

# THE IMPERIAL CITY

The Imperial City is far from the village. It was once the seat of a mighty empire, but has fallen to insignificance. That is changing now; the noble families and burghers of the city seek to reclaim its past glories, and will stop at nothing to spread its power. The city is now sending outriders far and wide, disturbing traditional trade routes, and seeking to claim its old dominion. Many, though not all, of these outriders are wicked and violent men. Unfortunately for the characters' friends and families, the city's methods are brutal, and its power is growing.

This Threat Pack will place a complicated and not overtly dangerous Threat in your campaign. The Imperial City presents social, economic, and political problems, and is a good choice of villain for players who enjoy social challenges or logistical planning.

## DURING CHARACTER CREATION

The first NPC mentioned during character creation who is a professional will have stories about the city to

the south. Perhaps he has been there himself to sell his wares, or perhaps his father or his tools come from the Imperial City. It is likely that the city is connected to any exotic people and things which come up during character creation and the making of the village map. The GM may embellish upon any such topic and connect it to the Imperial City.

Finally, the GM should add Imperial ruins to the village map, whether that be the town hall, the remains of a wall, or an ancient temple. This is a symbol of the once-mighty reach of the Imperial City.

Finally, at least one character should make a roll on the table below as their fourth roll during character creation.

## ON THE CAMPAIGN MAP

The GM will need to place the Imperial City on the map herself. The first time that a player places a 'far' location on the campaign map, the GM should place the Imperial City even farther past that location, saying something to

## CHARACTER HISTORY

1d6	How are you connected to the Imperial City?	Gain
1	Your family claims to be descended from one of the city's noble houses. Will you reclaim your family name?	-1 Wis, Skill: Etiquette
2	Last fall you met one of the city's outriders on the road near the village. The two of you quarrelled and he beat you with his riding crop. You are certain he remembers your face.	-1 Cha, +1 Con
3	You visited the great city many years ago to see one of its strange doctors. You have seen the city's glories and its ambitions firsthand. You can still find the doctor's home after all these years.	-1 Con, +1 Cha
4	Your grandparents grew up in the great city and left for wilder lands. Rumor has it that they and all their kin are wanted for a horrible crime.	-1 Str, Skill: Hagglng
5	During the winter, you rescued some of the city's traders from bandits. You have a standing invitation to visit them.	-1 Int, +1 Str
6	When one of the city's nobles rode through town, you stopped him from bullying one of the village children. He broke one of your limbs and you broke two of his. He has sworn vengeance should he see you again.	-1 Dex, +1 Wis

the effect of “Yes, the Lake of the Nereids is there, and past that is the ancient Imperial City!” If possible, ensure that the city is near a body of water, as this makes it a more important trading center and gives the populace access to water. If the players end up with another city as a major location, consider how the two cities might be related. Are they ancient rivals? Is the other city a newer, younger upstart? Are they close allies seeking to share an empire? In any case, all cities on the map are smaller and weaker than the Imperial City. If you are not excited about any of these ideas, feel free to pick another major location.

The GM should add the Ruined Watchtower minor location somewhere within a day’s travel of the characters’ home village, and the Outriders’ Post minor location roughly halfway between the city and the characters’ home village. These locations are presented in full below.

## THE CITY ITSELF

It is very likely that the characters will visit the Imperial City during the campaign. You should not feel the need to map out the city; it is enough to say that it is very large and contains more or less any commercial location the characters are interested in. In fact, it is likely the only place in the entire campaign to buy certain goods, like the glass beakers and unusual equipment needed to stock an alchemical laboratory.

The city is also extremely confusing to outsiders. Until characters have spent a significant amount of time in the city, have them make Wisdom checks to find their way or else become lost in its twisting streets.

Characters can also find a great deal of information in the city, but the social norms of the place are probably very different than the village. This can be simulated by giving frequent Charisma checks, providing information for successes and quarrels for failures.

## THE RUINED WATCHTOWER

This minor location is somewhere within one day’s travel of the village. It contains clues as to the extent of the ancient empire, and serves as a good model for the types of imperial ruins that dot the entire countryside. It would make a fine location for first or second level characters to visit, have a brief adventure, and learn about the world.

The Ruined Watchtower sits on a rocky hill, and was once significantly taller than it stands today. Only two of its stories remain intact, and they are treacherous. Villagers claim that the tower is haunted, but that great imperial treasure remains there somewhere.

The tower is home to a dangerous pack of wolves led by a savage, ageless worg named Niceros. This wicked spirit in wolf shape remembers the ancient empire and has no love of men or their settlements. He has claimed the ruins as his home and allows nothing on two legs near it. Niceros leads a pack of seven wolves, but they are rarely all at the tower at one time. During the day, the worg and three of his wolves will be sleeping on the ground floor. At night, there is a 50% chance that two wolves will be prowling the grounds with Niceros and one more wolf nearby should they hear a howl, and a 50% chance that Niceros will be alone on the upper level of the tower, howling, in which case the characters will hear his pack answering from the surrounding lands.

