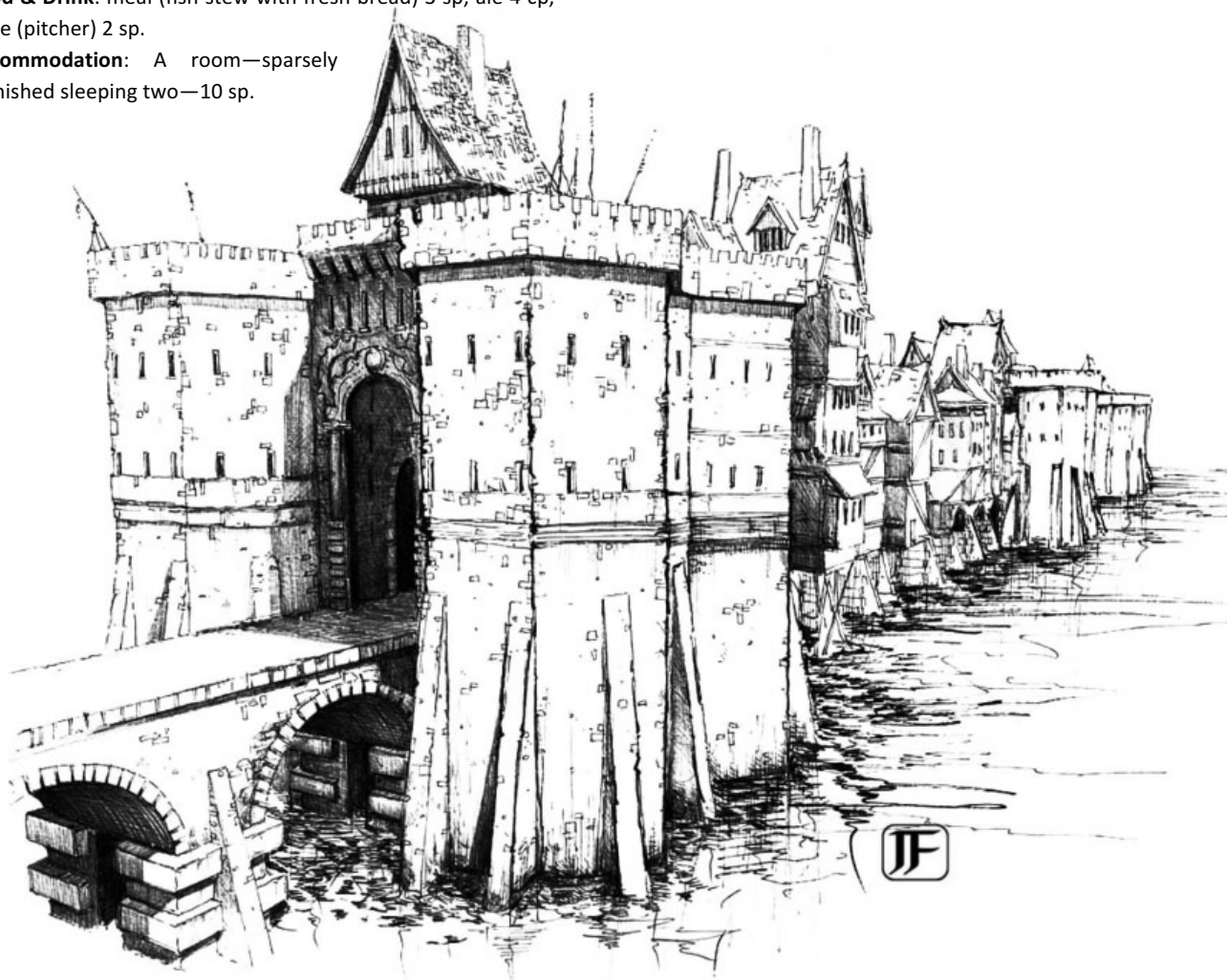
- **Food & Drink:** meal (fish stew with fresh bread) 3 sp, ale 4 cp, wine (pitcher) 2 sp.
- **Accommodation:** A room—sparsely furnished sleeping two—10 sp.

9: THE IRON FIST

Owned by Fruen Deadeye (LE female half-orc **veteran**), an ostensibly retired mercenary captain, the Iron Fist is popular with off-duty men-at-arms, travelling warriors and others who enjoy a rough and ready atmosphere. Brawls here are relatively common, but rarely result in anything more than a broken nose and spilt drinks. Fruen is strict, however, and charges anyone involved a "breakages tax" after such incidents.

Fruen is secretly in league with Hilduin Lorsch. The nobleman has paid her handsomely to spy on the southern part of the village and she has hired some of her old company to act as tavern guards and enforcers. Hilduin has promised her more gold if she uses her warriors to cause chaos and confusion when his men storm across the bridge to claim the whole village for their lord.

