

TAVERN PATRONS (EXPANDED)

d100 Roll	PATRONS
1-2	<i>Thorzug</i> , male barbarian, bald with heavily scarred forearms and tribal tattoos. He's hoping to buy something.
3-4	<i>Lecidies</i> , female Nydissian, striking skin tight leathers. She wears a small bronze amulet in the shape of a chalice (Baal icon). Wants to sell an amulet given to her by her now ex-boyfriend, who worked for a mysterious character said to be a sorcerer, who operates out of a half-ruined castle on the edge of town. Her ex wants it back, seems he took it from his boss without permission and the boss is now making a big stink about retrieving it. The amulet is a "lunar" (a pendant shaped like a crescent moon). She has noted strange things happen when a crescent moon shines on it so she no longer wears it at night. After the break-up her ex informed her that the pendant had been found amidst the ashes of a hall that had been the site of a mass wizard-slaying. A witch-hating king with a score to settle had enticed many sorcerers, witches, etc. to a feast in that hall. At the height of the festivities, however, the king had the doors locked and the hall torched, burning them all alive. The ex has also told her this pendant is not designed to be worn by anything living...
5-6	<i>Taris</i> , male Midlander, stooped with a sheepish demeanour. Is on the lookout for an opportunity to pick pockets or steal something.
7-8	<i>Gonzale</i> , male Karok, dark blue silk robes with a wide cowl protecting his albino skin. On the hunt for some information.
9-10	<i>Ulbrecht</i> , male Varnori, almost completely blind (lost his eyes to disease long ago), slow but steady with his walking staff. Rich baritone voice that he busks with for coin. Loves swapping stories with others.
11-12	<p><i>Kawri</i>, female barbarian, 6 ft 5 inches with a glowering stare and spiked gauntlets. Very angry and wants to vent her frustration by hitting someone. Kawri was part of a group that had just pulled off the heist/dungeon haul of the century, though it involved trespassing on the sacred grove of a mysterious character said to be a sorcerer. Although most of the group were a close knit "band of brothers" that had stuck together through all sorts of adventures, that evening a violent dispute erupted over the division of spoils.</p> <p>She realizes now that the instigator was a newcomer, a bandit type who'd guided them to the treasure in return for a cut. When it came time to divvy up the loot he went back on the pre-arranged agreement, and somehow managed to persuade some members of the group to take his side. Just when the dispute was getting violent they were attacked and the closest thing she had ever had to a family was wiped out in minutes. Piecing together the evidence after the fact she realized the guide had betrayed them and somehow triggered an ambush against which her normally invincible sword could not prevail. After her friends were cut down all she could do was run for her life. She is enraged at the loss of her dearest friends, the betrayal (and her gullibility that contributed to it), her inability to completely understand what happened, and her utter impotence in the face of the attack. She is also haunted by guilt for not standing by her friends to the end as the barbarian code demands, even though that code assumes that one's sword will be working at the time.</p> <p>She is a bomb waiting to explode and would like nothing better than to lash out at the first person to cross her. She no longer cares if she lives or dies and the drinks she is consuming are making her even more likely to erupt. She is also in pain from a wound she received that night that she suspects is either envenomed or ensorcelled, since it is not healing properly</p>

	<p>and is affecting her in strange ways.</p> <p>How to defuse the bomb: Surviving an encounter with her will likely take high perception/social skills/charisma rolls and considerable savvy on the part of the players. For example, responding to her snarled “What are you looking at... ((Insert setting-specific ethnic slur of your choice here, if appropriate to the character’s background))?” with an invitation to join them for drinks might work, particularly if not done in a grovelling way, and preferably by a character the barbarian could respect.</p> <p>Once she accepts a drink, a barbarian is caught up in a web of traditional hospitality codes that may constrain her actions somewhat. Many barbarian tribes regard it as very poor form to kill someone you’ve just accepted some form of hospitality from. She also really wants a drink right now.</p> <p>She may follow up her drink with the non-sequitur “I want to kill somebody tonight!” If the players handle the situation with some finesse they may narrowly avoid setting her off. Responses like “I have that feeling too sometimes” might work, especially if uttered by a character that looks like he could walk the walk if he had to. Alternatively, taking the opportunity to acknowledge her evident talents as a warrior might work, if done in a respectful rather than sycophantic way (remarks along the lines of: “You look like you could kill a man without breaking a sweat, if you had to.” “Doesn’t look like you would find that much of a challenge” “Looks like your sword has certainly done its share of killing” “Looks like you could kill off the entire tavern here, if you needed to” “Doesn’t look like any wounds inflicted by that sword of yours would need bandaging” should entitle the adventurers to a charisma or social skills roll, at least).</p> <p>Someone with high sensitivity/supernatural healing skills might also have an in through offering to heal her wound, although she is not going to reveal that to just anyone. If treated properly, she could be recruited since she is now a lonely free agent and eager to do damage. Increase the chances of this if some possible link could be drawn between the betrayer and someone the adventurers are at odds with, or if the adventurers can shed some light on what happened to her, which is still largely a frustrating mystery to her. Magic knowledgeable characters, for example, might have a sorcery-based explanation for what went wrong for her that night, while those learned in lore might recognize the modus operandi of the betrayer. If there were any way to join forces with the barbarian to help her avenge her friends she would likely be all ears.</p> <p>She might be more deferential to warriors of her skill level that treat her respectfully, characters from a similar ethnic background, women who are not weak or associated with an unheroic lifestyle, and to anyone who could help her understand what happened to her or who seem willing to help her achieve vengeance.</p>
13-14	<i>Thaddeus</i> , male Nydissian, completely hairless (no eyebrows, nothing), wearing a rucksack. Wants to discuss philosophical enlightenment.
15-16	<i>Mercer</i> , male Midlander, sumo like proportions with an enormous smile. Wishes to socialise and meet new people.
17-18	<i>Barros</i> , male Karok, elderly with a staff and wearing long rusty orange robes. Is curious about the party and would like to learn more about where they are from.
19-20	<i>Tyra</i> , female Varnori, tall and athletic with blazing red hair. Has no understanding of the concept of “personal space” (though not all men would object to being crowded a little by this statuesque beauty). She doesn’t think twice about taking a bite out of other people’s