## THE GROUND LEVEL

Around the ground level of the tower are the ruined foundations of several long-dismantled out buildings. A character with any skill or background in masonry or carpentry might recognize the stonework; many of the stones from these buildings were removed long ago, and have since been used for construction in the village.

The tower itself once had four levels, but only two remain. Both are now completely open to the elements as the southern wall has crumbled. This leaves the second story open, but the ground floor is densely shadowed. Characters can enter through the large crack in the southern wall, or through the now open western gate.

The ground level is a single, 30 foot by 30 foot room. The stone floor is still showing in many places, though in others it is either completely broken or covered in earth.

The wolves use this area as their den, and the place has a foul odor. The remains of past meals litter the floor, and the corners contain rough beds of plant debris, rotten fabrics, and fur. Niceros keeps a treasure pile beneath the intricately-carved stone stairs found on the western wall near the gate. The other wolves have no interest in such things, but the worg spirit has a great love of jewels and gems. There is almost 500 silvers worth of

coin treasure there, which will be difficult to cart away, and around twice that much in precious gems, which are easier to carry but much harder to sell. Much of the coinage bears the mark of the ancient Imperial City, and many of the gems sit in settings of an ancient style.

In the center of the ground floor is an ingenious trap door of stone, hidden by debris, plant growth, and a century of neglect. It is quite heavy, but moves smoothly on hinges; when the tower was in use, there was a pulley system to open the door, but no longer. Someone with knowledge of the ancient Imperial powers might know that their towers frequently had such trapdoors. Otherwise, a character can only find the trapdoor by actively searching the floor in the area and succeeding on an Intelligence test. It requires a Strength test with a -5 penalty to open the door, beneath which is utter blackness.

## THE SECOND LEVEL

The stairs leading to the second level of the tower are of sturdy stone, but the floor of the second level is wood. While it was made of a very dense, sturdy wood, time and the elements have done their work, and the area is now very treacherous. Anyone walking across the floor must make a Dexterity test with a +2 bonus to avoid falling through to the ground floor and receiving 1d6 damage.

This level is open to the elements. It provides a commanding view of the surrounding landscape, which may give characters some ideas about future travels.

Niceros comes here often to howl his commands to his pack. Should one of the characters face the worg and slay him on this level and beneath the night sky, the other wolves will think of the victor as their new alpha.

## THE HIDDEN BASEMENT

The trapdoor in the ground level opens to a cellar carved into the rocky hill. There is a ten foot drop into the cellar and no ladder or stairs leading down.

This basement houses the true lost imperial treasure: a large and fairly accurate map of the entire region. The map sits in the center of the room on a large, rotten table of oak. It is, of course, dated, but its geography is mostly correct, and it lists several locations which are now in ruins. The map itself is delicate, but not dangerously so; a careful character can easily fold it and pack it

away. The rest of the room is full of rotten stores: barrels, rusted weapons, and other useless junk.

## THE OUTRIDERS' POST

This minor location is a recently established camp of the imperial outriders, a group of mercenaries, minor politicians, and petty nobles riding throughout the land proclaiming the status of the Imperial City. This is the first outrider post the city has established, but it plans many others; therefore, this minor location can serve as a guide for many more adventure locales.

The post consists of a wooden palisade, a large stable, a barracks, a smithy, and the captain's quarters. At any given time, the captain, the blacksmith, a stable boy, a garrison of a dozen guards, and an outrider or two will be present. The stables are almost always stocked with good quality horses so that the riders can change out their steeds when riding great distances. While the garrison is small, the post can accommodate many more men if need be, and the area around the palisade has been cleared so that the Imperial City may station a large army here in the future, should their ambitions come to fruition.

The captain of this particular post is a man named Rufus. He is middle-aged, spent most of his early life as a glass-blower in the city, became rather wealthy, was awarded rank and position, and is largely unaccustomed to military service. It would be a mistake, however, to think him weak. He believes strongly in the city's right to rule its former empire, and takes his new post very seriously.

Rufus will give any friendly travelers a place to stay and a meal for one night, and then send them on their way. If the characters have had past troubles with the outriders, Rufus will not be so inclined to give them succor, and will turn them away or attempt to try them for their crimes. His justice is swift, and almost always involves execution. As a man whose position is due entirely to monetary advancement, Rufus is very susceptible to bribery, which an enterprising character might be able to leverage.

The Outrider Post can be used as an adventure location in many different ways. Depending on the characters' history with the Imperial City, it can be a safe haven or a dangerous location to be avoided at all costs. If the characters have decided to fight the threat of the city head-on, they may well begin by attacking the post and destroying

it, something not out of reach for low level characters if they are smart and bring backup. It is also possible, though unlikely, that the characters can make such an impression on Rufus that they are able to bring him over to their side in their conflict against the Imperial City.

