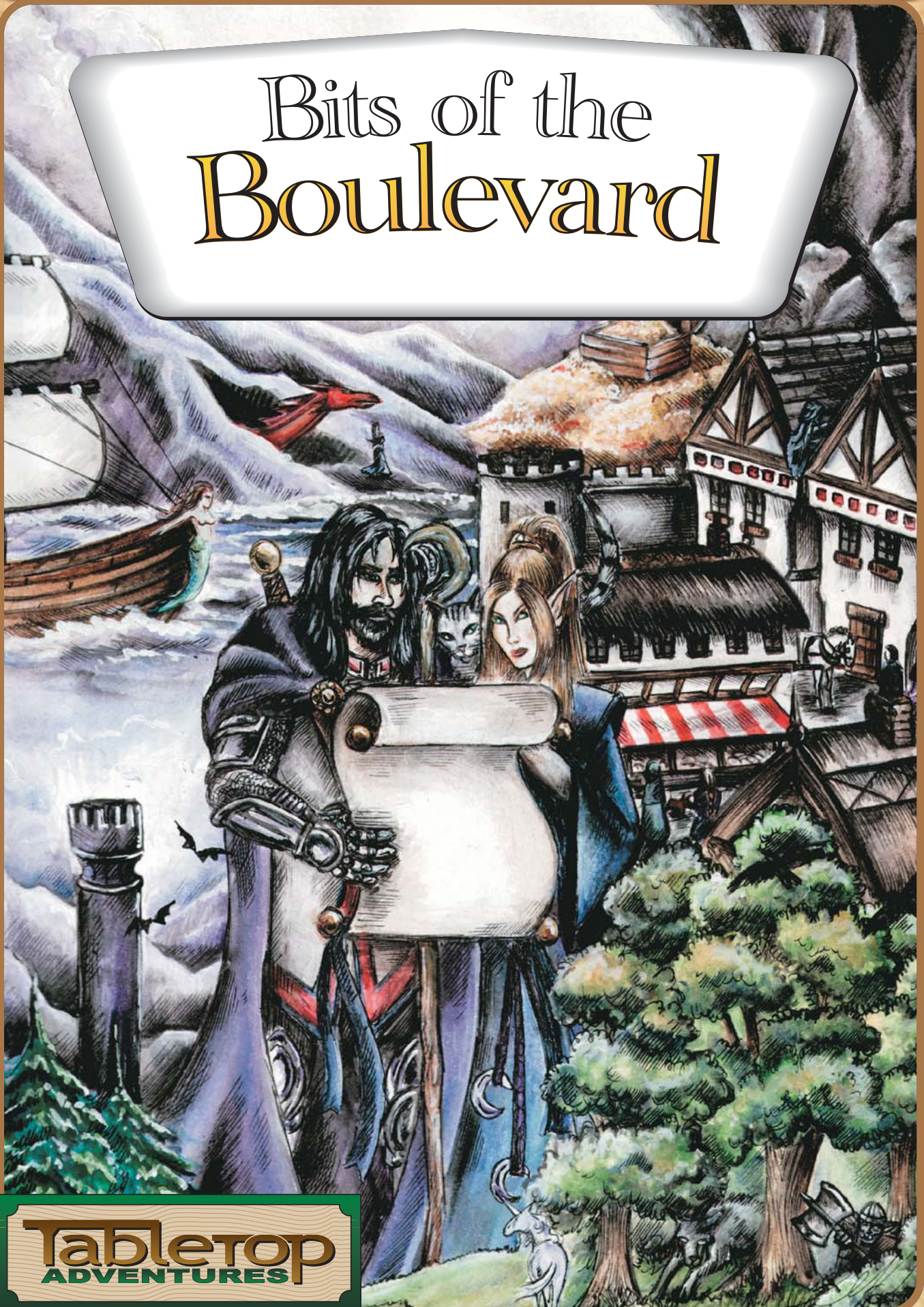


Tabletop Adventures presents

Bits of the Boulevard



Tabletop
ADVENTURES



Bits of the Boulevard

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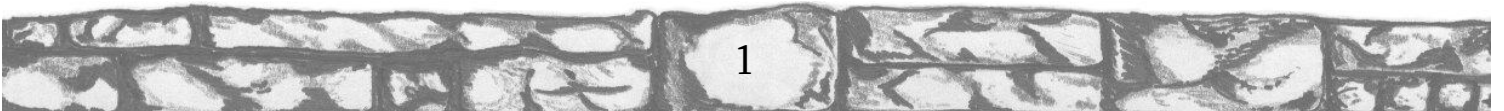




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Introduction

Welcome!

Welcome to Bits of the Boulevard™, Tabletop Adventures' first city product. Cities can be a lot of work to develop and we hope to make your job easier. For Bits of the Boulevard we have found writers with a broad range of medieval and fantasy writing experience so that we can represent a diverse range of settings. Each of us have some ideas of what to put in a medieval fantasy city but all of us together are able to cover things that, individually, we might not have considered. We have taken care to provide descriptions that can be used in virtually any game that takes place in a quasi-European medieval fantasy setting without "clashing" with the feel or setting of your existing campaign. However, in those rare cases that something seems out of place, either discard the description or change it as you have need. These descriptions are for your use in your game and you are free to modify them to keep your game fun and exciting for you and your players. I hope that you can find plenty of material here to augment your players' imaginations and to stimulate your own ideas for adventures.

Harried Game Masters, or How We Came to Write This Book

So, I hear you ask, "Why write a book like this?" Well, I'm glad you asked. We wrote it for all those Game Masters who have ever lamented not having the time that they wanted to spend on their game because those unforgiving intrusions to gaming (life, work, family, school) interfered. We wrote it for all those gamemasters who have come home from a hard day of work or just finished a grueling finals week and had friends call up and say, "Hey, let's play tonight. I had a rough day and I want to kill something." For all of you who need more than 24 hours in a day, welcome to Tabletop Adventures' line of products for the Harried Game Master.

We here at TTA believe that description is a very important part of game-mastering and that vivid descriptions can make a world or an adventure come alive. However, we have noticed that the more rushed or frazzled a GM becomes, the more mechanical the game tends to be. So we have written a book that we've always wished to have, one that would have made our lives easier over the years. Tabletop Adventures' "Harried Game Master" products are designed to be products that you can buy today and play tonight. We have taken care to make them flexible so they can be used in virtually any campaign without changing its feel or details. They are to help you, the Game Master, make the maximum use of the limited time you have available.

This tool provides the GM with a way to stimulate the characters' senses and the players' imaginations without having to use game-changing information. The descriptions can give players a "feel" for a situation, a better image of what is happening or what their characters are experiencing without all of those experiences leading directly to combat or treasure. They are intended to enhance role-playing by encouraging character building, reaction, and interaction. These Bits of the Boulevard, and all the accompanying material, are made for you, to ease the life of the Harried Game Master.

Check out our other products at www.tabletopadventures.com, and if you have any comments or suggestions please send them to me at overlord@tabletopadventures.com

Enjoy, have fun, and create fun for others!

The Evil Overlord and his minions...er...I mean, the good people at Tabletop Adventures





How to Use *This* Resource

Or, What in the World are Shards and Bits?

Shards and Bits should be viewed as small pieces of an adventure. Think of the archeologist, collecting little pieces of pottery and then fitting them together into a fascinating whole. Bits are tiny pieces of description that can be thrown in anywhere to provide “color” or add a little excitement to what might otherwise be a dull spot. Shards are longer and more elaborate, meant to be selected rather than added randomly. They may describe a certain area or specific thing, or particular facets that do not fit well in a random table such as times or seasons.

One thing to remember in using this is that we try to provide you products that will add a bit of drama to your game. Therefore, delivery is important. The way you choose to deliver the descriptions that are provided can have a tremendous effect on the subsequent playability of the situation involved.

As with our previous products in the Bits of Darkness™ series, these Bits of the Boulevard™ have been numbered so that a GM can roll percentile dice or pick a card to randomly generate a dash of description for an adventure. An Index is provided in case a Bit is needed to fit a particular situation, and we have included many Shards for specific situations, conditions, or locations within the city. These all can help you flesh out areas of a favorite city or give you an "instant" description for those occasions when your players go "where no-one has gone before" and you don't yet have a clue what is there because you didn't expect them to go that way.

These descriptions need not be followed verbatim. As GM, you should feel free to adapt them however you need in order to use them to greatest effect. In some instances they may even give you ideas for additional adventures for your players. These Bits are for whatever you want! If a piece sparks your imagination (or those of your players) and you want to build on it, then go for it.

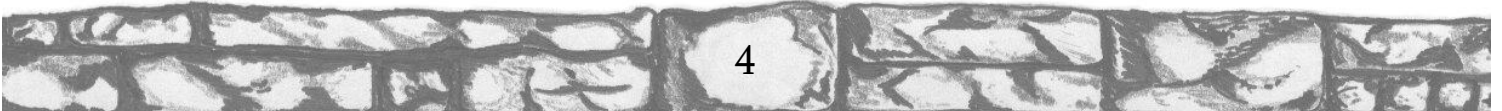
Another consideration is that, while most Bits do not add encounters, in some situations a minor encounter is possible. In those cases, (if you are using the D20 System™,) you may well find it handy to use the resource "Everyone Else" by E.N. Publishing. This is an excellent and handy resource for providing the GM stats for "everyone else".

Printing This Product

These pages can be printed out on regular paper. However, the final pages are formatted to be printed on card stock. As cards, they can be shuffled and drawn randomly during play or sorted ahead of time, with the GM selecting certain bits for use and placing them with the appropriate map or other materials. If you don't want to work with cards, you can roll randomly and read the description to the players, or write the appropriate number on the GM's map and refer to it when the characters arrive there.

Upcoming Products from TTA

Be watching for the next product from Tabletop Adventures™: “Bits of Wilderness: Into the Wildwood,” which will bring you descriptions for drama and suspense as your adventurers venture into the darkness and mystery of the untamed woods. Check our web site at www.tabletopadventures.com for more information. As always, if you have any comments or suggestions please send them to the Overlord at overlord@tabletopadventures.com





Bits of the Boulevard

01. A dozen merchants call out prices and wares in practiced, sing-song chants. Some exuberant businessmen juggle their wares as they call out, and over the heads of the crowd you catch sight of tumbling fruits, baguettes, even hunks of smoked meat.

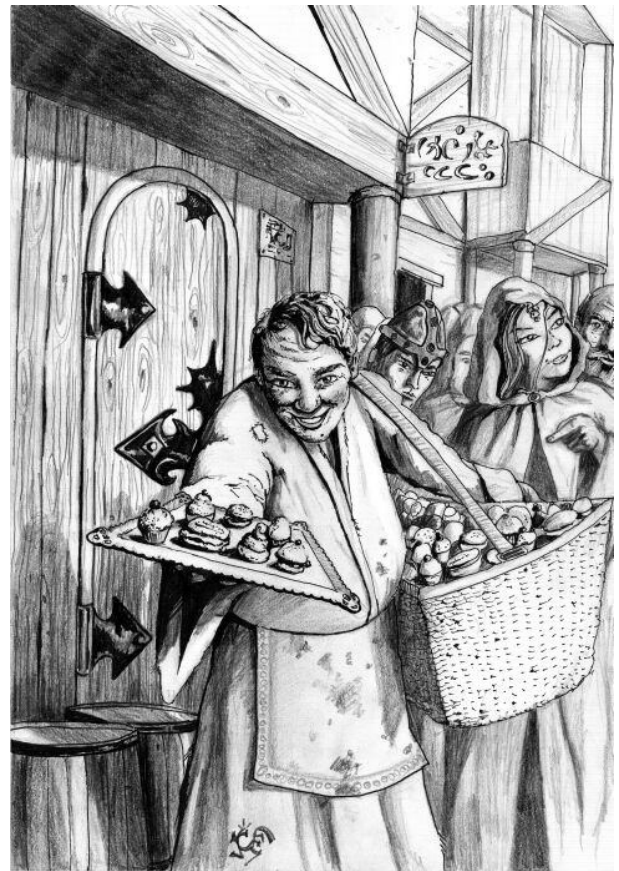
02. A weary peddler walks his heavily-laden donkey through the narrow streets. With each step the ragged beast of burden takes, you hear the clink of metal on metal, as copper mugs and pans clink together. As he walks, the donkey contentedly munches grain from an ornately stitched leather feedbag.

03. The dusky smell of good coffee [spicy tea] drifts out of an otherwise non-descript market stall. Looking inside, you see a plump old woman brewing herself a cup, while dozens of colorful finches hop across rows of carrots and melons, squawking. [Note: The publishers know that coffee was not available in medieval Europe, however it is something many players are familiar with, and it or its equivalent might be available in a fantasy world.]

04. In the shade of a push cart, a young girl is busily scraping the seeds out of a fat, pinkish-yellow pumpkin. She dumps the entrails into the dirt beside her, and occasionally a spectacularly bold grey squirrel will dart in to snatch a seed or three. The pudgy pushcart owner busies herself selling similar gourds, while the child dutifully prepares one for dinner.

05. There is a jolly red-faced man with a white hat and tunic and a huge smile offering his pastries to the crowd. "Sweet pastries! Fruit and honey!" His smile is sincere and he seems genuinely enthused about his fruit pies. "Tickle your taste and tease your tummy! Get your sweet treats here!" In his left arm he carries a large basket lined with a red and white woven fabric and many pastries. He smiles at [pick one of the characters]. "You look

like someone who could use a special treat today! How abouts a pie of fruit and honey as you go on your way?" [He is named Rocco but his friends call him "Sweets." He loves the pies which he and his wife make at their home and then sell on the street each day. The little pies cost as much as a loaf of bread.]



06. A wagon load of fired clay pots clatters down the narrow street, pulled by a drab grey donkey. The cart's driver is an equally drab grandmother; the only spark of color on the wagon is the brightly colored scarf the old woman has wrapped around her mouth to keep out the road's dirt. Even the pots are drab; simple unadorned grey clay splotched with brown. The woman lowers her scarf and spits a glob of inky black tobacco into the road.



07. The frightened clamor of a dozen condemned geese drowns out all other sounds. Their wings clipped, one leg tied to a post with blue thread, the geese can only squawk and scamper around the small cook-stall. It's no use. One by one, the grey geese are snatched up by an elderly grandmother, who expertly severs their heads with an old and often repaired hatchet. She curtly tosses the still struggling corpse to one of her many brawny grandsons deeper in the stall's shadows for cleaning and cooking. The air smells of tangy exotic spices and the panicked excrement of the dying geese.

08. "Finest wine in town!" You hear the wine crier before you can see him, but as you approach you sight a man in a clean white shirt with a blue vest and breeches. Under his left arm is a flagon of wine supported by a strap across his shoulder and over his neck and in his right hand he holds a wooden cup of modest size. [Pick an inn in town or use the one provided. This man is a professional wine taster and crier and works for the inns of his choosing.] "Philip recommends the wine of the Black Steed; fruity and rich!" He looks at [pick a character]. "Hey there, you seem to be a cultured lot. The Black Steed has the finest wine in town. Care for a taste?" He proffers the cup toward the players. "A taste is free, you can't loose with that, eh?" [Philip will give directions to the Black Steed but he is being paid to cry the wine so he will not talk long.]

09. A leathery gnome merchant has stopped to chat with a pair of human masons, and possibly make a sale. A sheaf of dried tobacco leaves protrudes from the gnome's backpack, and he hunches low under the weight. Leather pouches filled with sweet-smelling dried tobaccos and teas hang from the gnome's every button hole and from his braided rope belt.

10. A pudgy, friendly-looking man with a cart stands on the corner hawking his wares. The most wonderful smell is coming from the cart, the smell of fresh baked bread. The long loaves of bread are stacked, and the man has one hand on the cart and

the other gesturing broadly as he calls to the passers-by. "Roger's fresh baked bread, Roger's fresh baked bread!" He looks at you and smiles broadly. "Care for a loaf of bread to fill the empty corners? There is no finer bread than Roger's!" It does smell good.

11. As you continue down the street, a small stall on the right side of the path draws your attention. A small boy plays festive dance music on a mandolin beside the stall, and the sound of laughter comes from the back. Several exotic scents combine to further entice customers. Inside the stall, all manner of masks and headdresses hang on display. An exaggerated bird's face with an enormous beak, a jeweled cat head, a black and white patterned headpiece and a brightly feathered mask all vie for attention with numerous other, simpler pieces.

12. A man dressed in a swirl of bright reds and golds stands beside a covered horse-drawn wagon at the side of the road. Strange and exotic-looking statues, weapons and mirrors are laid before him on a blanket, and a small hunched assistant (whose race and sex you cannot determine) in a hooded cloak scampers from wagon to blanket, adding and removing items under the man's direction. Townsfolk obviously view these activities with suspicion and give the wagon a wide berth, though the man either doesn't notice, or doesn't care.

13. "Eel pastries! Get your eel and fish pastries here!" Up ahead a rather large, round peddler carries a deep wooden tray supported by straps that go over his shoulders and behind his neck. He catches your eye, [pick one of the characters]. "Finest eel in town, wriggling only yesterday, baked into a fresh pastry with cheese and rare spices from the east! Care for a pastry?" [The pastries are well made and look fresh. They are small, just large enough for a quick bite to eat for one person and cost a few coppers. The GM can tie the peddler to an inn by the docks/river/edge of town if desired, and use the fellow to guide characters to a specific location. His name is Japers.]



14. A train of dwarven porters, conspicuous in their brilliant red leather jerkins and blue-dyed brewer's aprons, winds through the street. Each of the stout men carries a wooden ale cask on his shoulder, painted in a red and blue check pattern. The eldest dwarf calls out the name of the brewery to drum up interest. The chant of "Ten Keg Mountain ale" resounds through the street.



15. A merchant steps out of her shop just in front of you, clad in a deep red velvet gown. All of her fingers bear bejeweled rings, and a large emerald hangs around her neck. Six guards, each dressed in mail and bearing finely-crafted long swords that are emblazoned with a rose and an eagle, stand around her, glaring at townsfolk, and clearing a path to the merchant's coach. The coach itself is lacquered wood, stained the same deep red of her gown, and clearly cost more than many of the people nearby would earn in their lifetimes. A number of hands stretch up requesting coin, but they are quickly swatted away by the woman's guards as they seat her in the coach and ride off.

16. A fat tabby and a brightly colored iguana battle over scraps of beef fat under a butcher's window. So far, in a storm of hisses and swats, the plump cat seems to be winning the fight, while the butcher's small daughter watches from the window sill with delight.

17. "Ham pies! Get your ham pies here!" An unkempt man in a stained green tunic and red scarf calls out to the crowd. It looks as if he added the scarf as a way of trying to spruce up his appearance but he is one of those people who will never look neat no matter how hard he tries. "Ay there you folks look like you could use a bit of meat! Got to keep your strength up for fightin' dragons and all, eh?" [The man's name is Scotti and he is socially inept but he means no harm. Any conversation of more than a couple sentences is bound to elicit at least one politically incorrect, racist, or insensitive comment. There doesn't seem to be any malice behind it; he is just clueless. His meaty pies cost a laborer a day's wages.]

18. Across the street is an inn, but the sign is at an odd angle, so you can't make out the name of the establishment. Folks are entering with baggage and through the second floor window you can see a man shaving. Just in sight, off to the side of the building are what appear to be stables. This thought is punctuated by a loud crack, followed by a horse's whinny. You see a harried looking youth dart out of the stables, bent double and his arms over his head. Once a safe distance away he whirls back to face the stables and begins to shout. "Blast you, Firetounge, you near took my head off!" You hear Firetounge whinny again in reply. A couple of passers by laugh at the poor groom.

19. The sign of a windowless, red brick pub fascinates you for long seconds as you pass by. For those who can read, the finely-wrought iron sign proclaims the name of the place to be "The Vorpel," and the majority of the sign is taken up by a small puppet connected to a pinwheel. The metal shadow puppet depicts a miniature knight losing and regaining his head as the breeze stirs the pinwheel.



20. Like most of the shopkeepers in town, the innkeeper and his wife live above their tavern. As you pass under their second floor window, (its wooden slat shutters open to catch the breeze,) you hear the man and wife arguing loudly and profanely about the poor state of the tavern's business. Each accuses the other of drinking up too much of the profits.

21. Far too many guests arrived at a prosperous merchant's wedding party. As the noise and chaos of the celebration increases, the group is being moved to a large patio area outside the ritzy inn. Harried waiters are setting up tables while trying to stay out of the way of drunken revelers and arguing in-laws. Passers by are apt to be spit upon for some imagined insult to the bride's family, or warmly embraced as a long-lost cousin by one of the drunks. [It's difficult to hear anything over the roar of the party and the loud musicians they hired to entertain. Any conversation will be nearly impossible.]