	<p>sandwiches or finishing their drinks for them either, if these people are associated with her to any meaningful degree. Those from cultures with a more developed sense of personal space and boundaries might also find her irritatingly touchy feely, though men and anyone who gets to know her will not. She presents as an extremely competent fighter but not everything is as it seems.</p> <p>Tyra is heartbroken because a sword of grey iron that she'd recovered from a bog and used successfully for some time suddenly turned on her friends in her last melee, right after she'd slain the last of their foes. It did quite a bit of damage, though not quite lethal, before she was able to force it back into its sheath. She does not understand what happened. Her companions did not kill her but she was no longer welcome in their war band. She is wracked with guilt and frustration at not being able to understand what happened. She has always taken pride in being the friend who will never fail, who will always stand by her comrades whatever the cost. She knows her former companions must regard her as cursed, at least. She is very open to employment offers but very conflicted about what to reveal about the sword. Characters with high perception/high intelligence or who make an effort to "read" her or who have some other strength in the area of emotional sensitivity might be able to detect that something is very amiss with Tyra. Otherwise, Tyra is likely to function at sub-optimal combat efficiency, reluctant to draw her sword in all but the most serious of situations. This could lead to lethal hesitations in life or death combat situations, should such be known to occur in your campaign. There is also a real possibility that once unsheathed again the sword may have its own agenda, much as Tyra may want to deny it.</p> <p>This experience is also likely to give her nightmares and she probably mutters about it in her sleep, in her strange barbarian tongue, and may even sleepfight from time to time. Someone who knows her language who observes her closely in her sleep may be able to figure out what her secret is.</p>
21-22	<i>Jawmok</i> , male barbarian, impossibly luscious blonde hair, broken nose. Really hungry and wants to eat something. Now.
23-24	<i>Ismene</i> , female Nydissian, heavy leathers and wilderness garb with a well used sword. Is frantically searching for her dwarvish foster father, who reportedly is embarked on a mission impossible to recover something or someone held by a mysterious character rumoured to be a mighty sorcerer. Her first option would be to dissuade him at all costs, but if that fails she is honour-bound to join forces with him. She has heard that a short man with a long spear got into a fight with some bullies at this tavern last night and is desperate to find out where this man is now and what happened to him. One version is that he accosted someone said to be a minion of that "sorcerer" and she is trying to find out who that person was as well. She knows her foster father is definitely not a city person and does not handle urban environments well. She has no patience with dwarf-haters but knows that is a lonely battle in this town. Conversely, she usually gets along well with dwarf-friends. If the man last night was in fact a dwarf he has now made himself some serious dwarf-enemies, though, since the sorcerer takes any assaults on his minions very seriously.
25-26	<i>Anjelise</i> , female Midlander, piercing brown eyes with a mesmerizing sashay. Bored with her usual companions, she is seeking more exciting and exotic company.
27-28	<i>Ursula</i> , female Karok, in heavy chain armour and bearing a wicked looking mace. She is a bounty hunter, and one of the adventurers resembles her mark.
29-30	<i>Torvald</i> , male Varnori, slow of wit but quick of reflexes, he is a playful wrestler and prankster. Torvald is trying to remember the quickest route to his favourite drinking haunt.
31-32	<i>Dromog</i> , male barbarian, teenager, wiry and svelte with a cheeky grin. Hoping to earn some coin running odd jobs for rich adventurers, explorers and other berks.

33-34	<i>Cicero</i> , male Nydissian, dressed in practical garb, with a whimsical look, followed by three servants who trail at a respectable distance. Cicero is enjoying wandering new surrounds.
35-36	<i>Kirkwood</i> , male Midlander, unkempt with wild, raven coloured hair and a beard that reaches past his shoulders. Kirkwood suffers from infrequent delusions but also catches glimpses of true prophecy. He has something important to share with the party, if they'll listen to him.
37-38	<i>Sancto</i> , male Karok, brawny with a large hooked nose, emphasized with a copper nose ring. Sancto has heard of the party's exploits and wishes to meet one or more of them in person.
39-40	<p><i>Astrid</i>, female Varnori, beautiful with long blonde hair, high quality leathers and expensive boots. Astrid is a former Nydissian slave, and goes out of her way to cause trouble for southerners (especially those who think highly of themselves). Very free with the ethnic slurs and ethnic jokes about southerners. She was very badly treated as a slave. She also revels in instigating fights between unsuspecting Nydissians and anyone at hand. She has even been known to join a table of unsuspecting Nydissians, come on to one of them, and just when he thinks he's found the woman of his dreams she will point to the toughest looking brute in the vicinity and exclaim in a loud voice "you say that _____ over there is a gutless wonder (or insert the politically incorrect insult of your choice here, if appropriate) that you could beat to a pulp with one hand" (or something else in this vein, the more colourfully insulting the better). Feel free to work in references to the insult-target's mother/sister/girlfriend if appropriate too.</p> <p>She was once the apprentice/protégée of a powerful sorcerer and was on a long-distance mission for him when she was done in by means of a spiked drink or spell. This resulted in her being abducted and spending years as a slave under conditions too horrible to describe here. For this reason she is always very careful with anything she consumes in public settings.</p> <p>She was enslaved by a powerful sorcerer who used to perform dark magical experiments on her, among other things. Highly magic-knowledgeable persons who observe her closely may notice that something is off about her, since that kind of magic leaves marks, (such as runes and symbols) on the victims of such experiments, and may also have other long-term residual magical effects detectable in the normal way, by those skilled in such matters. In any event, she endured durance most vile until the day the sorcerer used her as bait to summon some unspeakably evil being.</p> <p>For some reason the being opted to eat the sorcerer first, however. In the resulting chaos, she ran for her life and miraculously encountered a Varnori trader on the road whose concubine took pity on her and prevailed on him to let her travel back north to their homeland with them.</p> <p>She is still haunted by the experience of that summoning and has nightmares about it daily. She knows that the being is still looking for her. She has a foreboding sense of doom that never leaves her, except when she drinks.</p>
41-42	<i>Milesh</i> , female barbarian, pockmarked with a half shaven head. Milesh carries a sharp axe and a sturdy shield with a wolf head motif. Is seeking to rescue her sister, abducted by someone she recently discovered is a minion of a powerful sorcerer. She suspects this sorcerer and his minions may be way out of her league. Her only hope is that this abduction might be an unauthorized side-venture on the part of the minion and that a rescue might not necessarily involve going against the teeth of the sorcerer's defences. Right now she doesn't know how she can possibly persuade anyone to help her, given the dangers involved. She also doesn't know what will happen to her sister if she doesn't act fast. She might have important information to trade.

