

Locks, Vaults, and Hiding Places



Follow Me, And Die!
Larry Hamilton
SNI-001

Locks, Vaults, and Hiding Places

A Game Master's Toolkit for How Valuables Are Secured

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INTRODUCTION

This is my first foray into sharing a PDF on One Bookshelf (OBS). I have collected and revised several articles from my blog covering the related topics of locks, vaults, hiding places, entrances and exits, prisons, and thieves. Many of these articles contained one or more tables. New items were added to some tables, and some new tables were inserted.

My intent is to share my ideas other GMs can use to prepare their games and add character and nuance to their campaigns. This first effort was solely my effort of editing the text and attempting to layout a legible and functional RPG supplement. I am not a trained editor or layout person. These articles were written over the course of a few years and have sat unread for me since first published. This has allowed me to re-visit them with fresh eyes. I feel this allows to to break the rule against editing your own writing.

Future PDFs will be shared with the patrons of my Patreon. This will allow a group of eyes to scan the text for typos and clarity, as well as appearance. If you back my Patreon, you will get to vote on the topics I work on next, or suggest your own. All patrons will get a final copy of the PDF as released on OBS.

I am open to constructive criticism and will revise and enhance this PDF with the possibility of making it available as a POD option. This is a generic supplement compatible with any fantasy RPG, and by replacing references to spells and magic with similar technology, it can fit nearly any RPG genre.

LOCKS

My father was a locksmith. I remember many cold and frozen nights going out to one of the truck stops out by the interstate to help traveler who locked their keys in their car or broke their key in the ignition. Many locksmith tools require a fine touch or are small enough that gloves get in the way. Ice cold metal on bare skin in the middle of a snowstorm in January is not fun. I would have rather held metal that was too hot to touch in a hot and humid car in July with sweat in my eyes.

If you think weather doesn't matter in a game, imagine a thief encountering a fancy lock that requires all their skill and their fingers are numb from the cold. Would you give the thief a negative modifier? Would you let the thief, if the player thought of it, warm their hands with a torch or lantern to negate the effect? What about a lingering ice spell? It gives off a lot of cold. It would cause a room and any metal, including locks, tools, and hands to be cold.

Locks prior to the uniformity and interchangeable parts of the Industrial Age, meant that no two locks were identical without a massive amount of effort on the part of the locksmith. Thus, picking locks is a new experience for each one encountered. Locks were of iron and perhaps brass. Iron locks tended to be bigger with less fine mechanisms. The use of brass in locks lead to smaller locks and keys, but it is only industrialization that makes the abundance of small and secure locks that we have with us today. Prior to industrialization, only the rich could afford locks. How many peasants have something other than a bar on the door? Locks could be made out of any material, wood, plastic, glass, metal, etc.

Perhaps the same locksmith will use a similar design, but without a lot of time to make them identical, there would still be some variation. Also as a locksmith becomes more skilled and refines that skill over time, the flaws and weaknesses in older designs will be addressed. Students of the same locksmith would show that influence. The master would point out the most obvious flaws, perhaps reserving the best ideas to gain an edge. Students that exceed the master would have better locks. Now imagine an ancient lock of a style no living thief has encountered.

Keys or means of opening the locks would be varied. There could be a combination of dials, like modern safes, or knobs, buttons, slides, or switches. Keys could look like we think of skeleton keys, or could have a variety of shapes and features to disguise their true nature and means of releasing a lock. That would

be the strictly mechanical and technological means. There could be traps incorporated into a mechanism on a chest, door, or other item to be secured. Traps could be merely mechanical and designed to frighten, draw attention, wound, or even kill. In addition to mechanisms, there could be various poisons to incapacitate/capture or flat out kill any thief, depending on the nature of the contents, or anticipated contents to be secured.

In a fantasy setting, there would be magical enhancements. A Wizard Lock spell is proof against all but magic or great force. Knock is a near universal key. Simply casting some spell that gives a hint of magic to confound wizards would be a neat trick, like Magic Aura. Keep in mind that a lock is used to keep others out and that lost keys are a big deal. In an online game our group found a simple small coffer with no lock, and one player went into overdrive looking for secret panels and a locking mechanism. This was a decorative item that a suspicious player latched onto the idea of more importance than necessary. I am sure it was of great entertainment to the DM. On the other hand, in many OSR games, a thief can't try to pick a lock they failed to pick until they have gained a level.

