

# CAROUSING AT THE SHACKLE

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*The infamous Shackle is one of Languard's most twisted and notorious gambling establishments. Here are held terrible fights to the death between monsters and willing (and some unwilling) warriors, all presided over by the crippled, depraved and perhaps mad Our Lady of Rust.*

## CREDITS

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### WHAT'S A MINI-EVENTURE?

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Mini-Events are perfect for GMs and players who enjoy roleplaying or who crave a change of pace from their characters' normal adventurous doings. Each Mini-Eventure brings to life a specific locale—for example, the Drunken Sailor tavern, the Orc's Head inn or Kardagg's Discount Emporium—and presents easy-to-use, flavoursome lists designed to facilitate play and bring the place to life in your players' imagination.

### USING A MINI-EVENTURE

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Use the lists herein—either before or during play—to add depth, flavour and interest to the characters' downtime doings in Languard. The entries therein can serve as nothing more than local colour and roleplaying opportunities or as springboards to encounters, side quests or even full adventures. Some of the listed NPCs and locales could even become staples of your campaign.

While this Mini-Eventure is designed for the City of Languard in the Duchy of Ashlar, it can be easily modified for almost any fantasy town or city.

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## THE SHACKLE (W 5)

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### *Infamous gambling den and fighting arena*

The infamous Shackle is one of Languard's most twisted and notorious gambling establishments. Built in the belly of the great river barge *Redemption*, the ship's lower hold is fashioned into an ever-changing arena of traps, dead ends and confusing crawl holes. These are open to view from above and topped with thick iron spiked bars to prevent escape from all save a few spots. Tottering rows of seats stare down from above, lashed at alarming angles to the hull. It is not uncommon for audience members to fall from ill-fixed chairs, into the hold, literally becoming part of the show.

The show is escape and horror; victims are dropped or released into the frightful hold to face the perils lurking therein. Bets are exchanged throughout proceedings by the owner's acrobatic bet collectors, all dressed as gaudy clowns.

A great iron lattice is lashed high above the hold, and from here the Lady of Rust provides a running commentary—shouting, screaming and laughing at the misery below.

Abductees are frequently used as "bait" for the creatures serving as the hunters of the game. Our Lady of Rust likes the revolting forms of aberrations best. Their appearance, alien and menacing, is so satisfying. In truth, however, the self-important show-woman cares for little save putting on a spectacle, so whatever is available—or can be arranged—is fine by her. Private shows occasionally occur for the wealthier sadists in Languard, and sometimes certain named persons are abducted to provide the entertainment.

- **Our Lady of Rust** (NE female dwarf **bandit captain**) almost died at sea, during a terrible storm. Her spine crushed, the former sea captain now moves with the aid of an unusual iron animated object that walks its passenger—who swings in an iron crib below—using hooked arms, resembling a rusting metal monkey. Sadistic, noisy and perverse, she loves putting on the most gruesome spectacles in Languard. She is obsessed with Gudea Ki-Am (location W10).
- **Bedgin Whelk** (NE male dwarf **gladiator**) deals with his Lady's problems. He is an acrobat, bouncer, heavy drinker and mine of local gossip. Hairless through choice, he is deluded in his love for his employer.

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### IN YOUR CAMPAIGN

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The Shackle is not somewhere that good-aligned characters will (voluntarily) visit. However, they could be forced to meet an odious contact at the Shackle or come here searching for a missing friend. For whatever reason they visit, they are unlikely to find a friendly face. Most of the customers (and all of the staff) are evil sadists intent only on their perverse entertainment.

## THE OFFERING

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The drink at the Shackle is mostly potent and cheap, but some (potentially dangerous) spirits are also available.

- **Admittance:** It costs 1 sp to enter the Shackle; securing a better seat with a clear view of the arena-hold costs another 1 gp.
- **Drink:** Most of the drinks on offer at the Shackle are harsh, potent and cheap (4 cp/mug), but Our Lady of Rust keeps some special hard spirits for wealthy customers (25 gp/bottle); buying such a bottle marks the customer as a person of importance and may even attract the attention of Our Lady of Rust herself.

### SPECIAL OFFERINGS

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Adventurers may find unique items or services for sale here beyond those noted in "The Offering".

1. **Bits of Monster (var. gp):** Ever keen to turn a profit, Our Lady of Rust sells the hide, teeth and bones of any monsters slain in her hold. Some folk want the hide for atypical boots or book bindings, while other customers—necromancers, cultists and the like—want whole corpses. All is for sale.
2. **Shackle Grog (10 gp/bottle):** Distilled from the bile of certain monsters slain in the hold—Our Lady of Rust wastes nothing—this clear spirit is both exceptionally potent and mildly poisonous. Wealthy regulars swear by it, and drinking it is seen by some as a rite of passage. Anyway, the violent stomach cramps always pass in a day or two.
3. **Good Manacles (50 gp):** Extra-strong and heavy manacles used to restrain monsters and the like are available in a variety of sizes. Most are battered and stained. Manacles for creatures smaller than a human cost 75 gp; she has no manacles for larger creatures.
4. **Poison, Acid and So On (var. gp):** Inevitably, some of the monsters unleashed into the hold excrete acid, have poisonous bites and so on. Our Lady of Rust milks such dangerous monsters and sells the proceeds to trusted buyers. Certain assassins, and many of the Takolen, buy such wares.
5. **Corpses (var. gp):** Only available to select, trusted customers, the shredded and gored corpses of those unfortunates who died in the hold (and who won't be missed) are available for "anatomical research". Such transactions are always carried out in the dead of night by Our Lady of Rust herself.
6. **An Audience with the Lady (20 gp or a Favour):** As befits a business owner of her interest, Our Lady of Rusts knows much about the monsters that fight in her arena; she is willing to share her knowledge with adventurers—if the price is right. Sometimes she charges gold for her knowledge, and other times she demands a favour.