22. Through the window of an old and ramshackle inn, you see a young woman weaving a wide-brimmed straw hat. She's obviously impatient, looking up from her work often, sometimes out the window and sometimes inside the inn. [She is waiting for both her food and her companion.]

23. Expert construction gangs are erecting a new warehouse. They work in a very efficient manner such that the massive new structure will be completed in a little over half the usual time. The workmen's lilting work-songs, sung in high voices in a language more exotic than Common can be heard for some distance, and at lunch they grill savory meat dishes.

24. An ancient, legless man sits on a threadbare rug in front of a carpenter's shop, spinning a wagon wheel on his lap and checking its balance. He doesn't look up as you pass, and your shadow falls over him. He's engrossed in his exacting work, humming an old army battle chant to himself as he works.

25. The hanging wood signs along the street creak rhythmically in the gentle breeze. Scanning the garishly painted planks, you catch sight of advertisements for all the businesses common to a bustling city; cobblers, wheelwrights, barrel makers, iron workers and glassblowers are all present. All the signs are crudely wrought but effective, decorated with simple pictures depicting the business' trade, for the benefit of their mostly-illiterate customers.

26. A brown-skinned glass blower works behind a hissing and popping fire pit that is separated from the walkway by a single round wooden rail a few feet away. Behind you can see the doors that are pulled across to close off the shop and tools after hours. Yellow light glistens off the long glass tube she plays like a flute, and within a few moments, the woman finishes her current project, a delicate black glass figurine in the shape of a crab. With callused fingers, she snaps off the crab's blow tube and sets this latest creation aside onto a low table that's filled with a bedazzling glass menagerie in clear view, but just out of reach, of the passers by.

27. A smith is busy at his forge in plain sight of the street, hammering out horseshoes forged from iron and silver, and inscribed with protective runic prayers. The smith must be superstitious, as he wears a dried cat's paw on a leather thong around his neck, as a symbol of good luck, and several upturned horseshoes wreathed in pungent bulbs of garlic adorn his stall. A traveler is waiting to have her horse shod as soon as the smith finished his latest piece.

28. A gnomish pastry chef looks resplendent in his many-layered, five-colored chef's hat as he strides purposefully down the lane. In one stubby-fingered hand, the chef clutches several dozen honey candies on a stick. All of the tasty treats are shaped to resemble fanciful monsters; you catch sight of a great worm spun from purple sugar, an orc carved from licorice, and a dozen more. Despite the hungry eyes of neighborhood children, the gnome ignores all entreaties, intent on delivering his wares to a very specific customer.



29. The ground in front of the fletcher's stall is studded with racks of arrows, their iron and stone tips are resting lightly on the racks' lower shelves. The rainbow of feathers capping the arrows rustle like leaves in the breeze. Children run their fingers over the arrows' fletchings as they pass, but remove their fingers from the shafts at a gruff warning call from the stall.

30. Behind a low slat fence, you can see a yellow-robed stonemason busy at work. His shirt is open on his chest, and his robe flaps in the wind. You hear the chink of his chisel on stone. The mason gently and patiently chips lettering into a grey marble grave marker, which rests on a sturdy tree stump before him.

31. A few blacksmiths have set up shops in a courtyard around one of the city's deepest wells. The sounds of multiple anvils being rhythmically hammered resound through the plaza. The burnt and coppery smell of smelting fires fills the air; steam and haze from tempering buckets roll gently along the ground.



32. Through the noise of the crowd you seem to hear the noise of running water. Ahead in the center of an intersection is a fountain. You can see the top of it first, above the heads of the people in front of you. Some type of long fish, carved in stone, perches on top of a basin and water spurts

up from its mouth. When you draw closer you see six of the same fish supporting the top basin. Their mouths are open wide and water pours out, making spouts which are convenient for filling cups or buckets. People stop to water their animals from the lower pool, but get their own drinking water from the spouting fish.

33. The streets meet at a large intersection, paved with old bricks. In the center is a simple fountain—the rain god[dess] standing over a bubbling stream of water. On each side of the stone figure, the water collects in pools deep enough for people to dip buckets.

34. The drains run under the pavement along the street. At the intersection of streets, the pipes are carried into a pool at the center of the open area where the streets meet. A roughly circular stone basin 5' in diameter with 3' sides holds about a foot of water. The water is warm and somewhat cloudy. A little more water is dripping into the basin from the uphill drain.

35. A lanky traveler in well-worn leathers waters his horse in the fountain [well/pool/river]. Despite his appearance he does not seem to be a stranger here.

36. A red-bearded dwarf with skin the color of brownish clay sits perched on a rickety wooden stool near the entrance to a large temple. A low wooden table before him is covered in painted prayer cards bearing the images of various deities and holy persons. The dwarf thrusts a handful of prayer cards at you with ink stained fingers, puffing with exaggerated pride as he details the many hours of loving work that went into painting each of these icons. One look at the crude but brilliantly-colored icons tells you he is probably lying.

37. You pass under the shadowy arch of one of the great temple's flying buttresses, enjoying the moment's respite from the blazing sun. Copper bells dangle from thin cords tied to the mossy under side of the arch, tinkling out a gentle hymn.





38. A procession of clerics [followers of some good or lawful deity that encourages care for the poor] **has attracted a large number of the town's beggars and unfortunates.** The priests are passing out food and clothing. Their once-bright robes are stained and muddied, but they seem unaware. The line of waiting beneficiaries is rather long, and the area is slowly beginning to take on the scent of a large mass of unwashed bodies. One of the clerics sees you and gives you a piercing stare, seemingly taking in your clothing and arms, then shakes his head, turning back to his charges.

39. The mournful bells of the holy places ring out through the town. The clarion call tells the religious that it is time for prayer but for most others it simply lets them know how many hours of daylight remain. The bells ring at the beginning of every watch of the day and night (that is every three hours) with four watches of the day and four watches of the night and the pattern of rings telling the number of the watch.

40. You come to an area where the avenues are broader and cleaner. There are trees and bushes to either side and the occasional twitter of bird song – which is quite different from the slums, where any birds foolish enough to venture learn to keep their beaks shut for fear they will end up in the pot. That's another thing so different here, in the rich part of the city. It is so quiet! There is none of the constant shouting and squawking of goods for sale and offers to be had. There are no children – those dirty-faced urchins who had seemed to be everywhere before are notable here by their absence from the streets.

41. A line of grey-cloaked school children walks through a statue-lined park. Each child tightly clasps the hood of the child in front, forming a human chain watched over by a pair of severe-looking adults in mage's robes and wide flat hats. Every now and then, one of the stern preceptors will lightly slap a child on the back of the head for talking out of turn or some other breach of discipline. [These children are sons and daughters of

some of the town's wealthy merchants, accompanied by their teachers.]

42. Flies buzz incessantly, hovering over stinking piles of raw sewage randomly scattered across the slick and narrow way. Pedestrians and push carts jostle for space, competing with urchins and beggars for walking room in the narrow lane. Now and then you catch sight of a peasant wife emptying her family's chamber pot onto a momentarily empty space on the street, contributing that much more to the squalor. You'd be advised to watch where you step; the citizens of this quarter seem adept at almost unconsciously dodging the reeking piles of dung. [Characters residing in this district for more than a short time may be at risk of contracting a disease.]

43. Many extended families have crammed into a few multistory buildings that threaten to tumble down around them. The noise and stench of so many living in such close proximity is appalling. Drying lines bearing the poor people's meager possessions are stretched between crooked buildings. They must have hope though, because despite the poverty, small but immaculately-arranged religious altars have been placed on every windowsill.

44. Two or three ragged old women are roasting potatoes on a charcoal fire, and the smell is enticing. They are enjoying the warmth of the fire. The same idea appeals to some town guards who come over take a little chill off. However, something one of the women says angers the guards and, within seconds, they have kicked the potatoes into the dirt and trodden out the fire.

45. An old man sits by the side of the ditch, cackling. His withered limbs are visible through the tears in his clothes. He is holding a stick and occasionally fishes something out of the ditch which he then thrusts into a stinking old sack next to him. Then he cackles some more. The combination of smells near him is intense, and intensely unpleasant.



46. A mother, shoulders wrapped in a brightly-colored crazy quilt to ward off any chill, sits in the sun nursing a newborn baby. The baby absently plays with the quilt's tattered edges as it feeds. The woman nods a bored greeting as you pass.

47. It may seem early in the day for it, but the poorly-dressed man over on the other side of the street is already drunk. He weaves as he walks and his face is ruddy and covered in sweat. He bangs on the window of a house and a woman's head emerges. She must be the angriest woman you have seen for a long time. Even from a distance you can almost taste her emotions. She grasps the man by the ear and then by the nose, all the while telling him what a useless, lazy, good-for-nothing wastrel he is. Other women forget their household tasks for a moment and gather round, shouting encouragement to the screeching harridan. The noise quickly becomes shrill and unbearable.

48. On the other side of the street from you walks a young woman who catches your attention for some reason. Cosmetics are smeared thickly over her face and her clothes seem to have been hastily assembled. She is carrying a bottle in front of her carefully, as if frightened to spill even a drop, and seems tired and unhappy. When the young woman stops at a door and knocks hesitantly, it is wrenched open violently. An angry man who looks a lot like her, only older, stares at her with loathing. She hands him the full bottle she has been carrying and waits for him to turn. Then, head bowed, she follows him into the building.

49. Competing street corner prophets of obscure but rival fanatical sects attempt to shout each other down in front of an apothecary, as the bored proprietor watches from a stool just inside the shop's cool darkness. The two prophets seem almost mad, and are obviously foreigners, distinctive in their ragged sackcloth, facial tattoos and scars of self-mutilations. They argue and shout derisive comments back and forth at high volume, slipping out of Common and back into their native tongue as they get excited about a particular point. It is hard to believe that these

two have any real insight into the truths of the gods or the rhythm of the universe.

50. Straining under the huge weight of their burden, a small gang of burly workmen carries an enormous log on their shoulders to a construction site just up the street. A broken crew wagon is visible down the street, where several more of the construction logs have spilled out onto the street, blocking traffic. Several angry pedestrians are tossing curses at the harried construction crew.



51. Ahead of you, a large and boisterous crowd of people surround a hooded figure, dressed all in black. A city guard seems to have just finished reading from a scroll, and as he puts the scroll away, several people in crowd begin to cheer. The figure (a man) is quickly stripped to the waist, and efficiently given 10 lashes, then roughly shoved to a nearby cleric, who checks his wounds. As the punishment ends, the crowd breaks up in to several small groups, some clearly arguing about the event, others simply discussing local events.



52. Cattleherds, with much shouting and waving of long wispy poles they use almost like whips, are driving their belligerent, noisy cattle through the city's streets, intent on reaching the city's livestock market. Cattle moo, bells jingle on some collars, and the strident commands from the herders ring out through the street. The air has acquired the earthy rich tang of cattle dung.

53. Neighborhood children play some team ball game in an open area between buildings. There is much shouting, kicking the ball, pushing and chasing. The teams are marked with strips of cloth tied around their arms. One team wears brown ties; the other wears golden yellow. Parents and gamblers, waving cloths in their team colors, cheer the children on.

54. Several men and women dressed all in white walk methodically down the road towards you, almost as if they were in a procession. They each bear the holy symbol of their deity, and each has a large yoke or pack on their backs, penitent pilgrims atoning for their various transgressions. Their eyes remain downcast as they walk through the streets, uttering no sounds. A number of children run around the group, taunting and calling to them, clearly trying to distract them or elicit a response, but the group pays them no mind. Some young boys even throw a few stones, which strike one of the men in the back, but he does not flinch. A few locals stop to watch the group, but most pay them no mind, beyond moving aside as the group passes. [These pilgrims probably worship a lawful deity.]

55. You catch a glimpse of something bright and shiny at the far end of the street. Then you begin to hear laughter and music, and the sounds of horses and oxen. Moments later, several large, horse- and ox-drawn carts roll into view, each with an elaborate scene constructed on the wagon. One shows what is obviously a local hero tale, as a man dressed in exaggerated armor and wielding a gigantic sword challenges some sort of large winged beast. On another, a fool tumbles and rolls, eliciting laughter from the children that

follow his cart. A third bears a beautiful young maiden who throws flowers to passers by as her cart slowly moves along. The fourth and final cart bears a quartet of musicians playing simple tavern songs for their appreciative audience, which sings along, often very out of key.

56. Buoyed up by a cloud of cinnamon-scented fairy dust, a bundle of scrolls, some quill pens and several inkwells drift through the air, bound for a wizard's study near the town gate. The townspeople have seen this spectacle before, but never grow tired of gawking at the 'wizard's shopping trip'. The floating writing implements zip efficiently through the streets, maneuvering easily around amazed bystanders.

57. A man stands on the corner, surrounded by a group of wide-eyed children and bemused adults. He is gesturing wildly and grandly, and eliciting oohs and aahs from the youngsters. With a motion of his hand, a bright flash of light pops into existence, and disappears again, quickly. Another gesture and the distinct scent of baking bread fills the air, and then is gone. He bows deeply, and tells a short joke, which brings laughter from a few of the adults. After several more tricks including summoning a small bird, and making a young boy's shoes tie themselves, he begins to pass around a hat, collecting copper and silver from the watching crowd, and then moves on.

58. A troupe of green-faced clowns dressed in elaborate green and yellow costumes perform in front of a row of food stalls in the marketplace. A crowd of customers and gawkers applauds as the troupe runs through their routine of acrobatics and comedic pratfalls. Occasionally an onlooker will expectantly toss a copper coin at the performers, who try to catch it with their teeth, to the crowd's delight.

59. A green-cloaked druid with yellowish reptilian eyes squats in the dust, his bare feet dark and leathery from the road. He plays a flute well, swaying his lithe body in time with the music. A trio of blue and white scaled cobras dances in the



dust before him. The gathered crowd keeps a respectful distance, but claps politely as he makes the snakes dance and spell letters in the dirt with their bodies. The three large serpents coil over a growing pile of copper and silver coins.



60. A trio of fools tumbles through the streets, using their skills to get the attention of the pedestrians and merchants. Each wears green and pink motley, and their faces are hidden by papier-mâché half masks made in the images of fanciful birds. One of the clowns, with a mask like an exotic pink bird, bounces in front of you and laughs and gestures down a particular street. “Come to the circus tonight! It’s fun, fun, fun!” With a laugh and a flourish he is gone, bouncing and tumbling along the street with his companions.

61. A procession of brightly-costumed bards, street performers and even court entertainers winds its way through the city, the largest among them carrying a black and gold checkered coffin on their shoulders. Musicians play loudly and enthusiastically in dozens of different styles, serenading a fallen colleague out in style. An enormous crowd has gathered to gawk and catch the handfuls of candy some of the performers are tossing to them.

62. Most of the traffic in the town is on foot. People are hurrying to and fro engaged in important business of their own. Some look at you and pass by while others pointedly avoid looking in your direction, almost as if to say that it doesn't pay to get involved in someone else's business. The variety of people is as diverse as the buildings. There are merchants with fur-trimmed garb, craftsmen in work aprons, artisans in brightly colored tunics and housewives and women in peasant dresses, gowns or tunics. Occasionally, one dedicated to the religious life is seen in the streets in the vestments of his or her office.

63. A blanket of lush green vines and black moss covers most of the buildings to the rooftops, giving this entire area the appearance of strange topiary. The smell of mint makes your nostrils tingle as you walk through the verdant alleyways. Small green lizards, almost impossible to spot amidst the foliage, dart quickly through the moss chasing insects.

64. Rounding a corner, you come upon a small courtyard, with a raised platform in the center. The platform is empty, but the gibbet still stands on the platform, a noose dangling and swaying in the wind. The square is empty, almost as though the city’s residents unconsciously avoid traveling this route when they can.

65. This small section of the city, stretching only a street or two, is very different from the rest, being home to a number of people that are clearly travelers. Strange music comes from beneath several small tents, and a dancing girl dressed in a diaphanous silks swirls out the door of a shop, and quickly back in. The smells of strange foods and spices are almost overwhelming, and the people call loudly back and forth in a hundred different languages, arguing and laughing loudly. No one actively shuns your party, but it’s clear that you are tolerated, not welcomed. No one will make eye contact, and conversations die down as you move through the street.



66. The street here is paved in stones that are well worn. This is unusual and is a mark of the wealth of the city or of the area. Either in the distant past or in its recent history the city either had, or wanted to pretend that it had, enough importance to actually pave some streets. In any event this makes your travel much easier, your footing surer, and the street a bit cleaner.

67. The odors of the city are prevalent wherever you go. [The following aromas could be used to lead characters to a tavern or inn that you have prepared for them.] **The pleasant aromas of food from the inns and cookshops are punctuated with the pungent smell of animal and human waste that mingles with the scent from the piles of rotting garbage in the alleyways. While a law has been passed to prevent people from dumping waste into the streets it is, obviously, not entirely effective. Apparently, the inhabitants don't feel that the law includes the alleys either. Occasionally, the city officials will demand that the sources of the city's less pleasant smells be cleaned up but they don't seem to have done that recently.**

68. The street here is muddy and slippery. At one side of the mouth of an alley filled with trash, a rain water barrel that has been tipped over. It seems that the water has washed some of the waste from the alley into the street. People are stepping around the muddy barrel but no one is moving it out of the way. You are not sure that you want to know what else besides water caused the mud but it is clear that there is animal waste in the mix from passing horses and dogs. The street here smells vaguely like a cross between a latrine and a compost heap. People around you are picking their steps carefully and some are cursing fluently.

69. Turning a corner, you see an ancient circular bronze seal, eight feet in circumference, depicting seven birds of different species surrounding a tongue of fire, set into the worn, neglected brick road. Four of the depicted birds – all birds of prey -- hover over three featherless and wounded birds from a position of dominance. Around the perimeter of the seal you can make out the faded

characters of what might have been a sacred inscription. The few pedestrians on the road sidestep the seal with a solemn expression, while the carriage of a wealthy merchant passes over it without care. [Those questioned about the seal cannot say why they avoid walking on it, citing forgotten traditions. Persistent characters may learn that the seal dates back to the founding of the city, or, that this area of town was once the home of heroes who defended the city from unworthy foreign kings.]

70. Prostitutes in suggestive outfits drift through the streets, calling seductively to potential customers. All of the women, whether young and still pretty or old and worn down, wear a small rectangular piece of silk covered in some sort of script [their civic license] either fastened to a chain around the neck or pinned to a sleeve.

71. In one of those odd lulls in the sounds of the city you are able to hear the beautiful sound of voices raised in melody. It is haunting and reverent, singing in an ancient language of things that you can only imagine. The sound, however, is so beautiful that it draws at something deep within you and seems to simultaneously call you to remember your beginnings and to fulfill your destiny. Unfortunately, just as the melody begins to draw you in, the brief calm in the city is past and the cacophony of the crowd rises once again to obscure the sound.

72. A mob of urchins scamper underfoot, all carrying shoeshine rags or tailor's needle and thread, and everywhere you turn, you're besieged by grasping little hands, and sing song voices offering to clean your armor, polish your blades, bind your wounds, shine your shoes, reattach your buttons, massage you, trim your nails, carry your packages, find you lodgings.... [The children may follow the party as much as two streets from where they were first encountered, but then desist and return to their first location. The GM could have the players make a few dice rolls; even if there's nothing to discover it should make them good and paranoid about pickpockets.]





73. Many people bustle about, moving in every direction. A man in trousers and a short brown tunic totters past you carrying a crate of clattering dishes that is so big it covers his face. "Oi!" he shouts, "Coming through!" Two pretty women in expensive dresses pass you going the other direction, giggling to themselves and apparently oblivious to anything else happening around them. They move on without giving you any more than a glance.

74. Under the shadowed branches of a willow tree, a pair of young lovers is locked in a passionate embrace. As the pair kisses, the young man is attempting to undo the laces of the girl's bodice, despite her halfhearted protests.

75. A cloaked warrior in the livery of the city guard leans in the shadows of an alleyway between two fishmongers. The old knight is cursing colorfully in Orcish as he tries to light his long-stemmed pipe.

76. A middle aged man and another about twenty-five years old struggle with the street's many pot holes as they push a cart containing a wrapped body, toward the city's burial plot. The corpse is bound tightly in white linen, with purple flowers laid on the chest. For all the dignity the two attempt to give their small procession, the corpse jumps and threatens to spill out with every new bump the unbalanced cart hits. The two men can't help but laugh resignedly as they struggle to finish their somber task. [A young man and his father are transporting the body of his grandfather, because they cannot afford to hire a wagon.]

77. A stunningly beautiful half-elven prostitute wanders haphazardly through the streets, clad only in a wrapped gown of gossamer red silk. Long chains of silver bells dangle from her elegant ears, jingling with every step she takes. She sings her services and prices loudly and clearly, in a surprisingly well-trained voice. [PC s wishing to sample her services can do so for 25 pieces of gold per night; her name is Antali Linosen and her skills command a premium.]

