

LANGUARD: HIGH CITY

Set upon the Svart's northern bank, High City rises above the stink and muck of the rest of Languard. Here dwell the great and the good (or perhaps just the wealthy) of Languard.



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ABOUT THIS BOOK

This chapter presents more details of Languard's High City. Use it in conjunction with the base chapter, *Languard: City of Adventure*, to design exciting adventures for your players. Subsequent chapters will detail the balance of Languard, including its other wards. When complete, *Languard: City of Adventure* will be available in hardback and soft cover as well as a compiled PDF.

Each month that we release a new chapter for *Languard: City of Adventure*, we also release a new Languard Backdrop set in that ward. Members of our Patreon campaign also get an exclusive mini-eventure set in the city. You can learn more at patreon.com/ragingswanpress.

ABOUT LANGUARD BACKDROPS

You are a GM, and you are busy. You want to write your own adventures, but don't have the time to start from scratch. And you don't want to use commercial modules. You want to make your campaign your own.

That's where the Languard Backdrop line comes in! Each Languard Backdrop presents a fully fleshed-out and lovingly detailed self-contained locale ready to use as you see fit. Stock the backdrop with smugglers, cultists, thieves or whatever best suits your campaign, decide their back story, and gather your players.

ABOUT MINI-EVENTURES

Mini-Eventures 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.

HIGH CITY AT A GLANCE

Set upon the Svart's northern bank, High City rises above the stink and muck of the rest of Languard by dint of a series of bluffs rising from the river's waters. Here dwell the great and the good (or perhaps just the wealthy) of Languard.

In High City, the streets are cleaner and broader, the houses are of stone and slate, and the folk are wealthier and healthier. The concentration of so much wealth and power should attract thieves and other ne'er-do-wells. However, given the large numbers of men-at-arms, bodyguards and other armed personages serving the folk dwelling here, it is a brave, stupid or superlatively skilled burglar who works in High City.

All of Ashlar's noble families have townhouses in High City used when family members visit the city for business (or pleasure). Such places are permanently staffed by trusted servants and a small garrison of men-at-arms to discourage theft, vandalism and the like.

NOTABLE LOCATIONS IN HIGH CITY

G2 River Gate: These two towers oversee all river traffic.

G4 Duke's Gate: Only those travelling northwards pass through the least-used of Languard's gates.

H1 Castle Languard: Family Nenonen's seat, Castle Languard, is the safest place in all Ashlar.

H2 High Market: Those with a taste for the finer things in life come to High Market.

H3 Urmas Aalto's House: The aged, cantankerous sage Urmas Aalto—perhaps Ashlar's greatest authority on Gloamhold—dwells here.

H4 The Dreaming Spires: Ashlar's centre of learning and education, the library here is only matched by that held at the Black Tower.

H5 Anku Sennra's Fine Gemstones: Offering the finest gemstones, this shop has a surprising, nefarious connection with Low City.

H6 High Bank: One of the best-protected buildings in Languard, many nobles keep their coin wealth here.

H7 Miya's Stable: This stable caters to the well-to-do visitors who have "strange" or "atypical" steeds or pets to stable.

H8 Kilpikonna's Fine Baked Goods: This bakery of renown is where the assassin Ohto Paivanen plies his trade.

H9 Dragonheart Tavern: A favourite among nobles for its wide and ever-changing menu, this tavern is always busy.

H10 Old Mother Grumm's: Here can be found for sale tasty pastries of all descriptions...and magical potions.

H11 Needle's Poise: The finely tailored clothes crafted here are the best in Languard.

H12 The Emerald Medusa: A popular eatery, the Emerald Medusa was once the *Medusa*, an oceangoing caravel that is now permanently moored in High City.

H13 Pharran's Shroud: This high-end brothel is famed for its decadent and expensive pleasures.

H14 The Ruby Plate: This open-air eatery is famed for its weird, but not always wonderful, food.

H15 The Screaming Halls: Riddling the ground beneath a grand house of fine aspect, the so-called Screaming Halls is Languard's insane asylum. The Screaming Halls is not its real name, but its proper moniker—the House of the Clouded Mind—is only used by those who have consigned a friend or family member to its care.

H16 Shrine of the Underfolk: Buried in a network of natural caves under High City, this is the only church in Languard dedicated to the dwarven gods.

H17 The Low Shard: Set around a shard of unidentifiable rock, this large chamber is a popular meeting place for merchants engaged in discreet business, courting couples and others desirous of privacy.

H18 The Dark Market: The gloom of this subterranean market conceals many stalls offering esoteric, hard-to-find items, including dwarven-crafted weapons, strange drugs and more.