From the perspective of someone with locksmith training, that is not very realistic. A locksmith can keep at it until they have it.

However, a thief usually does not have the luxury of time. A thief operates by stealth and speed. Taking too long to get away with the goods is a no no. However, in an adventure, an approaching monster or combat might be a great distraction. Adrenaline gives one tunnel vision making it harder to focus. Seldom does a thief return to the same lock in the same dungeon after gaining a level. Most parties resort to bashing down a door if they don't find or don't trip any traps.

I helped my Dad with several bank jobs. (*That's a cool thing to say and not be admitting to a crime.*) Customers lost their safe deposit box keys, so we had to drill out both locks to get it open. With all the right tools and access to a safe, it is not that quick and easy as they do it in the movies. It always took us a couple of hours to drill out both locks to get the box out and give it to a bank employee, and then put in replacement locks.

One time, we even had to go to a nearby small airport to replace a lock when they lost a key for a lock box built into it.

Material – d6 (Lock and key material are often the same, but could differ to obscure their connection.)

1	Wood (Hard woods for strength, soft woods for decoration.)
2	Metal (copper, bronze, brass, iron, steel, mithril, adamantite, etc.)
3	Glass (clear, opaque, etc.)
4	Gems (Roll for type based on value.)
5	Mixed
6	Other (Plastic, Bakelite, other high tech material in a low tech world.)

Size – d6

1	Tiny (Difficult for human to use, gnomes, halflings and smaller can use with ease)
2	Small
3	Medium/Average
4	Large (Difficult for smaller beings to use.)
5	Huge (Difficult for humans to use. Very difficult for smaller than humans to use.)
6	Gigantic (Very difficult for humans to use. Without magical aid, nearly impossible for smaller beings to use.)

Decoration – d8

1	Rough/No finish
2	Plain/Basic Finish
3	Fine/Highly Polished
4	Engraved
5	Inlaid with precious metals (brass, bronze, silver, electrum, gold, platinum, mithril)
6	Accented with gems.
7	Any two of 3, 4, 5, or 6
8	Any three of 3, 4, 5, or 6

Secret – d6 (Additional action required to enable key. Could also be tied to disabling traps.)

1	Button
2	Lever
3	Switch
4	Knob/Twist
5	Slider
6	Combination of 1d4 of 1-5 above.

Key – d8 (Material may differ from lock.)

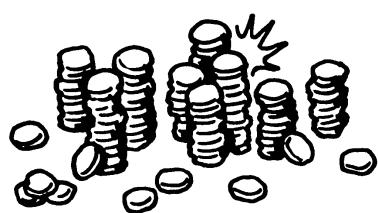
1	Skeleton Key
2	Hollow Tube
3	Rod
4	Sphere/Round
5	Standard Polygon
6	Mechanism (Turn/twist, press, slide, etc. to make some part available or move out of the way for key to function.)
7	Thumb print or hand print
8	Retinal scan

Trap – d4 (Purpose of Trap)

1	Noise/Alarm/Alert
2	Injure to leave a trail of blood or scent for tracking (Option to release the tracking beast, from a super friendly, but loud basset hound, to large and hungry beast. d10 for severity)
3	Trap/Capture/Slow (Net, cage, rope, pit, sticky, stun, etc.)
4	Kill or Maim (Lethal device, poison or both.)

Condition of Lock – d8

1	New/pristine/well oiled
2	Used but well maintained
3	Used but poorly maintained (rough, rusty, hard to turn, etc. Noisy when operating.)
4	Used but not maintained (Severe issues with normal use, in major need of expert to refurbish, chance to not lock or unlock when desired. Very noisy when operating. Chance to break or bend key.)
5	Disused but functional.
6	Disused but difficulty functioning.
7	Disused and very rusty/worn/corroded.
8	Broken (50% chance to be broken in the locked position.)