- **Food & Drink:** meal (thin rabbit or fish stew with vegetables) 6 sp, ale 4 cp, wine (pitcher) 2 sp.
- **Accommodation:** A room—sparsely furnished sleeping four—4 sp.



LIFE IN LONGBRIDGE

Excepting the tension between lords Gall and Lorsch (and their followers) life in Longbridge is relatively peaceful.

TRADE & INDUSTRY

Farmland surrounds the village. Many villagers make their living servicing the needs of travellers passing through Longbridge. Some villagers fish Kymi's Run, using coracles or other small craft to ply its waters. A few of these individuals—for the right price—transport goods and travellers across the river at night; thus avoiding the tolls and taxes levied on such movement.

LAW & ORDER

Each nobleman has appointed a bailiff to control his portion of the village, overseeing law and order, levying taxes and so on. Travellers are less than delighted to pay such tariffs more than once and arguments often flare.

EVENTS

While the PCs are in Longbridge, one or more of the below events may occur. Choose or determine randomly:

D10 EVENT

1	An outraged traveller refuses to pay a toll at both towers. An argument quickly develops.
2	Einhard Kochel stands at the Welcoming Hearth's threshold loudly (and charmingly) inviting travellers to rest within.
3	A muttering dwarf wanders the bridge, closely examining its stonework, as if searching for something.
4	A fisherman sits in his craft in the shadow of the bridge. He suddenly shouts that "something big" is in the water below his boat.
5	As one of the bailiffs inspects the bridge, a bucket of excrement is "accidentally" dropped from the rival's tower and narrowly misses its target.
6	Freun Deadeye wanders the bridge ostensibly for fresh air, but in reality she is checking on the guards at the South Tower.
7	Loud voices emanating from the Weary Traveller mark the beginning of another argument between Kuno and Gunda.
8	Three figures—all wearing voluminous cloaks, but obviously by their stature dwarves—stand outside Rideth Sehiatyn patiently waiting for her to answer the door.
9	Dark clouds hover low over the bridge and a heavy rain begins to fall. Within minutes, the bridge is seemingly deserted as everyone—guards and travellers alike—seek cover.
10	A brawl erupts at the Iron Fist as rival, off-duty men-at-arms from the two towers come to blows.

TRAVELLERS

While the PCs are in Longbridge, many folk use the bridge. Choose or determine randomly who the PCs encounter:

D10 TRAVELLER

1	Boram Bigbelly (CN male halfling commoner), a peddler by trade, tries to sneak through one of the gates while the guards are occupied with other travellers. They spot him, and give chase across the bridge.
2	Kanbrar Natityrr (NG male half-elf acolyte) is a devout follower of the god of travelling. He has come here to visit Einhard Kochel and loudly protests the need to pay a toll to do so. He is otherwise pleasant and happy to share stories with fellow travellers.
3	Baggi the Rash (N female half-orc tribal warrior) is a wandering adventurer. She is drunk, impetuous and in a silly mood. She is trying to talk the guards into letting her cross the bridge for free. When she sees the PCs, she mistakes one for an old friend and greets them warmly.
4	A wandering sellsword of some small repute—Krorz the Destroyer (N male half-orc assassin)—rests on the bridge's parapet and stares moodily into the waters below. He is in a foul mood.
5	Drunn Kraviz (LG male dwarf fighter 3) has come to the bridge because ancient family stories say one of his ancestors worked on its construction. He is searching every inch of the bridge for any sign—perhaps graffiti or a maker's mark—to prove the stories.
6	Ossi Leino (CG male human commoner) didn't know he had to pay a toll at both ends of the bridge. He doesn't have enough money to get off the bridge and has been trapped here for much of the day. The man—a travelling down-on-his-luck scribe in search of employment—is thirsty, hungry and getting desperate.
7	Aune Alanen (CG female human wizard [diviner] 6) has come to visit Rideth Sehiatyn in hopes of swapping some spells. Aune is well-dressed and doesn't have much time for commoners and the like. She is haughty and cold.
8	Addabar Andig (N male gnome bard 2) is playing a merry tune on a pipe. He stands on a small box and a rug on the ground holds several copper and silver coins. He makes a special effort to elicit a few coins from the party and is not above making up fantastic rumours to earn gold from gullible or impressionable adventurers.
9	Merla Faststep (NG female halfling thief 9) is fleeing an irate merchant who she has just fleeced. The man is loudly calling for the watch, but as the bridge is a no man's land of sorts no one is rushing to his aid.
10	Adalbern Njars (LG male human commoner)—a carter—is trying to cross the bridge with a load of hay. His horse is in a foul mood and the cart has become wedged in one of the gates. Guards and other travellers are shouting at him to get out of the way.

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