H19 Tunnel of Shades: This mostly forgotten, partially flooded tunnel runs under the Svart. Smugglers of the foulest sort lurk therein.

H20 Chapel of the Maiden of Death: Abandoned church dedicated to Tuonetar and the Knights of the Black Swan.

H21 Tenhunen Mansion: This once opulent, now abandoned, mansion was home to the master vampire Kaarlo Tenhunen.

T2 The Father's Hall: This huge and impressive cathedral is the centre of Conn's worship in Ashlar. Extensive catacombs lie under the cathedral.

T3 The Great Forge: A clamour of noise and smoke perpetually rises from Abarin's temple-forge.

T4 Watcher's Spire: Darlen's followers dwell in this heavily fortified temple.

NOTABLE STREETS & ROADS

Abbey Road: This tree-lined street runs from Market Street to Watcher's Spire.

Aralivar's Way: Named for the legendary bard and pirate captain Vilimzair Aralivar, this street leads to the docks.

Broad Street: By local ordinance, this street must be kept wide and clear to facilitate troop movements.

Castle Way: This short road connects Watcher's Spire to Castle Languard.

Friar Street: Friar Street connects the Watcher's Spire to the Lawgiver's Hall.

Lawgivers Way: This short street is named for Languard's most impressive cathedral and most important faith.

Market Street: This wide street, lined with shops, runs from Duke's Gate all the way to High Market

Ship Street: So named as the Svart's Mouth is clearly visible from along its whole length

South Street: Running from Market Street to Broad Street, South Street is comparatively quiet to the roads it links.

NOTABLE LOCATIONS BY TYPE

CATHEDRALS, CHURCHES, & TEMPLES

Locale	NAME	NOTES
H16	Shrine of the Underfolk	Church (dwarf pantheon) ^{1, 3, 4}
H20	Chapel of the Maiden of Death	Abandoned church (Tuonetar)
T2	The Father's Hall	Cathedral (Conn) ^{1, 2, 4}
T3	The Great Forge	Church (Abarin) ^{1, 2, 4}
T4	Watcher's Spire	Temple (Darlen) ^{1, 2, 4}