Magic Protections – d8

1	Magic Aura
2	Magic Mouth with an obscure activation instruction, so it is likely to be in effect.
3	Magic Mouth designed to attract attention by giving the thief a severe talking to while waiting for the constable. (A wizard might want one to shout if Knock is cast.)
4	Wizard Lock
5	Fire Trap at (For druids at 1st level plus 1d12 levels, and for wizards at 6th level plus 1d12 levels.)
6	Glyph of Warding – Typically to protect not destroy the protected item(s).
7	Combination of the above. (Wizards with Magic Aura, Magic Mouth, Wizard Lock, and Fire Trap would tend to use them all on something they wanted kept secure.)
8	Get creative. What is to stop a mad wizard from casting a Geas on the fool who dares mess with their stuff? Or the high priest placing a Quest on a special object in the temple? Hold Person, Slow, Gate, Plane Shift, Teleport, Conjure Elemental, Monster Summoning, etc. would all be ways to make it difficult for a thief or grave robber to get away with the goods.

Item That Is Locked – d6

1	Door/Gate/Cage
2	Coffer
3	Chest
4	Padlock
5	Cabinet
6	Shackles

Special (What other kinds of items could be locked and how and why?)

Decoy Item: There is a cursed decoy that forces the thief to tell the truth, or glows or rattles to indicate a lie.



Skill of Locksmith - d4 (Or any skilled craft.)

1	Novice/Apprentice (3-5 years, traditionally 7)
2	J Journeyman (3 years)
3	Master (Graduated from Journeyman by submitting a masterpiece to the guild.)
4	Grand Master (Head of a guild or mutually acknowledged skill.)

In remote areas, the local blacksmiths might make locks, as might a bronze smith. Brass is a type of bronze.

Some locksmiths might specialize in a particular metal, and be even more skillful with that material.

Imagine a thief who uses his skills to improve his own locks and rob those who use his competitor's wares.

A thieves guild might also seek to infiltrate the locksmith guild, or even use it as a front. Those who buy the most expensive locks, chests, and vaults might be considered to have paid protection.

Collaboration: Locksmiths will work with other craftsman, or modify the work of other craftsmen.

- Arkwright - One who makes chests. These could be wooden, wooden bound with iron,
- Carpenter - Door makers, other wooden constructions that don't have a specialized guild. In remote areas, a carpenter may do it all.
- Cabinet Makers - Specialized carpenters who do fine woodworking.
- Furniture Builder - Specialized carpenters who make furniture such as tables and chairs.
- Vault Makers - A vault for security purposes is a room sized safe. Might be stone construction, carved from solid rock, or cast or welded from iron or steel.

Magic Key - Can open any lock with a keyhole.

Magic Key & Lock Pair - A magical lock that is proof again Knock, but can only be unlocked with the magical key. A wealthy patron needs the party to find the missing/stolen key. The wizard who made it made it randomly teleport for non-payment for the magic on the lock & key.

VAULTS

The wealth of a city and its guilds, nobles, adventurers, and others all require safe keeping. Where is it kept? Moneylenders, money changers, bankers, etc. Thieves and Assassins will do a lot to get it. Taxes of coins, goods, and grain must be stored. Merchants secure their wares and coin boxes..

Where is the wealth of the city kept? In a fallen city is any of it still there?

If treasure maps lead to a lost city, where might treasure be hidden? Tombs, cisterns, fountains, basements, and attics all make great places to hide things, or store them out of sight and forget them in an emergency.,

Vaults can also be rooms for tombs, coffins, etc. Vaults are also a type of architecture with high ceilings. A vault might have a vaulted ceiling and house a vault.

For all your cities, living and dead, where is the wealth kept? A high level thief out for a major haul, wants to know. A party more interested in robbing the wealthy than plundering a dungeon might want to know. Nobles, the wealthy, merchants, and anyone with anything that they consider valuable and are concerned others might take it from them, will have some way to protect their stuff. A crazy old man might have all kinds of junk he considers valuable and due to paranoia devises elaborate means to protect it. This could lead to a lot of people going after what they think is valuable, only to learn it is just junk. Wizards will have protections for their books and scrolls, experiments and items, and rare spell components. Temples will have divine magics and other things to protect their wealth. Even the poor who have squirreled away a few coppers or silvers will have a hole in the wall, floor, ceiling, or hearth to hide their meager wealth.