78. Three members of the town militia have caught a pickpocket, and are tying her hands in front of a bottle maker's stoop. Two of the guards watch the thief closely, arguing with her about the severity of the charges. It seems she knows the law well and is quoting chapter and verse to mitigate her punishment. She's already talked the trio down from a public flogging to a fine. Meanwhile, the third guardsman is busy returning a coin purse to a victim, shaking his head in amusement at the girl's boldness.

79. Suddenly a horn call rings out over the city. It is the alarm of the guards on the wall. In just a few minutes, the streets seem full of warriors as what must be every guard in the city heads for a post on the wall. The normal citizens just stand aside and let them go, though many of the street children follow behind, trying to discover what all the excitement is about. [This is an unannounced drill of the city guards. They have happened before, though not for a couple years, as some residents may recall.]





80. A family of traveling people has taken up residence in a burned out ruin that used to be a moneychanger's shop. Their multicolored wagon is parked beside the collapsed northern wall, its rainbow of wooden shields and flapping banners brilliant against the blackened wood. Small children gather mushrooms and try to snare a wild creature for the night's stew, while their older brothers and sisters stabilize the old roof.

81. Two bullock carts have tried to pass each other in a narrow alley [street] and their wheels have locked so that neither can move. The drivers are standing and shouting at each other. Some chickens have escaped and are running around crazily, and a small child is crying while two older boys are trying to steal eggs from one of the trapped carts. [All three boys are brothers that live nearby.]

82. The woman seems bowed under a heavy weight as she returns to her humble abode. Her plain black clothes are old and in need of cleaning and mending. She opens the door and then the window, where she ties a red ribbon to the open shutters, to attract any male passerby.

83. Walking along a particularly muddy street, you spy the gleam of a gemstone buried on the side of the street. Before you can move towards it, you see a man nearby spy it, and reach down, attempting to pick up the gem. However, his fingers pass directly through it, and come up covered in something that smells only slightly less foul than it looks. There is a burst of high pitched laughter nearby, and several tiny pixies scamper away, disappearing into the crowds.

84. The end of this street is blocked off by several city guards standing shoulder to shoulder. A number of people are attempting to see past them, but the guards block most lines of sight. As they shift, you can see past them in bits and pieces. It appears that a body dressed in fine furs lies face down in the street, and several guards are questioning a skinny woman, dressed entirely in black. Her hands seem to be bound or held behind

her back in some way, and as you watch, she is escorted away by her questioners, while the guards blocking the street begin to shoo people away.

85. A wooden 50-gallon barrel falls off the back of a farmer's wagon with a resounding crash. Grain spills everywhere onto the wear-pitted street, and the accident immediately draws beggars, who scoop the spilt grain into cupped hands and shawls. Next to descend are the pigeons, starlings and other city birds who show little fear of the humans as they squabble for their share of the mess.

86. As you walk down the street, a blurry streak crosses your path. You turn to see a beige dog with brown patches, about knee high, running off down an alleyway. As you attempt to continue on your way, a barefoot little urchin runs in front of you, following the dog. The child has short, curly blonde hair and is wearing a short green tunic with black pants and you're not sure whether the child is a boy or girl. As you watch, the urchin also disappears down the alley. [The child is very familiar with the streets and can easily lose itself in the crowd should the adventurers try to follow.]

87. Two sets of soldiers sit under the shade of an oak. One pair of warriors are garbed in red-tinged steel, with steel helmets by their sides, the others armored only with leather caps and jerkins decorated with intricately sewn swallows in green and red. The four men sit comfortably together, eating a lunch of bread and cheeses, sipping from leather wineskins and laughing about past battles.

88. A young boy, skin as tanned as boot leather, leads two young girls by the hand through the crowded street. The boy is perhaps eight years of age, the girls (obviously twins) around five or so. All three children have large cloths tied around their shoulders to form crude backpacks, and all struggle under loads of potatoes, radishes and beets they are carrying away from the market. [A brother and sisters sent on an errand.]





89. Flocks of doves and pigeons roost in chaotic nests in rain gutters, squawking incessantly. The cloth awnings covering most doorways are white with old bird droppings. Bits of long-forgotten bread crunch underfoot, thrown by visitors similar to the ones you see today who come here to feed the tame street birds. Unlike most wild birds, these avians don't flitter away as you approach; instead they boldly approach you for treats.

90. Crossing a narrow intersection brings you to a part of the city where the buildings are spread out just a little, revealing an alleyway here and there. Up ahead to the right, half protruding from between two buildings, a dog stands watching the street. Approaching the alleyway you notice growling sounds coming from within, and the patchy, black-and-brown-coated dog fixes its gaze on you. As you pass, she follows your movement with her head, otherwise standing very still. Beyond it, in the alleyway, you see two puppies with similar markings tugging at the remains of a haunch of meat. The dog continues to watch your progress until another passerby approaches, then she switches her attention to them. The sounds of little dogs at dinner fade into background.

91. Feral dogs with spotted auburn coats growl menacingly at passers by, but keep their distance. In the alleyway, their companions work on the shredded corpse of a cat. The wet sounds of tearing fur and snapping bones reach your ears.



92. Everywhere around you cats mew plaintively. Two slender felines stalk up and down the broken cobblestones of the streets, hissing and fighting over scraps and tiny kills. A black and grey tom with mismatched eyes glances up at you balefully as you pass, and returns to protecting his meager kill from equally mangy rivals.

93. You notice a brown dog, about knee high at the shoulder, moving along the edge of the street and sniffing around the alleys and merchant stands foraging for food. It is thin and wary in its manner as if it has been living on its own for some time and is used to not getting a warm welcome. As you look you see that it has a black spot on its right foreleg and a bit of white on its underside that begins at its neck and continues toward the abdomen. Its tail is down and it pauses in mid stride as it eyes you with an uncertain gaze. [The dog can react as the GM wishes if approached.]

94. You hear the honking of geese and the curses of men and women in several languages. Up ahead you search for the source of this disturbance and you see a gaggle of geese in the street. They apparently believe this area to be theirs and they are honking at passers-by and simultaneously trying to avoid the hooves of horses. Two of them run forward honking and flapping their wings at a young boy, who swings at them with a stick and runs off down the street in the opposite direction. Other people seem to be just as annoyed at the geese as the geese are at them. [If the adventurers investigate:] It is unclear whether these geese have escaped from a poulterer's shop or someone bringing them into town for market, or if they just landed here for some unfathomable reason.

95. Pigeons flit about the roof tops and dip down into the street, picking up morsels that have been dropped by the passing crowd. Their cooing infiltrates the sounds of the people going about their business and some suddenly take flight to avoid being stepped on. Just in front of you a couple of pigeons walk across your path, heads bobbing, but as you approach they hurry on their way.



96. A grey-speckled rat almost the size of a human baby laboriously drags a stale loaf of bread back to its warren. A pair of neighborhood cats watches from an open window, deciding whether the rodent would make a good meal or if the vermin looks too tough to attack.

97. A yipping miniature hunting poodle, dressed in a hand-knitted grey and gold sweater that's a mocking approximation of the local watch uniforms, darts between your legs at maximum speed. A few feet behind the canine, a panting new recruit barrels after the little mascot, a snapped leather leash clutched tight in one hand.

98. Flocks of wild chickens run riot through the dirt streets, their white feathers darkened with dust. The noisy birds tangle underfoot, and peck irritatingly at your legs and ankles. An impressively combed rooster crows at his harem from atop a splintered fence post.

99. As you approach a space between two buildings that is as wide as a short spear, a small grey and white cat slips from the crowd and heads into the alleyway. [When the adventurers reach the area, read:] As you reach the alley itself you see that the kitten is cleaning itself and there is a dead mouse lying at its feet. It stops its bathing and looks into the shadows between the buildings. There are some wooden crates that are haphazardly tossed to the left and some rags and garbage strewn about. The alley smells like an over-ripe trash heap. Turning and seeing you in the entrance to its alley the kitten hisses at you and then picks up its prize and trots over to the privacy of the crates for its meal.

100. A scrap of rag is caught up by the wind and flutters up behind you, just at the edge of your eyesight. For a moment, it almost seems as if a ghost has risen from the grave to haunt you, but it is just a rag.





Shards of the Street

General Descriptions

1. LEAVING THE GATE – It is wider here just inside the gate, yet the crowding is worse. Gaffers trying to get to market curse those new to the city, who stop in the middle of the road to get their bearings. A few gentle-born in rich capes do their best, while holding scented cloths to their faces, to nimbly dodge the unwashed children darting through the mass of people. It seems only the presence of a few of the gate guard moving through the crowd keeps things from getting out of hand. “Move along now, move along.”

Trickles of people head off from the bottleneck in a number of directions, more or less guided by the layout of the streets and close buildings. As the pressure of the traffic begins to lessen, it becomes noticeably easier to breathe. The muttering masses begin to give way to the measured clip-clop of horses being lead on stone-paved streets. A townsman heading for the gate passes you; he seems to have come from the market, as his cloth-wrapped bundle releases the smell of hot bread, which washes over you.

2. BUILDINGS OF THE CITY – The buildings rise up on either side of you and for anyone who is used to open spaces, you feel like they are closing in upon you. In many buildings, the upper stories actually overhang the street and cast grey shadows beneath them as the owners tried to maximize their space. Stucco and half-timbered buildings are more prevalent than wood or stone but there is a variety of buildings and nearly every possibility seems to be represented. The facades of the buildings are often painted bright colors, with red, blue, green, and white being common. Some of the richer-looking buildings actually have tiled facings or tiled decoration around the doors and windows. Signs hang above the shops and show their wares in bold detail. Sometimes the name of the shop is written and sometimes it is just the picture and the

color of the sign that let you know what may lie within.

[An example of this would be the "Golden Lion;" it may or may not have words on the sign but it would have a gold lion on it.]



3. NARROW ALLEY – [As you turn the corner] You find yourself in an alley so narrow, you imagine one person could lean out a window and shake the hand of her neighbor across the way. Weak sunlight filters down from above, illuminating the gray puddles and black mud of the alley. There is no sound except the wind howling quietly through the eaves of the buildings on either



side of you, and a few dried leaves scuttling across the rooftops above. One by one the dead leaves fall, cascading slowly down in the gloomy light. If you squint you can make out something sparkling from farther down the alley, glinting in a slender shaft of sunlight.

The alley seems to go on forever, not getting any wider or narrower. Someone tosses their chamber pot refuse and it lands with a splash just a few feet ahead. "Want t'watch where the heck yer walking when you walk back there, ye do!" a voice calls from above. Suddenly the sparkling object can be seen again, hanging from a string, being held by unseen hands from a fourth-story window just two buildings down. As you approach, it is slowly pulled up, but then the string snags against the building's timbers. The unseen owner yanks harder to pull the string but it breaks, sending the sparkling object plummeting into the mud below. A child's [or woman's] voice hisses, "Drat it!"

[The door to the building is bolted from the inside and can't be opened. If the characters try to search for the item, it can be anything from a shard of glass to a worthless trinket to a valuable or magical item.]



Markets and Shops

4. SIGHTS AND SOUNDS OF THE MARKET—You walk along the market square, beholding the sights, sounds, and smells of a living city. Any type of food, clothing, or other sundry items can be had here for a price. Some of the shops are open-air booths, including the ones selling food. Others are closed-in shops, most of these being fine clothiers, equipment shops, and miscellaneous stores such as jewelers and herbalists. You can see that it would be easy to spend too much gold here on tasty treats and unique items that you've seen nowhere else. Thinking of gold makes you instinctively

reach down for your money pouch as you remember that a place like this is the prime vicinity for thieves and cutpurses.

The more time you spend walking along the market square, the more the facade fades away in your eyes. At first this place was exciting and seemed almost beautiful in its diversity, but as you look deeper you notice the reality of a spot such as this. Surely there are great things to be had here, but there are also dangers. Your earlier thought of protecting your purse comes back as you see a poorly-dressed young man bump into a well-dressed old woman. She doesn't notice it, but you see that the teenager has walked away with her money-purse, a grin of satisfaction on his lips. Further along you see a small boy standing among a group of soldiers. They are eating hard bread and jerky just bought from a nearby market stand. The boy, obviously hungry and poor, moves about like a small mouse grabbing bit of bread that the soldiers drop as they eat. It's hard to feel sorry for the boy however, because you can see a fierce determination in his green eyes as he pilfers the fallen morsels.

The sounds of the place are almost deafening. Hawkers yelling at potential customers, children running and laughing, and groups of people all talking at once; all of these sounds assault your ears as you make your way through the square. As much as this city's market place has to offer, you are still anxious to buy what you need and make your way back to a quieter part of town.

5. PAINTER IN THE MARKET—A painter of middling talent has spread some of her best canvasses out on a carpet in an unclaimed area between a sausage vendor and sword smith. Most of the woman's paintings are competent, if unimaginative, still lifes and portraits of various people. [These people are her family, friends and local merchants who agreed to pose. The painter will introduce herself as Amiis, and tell customers she'll sell any of the pieces for a few silvers, and she also accepts commissions. However, from the paltry copper coins in the cup in front of her, customers might conclude that she would sell most of the paintings for far less.]





6. THE FRESH MARKET, EARLY

MORNING – Stretching across the plaza, traders have arranged their fruit and vegetables for inspection. To one side, a series of buckets and small tubs occasionally jump as the fish inside flop and splash. Here and there, claw-bound crabs try to escape their confinement. A row of skinned frogs wriggle weakly against a dirty blanket, the blood glistening on their exposed organs and muscles. An old woman is poking among them in a desultory fashion with her stick. From her demeanor, she seems to think they are a poor group of specimens indeed.

Bunches of root vegetables are lined up in the adjacent row of vendors. The mud clinging to the inverted tips is still fresh and glistens gently in the dawn light. Even as early as this, most of the cut flowers have already been claimed and only a few slightly dried-up bunches remain. Still, they are colorful, if not sweet-smelling – the opposite of the pungent herbs in the next row. Those look like tiny mandrakes but have an exquisite fragrance and taste, which could be valuable, given the apparent propensity for most cooks in this city to ruin their meats with a single variety of oily, greasy gravy.

The final row of vendors has a variety of miscellaneous manufactured goods. Colorful printed cloth appears variously cheap, gaudy or

attractive depending on the woman holding it up against herself. Chipped ceramics that look like they have been rescued from a shipwreck are being examined by several maids. Small children eye the spinning tops and hoops and wait for their opportunity to try to steal one or more of them.

Three bored-looking guards stand yawning and scratching to one side.

7. STREET OF CRAFTSMEN AT DAWN –

The street of cobblers and tailors is a narrow paved walk between two-story buildings, pressed tightly together with no alley between. At dawn their brightly painted shutters are closed, next to matching wooden doors. Painted signs hang by the doors: a shoe being repaired, a suit of new clothes, and a needle stitching cloth indicate shoe repair, a tailor, and general sewing. There is little sound, although a dull murmur indicates that some of the residents are probably awake.

8. STREET OF CRAFTSMEN IN THE

DAYLIGHT – An hour after dawn, the street of cobblers and tailors is alive with activity. The painted wood shutters on each house have been thrown back to show large bay windows in which the craftsman (or woman) works. Items for sale or demonstrating the skill of the craftsman are spread just inside the window, inviting inspection. The crafters sit in the windows at their workbenches, each plying his or her trade. Few workers look up at passersby, but if you stop, they will quickly respond, inquiring how they can serve you. You hear a continual background sound of taps and bangs and the sound of large shears, and smell food cooking mixed with the odors of wool, dyes and glue.





9. JEWELERS' ROW – The jewelers' row is up a hill, near the center of the city. There are stone archways at both ends of the street. A guard with a short sword and heavy leather jerkin stands conspicuously just inside each entrance, watching pedestrians carefully. The street is narrow but swept clean of debris. The shops have the usual narrow fronts, but in this street their doors are closed. A window, set back into the shop, shows the wares, behind a thick, well-made iron grid. The first shops display fine silver and brass necklaces, brooches and belts, either too large to pass through the grid's bars, or mounted so they cannot. The metal work is excellent and the gems appear high-quality.

A customer knocks at the jeweler's shop just beyond you. The barred window in the door is unfastened, someone inside inspects the potential customer, and the heavy shop door opens to admit the visitor.

10. STREET OF LEATHER MAKERS – The street of the leather makers is an unpopular place to be because of the intense smell. At one end, the carcasses are stripped and boiled down and the rendering passed on to the tallow makers. Next, hides are cured, salted and dried. The leather-workers scurrying about these tasks have come to seem as old, dry and wrinkled as the leather with which they are working. Some apprentices in smeared smocks are hammering rather ineffectually at the ribcage of some animal – what can they be doing?

Nearby, shoemakers ply their trade with aprons and awls constantly busy. Behind where each squats, a small but growing pile of sandals sits.

11. HERBALISTS' ROW – The herbalists' row is more like a full-sized open-air bazaar crammed into a series of alleys than it is a proper district. Most of the buildings here are quite old, and their crumbling stones have been replaced and repaired countless times over the years. Much of the row's commerce, however, takes place between the

buildings, in the dozens of stalls and booths that line both sides of every narrow street.

The streets of the row twist into one another without rhyme or reason, and were the district not so small one could easily get lost here. What it lacks in size, however, it makes up for in quantity; there are hundreds of businesses here, the larger ones occupying the buildings, and the smaller ones filling the doorways, nooks, alcoves and other spaces in between.

After only a few moments in this district, it's impossible to tell what you smell anymore – there are simply too many scents warring with each other for your attention. Fresh-picked or dried, exotic or mundane, magical, sinister or otherwise, if it grows anywhere within a few hundred miles of the city, you can buy it here.

Of course, this includes the darker side of herbalism: poisons, both with and without antidotes, strange potions, and snake oil in every conceivable variety. The temporary nature of the many shops crammed into the herbalists' row makes it an ideal place for charlatans and con artists to set up for a day or two and then move on – buyers beware.

12. SMITH STREET – In any city that has a street of smiths, that street won't be very long – and this one is no exception. The smithy street is dominated by a large dwarven foundry: a low building constructed of heavy stone, with most of its furnaces below ground. The foundry maintains a small, well-organized storefront where a wide range of smithed goods are available – but they specialize in large orders, and in crafting unique and unusual items.

Filling more ordinary needs are the many smaller smithies that line both sides of this wide street – the only street in the city that stays warm year-round. Heading up the street, you have to jockey for space among ore carts, wagons laden with new-forged swords and spearheads, and a great many city folk shopping at the stalls and small shop fronts.

Apart from the heat of the many forges, the other thing you can't escape is the noise; everywhere you go, you're surrounded by the





clang of hammers, the hiss of hot metal being slaked, hawkers' cries and the thousand myriad sounds of commerce being conducted.

Some of the smithy street's more noteworthy visitors include buying agents for the larger mercenary companies (who tend to cluster around the foundry), elven arrowhead merchants, wood sellers – and of course, adventurers on the lookout for magical weapons. Everyone seems to know someone whose cousin bought a magic sword here for a pittance, but you just can't put much stock in tales like that.

13. LIVESTOCK MARKET – The livestock market is one of the most chaotic places in the city, and one of the noisiest. The market itself consists of a large fenced-off area, which is then broken down into smaller corrals. Narrow paths wind between these enclosures, sometimes bringing you uncomfortably close to a wide variety of animals (and stranger creatures) that don't like being confined, or around crowds, or both.

Apart from the smell, which is absolutely unforgettable, the noise is unbelievable: a true cacophony of everything from screeching chickens to hissing snakes to roaring bulls – and other, more unusual sounds as well. On top of that are the cries of the merchants themselves, shouting to be heard over the animals and each other.

What you find in the livestock market varies from day to day, and the beast merchants arrive early in the morning to claim the best corrals. Although the majority of the beasts for sale are mundane – cows, horses, sheep and the like – the livestock market also offers more peculiar creatures: dire animals, oozes, and the occasional beast bound for the fighting pits, to name a few.



14. CLOTH MARKET – You enter an area where vendors are hawking their cloth goods. Huge bolts of striped cloth are spread out on tables; muslin, cotton and wool are stacked in heavy rolls. Brightly-colored embroidered pieces are stretched on frames for viewing, while richly-dyed fabrics in hues of crimson, deep green, brown and pale blue are all displayed with care. You pass one merchant selling finely-tailored clothes. Surcoats, tabards, mantles, capes and bodices hang about his booth like well-dressed ghosts. As you are looking around, the wind picks up. Cloth starts to flutter, hanging clothes begin to sway and the merchants scramble to better secure their goods from a disastrous landing in the muddy [dirty] road.