43-44	<p><i>Laurentia</i>, female Nydissian, wears a breastplate and carries a short spear. Laurentia's mercenary company recently disbanded after most of them perished in a beastman ambush. She is feeling down and out, and is running low on gold. Adding to her sense of despair is a growing suspicion that she may have been ensorcelled in some way, for at a key moment in the ambush she froze, which allowed a foe to strike down a valued member of her company, and really turned the tide of the fight. She has never had this problem in combat before and is eager to prove this was just a momentary aberration. But the men who fought beside her that night think she's lost her edge. The ones that are still alive, that is.</p>
45-46	<p><i>Lyndal</i>, female Midlander, short and dumpy with curly locks. The party (or someone associated with the party) has caused Lyndal trouble or loss in the past. She's tracked them down to seek recompense by coin or favour, or she will take her complaint to the justicar.</p>
47-48	<p><i>Arias</i>, female Karok, piercing eyes under a willowy hat laced with flowers. Arias likes the look of one of the party, and wants to find out who they are. She is from a wealthy House, and could open doors to certain noble circles if befriended. Arias is used to people doing what she wants, as many find her wealth, beauty or social standing incentive enough. However, she needs assistance she can't get from the usual sources and the matter is somewhat delicate, so she may turn to the adventurers if they can prove worthy of her trust.</p> <p>Arias has gotten into trouble due to what some regard as an excessive curiosity on her part about sorcery. This is linked to a bad influence, a mysterious young woman said by some to be a witch or a former close associate/servant/kinswoman/apprentice of one. Some say she was even giving Arias dark lessons of some kind and that strange things were happening as a result, including some very bizarre night activities. This in turn antagonized powerful people with the result that the "friend" had to flee for her life. Arias was able to get her a position as a shepherdess on the estate of a distant relative, which lies in an increasingly monster-haunted area and is on the verge of becoming uninhabitable. The relative does not know the facts of the situation. Arias has learned that this hide-out has been discovered and that there is a good chance someone will be sent to kill the "friend". Arias has to send her a warning, which will be in the form of a ring with a wolf's hair wrapped around it, which will be the signal for the "friend" to abandon everything and accompany the adventurers back to town to Arias, who will have to think of some way of hiding her or sending her to another safe place (which also could involve the party). The "friend" may have some dark talents of her own which could come in handy in a combat situation, if it comes to that.</p> <p>Given the scandal involved, Arias will not reveal most of these details to the party unless they are very skillful in persuasion or make an extremely good impression on her. She will probably be very vague on all sorts of major details, beyond impressing with them with the urgency and the danger facing her friend. Travelers try to detour around this monster-haunted region if they can, and many of its long-time residents are fleeing. The "friend" will be extremely suspicious of the whole affair and might take some persuading (or a DM-instigated encounter) to get her accompany the party. She will be very secretive about her talents.</p> <p>The forces wanting to kill the friend would not hesitate to eliminate anyone who gets in their way. Arias's involvement with this friend derailed a highly advantageous marriage arrangement for them, so that passions are running high. Conversely they would be prepared to pay handsomely for the friend to be delivered to them, if the adventurers care to negotiate some kind of side deal (but it should be up to the adventurers to figure that one out). The mysterious friend may also be somewhat abrasive (some might even say haughty), stand-offish and suspicious and engage in strange night activities that might make the adventurers more open to such side-deals. She may tend to regard herself as being on a plane of existence far</p>

	<p>beyond that of the mundanes sent to rescue her. She does have a weakness for ancient heroic poems, if well-recited, and this could make her considerably less prickly. She is actually quite knowledgeable in ancient poetic forms and lore and can hold her own with professional bards when conversing about such matters, and won't hesitate to correct those that slip up in this dept. She is also very knowledgeable about and well-disposed towards mermaids, and has some family history there.</p> <p>Another complication is that Arias is not used to paying for services of this type, as noted above. In fairness, a good word from her in the right place would be worth far more than money to most people. It says more about the adventurers' ignorance of the political and social facts of life in that community that they may not be able to appreciate this. If pressed/negotiated with, however, she will certainly pay. If pressed further by someone in the party with good negotiating/social skills or who's made a good impression on her (she has a weakness for musicians and bards who recite heroic poems) she could provide all kinds of material aid to this expedition. If crossed/betrayed she could make life very difficult for unconnected adventurers wanting to stay in her town. She realizes her friend is in mortal danger and that her options for saving her are few and dwindling as times goes by. If the party undertakes this mission as a favour, without insisting on anything so crass as strict cash payment terms, they will be gifted items (upon completion of the mission, of course) far more valuable than any wage they could negotiate and will be firmly entered onto Arias's "friends" list, and she always looks after her friends. She is likely to treat the male with the highest charisma or most social skills in the party as its spokesman.</p>
49-50	<p><i>Igvaar</i>, male Varnori, weathered oil skins and worn boots, accompanied by a huge white wolf hound. Igvaar is a loner at heart, preferring the company of animals to people. He is hoping to trade some goods.</p>
51-52	<p><i>Kraggor</i>, male barbarian, 6 ft 8 inches, impressive musculature, once knocked out a horse with his fist. Wears a chain shoulder and arm guard and not much else. Kraggor is looking for a fence to sell some items he recently "found".</p>
53-54	<p><i>Antigonus</i>, male Nydissian, ex-soldier, alcoholic and genuine vigilante fed up with bureaucratic corruption. Known in some alleyways for dispensing quick and deadly justice. Unfortunately there's precious little coin in righteousness; he's looking for work.</p>
55-56	<p><i>Welton</i>, male Midlander, heavily tanned farmer with calloused hands and weather beaten cap. Weaton sold some pigs earlier today and is eager to enjoy tonight, before he heads back to the farm tomorrow. Welton is approachable but not naïve. If the adventurers gain his confidence somehow (by buying him a drink, showing knowledge of and respect for farming, especially pig farming) he can share all sorts of interesting gossip. He knows one beautiful and very successful pig farmer, a distant cousin in fact, who is said to know more than a little about sorcery, that regularly entertains a very high ranking noble (a claimant to the throne in fact) at her place, and she has an elaborate underground bunker that is made up to look like a pigsty on the outside. Only a few of her friends have seen this. The noble has all kinds of powerful enemies and also tends to throw his weight around with the common folk, so he has lots of lower class enemies too. He's also at major odds with a weird character that lives in a half-ruined castle on the edge of town, and it is said they plot against each other from time to time.</p> <p>Welton is renowned for the quality of his pigs and sells to some of the finest establishments, religious institutions, and noble houses in town. Some say he can trace his pig farming prosperity to some interactions his forebears had with elves in the distant past, they seem to have conferred some kind of permanent blessing on his farming operations (some say that's nonsense, that it is really due to some elvish pigs he acquired that strengthened his stock's</p>