A city is a living thing unto itself. The GM will want thieves and others of that ilk doing things, or have a list of things they might be doing. There could be some famous or rare item that is rumored to be kept somewhere in the city. Such as a wealthy merchant or noble is known to have the biggest ruby in the land. If the player characters are in town, is it a coincidence that an ambitious thief or gang of thieves have a plan to steal it?

For a fallen city, there will be rumors of great treasures for those who dare to seek it. Where was it kept originally? Is it still there, or is what could not be hauled off hidden nearby, in hopes that those who

found it would return someday? Do the players find the stash the very day those other adventurers return?

How might vaults and other stores of wealth be protected? d6

1	Hidden – Behind a tapestry or curtain, behind a concealed or secret door, under the floor, above the ceiling, by magic either made invisible or disguised. The more unusual and less obvious the hiding place, the better. Hiding in plain sight can be a good one. Location, location, location. It must be difficult for thieves to gain access, but must not be too inconvenient for the owner to get at their stuff.
2	Locked – Bars, locks, gates, and anything that presents a physical barrier that prevents just opening the door or lid. This can include magic, like wizard lock. Where is the key?
3	Guarded – One or more men, monsters, items, spells or a combination thereof can actively prevent access. What is the password? How avoid having to fight the guard(s)?
4	Trapped – Active or passive traps. A pit before a chest is passive. Spring loaded dart traps are active. Again, this can include magical traps, like fire trap. How can one avoid/defeat/circumvent the trap(s)?
5	A combination of two or more of Hidden, Locked, Guarded, or Trapped.
6	A combination of all of the above.

Where is the secret hiding place? d6 (Determine if this has been found or not. Does it still contain its original contents? If the contents were moved, are they buried or hidden nearby?) This example if for an inn or tavern, but could be used for any merchant, farmer, or other household.

1	Under the keeper's bed.
2	Under a movable section of the bar.
3	Behind a brick/stone in the fireplace.
4	Secret compartment in the fireplace mantel.
5	Behind a rock/stone in the fire area of the fireplace.
6	Secret compartment in a post or pillar.

HIDING PLACES

Hiding things is one way of protecting them. There are many ways to do so in both real life and in RPGs. The following tables will help the GM to plan how valuable and special items may be hidden or secured.

Type of Hiding: d6

1	In Plain Sight*
2	Container**
3	Magic***
4	Hidden****
5	Trap*****
6	Combination of the above.

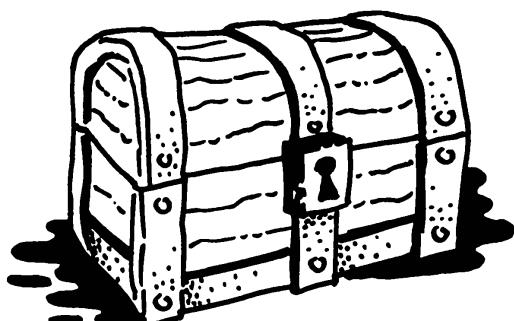
*This can vary from the object is in plain sight, but could be obscured in a minor way, it is very plain looking, it is in a room with multiple similar or identical objects. Illusion, magic, mirrors, lighting, and shadows can obscure that which is sought. One movie trope is a diamond hidden in a glass chandelier.

**Containers may be hidden or in plain sight. Containers are anything that holds something. Sacks, bags, bottles, kegs, casks, barrels, scroll cases, cups, glasses, chests, luggage, rooms, planets, pocket dimensions, including bags of holding, etc. They may also hide false bottoms or be nested, like Russian dolls.

***Both magic and illusions. Any way that a spell can be used to hide something. Darkness, polymorph, invisibility, duo-dimension, etc.

****Hidden can vary in how well something is hidden from not well to devilishly clever. This type of hiding is non-magical.