15. THE STRINGS – You know larger cities tend to house many small, unusual specialty districts, but even among those this one stands out: The Strings, a street entirely devoted to musical instruments. This winding street is jam-packed with tiny stalls and shop fronts, some of them large enough to walk around in, others small enough to be called alcoves.

Most of the shops focus on a single type of instrument, or even parts of a single type of instrument. The vast majority are too small to



keep much in the way of stock – instead, they make each instrument to order. There are some truly superlative craftsmen here, many of whom buy parts from one another. A harp maker might, for example, make the body by hand herself, and then buy the strings and pegs from two other merchants down the street. It's a peculiar way of doing things, but it's gone on for so long in The Strings that people will come from miles away to seek out specific shops.

The street itself is surprisingly quiet, though not in the sense of being empty of people. Rather, it is quiet in the sense that the only ambient noises are the small sounds of people busily applying their craft: fretsaws, hand-drills, tiny boilers, the plucking of strings and so forth, and occasionally a sudden burst of beautiful music.

16. FOOD COURT – The delicious smell of roast meat reaches you. To your right is a street of shops selling food. Each is a tiny storefront onto the street, with a half-door standing open. Behind the half-door, under a light wooden roof wreathed in smoke, the cook labors. In most shops there's a big pot over a low brazier on one side and a work table with cutting knives on the other. The cook can barely pass between these to the door at the back that opens into storerooms or the alley. The smells of meat, onions, and spices mingle in the air.

17. ENTICED TO EAT – Most cookshops have a single person or a couple working. They are dressed in plain work clothes, generally covered by large aprons. One or both often has a fine repartee and entices the passers-by: "Fine stew, great tastes, wonderful price!" "How can you pass this by?" "You know you are hungry. For two coppers, you can get a nice bowl of food. For four coppers enough to fill even you," (gesturing to the largest person in sight). "No cash young man? No one should go hungry! What have you to barter?"

18. PRICES FOR FOOD – Each food shop is selling a single item, such as mutton stew, duck

goulash, fish and rice, or bean and barley soup. Prices are just a few coppers for each main dish. Sometimes it can be expanded by adding fruit or bread for another copper or two. Only one shop sells pieces of meat and they are expensive, a couple days' wage for a common laborer. In the other locations, there are more grains and vegetables than meats.

19. CUSTOMER SERVICE – You watch a customer approach one shop. He pulls out a bowl and the merchant takes it, scoops food into it, and waits, holding the bowl of steaming, fragrant stew, until the customer digs into his pouch and produces the necessary coins. Then the cook hands the bowl to his customer. At another window, a woman trades an armload of greens for a meal. A shabby man is turned away, his barter rejected.

20. FOOD TO GO – There is no place to sit on the foodseller's street. Most people simply walk away out of sight carrying their food. You see a couple of men, merchants by their clothes, leaning against a wall and eating. Other people take their food to the square at the far end of the street and perch on the edge of the fountain's pool to eat. A group of three mercenaries who have been sitting by the fountain finish eating, rinse their bowls and spoons in the fountain's water, then shake the water off and put the utensils into their packs.

21. FRESH BAKED BREAD – The bakery smells lusciously of yeasty bread. It is a small shop with a half-door for selling over. Heat pours out of it into the street, but when you stop, there are no loaves available. The baker, dripping with perspiration, looks up, notes your presence and says, "Soon. We got another batch out soon." He gestures to a sand clock by the edge of the big dark oven; most of the sand has fallen to the bottom.

Within a few minutes a line of customers forms at the bakery. Women with baskets on their arms stand waiting for the bread, chatting companionably. When the baker pulls it from the



oven, crisp and brown, the smell fills the street, briefly masking all the reeks of dirt and decay. The baker's wife, a short woman with her graying hair parted in the center, appears from the back of the shop to handle the purchases. The bread is taken by the customers as soon as it is cool enough to handle and within a very short time, most of the bread is gone. The baker finishes the next batch and puts it into the oven, while his wife manages the last sales.

22. BAKERIES – Several shops in the area sell bread, and one or two larger ones even sell sweetbreads, but the small sweets are as expensive as whole loaves of bread. The places that sell baked goods seem to sell nothing else. You see a poorly-dressed elderly woman struggle as she enters one of the shops carrying a sack of flour that she can barely manage. [Several small shops bake for customers who bring their own flour, often charging simply part of the flour. This woman got a deal; she'll get bread from this place for several weeks from this flour, paying the shop with a portion of it.]

23. RAT ON A STICK – A dog-faced humanoid with the grey and yellow fur of a southern gnoll works in front of an enormous wood-fired oven. The chef sells long skewers of rat, pigeon and bits of beef and pork, grilled over open flame. You notice that he has shaved the hair off his arms up to his elbows; the grayish skin underneath is covered in old burn scars and knife marks.



Temples and Ceremonies

24. TEMPLE DISTRICT – The city's sprawling temple district covers several blocks, and every street – no matter how large or small – is crowded

with churches, shrines and temples. The larger temples command the most attention, with massive flights of low, wide stairs leading up from the busiest intersections. Out front, priests call to the faithful as they burn incense, offer up portents, and generally try to outdo the other priests who are all doing the same things.

The back ways and alleys are a different story; here you can find forgotten faiths tucked away in ramshackle little shrines, as well as tiny temples to the gods of foreign lands – and darker things as well. These narrow streets are quiet and dimly lit, and some of the city's oldest buildings cluster close around you. Where the main streets – with their towering halls, marbled cloisters and imposing colonnades – bustle with sweetmeat sellers, curio merchants and others looking to make a quick silver from the gathered crowds, these little byways offer services of a much less savory nature.

With the clergy of so many gods gathered in one place, fights are almost inevitable – though they usually stop short of actual violence. As such, there are more guards here than you might expect, and in fact many of the temples employ their own guards as well. Since some faiths prefer to hold their services at night, this district is a fairly busy place no matter what the time of day.

25. A TEMPLE, SEEN FROM AFAR – A temple sits at the highest point in the city, a tall building of white marble, its roofs covered with gold leaf so that they shine in the sun. It has towers upon towers, rising like a gilded, man-made mountain range. It is visible from virtually everyplace in the city, seemingly a guardian, or a watcher.

26. TEMPLE SQUARE – You enter the Temple Square, a broad open area more than 350 feet on a side. This plaza is wide open with no statues, benches or other features to get in the way of worshipers, and is dominated by the temple at its upper end. The stonework of the pavement is handsome, with geometric patterns in several types of gold stone. The other buildings on the





square are well-made and old, of gray stone softened by time. They have stone steps, and windows with old wooden shutters held together by attractive metalwork. The doors are likewise fine old wood with metal plaques indicating the group or department found within: “Charities”, “Mission to the Provinces”, “Safety and Health”. Plainly-dressed clerics and government workers can be seen coming and going during working hours. Most days, a few wandering merchants throw down a blanket and offer jewelry or religious tokens for sale or trade. Beggars frequent this area, hoping for a handout from worshipers.

27. TEMPLE FACADE – The temple doors are pure gold, two stories high, with elaborate friezes portraying the gods that founded and protect the city. Bright gems and sections of polished silver enhance the richness of the doors. The walls that flank them are stark, finely-polished white marble, rising 30’ to a golden roof with elaborate vines and decoration visible along the edge. Most of the time the great doors are closed and a smaller, human-sized door to their right is used for people centering and leaving the temple. The odor of incense wafts out the door every time someone opens it, perfuming the whole area.

28. HIGH HOLY DAY – You know there’s a high holy day coming: people have been pouring in from the surrounding countryside all week. Bars are full to overflowing. Innkeepers are pleased and smug: all their rooms are taken. Meal prices have gone up sharply and the service in inns and shops has deteriorated just as dramatically. The locals warn you that crime always rises during the holidays and to guard your purses.

This morning you are awakened by gongs ringing and ringing. When you go out after breakfast, the streets are filled with people, all moving toward the temple. They are dressed in their best, with festive additions of flowers and ribbons.

29. CELEBRATION IN THE SQUARE –

Temple Square is an open paved square, about 350 feet long on each side. Normally you see a few itinerant merchants in the center selling their wares, but not today. Today it is filled with people – hundreds, maybe thousands of people – packed into the square, with more arriving all the time. The gongs (there are several with different tones) keep a steady cadence that builds anticipation. More people press in behind you. The square is so crowded that it is hard to see far.



30. THE PROCESSION BEGINS – Suddenly there is a change in the sounds. Drums and horns join the bell-like tones of the gongs. The two-story golden doors on the temple open and a cloud of incense billows out, heralding the procession. Priests and priestesses, their raiment varied and colorful, march out. In the procession they are



playing instruments, carrying statues of the god[dess], singing hymns, wafting incense into the air and casting grain at the crowd. [The grain symbolizes a blessing of fertility.]

The costumes of those in the procession are lavish and vibrant: veils of ruby and sapphire; silken scarves that float in the air, golden and violet; silk jackets and skirts of crimson and puce and turquoise. Their jewels glitter and the gold and silver they wear is old and heavy. All have bells at their waists, their movements making a continuous, chaotic ringing at a hundred different pitches.

The statues they carry are equally awesome. They are man-sized or larger, depicting the god[dess] and scenes from his [her] story, or of important parables. Four or sometimes six men are needed to carry the beautiful statues, dressed even more lavishly than the living marchers. The faces are painted in gold, with red lips and rich hair. The silken veils and scarves on the statues sway as they are carried until you imagine the statues themselves are animate.

31. THE PROCESSION MOVES FORWARD –

The crowd parts as the procession comes down the wide pink marble stairs of the temple and onto the plainer stone of the square, the participants' steps falling together and making a soft rhythm against the chaos of the horns and bells. On all sides, the devout throw themselves onto the pavement in prayer and thanksgiving. Others kneel, forehead to the hard stones, while others sing in joy. A few stand, simply watching.

The procession descends from the temple and crosses most of the square before the last celebrants emerge from the temple. There must be more than a hundred priests, priestesses, and musicians. Then you note the people in square are joining the procession. Thus it lengthens as it goes. The priests lead the way across the square, turn and circle it once, and then move down the street opposite the temple in the direction of the water. The crowd now includes people wild with devotion, shrieking and dancing. Many of the people in the square brought along instruments or

are singing and clapping, and the wild sounds surround you. The incense from the braziers makes the air hazy and the sweet smell is almost choking.

32. CEREMONY BY THE WATER – [This could be by a river, lake, stream or ocean.] At the water's edge, the head priest[ess] wades in up to his [her] knees and stands, waiting with bowed head. The others line the bank. The men carrying the lead statue of the god[dess] proceed to the bank, and with impressive skill, lower the statue so that neither they nor the statue get wet but the priest[ess] can dip water from the river in a golden ladle and pour the water into the oversize golden bowl in the god[dess]'s hands. The people give a cheer and everyone sings a song of rejoicing which goes on for many verses, though only the priests and priestesses know all the words--most people join in only on the chorus.

The bearers of the main statue now lead the procession back toward the Temple. Many people sprinkle water on themselves in ritual cleansing, but many more immerse themselves for the even greater cleansing it symbolizes.



Miscellaneous Sights

33. SUCCESSFUL HUNTERS – A quartet of hunters, their armor concealed under long white and grey cloaks, returns home from a successful catch. Two men and a woman carry a massive boar trussed up on a spit, arrows with distinctive fletchings sticking out of its back. The fourth member of the hunting party walks sullenly beside his friends, his left arm bandaged and mounted in a splint and sling.





34. LIZARD – The chipped wooden corner of the building to your right is soaking up the afternoon sun, casting you in a shadow that seems cooler in comparison. From your position the jostling street crowd passes in clear view, voices and other noises washing over you. A slight movement draws your gaze back to the wooden beam; a small mottled green lizard has joined you. Its tiny tongue runs along its open eyes, considering.

As you watch, the creature quickly bends its legs, lowering its body a fraction, then straightens. Down, up. Down, up; it seems to be acting the fool just for your benefit.

"Watch it, you idiot!" The shout of a carriage driver sends the lizard hopping from its perch and scurrying for cover. In the street a young blond urchin dodges death from flying hooves as the carriage clatters on down the street. [This event could be good for one character alone. The GM could replace the shout with some other noise or happening, as appropriate.]

35. GAZING POOL – The alley [narrow street] opens up into a small plaza where the backs of six buildings meet. The ground is covered with mossy flagstones, and in the center of the plaza is a pool surrounded by a four-foot-high wall of stone. The top of the wall is covered with smooth, black pebbles, and many more rest at the bottom of the pool. The surface of the water is like polished glass. From the rooftops you can hear a flurry of wings beating and the cries of mourning doves.

36. DEBTORS' PRISON – A tall building looms ahead of you. Ravens clutter its towers with their glossy presence and taunt the people below with their cries. The building rises four stories above the din of the streets, the sun reflecting from its heavy, leaded windows. Thick ropes of ivy climb the stone walls of the building, lending a shaggy note of green to the otherwise gloomy edifice. A semicircular grill of iron bars is set in the side of the building at street level. Many pairs of filthy, pale hands grip the bars, and plaintive voices call for help, scraps of food, rinds of bread, freedom.

37. OUTDOOR ENTERTAINMENT – A troupe of red-vested fiddlers sits together in front of a small local tavern. They move aside for customers only grudgingly, often asking for a copper piece or two, more out of habit than need. Their fiddles sit on their shoulders, and they play sporadic bursts of popular drinking songs, then talk and laugh amongst themselves for a minute before returning to work tuning their instruments.

38. MINIATURE TOURNEY – A pair of wooden doors has been jury-rigged into a crude but sturdy table and the entire surface has been painted a velvety green. A small model of a knight's tourney has been set up; puppet kings and queens barely a foot high watch from tiny wooden stands. Stuffed squires polish wooden swords. A pair of small poodles, dressed in intricately-stitched barding that parodies the great knights of the land, have had doll knights strapped to their backs with thin carrots for lances. Every few minutes, the proprietor sets the dogs against each other, and they make their comically clumsy pass. For a few coppers you can watch all day, and the owner is even willing to take bets on the 'sport'.

39. PIGS TO THE SLAUGHTER – A human pig farmer, wrapped in mud-stained brown leathers and a dingy patterned cloak to ward off the night's chill, is leading a dozen of his fattest pigs to slaughter over their objections. Two of his burly sons, also dressed in the same distinct pattern, help the man herd the beasts through the narrow streets. A trio of well-fed sheep dogs keep the pigs on schedule for their appointment with the axe at the livestock market on the far edge of town.

40. NEW GALLOWS – Carpenters are busy putting the finishing touches on a gallows in front of the city hall. A prisoner in the jail next door shouts curses at the carpenters, and occasionally tosses old food or tiny rocks at them from his narrow slit of a window.



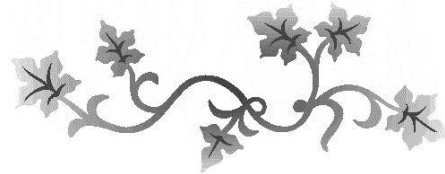
41. KITE HOLIDAY – Children dash through blocked off streets, screaming familiar fishing limericks as they fly kites shaped like caricatures of fish. The air is a tangle of waxed white strings and fish-kites in every stunning color of the rainbow. A middle-class boy of four weaves around you, barely avoiding tangling you in his line and crashing his glittering green barracuda kite.

42. MAGIC MAIDS – Animated rags and scrubbing brushes work tirelessly to polish the stone statues of beloved politicians and local heroes that line the broad, tree-lined boulevard. The air is filled with the tangy herbal scent of various cleansers. A minor city mage in green and grey robes sits cross-legged at the end of the lane, eyes closed in concentration as he directs the ‘maids’.

43. MATING DANCE – The festivities are blocks away, but from your vantage point on the hill leading down into the market square proper, you can catch sight of the seductive young dancers in their brilliant yellow dresses, twirling in the city's square. They dance to attract the black-vested young men watching from the shadows of the

buildings, who will toss glittering rings at the women who catch their fancy. Even this far away, you can hear laughter and the frenzied music of strummed strings.

44. WHEELWRIGHT – A wheelwright is setting several new iron carriage wheels out against her fence. Despite the great weight of each huge wheel, the bulky woman rolls them through the weed-choked yard from shop to fence with ease. After moving four of them, she steps back a little and gives them one final inspection. Satisfied, she stretches hugely and you see her muscular arms are covered in interlaced wheel tattoos. Then she turns and heads back to her workshop.



Waterfronts

45. RIVER STREET – The river runs through the city, its channel muddy and deep. Boats of all sizes move up and down during all the daylight hours. The water is far enough down the banks that generally access to boats occurs only where a dock has been built. Both adults and children stand on the banks, fishing. For a large part of the way, a street runs along the bank of the river, making a very pleasant boulevard. Trees have been planted (or allowed to grow) on the river side of the street. In the better sections of the city, the area between River Street and the river itself is manicured, with pretty flower beds and occasional benches. In the less-prosperous sections, the area is unkempt but equally heavily used.





46. WATER WALK – As you stroll along the walkway, you have the famous waterfront gardens on one side and the lovely waters of the riverfront [oceanfront] on the other. The waist-high wall between you and the water is made of a pure white stone that shimmers in the light. The waters and the flowers of the garden provide a fresh and clean scent to the air that both refreshes and relaxes you. Others move about the garden enjoying the beauty and two young lovers sit on a partially-hidden bench, oblivious to the rest of the world.

47. QUAY – You come to the riverside market, known as the ‘quay’. Small boats are unloading their goods and there is the raucous sound of trade being conducted. People are gathered at each dock to look over the goods offered, and they shout bids to the boatmen as the cargo is unloaded. For miles up and down the quay, merchants are selling the imported wares. The brackish smell of the river water mingles with other more exotic scents: honey, vinegar, perfumes and imported oil. The acrid scent of pitch stains the air, then mixes with the deeper, more pleasant smell of timber and leather goods.

48. OCEAN DOCKS – You make your way through the bustling town, catching the sights and smells of a breathing urban landscape. As you walk you catch the scent of the sea, and you know by that smell that you are close to the harbor. [If the party follows its senses and continues to move toward the city docks:] The ocean opens out before you as you approach the docks. Ships both large and small, all with colorful sails wrapped up against their masts, sit restlessly in the water. The smell of brine is intense now to the point that you can taste the salt on your tongue as you walk along the waterfront.

This harbor is a place of fervent activity. The crews of various ships are unloading or loading cargos as you watch. One ship seems to have come from a far-off land, as people dressed a bit oddly depart from it. Both men and women in bright, garish clothing pass you as they leave the

vessel and enter the city. These newcomers will stand out as obvious visitors, and you wonder how long it will be before their purses are cut from their belts.

[If the party continues to make its way along the harbor:] Further down, smaller docks are home to at least a dozen small fishing boats. Here the smell of the sea mixes with the strong scent of fresh fish. A fisherman, sweaty and dirty from a hard day on the water, is unloading his catch of whitefish. You recognize the smell, almost like fresh cucumbers, that emanates from the whitefish as the fisherman stumbles by with his catch.

Other groups of fisherman are just leaving in their boats for their day’s toil. These are not rich men, by the look of them. You can tell that they work hard at a thankless job, for little pay, and the sight of them makes you feel glad that you’ve chosen the life of an adventurer, no matter how dangerous it may be.

49. DEAD FISH – [This could be used for a river, stream or seashore.] A fish is floating in the water. Its distended belly points towards the skies and its whitened eyes show no sign of life. The water here seems slimy and unclean.

50. SMALL BOAT DOCKS – Smaller boats rub up against each other as they bob on the incoming tide. Dockworkers swarm over the larger craft, collecting cargo for importing or else swabbing down the decks. Further up the shore, away from the water’s edge, some fisher people are carefully going over their nets, while others are involved in trying to scrape off barnacles and other parasites from the hulls of their boats.

Two proud-looking merchants are giving orders in shrill voices and a troupe of slaves [servants] moves hither and yon in response to their extravagant pointing. Even here there are some small children, dressed in rags and hiding, looking for anything they might have a chance to steal.





51. THE DOCKS OF THE BAY – From a distance, the docks appear as a forest of masts and spars, every inch of available pier space chock full of ships of all sizes: deepwater traders, coast runners, galleons, schooners and more. Other ships are moored offshore, well out of the way of the main shipping lanes into and out of the protected bay.

The mouth of the bay itself is guarded by two staunch watchtowers, one on either side. Perched on the spits of land that shield the bay from the worst waves and sea weather, these towers can draw up a massive “net” of heavy chains to block off the harbor in times of war.

Up close, the docks are composed of several large piers, with smaller piers radiating outwards from them. One area is left open for deepwater ships to put to port, and this section teems with longshoremen, cranes both small and large, and bales, boxes and the other contents of ships’ holds.