## WHAT'S GOING ON BY DAY?

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During the day, the Shackle is closed and quiet. Sometimes, faint sounds of hammering and sawing come from within.

1. **Covered Cage:** A group of muddy and dishevelled warriors delivers a small cage to the Shackle. An old sail is draped over the cage to hide whatever languishes within. Two of the burliest warriors gingerly carry the cage while the others hang back.
2. **All's Quiet:** The Shackle is closed up and quiet; it does not appear as if anyone is inside.
3. **Work is Going On:** Muffled sounds of sawing and clanging come from the Shackle. A nearby wagon drawn up on the dock carries iron bars and other supplies.
4. **Loitering Fork:** Three folk, wrapped in heavy cloaks, loiter in the Shackle's vicinity. They take care to keep their faces covered, and one is always watching passersby for trouble.
5. **Bedgin Abroad:** Bedgin Whelk is abroad on some task for his mistress; he passes the characters and completely ignores them—unless they give him cause not to.
6. **Taking the Sun:** Our Lady of Rust rests on *Redemption's* deck, taking in the view of Languard's High City; during her vigil, she receives several visitors who conduct whispered business with the crippled dwarf.

## WHAT'S GOING ON BY NIGHT?

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At night, the Shackle comes alive with the reeking, sadistic, drunken dregs of Languardian society.

1. **Busy Tonight:** A long line of customers queues along the rickety dock leading to the Shackle. Braziers flare murkily in the dark of the night.
2. **Ejected Customer:** A customer is being thrown out as the characters arrive; the man's transgression was to complain about the price of the drinks. He is drunk and shouts angrily at a burly, hairless dwarf (Bedgin Whelk).
3. **Entertainers:** Our Lady of Rust has put on entertainers—clowns, jugglers and fire breathers—for those waiting for admittance. The dock is a riot of colours, noises and smells—it is a spectacle. Pickpockets circulate.
4. **Rattling Cage:** A group of dishevelled, shifty-looking warriors is delivering a small cage to the Shackle. An old sail is draped over the cage, but strange chattering sounds emanate from within. The warriors are nervous.
5. **Ragged Boy:** A beggar, Anton Unaja (CN young male human **commoner**), has managed to get inside. He desperately wants to watch the fighting, but will be in serious, perhaps fatal, trouble if Bedgin Whelk spots him. If spotted, he hides behind the characters and loudly proclaims he is with them.
6. **Scream:** A scream followed by a loud splash splits the night as the characters approach the Shackle. No one else on the dock pays any notice whatsoever to the disturbance; it is as if it didn't happen.

## OPPORTUNITIES & COMPLICATIONS

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Lucky adventurers find opportunities almost anywhere. Unlucky adventurers find complications almost anywhere.

1. **Help My Daughter:** One of the "contestants" is the daughter of a bankrupt merchant from High City. His merciless creditors have arranged this final act of humiliation. He begs the characters for help.
2. **I Want Monsters:** Our Lady of Rust has put out word that she seeks interesting monsters for her entertainments; adventurers delivering her suitable specimens will be well rewarded (if she cannot double-cross them).
3. **Special Seats:** The night is quiet, and the characters get offered good seats for only 1 sp each.
4. **Closed:** The Shackle is closed; baffled and disappointed customers stand about outside.
5. **The Characters are Noticed:** Our Lady of Rust spots the characters and realises they are adventurers; she keeps a close eye on them.
6. **Falling Customer:** A customer—overly excited at the spectacle—leans too far forward and tumbles into the hold. Their predicament is met with laughter and a renewed flurry of betting; no one tries to help them.

## INTERESTING FOLK

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While the characters are out and about, they may encounter other interesting folk:

1. **Suni Enon** (NE female human **spy**) possesses no redeeming features. She is a coward and loves watching other people torn apart by the monsters below; she has twice pushed distracted patrons into the hold.
2. **Jurrin Kalamies** (CE middle-aged male human **thug**) speaks about himself in the third person. This burly man is a skilled knife-fighter and hatchet man, come to watch some good old-fashioned violence. He can't wait, and an evil light fills his eyes.
3. **Lalli Tapio** (N young male human **commoner**) dreams of the glory to be gained in the hold. Soon, he'll pluck up courage to volunteer to fight; it is obvious to anyone with half a brain that he won't survive.
4. **Saara Ikturso** (NE female human **apprentice wizard**) waits for the fighting to end; she wants corpses—fresh corpses—for her experimentations.
5. **Eida Silvermane** (CE female halfling **bandit captain**) thinks she'll have an advantage in the cramped hold if she gets into the arena. She is here watching to gain insights into how the fights work; her homicidal heart can't wait to get stuck in.
6. **Auku Hirvi** (LE male human **veteran**) looks for a friend, Akatius Tammi, who came here a few nights ago. (Akatius fell into the hold while drunk and was unceremoniously ripped apart in front of the drunken, braying crowd.)

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