*****One or more normal or non-magical traps that are part of the hidden location of the item(s).



Effort Given to Hiding: d8

How much time and effort the possessor and/or owner of an object spends hiding it determines how easily it is found and retrieved.

1	Quick/Rushed – For example, a pickpocket hiding new loot.
2	A few uninterrupted minutes. – This is slightly better hidden, but without a special location to or a magic, one will not hide it too well.
3	An hour to think and plan it.
4	Days or more to plan it.
5	Special building project to hide/conceal it.
6	Magic and/or illusion to hide it.
7	Guardian(s) placed to defend and prevent finding the location.
8	Inaccessible – top of mountain, bottom of sea, middle of desert, etc.

A good example is the myths about Oak Island indicate that it is a vastly complex route to a hidden treasure. It shows maximum effort. Tides, weather, geology, atmosphere, traps, false walls and more have been used to dissuade those foolish enough to seek it.

Guardians: d6

1	None* – Solely reliant on how well it is hidden.
2	Obstacle – In addition to traps or hiding, there might be a moat, cavern, tower, etc.
3	Lock/Seal/Glyph – From physical locks to magical or holy/unholy protections.
4	Normal creatures – From unintelligent to highly intelligent.
5	Magical creatures – From charmed normal creatures to magical creatures or even extra planar creatures.
6	Combination**

*There might be no guards for other reasons, such as the guardians are dead or defeated by those who have gone before, but the location or item(s) was not found. Or they just popped out for a bite to eat, i.e. hunt.

**Combination could indicate competing groups out for the honor of guarding the item.

NOTE: Guardians that are intelligent can be highly organized, like a secret society dedicated to keeping something hidden, or a tribe whose goal is to keep something hidden. Such as in *The Mummy* with Brendan Frasier.

Guardians will also vary in how efficient and effective they are. A single guardian that has to eat will have to be away seeking food, unless it is supplied. If the guardian eats adventurers, there will have to be a steady stream of new ones to feed the guardian to keep it from going in search of food.

Guardians with a large area to patrol will only be as effective as the amount of area they can survey/patrol. A single guardian that requires sleep is less effective than a sleepless one.

The loyalty and dedication of guardians will also be a factor. A bound magical creature might have learned loopholes to let the item be found to spite the one who bound them. If the binding has a bit that will harm the bound if the item is recovered, it would motivate the guard to do a good job.

Lack of food, pay, discipline, etc. will have an impact on how motivated and loyal guards are.

NOTE: It is possible for the guardian to be the hiding spot, i.e. a large creature, like a dragon has swallowed the item(s) and you have to slay the creature to get it.

Tools for guardians:

Intelligent guardians will be given tools they can use. Unintelligent guardians will have the environment designed to maximize the effectiveness of the guardian. For example, a ten foot cubic passageway around a room patrolled by a gelatinous cube fed by the refuse from the sewers of the city above. Rats and other denizens of the sewers would be between the hiding spot and the character's starting point.

One great aid to helping guardians do their job is that they don't know the secret(s) to retrieve the item(s) or even the exact location it is hidden.

Possible Tools For Guardians: d6

1-2	Knowledge – Lore, map or other secrets to help protect item(s)
3-4	Items – Specialty items whether normal or non-magical specific to keeping it hidden.
5-6	Magic – Spells, charms, or magic items designed to help with the mission of guarding the item(s).

For a science fiction setting, replace magic with CCTV, add motion sensors, laser defenses, etc.

What is hidden? d10

1	Good guys hide something from bad guys.
2	Bad guys hide something from good guys.
3	Money
4	Gems & Jewels
5	Money, Gems & Jewels.
6	Magic.
7	Magic & Money
8	Magic & Money, Gems & Jewels
9	Unique interesting item – could be magical.
10	Nothing*

*The reasons for this are manifold. d4

1	Hiding place built, but item never placed there.
2	The item was moved for cleaning and lost.
3	The item was acquired b in the past.
4	More examples could be found.

To whom is the hidden valuable? d6

1	The person who hid it. Others consider it junk.
2	Specific species/race.
3	Specific class.
4	Specific group with a common goal.
5	Specific person/creature*
6	Everyone who knows about it.**

*The big bad, an average Joe, PC, dragon, lich, etc.