Harbor agents move among the sailors, dockworkers and passers by, inspecting some cargoes and taking bribes to avoid inspecting others. Overhead, gulls wheel, their cries mingling

with the shouts of the longshoremen, the sound of waves lapping at countless hulls, the creak of timber and the snap of sails being unfurled. All around you is a sense of purpose, of moving ships and goods as quickly as possible – the docks are the heart of the city’s commerce, and it shows.

52. THE HARBOR – Gulls wheel and scream overhead, taking their chance to dive on tidbits that might drop from the side of the returning fishing boats. Seaweed has washed up against the shore and is rotting noisomely in the wan sunlight. Unwanted fish have been flung overboard and this has led to a skirmish between the ever-present gulls and their competitors from the deeps. Only the choicest, roundest, most handsome fish are good enough for this city – ugly fish have no value here.

53. THE DOCKS – You walk down the road that leads to the docks. The scent of the ocean fills the air, mixed with the heavy smell of fish, and the exotic odors of spices and teas. Shouts from the





merchants calling people to their shops mix with the commands heard from the ships as captains call their crews to ready their vessels for a return to sea. Sporadically, over the din of the crowd, you hear the cargo masters supervising the loading and unloading of cargo and the curses of teamsters moving their loads. As you look out over the bay the seagulls circle and dive toward unseen fish in the waters and sails on both familiar and exotic vessels flap in the breeze.

54. FAT RENDERING – Huge jawbones, larger than the ramshackle building they lean against, offer a little shade. However, the whale's bones offer no respite from the stench bubbling out of the low, windowless wood building. It nearly makes you gag just passing by. [Inside, slaves are rendering down the blubber of the great whales to make lamp oil. Druids or other ecologically-minded characters might be driven to revenge on the whales' behalf, possibly by supernatural means.]



Times and Seasons

55. CLOSING THE MARKET – It's a gold and crimson sunset, and the farmer's market is closing just as the city's torches are lit. A tired old merchant yawns broadly as he pulls a mildew-stained leather apron down over his fruit stand, revealing a mouthful of blackened teeth, and a nearly-visible cloud of breath foul enough to gag a dog.

56. A NIGHT WALK – You walk the streets of the city as dusk turns to night. You can feel the moisture in the air settling on your skin, warm and wet. The street that you tread on is quiet and

dark, but off in the distance you can hear the sounds of men and women laughing and yelling, probably coming from a local tavern. As you walk the sounds seem to get louder; perhaps you should stop in to check out the night life of this town.

Another road crosses your path as you walk in the twilight. You can see lights flickering down this new road, and a couple of people off in the distance, but the cheerful sounds of the tavern come from further ahead. As you walk, even though you can hear the sounds of people enjoying themselves, the growing darkness of the night seems to close in around you. You feel almost smothered by the lack of light as you continue down the street. You know it's just a feeling created by the humidity and emptiness of the area that you're in, but you can't help but think that something bad may happen soon if you don't get to where you're going.

57. STREET LIGHTS – Floating spheres of milk-white magical energy drift slowly down the wide boulevards in predictable circuits, always hovering well above the heads of even the tallest men. The light they shed provides bright illumination in their vicinities, but they are far enough apart that there are areas of semi-darkness between them. As one of the lights nears you, the hair on the back of your arms pricks up a bit, and random static discharges crackle harmlessly across your weaponry. [The floating spheres are permanent globes of illumination, which shed light in a 15' radius and are used as streetlights in high magic societies. They cannot be dispelled, only suppressed for 1-6 minutes.]

58. LIGHTING THE LAMPS – A female lamplighter, still young and beautiful under the soot covering her face and her brightly patched wool cloak, moves purposefully through the streets, thick clay jars of pungent oil sloshing in their carrying cradle on her back. She carries a torch and bullseye lantern, and moves with the obvious fatigue of someone approaching the end of her work shift.





59. SEWER SHADOWS – There is a dank, moist feeling to the air as you walk along. It is night in the city and the shadows are deep and forbidding. As you pass between two buildings, a movement near the ground catches your eye. Perhaps it was a rat but it didn't seem to move like a rat. You peer into the shadows cautiously, but whatever it was, you don't see anything now. There is only the impenetrable darkness and a broken pottery bowl beside a large grayish puddle of some thick, improbable substance that shimmers in the night. Then as you watch, the puddle begins moving away from you with an oozing, rolling sort of movement. It slithers along the side of the building and begins to disappear down into the city's sewer system.

60. BATS AT MOONRISE – As the temple bells toll the moonrise, great flocks of bats erupt from the belfries and tower awnings. The air fills with the gentle flapping of leathern wings, and the shrill screeches of the animals can be heard as the crickets go silent. A shadow falls over the street as a flock of the predators flies across the moon.

61. ORANGE FIRE – In the dark, cold pre-dawn hours, a flare of orange fire briefly lights up the night. There is just time to see three men slicing the strung up carcass with long knives. The legs are severed and the skin scored across the whole of its surface. Then the carcass is returned to the fire and the skin begins to crackle and blacken. All around the city, the waft of grilling pork prepares to awaken appetites for the morning meal.

62. SOLSTICE OBSERVANCE – To celebrate the summer solstice, brown-skinned priestesses in saffron robes crisscross the market and temple districts, carrying jugs of rich golden paint made from powdered metal and sunflower paste. If asked, they quickly inscribe an abstract sunset design on the cheek or forehead of the faithful, and are quick with a joke or prayer.

63. ODORS OF SUMMER – It's high summer and it smells that way. Unwashed humanity rubs elbows with you. The summer rains have backed up the sewers, and the smell of bubbling filth wafts through the street. Some of the merchants have taken to burning cheap incense to mask the smell, but that distinctive scent only adds to the olfactory miasma hovering over the crowded street.

64. DUST IN THE WIND – It is almost impossible to see in the stinging dust. Red and blue shingles fly down the dusty street, slamming hard against buildings and shattering into dozens of colorful pieces. Wooden shutters slam against walls and crack, dancing wildly in the driving wind. Bits of glass and paper dance around in tiny funnel clouds in the empty streets.

65. CROWDED STREET – You make your way through the crowd, sometimes pushing, other times being pushed, slowly weaving your way forward. The sound of each person going about his or her own business adds to the general cacophony of the street. You pause a moment to get your bearings, stopping amid a sea of moving bodies; those behind you grumble loudly as they shove past. Smelling something remarkably similar to horse droppings, you glance to your right. Beside you a tall half-orc lumbers by with a load of hides on his shoulder. The crowd seems to move out of his way, letting him pass with minimal contact. If only you were a huge smelly tough person, people would get out of your way quick, letting you reach your destination faster! This hot, humid [or stale, damp] air seems to make all tempers short, and a stray word may spark a conflagration.

66. THE ONSET OF A STORM – Dogs everywhere howl as thunder rattles the township. Seconds later, another lightning strike resounds against one of the tavern's snake-shaped lightning rods in a shower of incandescent sparks. Long peals of thunder shake the city. There is no rain yet, just thunder and lightning, but it's enough to empty out the fishmonger's square. The few





merchants you see are hurriedly throwing canvas over their wares and casting a weary eye at the low grey sky and the sizzling lightning rods topping every two-story building. The first light drops of what promises to be a legendary downpour slap against your face and armor.

67. RAIN FLOODS – Merchants hurry to bring their wares inside, cursing as they drag in heavy buckets of grain and lamp oil. The rain hammers the city like icy missiles, and the low streets are already flooding. Merchants slog through freezing ankle-deep water as they haul in their burdens. Up the street, the innkeeper is laying out half-filled sandbags to keep the rising water out of his tavern.

68. RAIN ON THE ROOF – Rain pounds musically against leaking tin roofs, forming a chaotic orchestra. The people of this district have set buckets and old spare bottles on the roof, not only to block the leaks, but to collect fresh drinking water. A group of children, wooden puppets of soldiers clutched in their hands, watch from glassless windows as you pass, bored with being trapped inside.

69. RAIN BARRELS – Rain barrels appear as if from nowhere, under downspout and gutter, gathering the rainwater. The water the barrels catch seems to make no impact on the amount of water in the streets, where runoff covers all the pavement. The street becomes treacherous, as the encrusted dirt becomes slick, slippery mud.

70. CITY IN A STORM – Wind and rain lash at you as you move through the city, and the sky above you is a stark gray, shading to black where thunderheads gather. Sometimes the rain comes down in great sheets, and at other times odd lapses in the wind soften its force, giving you a moment's respite.

Water drips from every eave, and



travelers – those few unlucky enough to remain out in this weather – scamper as quickly as they can through the streets. Or at least, through those streets that are still navigable; where there are no cobbles or paving stones, many streets have become muddy rivers, the rushing water pooling around buildings and carrying straw and other detritus along with it. There is no way to stay dry for long, even on horseback – the rain seems to seep through every seam and gap in your clothing, soaking you to the bone.

Fierce winds tear loose tiles from the roofs and rip shutters from the walls, and the resounding peals of thunder from above remind you that this storm isn't likely to let up any time soon. As you pass a narrow alleyway, you are struck by a howling blast of wind that drives stinging rain into your face. From time to time, a flash of lightning illuminates the street ahead of you, casting everything in a harsh light and sending stray dogs and fellow travelers alike scurrying for cover.

71. THE CITY IN THE RAIN – The rain falls in a steady stream, drumming on the roofs. It goes on and on, a heavy patter that merges into a continuous background noise of falling water. The raindrops collect and run down the gutters and out of the mouths of stone gargoyles, washing over houses and their shuttered windows, pouring into the street. Great puddles form in the flagstone





street, murky and dark with the mud and wastes found there. The puddles overflow and run in wide rivulets across the stony streets toward the river. You cannot go many steps, even if you watch carefully where you put your feet, before the dirty water runs over the toes of your shoes [boots].

72. BUSINESS RAINED OUT – Rain falls continuously, having a negative affect on business. People throw cloaks over their heads to dash down the street if they must go out. They come in from the street dripping, leaving muddy footprints and spreading water all about. The awnings and tents of wandering merchants deflect most of the rain, but there are steady drips inside their improvised shops nevertheless. They cover their merchandise and hunker down to wait out the storm. The air becomes increasingly damp as the rain continues, so that if things aren't wet from the rain, they are soggy from the humidity. The smells also intensify: wet horses, wet dogs, wet hair, wet wool.

73. RAIN IN THE SLUMS – The rain dribbles down on the drunks in the ditch and the beggars by the roadside. The dirty water mingles with the sweat-soaked rags worn by the unfortunates and releases a series of vile odors. Yet this is as nothing compared with the stench let loose by more water interrupting the slow, rubbish-infested drifts of the canals [drains or sewers].

The rain eventually loosens the hay with which the poor have sought to protect their houses and begins to wash the corpses of rats and other noxious things out of the gutters. Puddles form among the dung and the dirt and sparkle merrily, as some oily substance catches the glinting of the wan light.

Whatever honest people may be in this part of the city have taken themselves indoors somewhere. Even the dogs have taken refuge.

74. ICY RAIN – Icy rain has driven all but the most hardy or desperate in doors. Warm yellow light peeks out from tightly shuttered windows.

Lightning strikes a nearby building, arching explosively against a wrought iron lightening rod lashed to the rooftop. A flash of brilliant blue/white light is accompanied by the lingering scent of earth and ozone.

75. FINDING SHELTER IN THE RAIN – [As the adventurers enter the city:] You pass through the city gate as a light rain begins to fall. You can feel the cold droplets hit your skin as you enter the city proper. You look up to see dark, almost black clouds rolling overhead, and you can feel the temperature drop quickly. You rapidly scan the area, hoping to find a nearby inn.

As you walk the light rain quickly turns into a downpour. It falls hard and thick, limiting your vision to just a few feet ahead of you. Any excitement about entering this town has given way to cold, wet melancholy as you continue to look for a place of respite from the storm. You think to yourself that it couldn't get much worse, and then the rain turns to hail.

Hard, freezing balls of ice the size of gold coins batter you as you frantically search for shelter. [When the party finds the local inn or tavern:] You suddenly come upon the entrance to an inn [a tavern] and almost beat the door down as you rush to enter. The people sitting at the bar and around tables all look up at your group as if you all must be crazy, but you are happy just to be in from the storm.

76. STICKY MUD – After a recent rain, the ground is a sticky soup pulling heavily at your boots. Mud clings to your feet and stains pants legs and the cuffs of clerical robes. Every step is an effort, and your pace through the streets is slowed by the sucking muck.

77. THE CITY IN WINTER – The city stretches out before you, still and white, every surface save the cobbles of the streets covered in snow. Snowmelt from the many chimneys has run down the eaves of the smaller buildings, leaving icicles



behind. Where buildings lean together at their roofs, the street below is bare, and those beggars too unfortunate to find their way indoors have flocked to these areas.

The streets themselves are striking against the whiteness of the rest of the city: brown runners of mud, with straw thrown down at the crossroads to give wagons traction as they pass through. Gone are the cries of street merchants and the whinnying of horses – the many sounds of the city are either muffled by the snow, or simply absent as everyone endeavors to remain indoors. The air is crisp and clear, and most of the city's more unpleasant smells are masked (however temporarily) by the snow.

Normal traffic has been replaced with itinerant traders selling tinder, candles, oil and other essentials – as well as those offering cocoa from brass tanks borne on their backs, or hot pies from special warming boxes worn around their necks. There is a strange sense of peace to this normally busy place. In a few hours, it may pass – as more wagons ply the roads, and innkeepers emerge to throw down sand and clear their doorways – but for now the city feels like a different world.

78. WINTER WEATHER – The winter wind claws at your face and exposed skin like a great cat as you hurry through the market's snow shrouded lanes. Convicts [and slaves] busy themselves clearing the narrow streets for wagons and carriages, but obviously don't care about those who are forced to walk. Pedestrians have to clamber awkwardly over three- and four-foot deep drifts of grey snow. The shopkeepers are out, knocking snow and icicles from bowing roofs. With the exception of the poorly-dressed slaves, every person you see is wrapped in bulky clothes as tightly as an average mummy. [The GM may require a die roll for any unusual movements to avoid falling in the slick and congested streets.]

79. WINTER SLUSH – The frigid air chills your entire body as you make your way through the slush that was snow. All the beauty of a pristine

snowfall is forgotten in the mixture of melted snow and mud that seeps through your boots. Though the ground is dirty, the air at least feels clean and fresh as you breathe it in. To your left a wagon is stuck, the wheel sunk into the mess of the road. The driver swears in a language unknown to you as he futilely tries to lift the wagon by himself. [If someone decides to help, the teamster will give a silver piece to the one who successfully aids him]. Pausing once more to seek a dryer place to step, you go on your way through the snow-laden town.



80. SANDING THE STREETS – Almost a dozen apprentices, squires, junior members of the city watch and teenaged conscripts (all male) are sanding the icy streets. A quartet of brawny young men push a rickety wagon filled beyond the point of safety with a load of sand. Every so often, the workers attack the sand pile with shovels, quickly spreading a thin coat over the streets, while the youths pushing the cart take a well-deserved rest. Eventually, one of the lads tosses sand at a friend, and a snow and sand brawl breaks out, the grime staining the boys' warm cloaks.



Walls and Gates

Adventurers seem to spend a lot of time riding up to a city, or entering or leaving a city. This special section is devoted to those crucial portions of a character's experience, walls and gates.

1. WIDE CITY WALL – The city wall is massive, fully twenty feet high and nearly as thick in some places. The outside face presents closely spaced crenelations along its top, while the side that faces inwards is lined with a narrow railing and dotted with stairways and ladders leading up to the top.

The top of the wall, between the inner and outer edges, is a walkway, wide enough for two horses to ride abreast – and the city keeps special guard units on hand to do just that if the need arises. The stones of the wall have been drawn from different quarries and it has been patched and rebuilt over the years, but rain and wind have weathered it to a deep gray in most places.

Squat, heavy barbican towers sit astride the wall every fifty yards or so, stretching around the city like silent sentinels. In peacetime, the arches that pass through each tower along the top of the wall are open at both ends, but in times of war they can be blocked off with heavy oaken doors.

Guards patrol the wall in threes and fours, dividing their attention between the land outside the city and the noisy, bustling streets within. Particularly in the rougher parts of the city, the wall offers a relatively safe and swift way to travel from place to place – and at any time of the day, you can see city folk taking advantage of this fact.

2. STONE BLOCK WALL – The city wall is made of great blocks of old granite. Four high they lie atop each other, to a height of 10'. The outside is smoothed and the joinings neatly set to reduce foot- or hand-holds. The top edge slopes down sharply. Sunlight glitters off the iron helmets and spear points of guards on the wall. Their positions suggest the wall is 2-3 feet thick.



3. WOODEN WALL – The city [town] is surrounded by a tall wooden wall. Logs of 6" or more in diameter have been sharpened and buried in the ground, and still stand 10' high. The outer side has been smoothed to remove handholds. No one can be seen on the walls.

4. TUMBLED WALL – Children play in the scattered stones of a ruined section of the city wall. Brought down in the city's most recent conflict, the local government hasn't had the funds to repair it yet. A 20-foot section of the wall has





tumbled down, leaving the outlying farm land easily visible through the gap. Children play at war among the ruins, and at night, foxes sneak through to steal chickens and kill cats.

5. WALL WITH FRIEZES – The walls are dark granite, with some lighter-colored stone flanking the gate. Friezes can be seen on the light-colored stone, greatly worn with age but still generally recognizable. The scenes feature fantastical figures that do not match any you have ever seen, in groups and dramatic poses, possibly suggesting some sort of creation story.

6. WOODEN PALISADE WALL – The city's outer wall is a wooden palisade, its massive logs linked together purely through the efforts of excellent local carpenters. The logs, each the size of a full-grown oak, have been fit together like intricate puzzle pieces. They are so firmly mounted together, no metal nails or spikes were ever needed during the construction. The entire wall has been lacquered a rich coffee color, and it is so well made it has stood for decades, while lesser walls have fallen into ruin.

7. NEGLECTED WALL – The wall appears ancient, built of stone that is dark with age and grime. It must have been very strong once, standing some 15' high and circling the hill, but it is in poor condition now. The stone has crumbled with age in some places, making the top of the wall irregular and creating a pile of stones and debris at the base of the wall. Weather does weaken stone walls, but replacement and repair is a normal part of defense. The state of the wall suggests long years of neglect; sections appear so weak that if you climbed them the whole thing would fall in.

8. CITY WALL PERIMETER – [If the party of adventurers travels along the outside perimeter of the city walls:] As you move along the city wall through tufts of grass, passing the occasional tree,

you are struck by the construction of the fortification. Although the wall is made of wood, when it was erected it was fortified with iron which was used not only as nails to hold the separate pieces together, but also banded at the top to insure the wall would hold up to punishment.

[If the party gets close enough to the wall to actually look at the ground where the wood is laid into the earth:] Looking at the base of the wall you can see that its builders tried to strengthen the construction by burying bricks in the ground that butt up against the wood. [If the party tries to dig out a brick to see how deep the bricks go or to learn more about the construction a guard from the top of the wall will yell at them, telling them to leave the barrier alone or they will have to send out a detachment of guards to arrest the party].

[If a member of the party touches the bricks or the wall:] As you pass your hand along the bricks you can feel the gritty material they were made from, and they are cold to the touch. The same is true of the wood; it is cold and rough. Splinters catch your skin as you pass your hand along the face of this twenty-foot-high barricade. Although you know that this city wall is old, it looks like new construction and you can still catch a scent of the natural aroma of the wood from which it is constructed.

9. LOG GATE – The gate is an iron-studded line of smoothed logs. It opens in the middle; the big doors are each 4' wide and 7' high. As you approach, it is standing wide open and people, both mounted and afoot, are flowing in and out. You see two guards with helms and spears, but their posture is relaxed and inattentive.

10. BROAD MOAT – A broad moat about 20' across surrounds the city walls. It is filled with water that is a deep green color with odd objects floating in it. A plank drawbridge reinforced with brass crosses it. At the edge of the moat children sit, fishing.





11. STRONG DRAWBRIDGE – The city’s drawbridge crosses a moat filled with slow-flowing water that reeks with a fetid smell. Logs and unidentifiable objects can be seen floating in it. The drawbridge is iron-reinforced wood. It is so solid that your steps barely make a sound as you cross. A massive chain on each side connects to the top of the wall. You cannot see them, but there must be huge winches inside the gate to raise the chain.



12. THE GATES AT DAWN – The sun is still nothing more than a vague presence in the sky. The guards are white-faced and bleary-eyed as they begin their duties for the day. They hawk and spit into the fire. Somewhere, a pot of bitter herbs is boiling – no doubt someone is thinking of making a few coins by offering to cure baldness or impotence or boredom.