	<p>bloodline). Anyway, Welton thinks very highly of elves and wouldn't hear a word said against them, his experience with them has been totally positive, and he would never turn one away from his door, and had occasion to give hospitality to a half-elf in a hurry just the other night. He even knows some words in elf-language. He will talk the night away about some of the legendary pigs he's raised over the years, such as "Battle-pig", so it is best not to get him started on that.</p> <p>If the adventurers really gain his confidence, he will confess that things are getting so intense between the noble and the weirdo on the edge of town that he fears he will become a target of the latter by virtue of his very distant link to the former's girlfriend. On that account he wouldn't say no to an escort if he and the adventurers happen to be travelling the same way.</p>
57-58	<p><i>Veniaz</i>, male Karok, wears a brown tabard bearing the world tree icon of Soliri (he is a long time convert and devotee). Veniaz works with the druids and is familiar with the local wilderness. He is hoping to buy something.</p>
59-60	<p><i>Helle</i>, female Varnori, older teen, light brown hair in a ponytail, 4 ft 8 inches, solid build, unblinking gaze. Helle suffered a head injury years ago and pauses before answering questions. Fearless, back made of stone, vice like grip. Helle's last employer recently died (by her hand, in self defence), and might make an excellent porter or trainee warrior.</p> <p>Helle came by her head injury quite honestly fighting (unsuccessfully) to save her father from the bandits that ambushed them near their farm one day. They weren't expecting a young farm girl to be such a fighter. She basically went berserk and managed to strike by surprise and do some serious damage (with something that strictly speaking wasn't even a weapon) before being cut down and left for dead. She has a strong grudge against these bandits, which some say were minions of _____, but can't remember much about the fight beyond seeing her beloved father killed. She has no use for bandits and will not engage in that sort of thing under any circumstances. She is very careless in her use of the pronouns "he" and "she". She is a loyal friend but wary in her relations with anyone else. She does not drink anything stronger than beer, and that sparingly but has been told that people can find jobs in taverns sometimes.</p> <p>The proprietor is something of a family friend and he and his staff will look out for her. They will be quick to intervene if anyone harasses her. She has also been known to back up individual staff members in sticky situations from time to time as well. She gets her meals free there, and does odd jobs (such as clean-up, unloading carts and barrels and handling horses) (for which she has a talent, being something of a horse whisperer) (at least for horses that aren't sticklers for accurate pronoun use)) from time to time. She will likely help clean up the tavern tonight unless something better is on offer. She takes a dim view of people who deliberately mess up the tavern and has a sense of ownership about the premises. She has full access to all the backrooms and staff-only areas and can crash there whenever she wants, though in some cases it might involve sleeping in the stables with the horses. She can carry phenomenal loads and when the proprietor is absent some staff have a side thing going where they will take wagers (mostly with ignorant out-of-towners) as to how heavy a load she can carry. They never lose and Helle usually gets a kick out of proving the doubters wrong, and they usually give her a piece of their winnings. This has won her a few enemies over the years however. She is usually very even-tempered but she has been known to go berserk on a couple of occasions, but only under the most extreme of provocations (most recently involving her late employer). She mourns her father and is always ready to talk about him, and makes regular pilgrimages to his grave whenever she can. Insulting her father's memory would be a very foolish thing to do.</p>

61-62	<p><i>Rifni</i>, female barbarian, heavily pregnant with eight rambunctious kids in tow, wrangled with her booming voice. Rifni and the family are thieves and messengers, hoping to either pick pockets or run dispatches.</p>
63-64	<p><i>Xanthe</i>, female Nydissian, slim, very short cropped hair, has a whip wrapped around her waist like a belt. She is a professional dancer and whip expert. Xanthe is looking to buy something.</p> <p>“The three faces of Xanthe” - There are really three variations on the Xanthe theme here, depending on whether you find her more interesting as good, neutral, or evil... Xanthe is quite capable of looking after herself in a fight, no matter what her moral path, however.</p> <p>Good Xanthe only wants to use her whip expertise for good, ideally in some kind of circus context. She acquired that skill from her years as a herds person, with long hours spent out in the open range or hillside with nothing to do but practise her whip skills. She is very proud of the time she broke up an attack from a wolf pack using only her whip. She is confident that her whip can handle any non-sentient animal out there. She has always thought of whip skills as herding related or as her ticket to a circus career. Her dancing skills make her a double threat of sorts. Since her move into town she has come up against the crushing reality that here the only market for whip skills is within the criminal justice system (both public and private) and she wants no part of that whatsoever. Her only option now is to make a dangerous overland journey to a larger town for an audition with a circus patronized by a powerful family for political reasons. To survive that journey she knows she needs more than a whip.</p> <p>Neutral Xanthe also never intended to use her whip skills on people. But she needed a job and there was absolutely no market for whip performers in that town. So in order to survive she finally gave in and applied for work with the criminal justice system, where she found herself “facilitating” one interrogation after another and in recent weeks graduating to punishment. She found this a very bizarre experience, especially all the extra money she earned in tips, which made no sense to her. For a time she was able to rationalize all this as what it took to keep the justice system going, and she never felt any personal animosity to any of the people she... used her skills on. It did make her quite uncomfortable, however.</p> <p>The final straw came when she was called upon to inflict a sentence on a young woman accused of either being a witch or acting as a sorcerer’s minion. She had never in her life flogged a woman and to make matters worse she was a distant relative, from the same tribe and area Xanthe came from. She found the whole process quite upsetting, especially when it seemed likely that this charge was groundless. Needless to say the accused regarded her involvement in the process as a complete betrayal and uttermost violation and there was even more screaming and rage than normal for such proceedings, and some dire curses pronounced on her by the accused. Even the tip was nothing short of insulting. This all drove her to the brink of quitting, since flogging innocent cousins, even cheapskate ones, was not what she had signed up for.</p> <p>What has pushed her over the brink, however, is that in the days since she has come to question the verdict of “innocence” she mentally pronounced on that cousin. Some very strange and very dangerous things have been happening to her at night. Xanthe has a sinking feeling that if even half of what was said about her cousin, or one tenth of what was said about her cousin’s supposed master were true that her days on earth are numbered. Xanthe now feels her only hope is to leave her life of crime (punishing) and run off to join that circus, as dangerous as the overland journey might be. The circus is under the protection of a very</p>