**Watch *It's a Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad World* .

Multi-part items with multiple hiding spots

A multi-part item contains clues to find the others. Each location is subject to the above criteria, plus the specifics of the item. The only way to find the items is to find them in the correct order. Some items have been found or moved, or were not placed in their hiding spots.

Custodians – Similar to guardians, and may be a subset of elite/senior guardians who actually know the secret location and many of the secrets to get close to the item, and even interact with it. As a last resort, custodians can move that which is hidden.

Custodians will know the importance or value of the item, and be loyal. A custodian bound by magics and loyalty over the centuries may go mad and think the item is their own.

ENTRANCES & EXITS

There are many ways into and out of a city besides the gates. Think like a thief, or an intelligent or hungry monster. How to get in or out without being noticed, or without consequences?

Any opening in the walls, or over or under the walls, is a potential entrance or exit.

Rivers, streams, harbors, aqueducts, sewers, hidden doors, sally ports, and blind spots.

If there is a blind spot on the wall between towers that a thief can climb over unobserved, the thieves guild will know about it.

If there is a subterranean connection to the cisterns or sewers, the thieves guild would know about it – unless there is no current connection. Or it could have something nasty, so the thieves guild knows about it, but can't use it. Perhaps the thieves guild could hire a party of newcomers to go after the *whateveritis* under the guise of a merchant having a problem. The gold paid to adventurers to avoid risking guild members' necks would pay for itself. If the adventurers are successful, it opens up a new smuggling route.

News stories in recent years about underground cities being found during renovations in different towns in Turkey, give an idea to the type of things that can be discovered in an area that has been inhabited for thousands of years.

Be creative and determine connections that are only partly known. What if a well-used smuggling route suddenly opens up to an unknown cave complex after an earthquake? Now the route is blocked by something bad. Or what if the something bad is smart and strikes up an alliance with the smugglers/thieves guild?

Is there a magical device to control entrance into or out of the city? Can magical entrance and egress from the city be blocked or controlled to only allow those with the right device to do so? (Shields vs. transporters in Star Trek.)



Known and Unknown Entrances & Exits

- The city authorities can only control the things they know about, and have power to control.
 - If they know about teleportation, it does not mean they have the means to block it.
 - A forgotten portion of the sewer system may not have any bars or gates, or any form of patrol. Or maintenance.
- Likewise, the thieves guild and other shadowy groups can only exploit the things they know about, and have the power or ability to exploit.
 - The leader of the thieves guild knows about an excellent route into the city, but there is a group of trolls down there.
- Bribes or threats to a guard's family may be better than trying to be sneaky and avoid paying or risking a fight with the town guards.

Types of Entrances & Exits

- Gates
- Sewers/Drains
- Rivers/Creeks/Streams/Harbors
- Aqueducts make great highways. (Aqueducts are both elevated above ground and across valleys, but also travel underground and through hills and mountains. They have to maintain a gentle slope to prevent too much pressure at the faucet.)
- Bridges (Why go on top of the bridge, when you can walk on the bottom?)
- Catacombs
- Caves/Caverns (Connecting to Sewers, Rivers, Catacombs, Dungeons, Cellars, etc.)
- Blind Spots between towers
- Hidden Doors/Sally Ports (Wealthy persons along the wall may have a clandestine method of passage unknown to the city authorities.)
- Air (Magical Flying Devices, Flying Creatures.)
- Magical Entrance (Spells like Teleport or Gate, Teleportation Rooms, or Devices for magical transit of space.)
- Invisibility & Moving Silently by magical means.

Volume of Traffic

If only one person can go in and out at a time, only items small enough to be handled by one person can be moved in or out. If patrols and security are lax, more is possible. Such small items would tend to have a higher value to increase the benefits of such a risk.

If wagons, barges, or ships can bring in cargo or wealth from cargo “exported,” then there will be a large competition to control that flow of wealth and trade. If the town authorities know about it, do they get a cut, i.e. taxes, bribes, or shares? Do authorities have the ability to do anything about it?