13. OPEN FOR THE DAY – The gates themselves are large and heavy. It takes several of the guards and a solid effort to drag them open – these are gates that cannot be slammed shut in a hurry. The loud squeaking sound they make raises the hairs at the back of the neck and alerts traders and vendors several streets away.

14. PREPARING TO ENTER THE CITY – The animals have been lining up all night waiting for their chance of admittance. Their owners are fastening straps and harnesses and checking trade goods. Up and down the line, the dung collectors are collecting their own particular goods, which will later be transformed into a low-cost but ill-smelling fuel for those who can afford no more.

15. APPROACHING THE CITY – The unpaved road that has been underfoot finally leads somewhere, as all roads do. The city appears on the horizon, slowly growing as you near it. The sun constantly beats down on you, heating your armor to a virtual sauna. Sweat drips from your forehead, stinging your eyes as you gaze ahead. The road is quiet but for the creak of armor and the rhythmic step that takes you back to taverns and merchants, politics and intrigue.

The dryness of your mouth is ignored for the moment as you approach the towering gates. The city’s stone walls provide a strong defense against any who would unlawfully enter. Craning your neck you see the reflection of light from the men at arm’s armor as they walk their posts on the walls, crossbows gripped firmly in hand as they watch the horizon. With a word from the guard that fighting within city walls will not be tolerated you pay the toll and pass into the shade of the gate. The city lies before you, a labyrinth of streets and shops. In the distance you can see a palace, probably the residence of one of the wealthier merchants, its gold roofed towers pronouncing the prosperity of its owner. As you step onto the cobbled street you think back to the guards at their posts on the walls. They will try to protect you from monsters, but who will protect you from the evils within the hearts of men?



16. SENSATIONS OF THE CITY – Your senses are filled as you approach the gates to the city. The old wooden walls that surround this place are cracked and sullied. They look as if they have withstood both foul weather and enemy attack, and you're not sure if they will endure another assault by nature, man, or monster. The walls stand about eighteen feet high and there is a walkway where guards can make their rounds to ensure the safety of the town. The gates to the city are made of the same wood as the walls. They stand about fifteen feet high and open out toward the road. The gates look like two giant doors and you can imagine that it takes several strong guards to open or close them since there appears to be no mechanism to move them.

From the looks of it this is the only public entrance to the city. There is a throng of people coming and going as you approach. You see all types of folk as you come nearer to the gates; merchants with their wares, soldiers, commoners and others move in and out of the city. You can smell fresh bread, seasoned meats, and sweet wine as you walk toward the entrance. Many more smells and sights assault your senses as various merchants carry their goods into the city.

The whole area is in such confusion that you can't imagine the guards keeping track of who enters and who leaves, and by the looks of them, they are not even trying. They are well equipped in case of a disturbance; each guard wears chain mail armor and steel helmet, and carries a long sword. You notice that the guards on top of the city walls are dressed the same, but there each has a longbow and quiver of arrows hanging at his back.

As you penetrate the crowd to make your way into the city, more odors assail your nostrils – the stench of people. Some are *clean*, covered with a sickly sweet perfume that surrounds their bodies; others smell as if they haven't seen a wash basin in many turns of the moon. The earlier smells of food and drink combine with these new scents and you are practically dizzy from the smell of it all. As you enter, this crowd reminds you of both the wondrous and the dreadful things that a city has to offer.

17. MURALS ON THE NEW GATES – The city's wooden gates stand wide open, with traffic passing through in both directions. The gates must be new; they look as though they have hardly seen any weather. Painters stand on rickety scaffolding, painting masterpiece murals on the new gates. Apprentices run to and fro with paintbrushes, while the masters work intently, blind to everything else, even the crowds who have gathered to watch them work.

18. GUARDS AT THE GATES – A dozen heavily-armed and armored soldiers guard the city's stout ash gates. A dozen more recruits drill with wooden pikes in a tree-shaded clearing just off the main trail. They shout responses to their screaming tutor, almost drowning out the traders' chatter near the gate.

Dozens of merchants and travelers, both on foot and in horse-drawn wagons, have gathered at the gates, waiting to be inspected, pay their taxes, fill out visas describing their intentions in the city, and finally be allowed in. Merchants talk deals, trade news of the road, discuss which areas are safe and which plagued with bandits or monsters, gossip and complain endlessly about the delay. Up near the front of the line, a pair of soldiers poke through barrels of green grapes, bound for local vintners; supposedly they are looking for contraband, but in reality they are stuffing as many of the sweet fruits as they can into their mouths.

19. CHANGE OF THE GUARD – At sunset, two full platoons are guarding the walls, but only for the next few minutes. A sleepy officer in a gold-embroidered cloak handles the changeover with the dayshift officer, while his men trade duties with their counterparts and settle in for the night. A pair of night guards who arrived early are chalking their names onto a slate roster to ensure they are the first to take an evening dinner break.



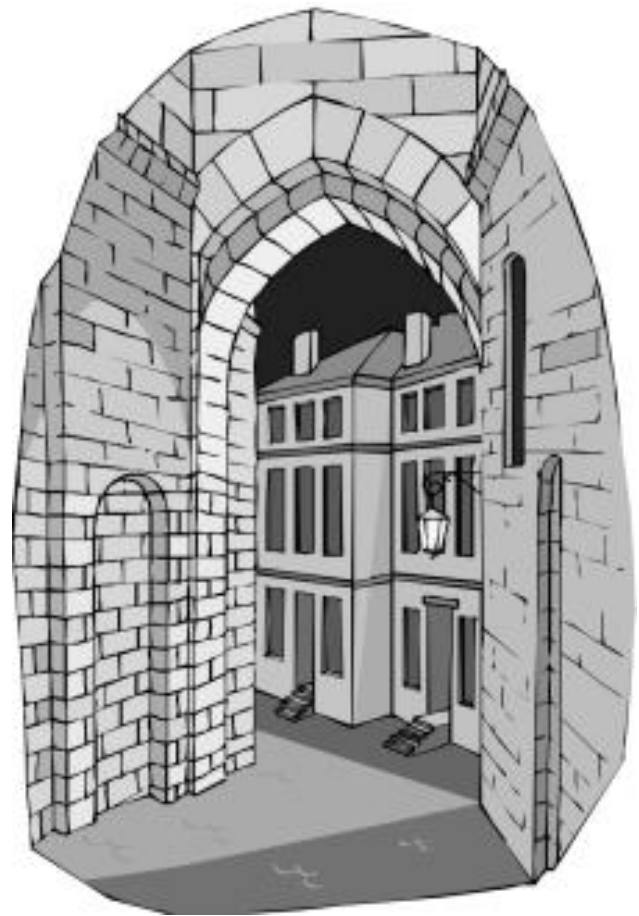
20. TALL CITY WALLS – The city walls are awe-inspiring, standing some 30' high with no apparent seams or edges. The stone is a warm yellow. The dust-covered road, at intervals thick with travelers, then open and empty, comes toward those high walls in almost a straight line. As it nears the city, the road changes from packed earth to well-laid square cut blocks of stone. They seem to have great age, but are still smooth and even. The road leads around the great circular wall, and even this close you can see no seams or joints. The top is high enough overhead that you cannot see what the top of the wall is like or whether there are guards.

21. MASSIVE GATE – The gate is part way round the wall. A big, sluggish brown river, well down in its channel, loops out from under the wall just beyond the gate. The water flows slowly through a huge old grate.

The gate is as massive as the wall. Its opening is only 15' high, so the huge wall passes unbroken above it. You don't see murder holes, but they must be there somewhere. The edges of a great portcullis can be seen, raised high since the gate is open. Two very large solid doors, covered in iron and brass, are wide open. Eight brightly-dressed guards flank the gate, four to a side. Their arms and armor are polished and reflect the bright sunshine.

22. QUESTIONING TRAVELERS – The people entering the city form a line that moves slowly past the gate guards. They wave a few people in without comment; these seem to be locals as they are on foot and most are alone. The wagons and groups arriving from afar receive more attention and the people are often alertly questioned. In once case, the guards look into the covered goods in a wagon, two guards poking while the driver stands a few feet away, next to a third guard, wringing his hands. He looks quite nervous, yet they pass him into the city without further incident. The guards seem aware of people coming out of the city, but you do not see them question any of them, nor stop anyone from leaving.

23. NEW WALL ORNAMENTS – Half orc work gangs strain with complicated pulley lines as they raise a new set of stone gargoyles to their spots on the city's outer wall. They move in unison, heaving in the rhythm set out in their comically vulgar work song. They are currently lifting a 20-ton stone gargoyle, carved to resemble a rearing hippogriff, and once they get the beast to the top of the wall, their work isn't done. A dozen other similar gargoyles, shaped like dragons, wolves and stranger beasts, wait their turns under heavy canvas covers.





A Bit About Cities

by Randon Eliason

Overview: Cities are a great place to add color and depth to your fantasy campaign. They can be the home base of your adventurers, a place for dramatic ends to long, hard-won campaigns, a place to buy supplies and have a couple of ‘just passing through’ adventures, or the dark and evil place the heroes must sneak into to ferret out who is behind the dastardly plan that has been evolving around them.

Regardless of how you plan to use a city, there are a couple of basic questions you need to answer to give the city a life of its own, beyond its name.

Why does it exist?

Why is this city here? That is the first thing to ponder. Often in roleplaying games, a city is present because some person put a dot on a map and gave it a name. That’s not how most living cities came into being.

Cities don’t happen without rhyme or reason. They usually fall into three general categories.

- A. A trading center with a large economic ‘reach’.
- B. A center of government or religion.
- C. A ‘jumping off point’.

A. Trading centers

Cities grow from towns and villages. Rarely are cities ‘created’ by some great design, although government and religious centers may fall into this category. However, the truly great cities are those that support long distance trade. Examples of these cities in history are Rome, Constantinople/Byzantium, Genoa, Venice, London, Hong Kong, Naples, Amsterdam, Hamburg, Singapore, New Orleans, etc. Each of these cities was famous for housing caravans, companies, trading houses and trade guilds that wielded powers greater than the kings of the kingdoms that housed them.

With large-scale commerce comes great wealth, and commerce takes laborers, artisans,

money changers, physicians, alchemists, cooks, brewers, tanners, weavers, tinkers, tailors, soldiers, sailors, rich men, poor men, beggar men, prostitutes, holy men, clerks and thieves. The wealth of a city is not measured in the wealth of its rich, but in the size and success of its trading endeavors. Trade cities are often rowdy, dirty, and dangerous, but they are alive day and night. The law levels in trade cities varies, but in general, they tend toward the ‘golden rule’ – them that’s got the gold, make the rules.

B. Centers of Religion and Government

Cities that grow up around seats of government, holy places or sites of religious authority are fairly common in our history. Often these cities grow into trading cities; sometimes they are successful trading cities that become the seat of government. Examples of historical government or religious centers are Rome, Constantinople/Istanbul, London, Paris, Washington DC, Mecca, Alexandria, Bangkok, Beijing, Delphi, Moscow, etc.

These centers of government usually employ hundreds of clerks, priests, masons, artists, archivists, politicians, courtiers, law experts, etc., in addition to the people they would employ as a simple trade city. These places are seats of power, temporal and spiritual. Cities of these types tend to be of a higher law level than their rowdy trade siblings.

C. Jumping-Off Points

These cities can be thriving trade cities that are the trail’s end for overland caravans, the final port of call at the end of civilization, a ‘gold rush’ city that has sprung up virtually over night to exploit some new resource, or a fortified border keep that has grown fat on the taxes of traders and the coin of soldiers. Cities in this category would be San Francisco, New York, Sutter’s Mill in California, Vancouver, Mumbai (Bombay), Calcutta, Perth, Adelaide, Flanders, Rio, Tana, Tyre, Constantinople (once again), Tobago, Sao Tomé, and the Gold Coast, along with such ‘wild west’ jumping-off





points as St. Joseph and St. Louis (Missouri), Fort Dodge (Iowa)/Omaha (Nebraska), Fort Worth (Texas), and Fort Cheyenne (Wyoming).

The spirit of these cities is adventurous and opportunistic. Law levels range from very little to outright anarchy. These border towns and trail heads offer a great deal of adventure and exploration, and often a great deal of reward, but just as often your only gain is a pine box and 6' of soil.

The Organization of Cities

Most modern people would find the organizational structure of medieval cities and towns almost incomprehensible. True, there were a few democratic city-states in antiquity and again in the 17th century in Europe, but in general the idea of an 'elected' town council or mayor is rather new-fangled.

City organization generally reflects the type of city it is. A trade city might have some noble – a prince or count – as its figurehead, but the city will usually be run by either a clandestine cartel or a public council made up of the powerful trading houses. Other trade cities might have a strong noble who runs the city, and makes it safe for the merchants and traders to run their business. Centers of government or religion are often labyrinthine bureaucracies with layer upon layer of self-important clergy or clerks who can help or hinder your group. Expecting any elaborate structure for the 'jumping off' cities is laughable.

When creating your city, ask yourself some basic questions about organization.

- 1) Who runs this place? Is it some noble appointed by the monarch? A collection of greedy merchants? A lethargic and overly-legalistic bureaucracy? Or, no one at all?
- 2) What are the law expectations in this city?
 - a) Highly 'lawful' cities will have codes against wearing weapons in public and severe punishments for things such as killing the innkeeper because your meat was overcooked.
 - b) Even places with Low or No law levels can have the odd constable who will crack your skull for brawling, or the chance to bring down the wrath of some noble's

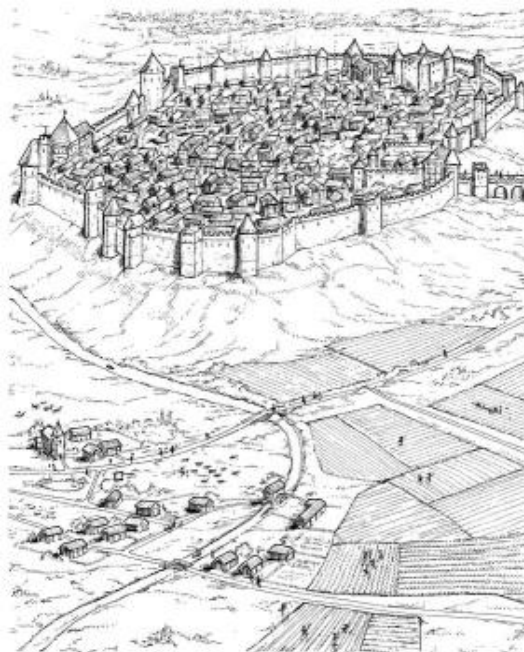
- armsmen should you kill him.
- c) Cities will often have two or more 'legitimate' authorities. If you are of the clergy, you may be exempt from the temporal authorities, answering for your crime to inquisitors and high priest instead of judge and jury. It is often a good source of tension. Your party robs a merchant who has a stall in a plaza dedicated to a sun god. The guild to which the merchant belongs wants your head for the theft and the city wants your gold paid in fines – as does the clergy, who want to punish you for desecrating the peace of that place.
- d) How active, honest and widespread are 'city guards'? Can individuals take matters into their own hands without city sanction? Do areas of town or single merchants employ their own guards, who have as much authority as a city guard?
- e) What types of penalties are there for crimes? For example, the penalty for theft – is it the return of the goods and a fine, a year's service to the injured merchant, or the thief's left hand?

3) What is the source of income for the city?

Examples: Caravan trade, mines and land resources

nearby, long distance trade, the government coffers, religious pilgrims, soldiers' pay and supplying the army, or something completely unique.

4) What level of religious tolerance is there in the city? Is there one faction in charge? Do evil gods have





public temples? How devout are the townsfolk?

5) What goods and services are available? Is there a temple that heals for free? How much magic trade is there? Is there anything in this city that can be found nowhere else?

6) How magical is the city? Do mages openly and publicly declare their profession? Is divine magic accepted, but wielders of other types persecuted? How do the laws deal with illusion, charms, and other mind-altering spells? How common are magic items? How expensive are they?

7) How tolerant of other races is the city? Are elves and dwarves accepted, but orcs, half-orcs and goblins persecuted? How common are other races in this city? What is the racial makeup of the city?

8) How welcome are 'adventurers'?

9) What is the overall alignment of the city, if any?

Once you have made some decisions based on the above leading questions, you will begin to have a much better feel for the personality of the city. As you brainstorm the various aspects of your newly minted (or ancient) city, plot ideas will begin to form in your head. Write them down and go back to them after you have finished fleshing out the city. Getting distracted by the events you wish to inflict on your players can often lead to one-dimensional cities and questions that you, as the GM, must then answer in the heat of the moment. A fully fleshed-out city will give you the guidelines to instead answer these questions consistently and quickly. This is especially important if your group is going to spend a great deal of time in this city.

So have fun. Remember to include as much detail in your design as feels comfortable to you. A sketch of the general layout of the city is helpful, though a full architectural rendering is probably a bit too much. Don't be afraid to add bits about the sights, smells and sounds of the city. Make lists or index cards of important personages, events, or places.

Find a balance between time investment in design and detail and actual playing time. Often a brief outline of who's who and what is what in a city is all that is necessary, but if you are designing a city for your players to 'live' in, its going to take a bit more work.

Appendix: Law Levels in Cities – Basic examples and guidelines

High Law Levels

- Professional law enforcement
- Gate requires a guard and will probably have a gate toll. The guard will record the names and business of everyone entering. The bribe to avoid this will be higher than the gate toll and also be a bit risky.
- Active, patrolling guard details will throw wrong-doers in the city jail.
- Judges are professionals who are more interested in truth and the enforcement of law than they are in the business of the victim or the guilty party.
- Flagrant offenders will be hunted down and/or have a bounty put out on them.
- Brawling is usually forbidden and killing, even in self-defense, is viewed as murder, until otherwise found innocent by a Judge.
- Dueling is illegal, or limited strictly to the nobility.
- A dim view is taken of bribery, theft, unlicensed gambling and unlicensed prostitution.
- All personal weapons will be required to be stored away, or 'peace bonded' with a tie to prevent them from being drawn quickly.
- City will frown on people roaming around armed to the teeth, armored to the tip of the nose, and sporting lions, tigers, dragons or similar as 'pets'.
- Punishment is usually fair, unless the GM decides differently.

Moderate to High Law Levels: Religious center

- Professional guardsmen
- Priests of other religions may be denied entrance. Unbelievers might find certain places off limits.
- Religious law is enforced on the entire citizenry, regardless of the individual's faith.
- Conflicts between faiths represented in a given city lead to tensions in the population. Lesser conflicts would be expressed more as 'keeping up with the Joneses'. Example: The





temple to the sun god gets a renovation, which inspires the followers of the sea god to build a greater and more impressive temple to overshadow the sun god's.

- A muddled confusion as to who has authority in any given situation.
- Inconvenient holy days and daily rituals that can be used to annoy, direct, or divert your players.
- Certain bans on 'unacceptable' practices or items often come into play. Examples: Prohibition on the consumption of alcohol; trade goods can only be sold at the temple; women's hair must always be covered; men must always wear a hat; no red meat is to be served on Fridays, etc.
- Punishments will include fines, incarceration, or service to the god in power.

Moderate to High Law Levels: General

- Professional guardsmen who can be bought for a high price.
- Laws will be uniformly enforced, if you are a land holder. Outsiders and peasants are at risk to run afoul of the powerful.
- Professional judges and clerks, who are interested in justice, but will rarely directly challenge those who put them in power.
- Property rights. Theft will be severely punished; breakage and destruction of property is a serious offense.
- Factions within the city play politics politely. Bribery is frowned upon, but not uncommon, while assassination is almost unheard of.
- Punishments will usually be fines, incarceration or banishment – not dismemberment and execution.
- Brawling in the streets is grounds for punishment.
- Dueling must happen in front of the eyes of a government official, with due ceremony, witnesses and of course the necessary tax.
- Inflexible, entrenched bureaucracies who have little interest in justice, but a great deal of interest in expanding their own domains.

Moderate Law Levels

- The 'golden rule' is usually the highest law in the city. Strangers and vagrants beware.
- Patrols by city guards will be infrequent, bribable, or avoidable.
- Property rights are enforced, but investigations will be lax, unless the property is stolen from someone 'in power' or their adherents.
- Religious tensions between factions sometimes boil over into mob violence and riot.
- The titular ruler is not necessarily the person who truly rules.
- Judges will be semi-professional, often drawn from the higher ranks of clergy, merchants and nobility. Justice is not the highest priority. Protecting the 'peace' in the city, and the prerogatives of the wealthy or noble will rank higher than 'truth' and 'right'.
- Dueling is acceptable, as long as loose forms are followed. Brawling in the streets is not acceptable.
- Punishments can range from fines and/or incarceration to death, dismemberment, or slavery.
- The political factions within the city play a more aggressive and public game than in higher law cities. Sponsoring chariot races and free bread to gain sway with the mob, creating scandals, bribing officials to further their aims, etc.