	<p>powerful noble and few would be so brazen as to risk a conflict with him by attacking its cast. She hopes, anyway. She will need valiant escorts for this journey and is not likely to divulge the full extent of her magical concerns. Party members (ideally with high intelligence/perception/emotional intelligence ratings) that specifically focus on her may sense that she's not telling them the whole story. Why quit that cushy executioner in training gig now of all times? Magic-knowledgeable characters may be able to discern a disturbingly dark and increasingly dangerous pattern in their encounters enroute to the circus town, should they manage to survive them.</p> <p>Evil Xanthe actually enjoys her work and revels in her status as a respected member of the executions branch of the local justice system. She has a reputation for being very good at what she does, able to extract answers from the most reticent of ... subjects. She also loves the tips and chases down all the private sector interrogations she can find, since these generally pay better. She is basically in it for the money and the thrills and sense of power and not so much out of any sense of personal animosity towards her subjects though. Lately she's been doing more and more private sector work for a high level sorcerer type. He is kind of creepy but the pay is good, provided one adheres to his strict confidentiality (most would say "secrecy") policies. Many of her assignments are in the bowels of a partially ruined castle on the edge of town long said to be haunted. The hours are crazy too; she's often summoned for assignments in the dead of night. It seems the staff there doesn't have much of a sense of night or day.</p> <p>In a protracted interrogation of someone said to be either a messenger or an apprentice of a rival sorcerous type who apparently had done great damage to her client, information came out that the interrogator, an out-of-towner, didn't seem to grasp the significance of. Perhaps it was the lateness of the hour and him being tired and all, or perhaps he just was not familiar enough with local place names to pick up on it, but basically the person being questioned gave him the key to the heist of the century. Xanthe knows exactly where this spot is, a couple of days journey into the Blue Mountain Hills, even though the prisoner, clearly local to that area, referred to it by a place name few non-locals would know. There are some significant hazards associated with that location but if Xanthe can survive these and get there first she will be set for life. All she needs are a few competent sellswords for escorts to the site. With luck those hazards everyone talks about won't even materialize, if she acts fast. And she has to act fast, before someone further up her employer's chain of command twigs to the enormity of what was revealed in that interrogation. If the adventurers are strangers in town so much the better, since that way there's less chance of word getting back to the client, who would be most interested in getting his hands on what Xanthe is preparing to snatch. Because of the urgency (she wants to leave in the morning, or tonight even) Xanthe is apt to be extremely flexible in the initial negotiations, some might even think too flexible if they pay close attention and are high perception types.</p> <p>Needless to say Xanthe is determined to keep her cards as close to her chest as possible and reveal nothing of the above if possible. Her profession is no secret to the town at large however and chance encounters with garrulous bar patrons or people on the road might blow her cover a bit. Passing drunks may ask her how many felons she has flogged today or warn the adventurers that all her boyfriends wind up getting flogged or to be sure to answer all her questions so it doesn't turn really ugly, ha-ha. To the adventurers she will try to present as someone (a simple dancing girl, perhaps, or shepherdess from the countryside) who simply has to travel (but under conditions of utmost secrecy) to a certain ruined temple/sacred grove to conduct a divination ritual to address a certain pressing family problem that has just come up. If someone notices the whip she will talk about her circus aspirations, her background in</p>
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	<p>herding, and the time she broke up a wolf attack single-handedly. DMs trying for a Blues Brothers vibe in their campaigns could let her demonstrate a few whip tricks in the bar itself but most respectable establishments do not permit that sort of thing. She will not enjoy demonstrating her talents as a dancing girl but if the adventurers really press it... it will soon become apparent that she is rusty in that area.</p> <p>As a play balancing factor, the DM should try to come up on the spot with a reason for why Xanthe's proposed trip has to be so secret, if any of the players are smart enough to ask. If the DM is unable to come up with a convincing explanation, despite his best efforts, so much the better. It really shouldn't make any sense, unless the adventurers are extremely low IQ or fumble their perception rolls, or unless the referee opts to make Xanthe distractingly pretty (which may not affect all genders in the party in any event).</p> <p>Xanthe's plan has a lot to recommend it but fails to take into account the fact that her evil sorcerer client didn't get to where he is by being naïve. And that he has his people working that tavern, who will be very quick to report her sudden interest in extracurricular activities with these out of town nobodies. The interrogator also had a much better grasp on the significance of what was revealed to him than she credits (his lack of response to the revelation was actually a ploy to make her think the big reveal wasn't all that big a deal). The sorcerer is apt to respond to this side venture of hers with extreme prejudice. At the very least Xanthe is about to experience the interrogation process from an entirely new angle, for her.</p> <p>Characters who pay attention, have a background in cloak and dagger type matters/thieving or espionage, or who make high perception rolls may notice someone is listening in on their conversation with Xanthe or may notice when he makes a high-speed exit. Otherwise, their only hope is that it will take enough time for the enormity of what Xanthe is intending to make its way up the chain of command to let them get a head start on their quest. It is unlikely they will be alone on the road for long. A play-balancing factor could be that the sorcerer and his cronies still don't know exactly where they're going, due to the obscurity of the place name. This might buy them some time, even more so if they take steps to hide their tracks.</p> <p>Xanthe is not necessarily planning to betray the adventurers (in part because that is such a hoary rpg cliché). She needs them and depending on their performance on the journey might even be prepared to keep them on (unless the DM thinks it makes more sense for her to kill them off to cover her tracks, but that is such a cliché!). She may not have the luxury of betraying any underlings once the sorcerer gets on her track either. Alternatively, there may be a chance for the adventurers to cut a side deal of their own, since the evil sorcerer's quarrel is not necessarily with them, just her. The magnitude of what could be gained here is such that even an evil sorcerer could afford to be a little generous, if it nets him the prize in the end. Xanthe should expect no mercy from that quarter however. If you play, you pay.</p>
65-66	<p><i>Kara</i>, female Midlander, dressed in merchant garb with a feathered necklace from the Suurat Jungle. Her left arm is wrapped in a sling. Kara is a secret cultist of fell powers, and her hand has been transformed into a foul smelling tentacle. She is intending to drug someone for later sacrifice.</p>
67-68	<p><i>Antyra</i>, female Karok, in her late 30's, wears a shiny black carapace breastplate (from a giant beetle), and has a tattoo of a twin tailed scorpion on her left bicep. Antyra is a monster hunter and looking for some help (fodder) for her next job.</p>