Means To Control Entrances & Exits

- Guards
- Tolls/Rules/Laws Governing Entrance
- Mundane:
 - Signs, Doors, Gates, Bars, Moats, Drawbridges, Portcullises, Murder Holes, Arrow Slits, Barricades, Pavises, Pits, Cauldrons, Mantlets, Etc.
 - Magical: Light, Detection Spells, Warding & Protection Spells, and Special Devices to block teleportation.
 - Patrols: Regular or Staggered Intervals.
Irregular and infrequent patrols may be the same as non-existent if they are only once or twice a year.
 - The frequency of patrols is something the thieves’ guild will know well. The neighborhoods of the rich and powerful will usually have more frequent and larger patrols than the less well-to-do areas of the city. Areas where there has been recent trouble may have a show of force with large and frequent patrols until things go back to “normal”.
 - Other

TIP

Make a list of how normal and illicit access to the city occurs. If you have a map, note it on the map, or have a “cheat sheet” to remind you of these things.

A Piece of The Action

If there is illicit activity and black market trade, those in power will want to squash it so they can tax it, or legitimize it so they can tax it, or somehow get their cut. Historically, smuggling and black markets arose to avoid taxes and make a profit by selling close to the price of properly taxed goods.

Tax stamps of paper, was, or some form of token affixed to trade goods will indicate it has been properly taxed. A market for such marks of legitimacy will rise up, so smugglers can “legally” sell their goods.

Tax collectors, guards, and other officials might look the other way for a small “donation” to the guild of collectors, guards, and officials. Some establishments might be taxed highly to keep them out of certain towns or neighborhoods of a city. Brothels or other businesses that offend the “polite society,” might be allowed but taxed highly. This will force false fronts, and being beyond the jurisdiction of the law to avoid taxes. But with taxes come defenders. Some law might offend against those beyond the boundaries of their patrols.

If slavery is illegal, then the sale of intelligent beings will require complex smuggling. Silencing or charming the slaves might be a lucrative business for a mage in need of cash to fund her experiments.

Even if there is no law limiting goods, or trade, there might still be a market for counterfeits. Knock offs might be sold to the unwary in broad daylight, or transactions handled in dark alleys.

Markets and bazaars will be busy, chaotic places. Pickpockets will seek rubes and other easy marks. More talented will wait for or cause distractions to get coin boxes. Thieves guilds will enforce their rules, and have their enforcers and own version of tax collectors. In areas far from the heart of a nation, an enterprising guild master might spread influence over all the towns nearby, keeping out competition. The most successful guild masters will have cells to limit the exposure of both the entire organization and themselves. They may even have a legitimate front, and no one knows they are the most skilled thief in the land.

The master or mistress of a thieves guild will have their own locks, secrets, passwords, and rituals to keep both the knowledge and the wealth of the group secure.

DUNGEONS, PRISONS, JAIL

Any large city will have a means to imprison law breakers and trouble makers.

A large enough city might have district jails for local or petty crimes, and a main prison for major crimes.

A prison could be an above ground structure, such as an island in the middle of a harbor with a tower.

It could also be a dungeon under the governor's palace.

Some prisons can be intentionally imposing structures with a design aimed at intimidation and fear.

Prisons: d8

1	Stone lions that come to life when there is a prison break.
2	Gargoyles that are bound to serve the warden.
3	Jet black stone construction of sheer walls of an unusual height, with towers and battlements, and big, mean, tough guards on patrol.
4	Magical wards to prevent magical ingress or egress.
5	Rooms with detect lie, or perhaps just the interrogation chair has that ability, so that the interrogators can lie.
6	Huge banners flying with the insignia of the prison.
7	Pits where the worst prisoners are just dumped and forgotten, like a series of oubliettes?
8	Depending on how "nice" the government is, there could be shackles on the walls, torture chambers, a gallows or chopping block.

Some types of crimes might warrant putting someone in stocks in the local square. Public shaming was a formal type of punishment that lasted into colonial times in North America.

Is there a secret police? If so, do they wear a uniform so that everyone knows who they are, and fear them and listen to them out of fear?

Is there a standard uniform for constables? Does the city guard perform all policing functions? Is there a difference between the city guard and the army?