Moderate to Low Law Levels

- City guards are corrupt, lazy and easily bribable. They all belong to one or another faction within the city.
- The dominate Religious faction will actively persecute unbelievers.
- Rule by a single charismatic leader, or the person who has the most troops, is common.
- Judges will be chosen by the ruling cabal; cases will always come out to the advantage of those in power.





- Property rights will be loosely enforced. Capture, prosecution and punishment is at the whim of those in power.
- Order is maintained with an iron fist, and a jack-booted foot.
- Sneaking into or out of town (when not under military threat) is a simple task. So is hiding bodies.
- Brawling and dueling is common, but often 'brought under control' by brute force.
- The words 'civil rights' have no meaning.
- Slavery can be common.
- Punishments include unreasonably large fines, torture, execution, sale into slavery, dismemberment, blinding, branding and permanent incarceration in a stinking prison with no hope of parole, or even long-term survival.
- Punishments seldom fit the crime.

Low Law Levels

- Might makes right.
- Merchant enclaves are small fortresses within the city.
- No judges, just review by the military powers in 'control' of the city.
- No professional guards. Town militiamen are often corrupt cronies of those in power.
- Personal guards are common.
- Assassination in broad daylight is common.
- People employ 'food tasters' to check for poisons.
- Slavery, either in name or by class, is common.
- Press gangs round up poor people for the army or navy of the city.
- Organized street gangs 'rule' over their parts of town.
- Brawling, dueling, and fighting are common in the streets.
- Politics is played with the edge of a sword, the dagger in the back, and the coin under the table.
- Punishments are random, and usually nasty.
- 'Personal property' refers to only those goods you are strong enough to keep.

Other Resources

If this article caught your interest and you would like to know more about the use of cities in roleplaying games, we suggest consulting the following resources.

"A Magical Medieval City Guide," by Expeditious Retreat Press, copyright © 2003. This information on cities is an award-winning excerpt from the longer book, "A Magical Medieval Society: Western Europe" and is available as a free download from RPGNow.com.
http://www.rpgnow.com/product_info.php?products_id=1678&src=TTABOB

Find out more about Expeditious Retreat Press at <http://www.exp.citymax.com/page/page/1396734.htm>.

"Medieval Demographics Made Easy: Numbers for Fantasy Worlds," by S. John Ross, copyright ©1993, 1999. From his web site: "Medieval Demographics Made Easy is an article designed to help fantasy GMs flesh out the population of their game-world by examining the demographics of medieval Europe. How many inns in that village? How many castles in that kingdom? How far to the nearest village? This should help you find out." The free article also includes a bibliography.
<http://www.io.com/~sjohn/library.htm>





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A dozen merchants call out prices and wares in practiced, sing-song chants. Some exuberant businessmen juggle their wares as they call out, and over the heads of the crowd you catch sight of tumbling fruits, baguettes, even hunks of smoked meat.

A weary peddler walks his heavily-laden donkey through the narrow streets. With each step the ragged beast of burden takes, you hear the clink of metal on metal, as copper mugs and pans clink together. As he walks, the donkey contentedly munches grain from an ornately stitched leather feedbag.

The dusky smell of good coffee [spicy tea] drifts out of an otherwise non-descript market stall. Looking inside, you see a plump old woman brewing herself a cup, while dozens of colorful finches hop across rows of carrots and melons, squawking. [Note: The publishers know that coffee was not available in medieval Europe, however it is something many players are familiar with, and it or its equivalent might be available in a fantasy world.]

In the shade of a push cart, a young girl is busily scraping the seeds out of a fat, pinkish-yellow pumpkin. She dumps the entrails into the dirt beside her, and occasionally a spectacularly bold grey squirrel will dart in to snatch a seed or three. The pudgy pushcart owner busies herself selling similar gourds, while the child dutifully prepares one for dinner.

There is a jolly red-faced man with a white hat and tunic and a huge smile offering his pastries to the crowd. "Sweet pastries! Fruit and honey!" His smile is sincere and he seems genuinely enthused about his fruit pies. "Tickle your taste and tease your tummy! Get your sweet treats here!" In his left arm he carries a large basket lined with a red and white woven fabric and many pastries. He smiles at [pick one of the characters]. "You look like someone who could use a special treat today! How abouts a pie of fruit and honey as you go on your way?" [He is named Rocco but his friends call him "Sweets." He loves the pies which he and his wife make at their home and then sell on the street each day. The little pies cost as much as a loaf of bread.]

A wagon load of fired clay pots clatters down the narrow street, pulled by a drab grey donkey. The cart's driver is an equally drab grandmother; the only spark of color on the wagon is the brightly colored scarf the old woman has wrapped around her mouth to keep out the road's dirt. Even the pots are drab; simple unadorned grey clay splotched with brown. The woman lowers her scarf and spits a glob of inky black tobacco into the road.

The frightened clamor of a dozen condemned geese drowns out all other sounds. Their wings clipped, one leg tied to a post with blue thread, the geese can only squawk and scamper around the small cook-stall. It's no use. One by one, the grey geese are snatched up by an elderly grandmother, who expertly severs their heads with an old and often repaired hatchet. She curtly tosses the still struggling corpse to one of her many brawny grandsons deeper in the stall's shadows for cleaning and cooking. The air smells of tangy exotic spices and the panicked excrement of the dying geese.

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"Finest wine in town!" You hear the wine crier before you can see him, but as you approach you sight a man in a clean white shirt with a blue vest and breeches. Under his left arm is a flagon of wine supported by a strap across his shoulder and over his neck and in his right hand he holds a wooden cup of modest size. [Pick an inn in town or use the one provided. This man is a professional wine taster and crier and works for the inns of his choosing.] "Philip recommends the wine of the Black Steed; fruity and rich!" He looks at [pick a character]. "Hey there, you seem to be a cultured lot. The Black Steed has the finest wine in town. Care for a taste?" He proffers the cup toward the players. "A taste is free, you can't loose with that, eh?" [Philip will give directions to the Black Steed but he is being paid to cry the wine so he will not talk long.]

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A leathery gnome merchant has stopped to chat with a pair of human masons, and possibly make a sale. A sheaf of dried tobacco leaves protrudes from the gnome's backpack, and he hunches low under the weight. Leather pouches filled with sweet-smelling dried tobaccos and teas hang from the gnome's every button hole and from his braided rope belt.

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A pudgy, friendly-looking man with a cart stands on the corner hawking his wares. The most wonderful smell is coming from the cart, the smell of fresh baked bread. The long loaves of bread are stacked, and the man has one hand on the cart and the other gesturing broadly as he calls to the passers-by. "Roger's fresh baked bread, Roger's fresh baked bread!" He looks at you and smiles broadly. "Care for a loaf of bread to fill the empty corners? There is no finer bread than Roger's!" It does smell good.

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As you continue down the street, a small stall on the right side of the path draws your attention. A small boy plays festive dance music on a mandolin beside the stall, and the sound of laughter comes from the back. Several exotic scents combine to further entice customers. Inside the stall, all manner of masks and headdresses hang on display. An exaggerated bird's face with an enormous beak, a jeweled cat head, a black and white patterned headpiece and a brightly feathered mask all vie for attention with numerous other, simpler pieces.

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A man dressed in a swirl of bright reds and golds stands beside a covered horse-drawn wagon at the side of the road. Strange and exotic-looking statues, weapons and mirrors are laid before him on a blanket, and a small hunched assistant (whose race and sex you cannot determine) in a hooded cloak scampers from wagon to blanket, adding and removing items under the man's direction. Townsfolk obviously view these activities with suspicion and give the wagon a wide berth, though the man either doesn't notice, or doesn't care.

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Cities 13

"Eel pastries! Get your eel and fish pastries here!" Up ahead a rather large, round peddler carries a deep wooden tray supported by straps that go over his shoulders and behind his neck. He catches your eye, [pick one of the characters]. **"Finest eel in town, wriggling only yesterday, baked into a fresh pastry with cheese and rare spices from the east! Care for a pastry?"** [The pastries are well made and look fresh. They are small, just large enough for a quick bite to eat for one person and cost a few coppers. The GM can tie the peddler to an inn by the docks/river/edge of town if desired, and use the fellow to guide characters to a specific location. His name is Japers.]

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Cities 14

A train of dwarven porters, conspicuous in their brilliant red leather jerkins and blue-dyed brewer's aprons, winds through the street. Each of the stout men carries a wooden ale cask on his shoulder, painted in a red and blue check pattern. The eldest dwarf calls out the name of the brewery to drum up interest. The chant of "Ten Keg Mountain ale" resounds through the street.

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Cities 15

A merchant steps out of her shop just in front of you, clad in a deep red velvet gown. All of her fingers bear jeweled rings, and a large emerald hangs around her neck. Six guards, each dressed in mail and bearing finely-crafted long swords that are emblazoned with a rose and an eagle, stand around her, glaring at townsfolk, and clearing a path to the merchant's coach. The coach itself is lacquered wood, stained the same deep red of her gown, and clearly cost more than many of the people nearby would earn in their lifetimes. A number of hands stretch up requesting coin, but they are quickly swatted away by the woman's guards as they seat her in the coach and ride off.

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Cities 16

A fat tabby and a brightly colored iguana battle over scraps of beef fat under a butcher's window. So far, in a storm of hisses and swats, the plump cat seems to be winning the fight, while the butcher's small daughter watches from the window sill with delight.

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Cities 17

"Ham pies! Get your ham pies here!" An unkempt man in a stained green tunic and red scarf calls out to the crowd. It looks as if he added the scarf as a way of trying to spruce up his appearance but he is one of those people who will never look neat no matter how hard he tries. **"Ay there you folks look like you could use a bit of meat! Got to keep your strength up for fightin' dragons and all, eh?"** [The man's name is Scotti and he is socially inept but he means no harm. Any conversation of more than a couple sentences is bound to elicit at least one politically incorrect, racist, or insensitive comment. There doesn't seem to be any malice behind it; he is just clueless. His meaty pies cost a laborer a day's wages.]

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Cities 18

Across the street is an inn, but the sign is at an odd angle, so you can't make out the name of the establishment. Folks are entering with baggage and through the second floor window you can see a man shaving. Just in sight, off to the side of the building are what appear to be stables. This thought is punctuated by a loud crack, followed by a horse's whinny. You see a harried looking youth dart out of the stables, bent double and his arms over his head. Once a safe distance away he whirls back to face the stables and begins to shout. "Blast you, Firetounge, you near took my head off!" You hear Firetounge whinny again in reply. A couple of passers by laugh at the poor groom.

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Cities 19

The sign of a windowless, red brick pub fascinates you for long seconds as you pass by. For those who can read, the finely-wrought iron sign proclaims the name of the place to be “The Vorpel,” and the majority of the sign is taken up by a small puppet connected to a pinwheel. The metal shadow puppet depicts a miniature knight losing and regaining his head as the breeze stirs the pinwheel.

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Cities 20

Like most of the shopkeepers in town, the innkeeper and his wife live above their tavern. As you pass under their second floor window, (its wooden slat shutters open to catch the breeze,) you hear the man and wife arguing loudly and profanely about the poor state of the tavern's business. Each accuses the other of drinking up too much of the profits.

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Cities 21

Far too many guests arrived at a prosperous merchant's wedding party. As the noise and chaos of the celebration increases, the group is being moved to a large patio area outside the ritzy inn. Harried waiters are setting up tables while trying to stay out of the way of drunken revelers and arguing in-laws. Passers by are apt to be spit upon for some imagined insult to the bride's family, or warmly embraced as a long-lost cousin by one of the drunks. [It's difficult to hear anything over the roar of the party and the loud musicians they hired to entertain. Any conversation will be nearly impossible.]

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Cities 22

Through the window of an old and ramshackle inn, you see a young woman weaving a wide-brimmed straw hat. She's obviously impatient, looking up from her work often, sometimes out the window and sometimes inside the inn. [She is waiting for both her food and her companion.]

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Cities 23

Expert construction gangs are erecting a new warehouse. They work in a very efficient manner such that the massive new structure will be completed in a little over half the usual time. The workmen's lilting work-songs, sung in high voices in a language more exotic than Common can be heard for some distance, and at lunch they grill savory meat dishes.

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Cities 24

An ancient, legless man sits on a threadbare rug in front of a carpenter's shop, spinning a wagon wheel on his lap and checking its balance. He doesn't look up as you pass, and your shadow falls over him. He's engrossed in his exacting work, humming an old army battle chant to himself as he works.

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Cities 25

The hanging wood signs along the street creak rhythmically in the gentle breeze. Scanning the garishly painted planks, you catch sight of advertisements for all the businesses common to a bustling city; cobblers, wheelwrights, barrel makers, iron workers and glassblowers are all present. All the signs are crudely wrought but effective, decorated with simple pictures depicting the business' trade, for the benefit of their mostly-illiterate customers.

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Cities 26

A brown-skinned glass blower works behind a hissing and popping fire pit that is separated from the walkway by a single round wooden rail a few feet away. Behind you can see the doors that are pulled across to close off the shop and tools after hours. Yellow light glistens off the long glass tube she plays like a flute, and within a few moments, the woman finishes her current project, a delicate black glass figurine in the shape of a crab. With callused fingers, she snaps off the crab's blow tube and sets this latest creation aside onto a low table that's filled with a bedazzling glass menagerie in clear view, but just out of reach, of the passers by.

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Cities 27

A smith is busy at his forge in plain sight of the street, hammering out horseshoes forged from iron and silver, and inscribed with protective runic prayers. The smith must be superstitious, as he wears a dried cat's paw on a leather thong around his neck, as a symbol of good luck, and several upturned horseshoes wreathed in pungent bulbs of garlic adorn his stall. A traveler is waiting to have her horse shod as soon as the smith finished his latest piece.

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Cities 28

A gnomish pastry chef looks resplendent in his many-layered, five-colored chef's hat as he strides purposefully down the lane. In one stubby-fingered hand, the chef clutches several dozen honey candies on a stick. All of the tasty treats are shaped to resemble fanciful monsters; you catch sight of a great worm spun from purple sugar, an orc carved from licorice, and a dozen more. Despite the hungry eyes of neighborhood children, the gnome ignores all entreaties, intent on delivering his wares to a very specific customer.

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Cities 29

The ground in front of the fletcher's stall is studded with racks of arrows, their iron and stone tips are resting lightly on the racks' lower shelves. The rainbow of feathers capping the arrows rustle like leaves in the breeze. Children run their fingers over the arrows' fletchings as they pass, but remove their fingers from the shafts at a gruff warning call from the stall.

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Cities 30

Behind a low slat fence, you can see a yellow-robed stonemason busy at work. His shirt is open on his chest, and his robe flaps in the wind. You hear the chink of his chisel on stone. The mason gently and patiently chips lettering into a grey marble grave marker, which rests on a sturdy tree stump before him.

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Cities 31

A few blacksmiths have set up shops in a courtyard around one of the city's deepest wells. The sounds of multiple anvils being rhythmically hammered resound through the plaza. The burnt and coppery smell of smelting fires fills the air; steam and haze from tempering buckets roll gently along the ground.

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Cities 32

Through the noise of the crowd you seem to hear the noise of running water. Ahead in the center of an intersection is a fountain. You can see the top of it first, above the heads of the people in front of you. Some type of long fish, carved in stone, perches on top of a basin and water spurts up from its mouth. When you draw closer you see six of the same fish supporting the top basin. Their mouths are open wide and water pours out, making spouts which are convenient for filling cups or buckets. People stop to water their animals from the lower pool, but get their own drinking water from the spouting fish.

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Cities 33

The streets meet at a large intersection, paved with old bricks. In the center is a simple fountain—the rain god[dess] standing over a bubbling stream of water. On each side of the stone figure, the water collects in pools deep enough for people to dip buckets.

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Cities 34

The drains run under the pavement along the street. At the intersection of streets, the pipes are carried into a pool at the center of the open area where the streets meet. A roughly circular stone basin 5' in diameter with 3' sides holds about a foot of water. The water is warm and somewhat cloudy. A little more water is dripping into the basin from the uphill drain.

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Cities 35

A lanky traveler in well-worn leathers waters his horse in the fountain [well/pool/river]. Despite his appearance he does not seem to be a stranger here.

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Cities 36

A red-bearded dwarf with skin the color of brownish clay sits perched on a rickety wooden stool near the entrance to a large temple. A low wooden table before him is covered in painted prayer cards bearing the images of various deities and holy persons. The dwarf thrusts a handful of prayer cards at you with ink stained fingers, puffing with exaggerated pride as he details the many hours of loving work that went into painting each of these icons. One look at the crude but brilliantly-colored icons tells you he is probably lying.

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Cities 37

You pass under the shadowy arch of one of the great temple's flying buttresses, enjoying the moment's respite from the blazing sun. Copper bells dangle from thin cords tied to the mossy under side of the arch, tinkling out a gentle hymn.

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Cities 38

A procession of clerics [followers of some good or lawful deity that encourages care for the poor] has attracted a large number of the town's beggars and unfortunates. The priests are passing out food and clothing. Their once-bright robes are stained and muddied, but they seem unaware. The line of waiting beneficiaries is rather long, and the area is slowly beginning to take on the scent of a large mass of unwashed bodies. One of the clerics sees you and gives you a piercing stare, seemingly taking in your clothing and arms, then shakes his head, turning back to his charges.

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Cities 39

The mournful bells of the holy places ring out through the town. The clarion call tells the religious that it is time for prayer but for most others it simply lets them know how many hours of daylight remain. The bells ring at the beginning of every watch of the day and night (that is every three hours) with four watches of the day and four watches of the night and the pattern of rings telling the number of the watch.

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Cities 40

You come to an area where the avenues are broader and cleaner. There are trees and bushes to either side and the occasional twitter of bird song – which is quite different from the slums, where any birds foolish enough to venture learn to keep their beaks shut for fear they will end up in the pot. That's another thing so different here, in the rich part of the city. It is so quiet! There is none of the constant shouting and squawking of goods for sale and offers to be had. There are no children – those dirty-faced urchins who had seemed to be everywhere before are notable here by their absence from the streets.

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Cities 41

A line of grey-cloaked school children walks through a statue-lined park. Each child tightly clasps the hood of the child in front, forming a human chain watched over by a pair of severe-looking adults in mage's robes and wide flat hats. Every now and then, one of the stern preceptors will lightly slap a child on the back of the head for talking out of turn or some other breach of discipline. [These children are sons and daughters of some of the town's wealthy merchants, accompanied by their teachers.]

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Cities 42

Flies buzz incessantly, hovering over stinking piles of raw sewage randomly scattered across the slick and narrow way. Pedestrians and push carts jostle for space, competing with urchins and beggars for walking room in the narrow lane. Now and then you catch sight of a peasant wife emptying her family's chamber pot onto a momentarily empty space on the street, contributing that much more to the squalor. You'd be advised to watch where you step; the citizens of this quarter seem adept at almost unconsciously dodging the reeking piles of dung. [Characters residing in this district for more than a short time may be at risk of contracting a disease.]

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Cities 43

Many extended families have crammed into a few multistory buildings that threaten to tumble down around them. The noise and stench of so many living in such close proximity is appalling. Drying lines bearing the poor people's meager possessions are stretched between crooked buildings. They must have hope though, because despite the poverty, small but immaculately-arranged religious altars have been placed on every windowsill.

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Cities 44

Two or three ragged old women are roasting potatoes on a charcoal fire, and the smell is enticing. They are enjoying the warmth of the fire. The same idea appeals to some town guards who come over take a little chill off. However, something one of the women says angers the guards and, within seconds, they have kicked the potatoes into the dirt and trodden out the fire.

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Cities 45

An old man sits by the side of the ditch, cackling. His withered limbs are visible through the tears in his clothes. He is holding a stick and occasionally fishes something out of the ditch which he then thrusts into a stinking old sack next to him. Then he cackles some more. The combination of smells near him is intense, and intensely unpleasant.

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Cities 46

A mother, shoulders wrapped in a brightly-colored crazy quilt to ward off any chill, sits in the sun nursing a newborn baby. The baby absently plays with the quilt's tattered edges as it feeds. The woman nods a bored greeting as you pass.

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Cities 47

It may seem early in the day for it, but the poorly-dressed man over on the other side of the street is already drunk. He weaves as he walks and his face is ruddy and covered in sweat. He bangs on the window of a house and a woman's head emerges. She must be the angriest woman you have seen for a long time. Even from a distance you can almost taste her emotions. She grasps the man by the ear and then by the nose, all the while telling him what a useless, lazy, good-for-nothing wastrel he is. Other women forget their household tasks for a moment and gather round, shouting encouragement to the screeching harridan. The noise quickly becomes shrill and unbearable.