## IMMINENCE AND SCHEMES

The city's reach and power will grow over the course of the campaign, increasing dramatically during each campaigning season. If the game starts in autumn or winter, the city will have an Imminence rating of 0, though characters may well hear rumors that the city is interested in hiring a great number of mercenaries and that some of the nobles there have aspirations of empire.

On March 20th, when it becomes spring (or at the campaign's start, if the game begins in the spring or summer), the city gains an Imminence rating of 4 and uses the following activation table:

1d6	Year 1 Threat Effects
1-3	An imperial outrider surveys the characters' home village and other surrounding settlements. This week, if the characters are within six hexes of any of these settlements and roll an encounter, it will automatically be with an outrider.
4	The outriders make a show of force at the characters' home village. Two outriders and a group of 3d6 mercenaries come into town, announce openly the city's intentions to reclaim its empire, and stay at the inn. They pay well and cause no trouble beyond their menacing demeanor. The characters will witness these things themselves if they are home or will hear about them the next time they return.
5	Imperial agents declare a toll on a road near the characters' home. If there is a road that connects the characters' home village to the city, then there is now an armed toll gate approximately halfway in between. If not, place the toll on another conveniently located road or bridge. The toll booth is manned by three soldiers.
6	A particularly violent outrider treats some farmers or herdsman brutally. The victims may live on the outskirts of the characters' home village or in another small settlement. If the characters are in the area, they may have a chance to stop it.

On March 20th of the second year of play, the city extends its reach and power and is now a very serious threat to the characters' way of life. Its Imminence increases to 5, and it uses the following activation table:

1d6	Year 2 Threat Effects
1-2	A large band of mercenaries, led by Imperial agents, rides across the lands, making a show of force and proclaiming the power of the city. Unless the characters are deep in the wilderness, any encounter this week will be with a troop of 5d20 mercenaries and 1d8 outriders. We hope the characters do not try to fight an army on their own!
3	The city builds a semi-permanent military camp in the region. Choose an appropriate spot on the map; somewhere near a road and a day or two from a settlement is a good choice. At the end of the week, that location will have a garrison of 50 troops, a wooden palisade, an earthworks, and several buildings. If the characters are in the area, they may be able to stop this somehow.
4	The armies of the city begin building a large road between two appropriate locations of the GM's choice. This is quite an endeavor, and the GM should not roll for the Imperial City's Imminence again until the road is complete or abandoned. The road grows by a single hex (10 miles or so) each week.
5	The city's forces come to the characters' home village and demand a sizable tax. Unless the village has a way to resist, they will have to pay. This will drive all prices up in the village by 20%. The taxing force consists of 2d10 mercenaries and 1d6 outriders.
6	The city's forces come to another human settlement or city and demand a sizable taxation. This result is identical to the one above, but affects another, random human settlement on the map.

On March 20th of the third year of play, the city launches its full invasion of the campaign map. At this point, the city's Imminence rating and effect tables are irrelevant, and the campaign is likely reaching its close, for good or ill. The city has at least one whole army in the field, and probably has several camps, roads, and waystations at its disposal. How will the characters save their homes?

## PLAYER ACTIONS

The characters are likely to run afoul of the Imperial City in a number of ways, but their interactions with outriders and others from the city need not be violent. Certainly the players might attack, ambush, or sabotage the city's forces in the field; after any such successful deeds, the GM should skip the Imperial City's activation roll for a week or more as they recoup. However, unless characters are particularly careful to disguise or hide themselves, making violent attacks on Imperial agents will cause them to become marked men, and will color all future interactions with the city.

Characters might also delay the actions of the Imperial City by other means, such as bribery, trickery, or deceit. All of these are valid ways to keep the outriders and taxmen from their doorstep, but the GM should make such actions difficult; the tax collector is rarely swayed by a simple, impassioned speech.

In addition to slowing the city's activation rolls, the characters may be able to push back its timetable so much that the city will not change its Threat Effect tables as the years pass. Such a change would require major actions on the part of the characters and, likely, the help of others throughout the land. Examples would be an elaborate and persistent series of raids on all of the outrider posts and the city itself, or making a strong alliance between three or more lords against the city.

It is unlikely, though not impossible, that the characters can ultimately end the threat of the city through military means. This would only be possible if they were able to convince many other settlements and groups to band together and form an army capable of resisting the Imperial troops, probably with the characters as commanders. More likely, the players will have to reach a diplomatic victory to end the threat of the city; such a victory would likely involve many visits to the city itself, audiences with nobles and generals, ploys to divert attention, or even a takeover.