Are there any magical items to aid in enforcement? Are there any spell casters involved in policing? Is spell casting banned? Are magic items banned or cataloged, or held until one leaves?

Are there hounds or other types of creatures, perhaps magical, or other worldly used to track down fugitives?

What does the judicial system look like? Are you guilty merely by being caught, or are there judges and/or a trial? Do punishments consist of monetary fines, or cutting off body parts? Is slavery or indentured servitude part of the system?

Are there rules that "everybody" knows, unless you're an outsider, but you are still expected to know? Is "The Law" chiseled into a monument, or kept in a large scroll somewhere?

Is exile an option? Is such exile at one's own expense, or are you shipped off to a penal colony? The ancient Athenian version of exile was ostracism. So named because they wrote the person's name on bits of broken pottery, an *ostraka*, plural *ostrakon*. The person was banished for ten years, and thus was "temporary".

A city with a strong bent to lawfulness will tend to have a consistent way of handling crimes. Do racial issues come into play? Do humans and dwarves get along, for example?

Is the justice system fair for all who live there? Or is one group, like the rich or elves favored above others?

What about adventurers just passing through? Do they automatically get the blame? Is there a tradition of making strangers a scapegoat to spare the citizens of the town?

If this is a ruined city, what are the signs left behind of the justice system? Prisoners still on the rack? A pile of bones from the last hanging? Will undead of unjustly condemned prisoners lurk about these places?



NEAR MISSES - THIEVES

I had an idea for thieves picking pockets from an experience at a game at UCON.

My Dad was a locksmith and I was drafted to help from the time I was about 13 until I went off to college. Dad gave me my own basic set of lock picks. I thought it would be fun to plop them down at a game, if I ended up running a thief.

I was getting stuff out of my bag, dice, paper, pen, pencil and other things so I wouldn't have to keep rummaging in my bag during the game and slow things down. I was wearing many layers, including a jacket sort of like a hoodie but without a hood. It has packets inside next to each outer pocket.

I put my picks in my pocket, or so I thought. I felt both sides of my hand feel fabric, so I thought it was in my pocket. I had just placed something else in that pocket and realized that I was about to drop it between my jacket and shirt instead of my pocket, so I corrected. I then checked and my picks weren't there, so just as I was getting ready to bend down to get them, another player says, "Here, Larry, you dropped this," as she hands it to me.

I can just see a thief picking someone's pockets and rolling 1 or 2 under what they need. A thief doing this, gets what they were after, or at least something, and they "pocket" it. Some kind soul will see them drop it and come up and give it to them in full view of all around. The "FUN!" will then ensue.

OTHER IDEAS

Thieves & Capers

Thieves vary from loners, like the cat burglar, to organized outfits. An organized group is only as strong as its weakest member, and the weakest is prone to panic if someone else in the group is captured, and very prone to spill the beans if they're caught.

Capers vary from cons and pickpockets to knocking over the jewelry store, or robbing the bank.

Crime & Punishment

In any society, there emerges some form of law, from eye for an eye and cutting off the hands of thieves, to fines, jail time, or hard time in prison.

A more chaotic society might have something like "the wheel" in "Mad Max: Beyond Thunderdome."

Humiliation, like the stocks, or public execution or torture, or torture and execution.

Some punishment is meted out by the mob, like tarring and feathering, lynching, etc.

Underworld & Guilds

Individuals and street gang Organizations, may be independent, or under the thumb of the local guild. The underworld may have competing guilds across a large city or kingdom. There might be a syndicate of families who wield the true power, or run the dark government and tax the black market.

MOTIVATION

Why does one steal? d6

1	Hunger
2	Basic needs. Shelter, clothes, warmth, etc.
3	Greed
4	Desire for an easier life, or to get away.
5	Excitement and fun.
6	Addiction/compulsion, etc. From either mental illness or a curse.

NOTE: Substitute technology for magic for modern and SF genres. Much of this applies to both living and lost cities.

TOOLS & TRICKS – What tools to thwart tricks, traps, magic, and monsters does a thief have? If you are having an NPC thief steal something the players own, or are guarding, make it interesting.