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Cities 48

On the other side of the street from you walks a young woman who catches your attention for some reason. Cosmetics are smeared thickly over her face and her clothes seem to have been hastily assembled. She is carrying a bottle in front of her carefully, as if frightened to spill even a drop, and seems tired and unhappy. When the young woman stops at a door and knocks hesitantly, it is wrenched open violently. An angry man who looks a lot like her, only older, stares at her with loathing. She hands him the full bottle she has been carrying and waits for him to turn. Then, head bowed, she follows him into the building.

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Cities 49

Competing street corner prophets of obscure but rival fanatical sects attempt to shout each other down in front of an apothecary, as the bored proprietor watches from a stool just inside the shop's cool darkness. The two prophets seem almost mad, and are obviously foreigners, distinctive in their ragged sackcloth, facial tattoos and scars of self-mutilations. They argue and shout derisive comments back and forth at high volume, slipping out of Common and back into their native tongue as they get excited about a particular point. It is hard to believe that these two have any real insight into the truths of the gods or the rhythm of the universe.

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Cities 50

Straining under the huge weight of their burden, a small gang of burly workmen carries an enormous log on their shoulders to a construction site just up the street. A broken crew wagon is visible down the street, where several more of the construction logs have spilled out onto the street, blocking traffic. Several angry pedestrians are tossing curses at the harried construction crew.

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Cities 51

Ahead of you, a large and boisterous crowd of people surround a hooded figure, dressed all in black. A city guard seems to have just finished reading from a scroll, and as he puts the scroll away, several people in crowd begin to cheer. The figure (a man) is quickly stripped to the waist, and efficiently given 10 lashes, then roughly shoved to a nearby cleric, who checks his wounds. As the punishment ends, the crowd breaks up in to several small groups, some clearly arguing about the event, others simply discussing local events.

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Cities 52

Cattleherds, with much shouting and waving of long wispy poles they use almost like whips, are driving their belligerent, noisy cattle through the city's streets, intent on reaching the city's livestock market. Cattle moo, bells jingle on some collars, and the strident commands from the herders ring out through the street. The air has acquired the earthy rich tang of cattle dung.

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Cities 53

Neighborhood children play some team ball game in an open area between buildings. There is much shouting, kicking the ball, pushing and chasing. The teams are marked with strips of cloth tied around their arms. One team wears brown ties; the other wears golden yellow. Parents and gamblers, waving cloths in their team colors, cheer the children on.

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Cities 54

Several men and women dressed all in white walk methodically down the road towards you, almost as if they were in a procession. They each bear the holy symbol of their deity, and each has a large yoke or pack on their backs, penitent pilgrims atoning for their various transgressions. Their eyes remain downcast as they walk through the streets, uttering no sounds. A number of children run around the group, taunting and calling to them, clearly trying to distract them or elicit a response, but the group pays them no mind. Some young boys even throw a few stones, which strike one of the men in the back, but he does not flinch. A few locals stop to watch the group, but most pay them no mind, beyond moving aside as the group passes. [These pilgrims probably worship a lawful deity.]

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Cities 55

You catch a glimpse of something bright and shiny at the far end of the street. Then you begin to hear laughter and music, and the sounds of horses and oxen. Moments later, several large, horse- and ox-drawn carts roll into view, each with an elaborate scene constructed on the wagon. One shows what is obviously a local hero tale, as a man dressed in exaggerated armor and wielding a gigantic sword challenges some sort of large winged beast. On another, a fool tumbles and rolls, eliciting laughter from the children that follow his cart. A third bears a beautiful young maiden who throws flowers to passers by as her cart slowly moves along. The fourth and final cart bears a quartet of musicians playing simple tavern songs for their appreciative audience, which sings along, often very out of key.

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Cities 56

Buoyed up by a cloud of cinnamon-scented fairy dust, a bundle of scrolls, some quill pens and several inkwells drift through the air, bound for a wizard's study near the town gate. The townspeople have seen this spectacle before, but never grow tired of gawking at the 'wizard's shopping trip'. The floating writing implements zip efficiently through the streets, maneuvering easily around amazed bystanders.

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Cities 57

A man stands on the corner, surrounded by a group of wide-eyed children and bemused adults. He is gesturing wildly and grandly, and eliciting oohs and aahs from the youngsters. With a motion of his hand, a bright flash of light pops into existence, and disappears again, quickly. Another gesture and the distinct scent of baking bread fills the air, and then is gone. He bows deeply, and tells a short joke, which brings laughter from a few of the adults. After several more tricks including summoning a small bird, and making a young boy's shoes tie themselves, he begins to pass around a hat, collecting copper and silver from the watching crowd, and then moves on.

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Cities 58

A troupe of green-faced clowns dressed in elaborate green and yellow costumes perform in front of a row of food stalls in the marketplace. A crowd of customers and gawkers applauds as the troupe runs through their routine of acrobatics and comedic pratfalls. Occasionally an onlooker will expectantly toss a copper coin at the performers, who try to catch it with their teeth, to the crowd's delight.

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Cities 59

A green-cloaked druid with yellowish reptilian eyes squats in the dust, his bare feet dark and leathery from the road. He plays a flute well, swaying his lithe body in time with the music. A trio of blue and white scaled cobras dances in the dust before him. The gathered crowd keeps a respectful distance, but claps politely as he makes the snakes dance and spell letters in the dirt with their bodies. The three large serpents coil over a growing pile of copper and silver coins.

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Cities 60

A trio of fools tumbles through the streets, using their skills to get the attention of the pedestrians and merchants. Each wears green and pink motley, and their faces are hidden by papier-mâché half masks made in the images of fanciful birds. One of the clowns, with a mask like an exotic pink bird, bounces in front of you and laughs and gestures down a particular street. "Come to the circus tonight! It's fun, fun, fun!" With a laugh and a flourish he is gone, bouncing and tumbling along the street with his companions.

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Cities 61

A procession of brightly-costumed bards, street performers and even court entertainers winds its way through the city, the largest among them carrying a black and gold checkered coffin on their shoulders. Musicians play loudly and enthusiastically in dozens of different styles, serenading a fallen colleague out in style. An enormous crowd has gathered to gawk and catch the handfuls of candy some of the performers are tossing to them.

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Cities 62

Most of the traffic in the town is on foot. People are hurrying to and fro engaged in important business of their own. Some look at you and pass by while others pointedly avoid looking in your direction, almost as if to say that it doesn't pay to get involved in someone else's business. The variety of people is as diverse as the buildings. There are merchants with fur-trimmed garb, craftsmen in work aprons, artisans in brightly colored tunics and housewives and women in peasant dresses, gowns or tunics. Occasionally, one dedicated to the religious life is seen in the streets in the vestments of his or her office.

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Cities 63

A blanket of lush green vines and black moss covers most of the buildings to the rooftops, giving this entire area the appearance of strange topiary. The smell of mint makes your nostrils tingle as you walk through the verdant alleyways. Small green lizards, almost impossible to spot amidst the foliage, dart quickly through the moss chasing insects.

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Cities 64

Rounding a corner, you come upon a small courtyard, with a raised platform in the center. The platform is empty, but the gibbet still stands on the platform, a noose dangling and swaying in the wind. The square is empty, almost as though the city's residents unconsciously avoid traveling this route when they can.

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Cities 65

This small section of the city, stretching only a street or two, is very different from the rest, being home to a number of people that are clearly travelers. Strange music comes from beneath several small tents, and a dancing girl dressed in a diaphanous silks swirls out the door of a shop, and quickly back in. The smells of strange foods and spices are almost overwhelming, and the people call loudly back and forth in a hundred different languages, arguing and laughing loudly. No one actively shuns your party, but it's clear that you are tolerated, not welcomed. No one will make eye contact, and conversations die down as you move through the street.

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Cities 66

The street here is paved in stones that are well worn. This is unusual and is a mark of the wealth of the city or of the area. Either in the distant past or in its recent history the city either had, or wanted to pretend that it had, enough importance to actually pave some streets. In any event this makes your travel much easier, your footing surer, and the street a bit cleaner.

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Cities 67

The odors of the city are prevalent wherever you go. [The following aromas could be used to lead characters to a tavern or inn that you have prepared for them.] **The pleasant aromas of food from the inns and cookshops are punctuated with the pungent smell of animal and human waste that mingles with the scent from the piles of rotting garbage in the alleyways. While a law has been passed to prevent people from dumping waste into the streets it is, obviously, not entirely effective. Apparently, the inhabitants don't feel that the law includes the alleys either. Occasionally, the city officials will demand that the sources of the city's less pleasant smells be cleaned up but they don't seem to have done that recently.**

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Cities 68

The street here is muddy and slippery. At one side of the mouth of an alley filled with trash, a rain water barrel that has been tipped over. It seems that the water has washed some of the waste from the alley into the street. People are stepping around the muddy barrel but no one is moving it out of the way. You are not sure that you want to know what else besides water caused the mud but it is clear that there is animal waste in the mix from passing horses and dogs. The street here smells vaguely like a cross between a latrine and a compost heap. People around you are picking their steps carefully and some are cursing fluently.

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Cities 69

Turning a corner, you see an ancient circular bronze seal, eight feet in circumference, depicting seven birds of different species surrounding a tongue of fire, set into the worn, neglected brick road. Four of the depicted birds – all birds of prey -- hover over three featherless and wounded birds from a position of dominance. Around the perimeter of the seal you can make out the faded characters of what might have been a sacred inscription. The few pedestrians on the road sidestep the seal with a solemn expression, while the carriage of a wealthy merchant passes over it without care. [Those questioned about the seal cannot say why they avoid walking on it, citing forgotten traditions. Persistent characters may learn that the seal dates back to the founding of the city, or, that this area of town was once the home of heroes who defended the city from unworthy foreign kings.]

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Cities 70

Prostitutes in suggestive outfits drift through the streets, calling seductively to attract customers. All of the women, whether young and still pretty or old and worn down, wear a small rectangular piece of silk covered in some sort of script [their civic license] either fastened to a chain around the neck or pinned to a sleeve.

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Cities 71

In one of those odd lulls in the sounds of the city you are able to hear the beautiful sound of voices raised in melody. It is haunting and reverent, singing in an ancient language of things that you can only imagine. The sound, however, is so beautiful that it draws at something deep within you and seems to simultaneously call you to remember your beginnings and to fulfill your destiny. Unfortunately, just as the melody begins to draw you in, the brief calm in the city is past and the cacophony of the crowd rises once again to obscure the sound.

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Cities 72

A mob of urchins scamper underfoot, all carrying shoeshine rags or tailor's needle and thread, and everywhere you turn, you're besieged by grasping little hands, and sing song voices offering to clean your armor, polish your blades, bind your wounds, shine your shoes, reattach your buttons, massage you, trim your nails, carry your packages, find you lodgings.... [The children may follow the party as much as two streets from where they were first encountered, but then desist and return to their first location. The GM could have the players make a few dice rolls; even if there's nothing to discover it should make them good and paranoid about pickpockets.]

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Cities 73

Many people bustle about, moving in every direction. A man in trousers and a short brown tunic totters past you carrying a crate of clattering dishes that is so big it covers his face. "Oi!" he shouts, "Coming through!" Two pretty women in expensive dresses pass you going the other direction, giggling to themselves and apparently oblivious to anything else happening around them. They move on without giving you any more than a glance.

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Cities 74

Under the shadowed branches of a willow tree, a pair of young lovers is locked in a passionate embrace. As the pair kisses, the young man is attempting to undo the laces of the girl's bodice, despite her halfhearted protests.

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Cities 75

A cloaked warrior in the livery of the city guard leans in the shadows of an alleyway between two fishmongers. The old knight is cursing colorfully in Orcish as he tries to light his long-stemmed pipe.

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Cities 76

A middle aged man and another about twenty-five years old struggle with the street's many pot holes as they push a cart containing a wrapped body, toward the city's burial plot. The corpse is bound tightly in white linen, with purple flowers laid on the chest. For all the dignity the two attempt to give their small procession, the corpse jumps and threatens to spill out with every new bump the unbalanced cart hits. The two men can't help but laugh resignedly as they struggle to finish their somber task. [A young man and his father are transporting the body of his grandfather, because they cannot afford to hire a wagon.]

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Cities 77

A stunningly beautiful half-elven prostitute wanders haphazardly through the streets, clad only in a wrapped gown of gossamer red silk. Long chains of silver bells dangle from her elegant ears, jingling with every step she takes. She sings her services and prices loudly and clearly, in a surprisingly well-trained voice. [PC s wishing to sample her services can do so for 25 pieces of gold per night; her name is Antali Linosen and her skills command a premium.]

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Cities 78

Three members of the town militia have caught a pickpocket, and are tying her hands in front of a bottle maker's stoop. Two of the guards watch the thief closely, arguing with her about the severity of the charges. It seems she knows the law well and is quoting chapter and verse to mitigate her punishment. She's already talked the trio down from a public flogging to a fine. Meanwhile, the third guardsman is busy returning a coin purse to a victim, shaking his head in amusement at the girl's boldness.

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Cities 79

Suddenly a horn call rings out over the city. It is the alarm of the guards on the wall. In just a few minutes, the streets seem full of warriors as what must be every guard in the city heads for a post on the wall. The normal citizens just stand aside and let them go, though many of the street children follow behind, trying to discover what all the excitement is about. [This is an unannounced drill of the city guards. They have happened before, though not for a couple years, as some residents may recall.]

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Cities 80

A family of traveling people has taken up residence in a burned out ruin that used to be a moneychanger's shop. Their multicolored wagon is parked beside the collapsed northern wall, its rainbow of wooden shields and flapping banners brilliant against the blackened wood. Small children gather mushrooms and try to snare a wild creature for the night's stew, while their older brothers and sisters stabilize the old roof.

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Cities 81

Two bullock carts have tried to pass each other in a narrow alley [street] and their wheels have locked so that neither can move. The drivers are standing and shouting at each other. Some chickens have escaped and are running around crazily, and a small child is crying while two older boys are trying to steal eggs from one of the trapped carts. [All three boys are brothers that live nearby.]

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Cities 82

The woman seems bowed under a heavy weight as she returns to her humble abode. Her plain black clothes are old and in need of cleaning and mending. She opens the door and then the window, where she ties a red ribbon to the open shutters, to attract any male passerby.

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Cities 83

Walking along a particularly muddy street, you spy the gleam of a gemstone buried on the side of the street. Before you can move towards it, you see a man nearby spy it, and reach down, attempting to pick up the gem. However, his fingers pass directly through it, and come up covered in something that smells only slightly less foul than it looks. There is a burst of high pitched laughter nearby, and several tiny pixies scamper away, disappearing into the crowds.

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Cities 84

The end of this street is blocked off by several city guards standing shoulder to shoulder. A number of people are attempting to see past them, but the guards block most lines of sight. As they shift, you can see past them in bits and pieces. It appears that a body dressed in fine furs lies face down in the street, and several guards are questioning a skinny woman, dressed entirely in black. Her hands seem to be bound or held behind her back in some way, and as you watch, she is escorted away by her questioners, while the guards blocking the street begin to shoo people away.

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Cities 85

A wooden 50-gallon barrel falls off the back of a farmer's wagon with a resounding crash. Grain spills everywhere onto the wear-pitted street, and the accident immediately draws beggars, who scoop the spilt grain into cupped hands and shawls. Next to descend are the pigeons, starlings and other city birds who show little fear of the humans as they squabble for their share of the mess.

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Cities 86

As you walk down the street, a blurry streak crosses your path. You turn to see a beige dog with brown patches, about knee high, running off down an alleyway. As you attempt to continue on your way, a barefoot little urchin runs in front of you, following the dog. The child has short, curly blonde hair and is wearing a short green tunic with black pants and you're not sure whether the child is a boy or girl. As you watch, the urchin also disappears down the alley. [The child is very familiar with the streets and can easily lose itself in the crowd should the adventurers try to follow.]

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Cities 87

Two sets of soldiers sit under the shade of an oak. One pair of warriors are garbed in red-tinged steel, with steel helmets by their sides, the others armored only with leather caps and jerkins decorated with intricately sewn swallows in green and red. The four men sit comfortably together, eating a lunch of bread and cheeses, sipping from leather wineskins and laughing about past battles.

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Cities 88

A young boy, skin as tanned as boot leather, leads two young girls by the hand through the crowded street. The boy is perhaps eight years of age, the girls (obviously twins) around five or so. All three children have large cloths tied around their shoulders to form crude backpacks, and all struggle under loads of potatoes, radishes and beets they are carrying away from the market. [A brother and sisters sent on an errand.]

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Cities 89

Flocks of doves and pigeons roost in chaotic nests in rain gutters, squawking incessantly. The cloth awnings covering most doorways are white with old bird droppings. Bits of long-forgotten bread crunch underfoot, thrown by visitors similar to the ones you see today who come here to feed the tame street birds. Unlike most wild birds, these avians don't flutter away as you approach; instead they boldly approach you for treats.

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Cities 90

Crossing a narrow intersection brings you to a part of the city where the buildings are spread out just a little, revealing an alleyway here and there. Up ahead to the right, half protruding from between two buildings, a dog stands watching the street. Approaching the alleyway you notice growling sounds coming from within, and the patchy, black-and-brown-coated dog fixes its gaze on you. As you pass she follows your movement with her head, otherwise standing very still. Beyond it, in the alleyway, you see two puppies with similar markings tugging at the remains of a haunch of meat. The dog continues to watch your progress until another passerby approaches, then she switches her attention to them. The sounds of little dogs at dinner fade into background.

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Cities 91

Feral dogs with spotted auburn coats growl menacingly at passers by, but keep their distance. In the alleyway, their companions work on the shredded corpse of a cat. The wet sounds of tearing fur and snapping bones reach your ears.

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Cities 92

Everywhere around you cats mew plaintively. Two slender felines stalk up and down the broken cobblestones of the streets, hissing and fighting over scraps and tiny kills. A black and grey tom with mismatched eyes glances up at you balefully as you pass, and returns to protecting his meager kill from equally mangy rivals.

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Cities 93

You notice a brown dog, about knee high at the shoulder, moving along the edge of the street and sniffing around the alleys and merchant stands foraging for food. It is thin and wary in its manner as if it has been living on its own for some time and is used to not getting a warm welcome. As you look you see that it has a black spot on its right foreleg and a bit of white on its underside that begins at its neck and continues toward the abdomen. Its tail is down and it pauses in mid stride as it eyes you with an uncertain gaze. [The dog can react as the GM wishes if approached.]

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Cities 94

You hear the honking of geese and the curses of men and women in several languages. Up ahead you search for the source of this disturbance and you see a gaggle of geese in the street. They apparently believe this area to be theirs and they are honking at passers-by and simultaneously trying to avoid the hooves of horses. Two of them run forward honking and flapping their wings at a young boy, who swings at them with a stick and runs off down the street in the opposite direction. Other people seem to be just as annoyed at the geese as the geese are at them. [If the adventurers investigate:] It is unclear whether these geese have escaped from a poulterer's shop or someone bringing them into town for market, or if they just landed here for some unfathomable reason.

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Cities 95

Pigeons flit about the roof tops and dip down into the street, picking up morsels that have been dropped by the passing crowd. Their cooing infiltrates the sounds of the people going about their business and some suddenly take flight to avoid being stepped on. Just in front of you more pigeons walk across your path, heads bobbing, but as you approach they hurry on their way.

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Cities 96

A grey-speckled rat almost the size of a human baby laboriously drags a stale loaf of bread back to its warren. A pair of neighborhood cats watches from an open window, deciding whether the rodent would make a good meal or if the vermin looks too tough to attack.

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A yipping miniature hunting poodle, dressed in a hand-knitted grey and gold sweater that's a mocking approximation of the local watch uniforms, darts between your legs at maximum speed. A few feet behind the canine, a panting new recruit barrels after the little mascot, a snapped leather leash clutched tight in one hand.

Flocks of wild chickens run riot through the dirt streets, their white feathers darkened with dust. The noisy birds tangle underfoot, and peck irritatingly at your legs and ankles. An impressively combed rooster crows at his harem from atop a splintered fence post.

As you approach a space between two buildings that is as wide as a short spear, a small grey and white cat slips from the crowd and heads into the alleyway. [When the adventurers reach the area, read:] As you reach the alley itself you see that the kitten is cleaning itself and there is a dead mouse lying at its feet. It stops its bathing and looks into the shadows between the buildings. There are some wooden crates that are haphazardly tossed to the left and some rags and garbage strewn about. The alley smells like an over-ripe trash heap. Turning and seeing you in the entrance to its alley the kitten hisses at you and then picks up its prize and trots over to the privacy of the crates for its meal.

A scrap of rag is caught up by the wind and flutters up behind you, just at the edge of your eyesight. For a moment, it almost seems as if a ghost has risen from the grave to haunt you, but it is just a rag.