69-70	<p>Tyr, male Varnori, 6 ft 2 inches with a long blonde moustache, armed with twin hatchets and a circular shield slung across his back. His black cloak has a horned helm emblem on it. Tyr is the captain of the Bronze Reavers, a mercenary company of some infamy. He is looking to recruit and/or drum up work.</p> <p>Tyr has just learned to be careful for what you wish for. For years he has dreamed of landing an assignment from the spooky character who maintains a strange establishment in a ruined castle on the edge of town. Rumour has it that this fellow is a sorcerer of some kind and engaged in some very dark activities. Rumour or not, fact has it that this guy pays the best rates (by far) in the industry but for years the big security companies have monopolized all his business. Tyr knows his Bronze Reavers would leave those fat-cat competitors crying in their nappies if once, just once, Mr. Spook would give his Reavers a chance to show what they can do. And tonight, the dream has come true. Mr. Spook has a sudden ultra-urgent assignment that must be done yesterday and none of the big companies have anyone available until next Tuesday at the earliest. It is a classic case of a small quick on its feet mercenary company (float like a butterfly, sting like a ...) being able to swoop in and pounce on an assignment before the big guys even can get out of bed.</p> <p>Except the Reavers can't do it either! Things have been very tight for the Reavers in recent months and Tyr has had to lay off all but his core staff, and none are available at this moment, being tied up with other assignments, working their farms or on long-term contracts as bodyguards, caravan guards, etc. Even though this is the opportunity of a lifetime, it doesn't look like there are any Reavers around to take advantage of it. He is prepared to do it himself, since it shouldn't take a lot of manpower but it may involve a trip to the Blue Mountain hills and that's no place for solo acts.</p> <p>His only hope is to recruit someone in this bar this very night, since Mr. Spook's people tell him if he's not ready to move tonight, he can forget about this contract and the prospect of any contracts from them ever.</p> <p>If the adventurers look at all combat-competent, he will swallow his pride and approach them. This goes against everything he has ever said about the Reavers but he has no choice. The Reavers are a picked band that doesn't take on just anybody with a broadsword. You have to qualify, usually by passing through a life or death ordeal of some kind or performing some over the top heroic feat. But tonight there is no time for feats or ordeals. He's sure he can perform the heavy lifting on this one in any case; he just needs some extra muscle as backup when going through the hills.</p> <p>The adventurers will have to prove themselves to him verbally at least. He will drop them like a hot potato if they present as treacherous or unable to fight or unwilling to start tonight or if they express any reservations about the assignment. Basically, a young Nydissian woman, slim, with her hair cut like a man, has stolen something from Mr. Spook and likely hidden it. Now she's on the lam to the Blue Mountain hills. They need to catch her before she gets there and bring her back, intact, immediately. Apparently she's into whips and wears one like a belt. She should not be underestimated. With the whip, she is a formidable adversary. They must take the whip away from her. Mr. Spook doesn't care about the whip, but she must be brought back, intact. If she has any companions that try to interfere, eliminate them. Don't talk to her, because she can bewitch people with her voice. If she tries to talk to you, use the whip on her or put a bag over her head. Cash on completion, all reasonable expenses fully reimbursed, provided all instructions followed to the letter. Big bonus if it's done by Friday. They should understand this does not give them permanent membership in the Reavers. They are being retained on a strictly casual and probationary</p>
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	<p>basis. That said, if they follow all instructions, obey all his commands, perform well and all goes well, all kinds of things are possible. A job well-done for the Reavers and Tyr could be the beginning of some kind of relationship. Failing to follow Mr. Spook's explicit instructions or disobeying commands in a combat or life-threatening situation could be lethal.</p> <p>Tyr is not at all treacherous and will not betray the adventurers, although he will not hesitate to kill anyone who betrays him or endangers him by disobeying orders (and he expects to be obeyed when it counts). He is very good at his job and a highly skilled fighter. He is charismatic enough to command the respect of the motley crew that traditionally comprises mercenary companies and has strong leadership skills. He is very brave, fair enough in his way, and does not expect his men to do anything he would not do himself. Traditionally only men serve in the Reavers and he has his doubts about women warriors, but is prepared to make an exception in this case, provided there are male warriors in the party as well. He may question her credentials/experience more rigorously than he would do for a man, however. It will help if the other adventurers speak up for her, if it occurs to the players to do that. He would be most unlikely to approach an all-amazon party unless they are making some incredible display of martial prowess at the time (such as totally cleaning up in a bar fight, ideally against superior odds).</p>
71-72	<i>Drelthuk</i> , male barbarian, slim, ugly scar marring his face, woodsman garb. Drelthuk is in town for the annual log splitting contest. He wants to buy something.
73-74	<i>Callix</i> , male Nydissian, open helm with a stern gaze, fire sigil breastplate and cold iron sword. Callix is an inquisitor of the Ordo Malefactoris, always on watch for sorcerers to bind or (preferably in his mind) slay.
75-76	<i>Bromley</i> , male Midlander, peasant tunic and pants with sturdy boots. Smells like horse and dog. Bromley is a stable hand and horse expert, and is in deep trouble. A sacred-elf horse has gone missing on his watch and the consequences could well be lethal if he doesn't get it back before this comes out. The horse belongs to an extremely powerful person, said to be a sorcerer to boot, and the horse was about to be used in a very special ritual with major repercussions for the whole area. He is at a complete loss to account for the disappearance, since security at the stables was very tight. His only clue, which is no clue, is that a half-elf horse whisperer type, who worked at the stables as well, disappeared at the same time as the horse. She seems the only logical suspect, but to him this makes no sense, because she has demonstrated her trustworthiness to him over an extended period, and would have no reason to steal the horse/betray him. She did dote on that horse. In any event, he is prepared to pay handsomely (out of the stable owner's purse, who also is aware of the disappearance and eager to recover the horse quietly and quickly before the horse owner finds out) to anyone who can track down the horse, and it makes sense to try to find the half-elf first. He is prepared to accompany the adventurers and has a broad range of horse-related skills. The horse had a lot of attitude and the half-elf was really the only one who could reliably control the horse all the time.
77-78	<i>Mergildo</i> , male Karok, burly, clean shaven with flowing white hair. Mergildo is a veteran blacksmith and is looking to buy something.
79-80	<i>Ylva</i> , female Varnori, elderly with silver hair in three large braids, light cloak with fur edging. Ylva is a genuine rune stone soothsayer. She feels inexplicably drawn to one of the PCs.
81-82	<p><i>Yethna</i>, female barbarian, wears minimal furs, light brown locks and a lazy eye. Yethna speaks little common, but believes opening her eyes wide and repeating the same phrase over and over will make people understand.</p> <p>Yethna is what her countrymen would call a raidfool, a highly derogatory term for a raider who gets so distracted by the looting and pillaging he fails to keep track of his surroundings</p>