## NPCs AND MONSTERS

### IMPERIAL OUTRIDERS

The Imperial City sends its most ambitious and talented young warriors as their outriders. They ride horses, travel alone or in very small groups, and are very resourceful.

**Hit Dice:** 3d10 (16 HP)

**AC:** 14

**Attack:** +3 to hit, 1d8 (sword)

**Alignment:** Neutral

**XP:** 80

### IMPERIAL FOOTMEN

These are the city's elite infantry, heavily armored and fighting in tight formation with large shields and spears. The characters might encounter them as the crack squad used to address a particularly thorny insurgency, or patrolling the streets of the city itself.

**Hit Dice:** 2d8 (9 HP)

**AC:** 16

**Attack:** +1 to hit, 1d6 damage (spear)

**Alignment:** Lawful

**XP:** 45

**Notes:** *Formation Fighting* (Imperial Footmen fight with spears and shields in groups of 8 and their second row can attack without penalty)

### NOBLES

There are numerous noble families in the Imperial City, and their members serve as officers in the army. They are also frequently involved in politicking and court intrigue in the city itself.

**Hit Dice:** 2d8 (9 HP)

**AC:** 10

**Attack:** +1 to hit, 1d8 damage (sword)

**Alignment:** Lawful

**XP:** 40

### TRIBUNES

These are the city's greatest warriors and generals. The characters might encounter them as the leaders of large warbands, or may meet them when in the city itself.

**Hit Dice:** 4d10 (22 HP)

**AC:** 18

**Attack:** +4 to hit, 1d8 damage (long sword)

**Alignment:** Lawful

**XP:** 150

**Notes:** *Inspire Troops* (a Tribune may spend a round inspiring his troops, in which case he has a -4 to his AC but all imperial troops in near range get +2 to hit)



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## IMMINENCE

### YEAR 1 THREAT EFFECTS

1-3

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Imperial agents declare a toll on a road near the characters' home. The toll booth is manned by three soldiers at all times.

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A particularly violent outrider treats some farmers or herdsmen brutally. The victims may live on the outskirts of the characters' home village or in another small settlement. If the characters are in the area, they may have a chance to stop it.

### YEAR 2 THREAT EFFECTS

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A large band of mercenaries, led by Imperial agents, rides across the lands, making a show of force and proclaiming the power of the city. Unless the characters are deep in the wilderness, any encounter this week will be with a troop of 5d20 mercenaries and 1d8 outriders. We hope the characters do not try to fight an army on their own!

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The city builds a semi-permanent military camp in the region. Choose an appropriate spot on the map; somewhere near a road and a day or two from a settlement is a good choice. At the end of the week, that location will have a garrison of 50 troops, a wooden palisade, an earthworks, and several buildings. If the characters are in the area, they may be able to stop this somehow.

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The city's forces come to another human settlement or city and demand a sizable taxation. This result is identical to the one above, but affects another, random human settlement on the map.

## IMPERIAL AGENTS

### A Patrol of Outriders

**Number Appearing:** 2d4

**Hit Dice:** 3d6 (16 HP)

**AC:** 14

**Attack:** +2 to hit, 1d8 (longsword)

**XP:** 80 each

*In chain mail and riding well-kept horses, these are the Imperial City's most resourceful young warriors.*

### THE OUTRIDERS' POST

#### Rufus, the Captain

A glassblower by trade, only newly a captain, Rufus is basically friendly. He is mostly loyal, but takes bribes.

#### Support Staff

Blacksmith, Farrier, Stable boys, and a few fresh horses.

#### A Dozen Guards

Simple soldiers in chain mail and bearing swords.

**Hit Dice:** 1d6 (4 HP)

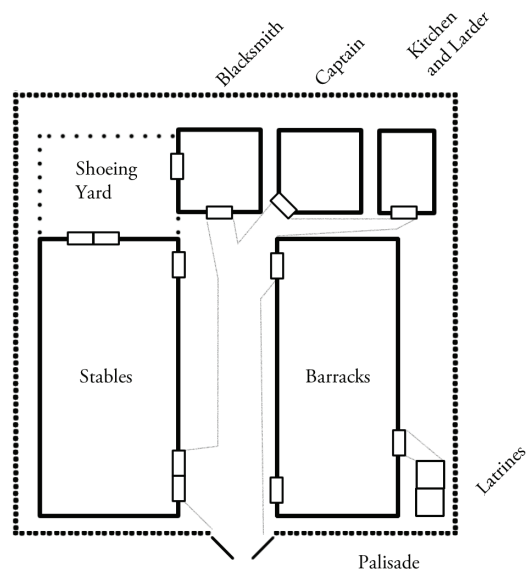
**AC:** 14

**Attack:** +0 to hit, 1d8 damage (longsword)

**XP:** 20

#### A Pair of Outriders

(see above)



## CITYFOLK

### YEAR 3: INVASION!