	<p>and winds up getting left behind to face the music alone when the rest of his band rides off to make new conquests. In fairness, she's really not to blame and wasn't doing any raiding. She signed up for a long distance gig as a caravan guard, the first time she ever ventured from her home turf, on the understanding that she would make her way back with some friends upon completion of the contract. Problem was, at the end of her assignment those "friends" went their own ways, for the most part seeking their fortune (and finding it) in their new land and then scattering far and wide. This left her stranded, since even a comic book barbarian would think twice before venturing the long way back on her own. If it weren't like that caravans wouldn't need so many guards.</p> <p>Yethna's position is extremely precarious, because she has no friends left here (with two exceptions), no job, and confronts a huge language barrier. With the caravan it was different, there was a set routine (if anything suspicious approaches the caravan, kill it!), set arrangements for sleeping, eating and drinking) and much could be explained with hand gestures. She also had those friends to interpret for her.</p> <p>The only thing that has saved her up to now has been her unexpected friendship with a half-elfen stable hand who also happens to be a master linguist, quite conversant in Yethna's exotic tongue. The half-elf found her sleeping in the stable one bitterly cold night and instead of raising the alarm, showed her great hospitality. She has been very kind to her and done everything she could to resolve Yethna's plight, including interpreting for her and sometimes helping her negotiate her way out of various scrapes, many a result of the language barrier. Both Yethna and the half-elf come from hard core horse cultures and find that a significant point of commonality. Yethna's people have enormous, even mystical respect for horses and it's a matter of survival for them to know everything there is to know about how to read, ride, communicate with and care for them. That enabled Yethna to make a little money helping out with problem horses at the stables. She also was able to sleep there, when the half-elf was around, but recently the half-elf disappeared and this is turning into an existential crisis for Yethna. She doesn't fully understand what happened either. She knows that half-elf was no mere stable hand, that there was far more to her than met the eye, that she had all kinds of hidden talents no one suspected, and was more than capable of holding her own in a fight, as Yethna discovered when they were attacked one night on a dark side street.</p> <p>What she doesn't know is the half-elf's name, which Yethna always struggled to pronounce, although she knows it meant "Swan-pretty" in elvish. Yethna always called her "teacher", a term of utmost respect in Yethna's tongue, and because she spent so much time trying to teach Yethna common and other useful things. Yethna also called her "blending", a common term for half-elves that is actually highly offensive to half-elves, although the half-elf never made an issue of it, since she knew Yethna was utterly oblivious to those connotations.</p> <p>Yethna is determined to do whatever it takes to find her friend, who she knows would never have abandoned her like this. She will strike any deal the party is prepared to make if it will get her closer to her friend, but really doesn't know where to start.</p> <p>Through the half-elf she has also become quite friendly with Halle, with whom she has a lot in common, and for whose strength and heroic stand she has the uttermost respect for. Like Halle, she too tends to mix up she and he. Up to now, however, she has always communicated with her through the half-elf, as between her low language skills and some cognitive impairments on the part of Halle conversations tend to get side-tracked. Yethna tends to get frustrated with this language thing, though the half-elf has always exerted a powerful calming influence.</p>
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	<p>Yethna senses that some locals find her “minimal furs” outfit kind of out there, even barbaric. She takes a perverse pride in sticking with what is a perfectly respectable (and practical) way of dressing where she comes from. They may be able to force their effete city language on her but devils take her if she will ever dress like those (insert derogatory epithet casting scorn on the martial prowess of effete city dwellers here). Although when she was with the half-elf the half-elf often loaned her her second best cloak.</p> <p>Yethna likes walking the streets (in the most innocent sense of the term) by night, sometimes in very dangerous places, driven by her desperate loneliness. Sometimes she has positive interactions in the course of this, such as being able to help someone in some small way where language doesn’t matter, as with helping with a heavy load or a crying child. Sometimes she gets some free food out of this, which she does not scorn. She thoroughly knows her way around town as a result of all this walking. She is pretty fearless.</p>
83-84	<p><i>Septima</i>, female Nydissian, large mole on her chin, dressed in a fine toga and cowl. Septima has a pair of twin slave boys with her, their eyes always downcast or averted unless Septima speaks directly to them. She is seeking information and is thirsty for wine.</p>
85-86	<p><i>Scarlet</i>, female Midlander, dressed in a low quality smock and worn boots, one blue eye and one brown. Scarlet is a spy and street informant for the local guard, thieves guilds, and frankly anyone else willing to pay. She has just landed the assignment of a lifetime and is desperate to pull it off, since it represents more money than she has ever seen in her life. She has considerable street smarts because she grew up on them, an orphan, and is very fortunate not to have been executed for all the things she’s has to do to survive over the years. Key to that survival has been to make herself too useful to hang, even to local law enforcement, but at the same time proving indispensable to some of the powers that be in the local underworld. In actuality it is an incredible balancing act, requiring a broad range of high level skills that pass under most people’s radar, though there have been officers in the guard, with a better sense of the big picture on the streets, that dimly grasp how challenging this balancing act is. In another life she would have certainly been a high level official or counsellor to the mighty, or some kind of master strategist. In this life she sleeps in doorways and stables and is very lucky if she can find footwear. Guards and thieves often refer to her by the name of the Nydissian flower coltsbane (strictly speaking a noxious weed that makes horses sick) known for its two-toned petals, or “Barefoot Coltsbane” and kid her for not having shoes (or for having acquired them illegally), both points on which she is rather sensitive.</p> <p>Players who study their surroundings and make their perception rolls will notice her working the room quite assiduously, but basically drawing blanks, being turned down or otherwise rebuffed, sometimes rather contemptuously. She will be quick to approach the adventurers, greeting them over jovially as “thief takers”. If they are at all receptive she will explain that she has two clients. One is looking for a young Nydissian woman, slim, with her hair cut like a man, who uses whips as fashion accessories and wears one round her waist. She also uses them professionally, as an interrogation facilitator for the local authorities, but has recently been implicated in the theft of a valuable object from a noble who lives in a ruined castle on the edge of town. That noble is prepared to pay very handsomely for information leading to her apprehension, alive, so if they see any such person on the road (possibly to the Blue Mountain Hills) they should contact her immediately. All reasonable expenses will be reimbursed if it leads to the apprehension of this thief.</p> <p>The second matter relates to a blending who is linked to a possible theft of horses from the local stables. The reward for her apprehension, intact, is considerably less, but still considerable. Anyone taking her into custody should be sure to take along any horses she is</p>

	<p>travelling with as well. They can report to her or proceed directly to the local stables, but they get more if they report to her.</p> <p>She will grill the adventurers as to whether they have seen either of these fugitives.</p> <p>If the adventurers are dining at that moment some may notice her looking at the food like someone who never takes food for granted. She will certainly accept any food offered to her.</p> <p>She is not above putting on the charm, if she feels it will make the adventurers more receptive to her proposals. If they seem enthusiastic, she will propose they set out with her to find the thieves. She is eager to accompany the party since she feels it will give her greater control over the situation and encourage them to stay on task. She also would recognize either fugitive.</p> <p>One slight complicating factor is that due to some traumatic events in her own past “Scarlet” has a burning, visceral hatred of anyone who would be so vile as to whip or torture someone for money, and this will come out in her language over time. She would not have any problem with seeing the first of these two fugitives quite thoroughly knocked about in the course of apprehension. This hatred is so intense it may undermine Scarlet’s professional judgement/analytical powers in certain contexts. She would see nothing wrong with dragging the first fugitive behind their horses for a while, even though this could clash with the prime directive. She has nothing personal against the blending, apart from a healthy respect for their occult powers and would want to err on the side of caution when apprehending such beings.</p> <p>Scarlet is quite fearless and would have acquired a broad range of skills growing up on the streets, such as climbing, move silently, hide in shadows, merge with crowds, tracking, hide tracks, outdoor survival, etc. She knows the town and its back alleys like the back of her hand and has a variety of friends in low places (plus some enemies). She has shared what little she has with some very poor people over the years and they may side with her in a crunch. They also function as a surprisingly effective information network for her. Odds are she will know far more about the recent comings and goings of these fugitives than anyone else. The adventurers should have a pretty good chance of tracking them down if they listen to her. Her near-genius intelligence level will also enable to her to glean clues from this information that others might not.</p>
87-88	<i>Crisante</i> , female Karok, in her sixties, fine scarlet robes, severe arthritis keeps her hands clenched. She is a herbalist, accompanied by a Midlander girl who acts as her hands (and apprentice). She is hoping to buy something.
89-90	<i>Asger</i> , male Varnori, heavily freckled with strawberry blonde hair, with a pleasant sandalwood scent. Asger is a candle and incense maker, he is hoping to discover a new scent.
91-92	<i>Belrog</i> , male barbarian, missing most of his teeth and two fingers on his left hand (maiming for theft). Belrog is addicted to the yellow lotus plant, and will do just about anything for coin. He’s hoping to pick up an odd job or two.
93-94	<i>Mathias</i> , male Nydissian, in his fifties, fine blue robes, clearly enunciates every word. Mathias is a cultural historian and retired explorer. He is hoping to trade some stories.
95-96	<i>Gwendoline</i> , female Midlander, sturdy apron and bandolier, sporting various pouches, vials and strange clockwork devices of mysterious purpose. Gwendoline is a reclusive inventor, constantly mumbling technobabble to herself. She is looking for a former apprentice who ripped her off and stole some devices that could do great damage if they fell into the wrong hands. She suspects the thief doesn’t fully understand the magnitude of the danger posed by these devices. She is willing to pay the adventurers to help her hunt down this fugitive, failing that she will quiz them as to whether they’ve encountered him on the road or seen signs of these devices having been in action. She will be interested in any large craters or scorch



	marks they've come across recently, any glows on the horizon at unusual times, or any alteration in the natural order of thing, or any mass killings, weird noises or odd concentrations of birds in strange places. Gwendoline will come across as a fish out of water in a travelling or social setting and leave the impression that she doesn't get out much. She is not a smooth talker and has little talent for repartee, jokes, or small talk, although she is obviously quite intelligent and lore-learned.
97-98	<i>Karlos</i> , male Karok, white hair parted down the middle. A giant Midlander servant accompanies him with a parasol to keep his skin from burning. <i>Karlos</i> is a gemstone expert, and is looking to buy, sell or trade something.
99-100	<i>Fenton</i> , male Midlander, latest fashion tunic, long fringe that he regularly blows clear of his eyes. <i>Fenton</i> is a famous socialite, interested in gossip and politics of all kinds. If treated well, he can conjure introductions with hard to reach people. He's looking for a good time.

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