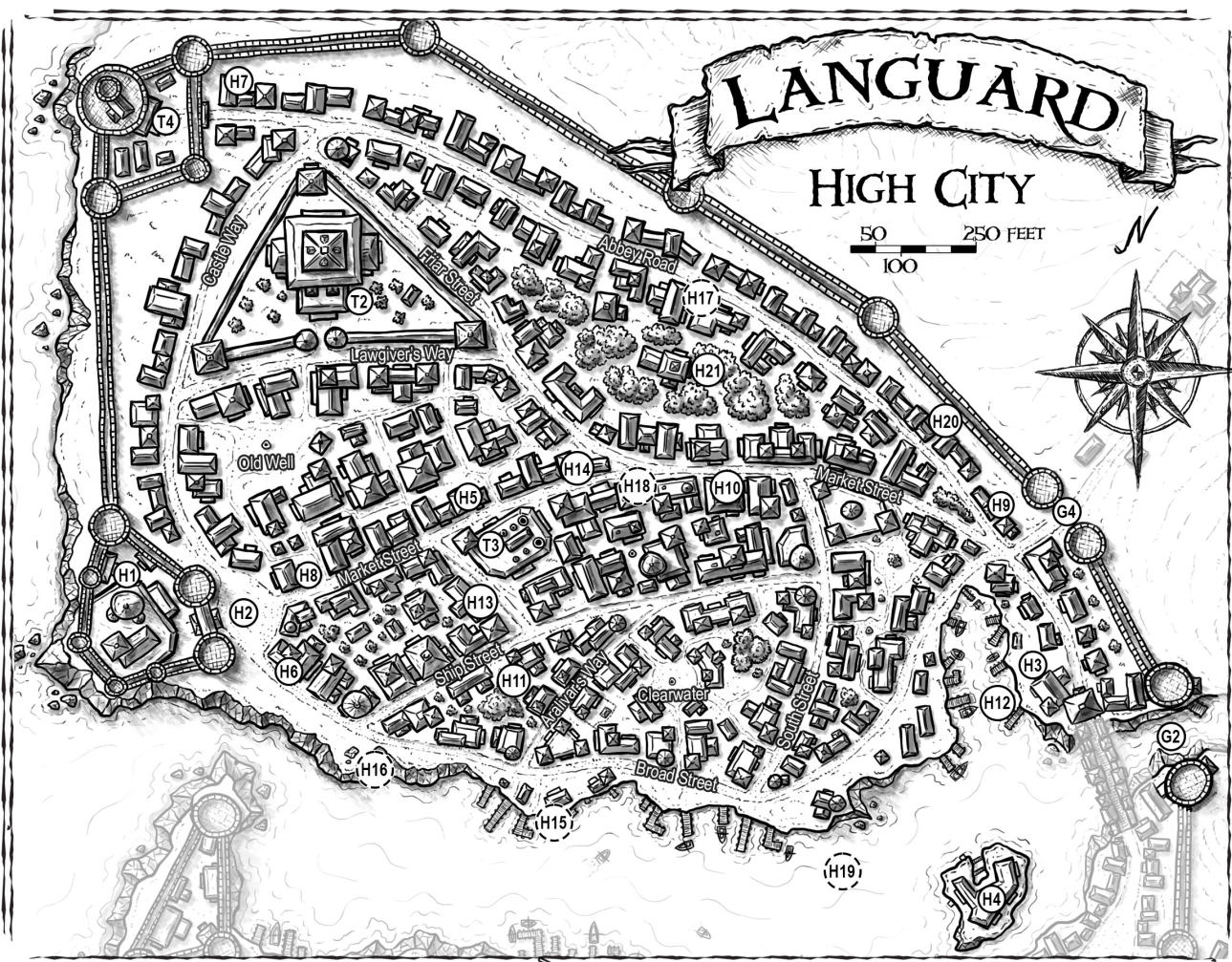
INNS, TAVERNS & FESTHALLS

Locale	NAME	NOTES
H9	Dragonheart Tavern	Tavern (high class)
H12	The Emerald Medusa	Festhall (high class)
H14	The Ruby Plate	Festhall (high class)

SHOPS, MARKETS AND SERVICES

Locale	NAME	NOTES
H2	High Market	Market
H3	Urmas Aalto's House	Sage (Gloamhold) ¹
H4	The Dreaming Spires	University, library ¹
H5	Anku Sennra's Fine Gemstones	Gem merchant
H6	High Bank	Bank
H7	Miya's Stable	Stable (exotic mounts) ¹
H8	Kilpikonna's Fine Baked Goods	Bakery, assassin
H10	Old Mother Grumm's	Pastries and potions ^{1, 2}
H11	Needle's Poise	Tailor
H13	Pharran's Shroud	Brothel (high class)
H18	The Dark Market	Market ^{1, 3}

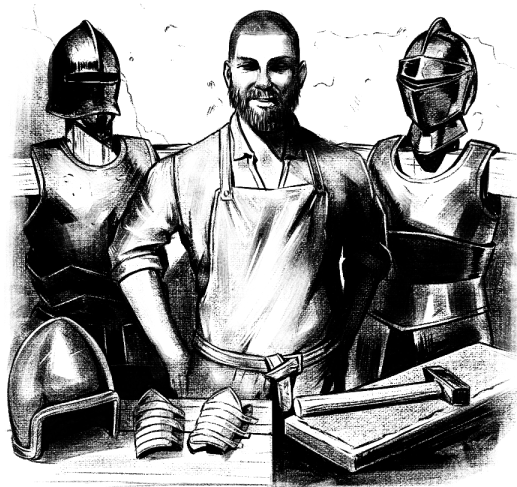
1. This locale might be of interest to adventurers for one reason or another.
2. Magic items for sale can sometimes be found here.
3. Subterranean locale.
4. Offers healing services.



MINOR LOCALES IN HIGH CITY

High City features many notable and not-so-notable locales, such as shops, workshops, private homes and the like. Place them wherever you deem appropriate.

1. **The Golden Unicorn:** The fine tavern is the preserve of the rich and powerful. Here come Languard's wealthy merchants to seal agreements worth thousands of gold crowns. The Golden Unicorn's prices are not for the faint-hearted. The establishment also boasts many guards, both to keep the riffraff out and to watch over the various patrons' bodyguards.
2. **Boots and Laces:** Owned and operated by Krister Vaania (LN old male human), this cobbler is one of the finest such establishments in Languard. Krister is stuffy and lost in the old traditions of boot-making. His daughter, Kristiina Vaania (NG female human), is open to experimenting with new practices and techniques. She dreams of making boots from exotic materials—dragonhide, basilisk skin, and the like. Sadly, she has no source for such rare materials.
3. **All That Glimmers:** This high-end jeweller's shop is only open by appointment—unless one is fabulously wealthy, powerful or widely renowned. Adventurers seeking to sell their ill-gotten loot are directed to the rear entrance. Such transactions are enacted in a small private room. All That Glimmers employs several semi-retired adventurers as guards and has impressive magical defences. Languard's thieves know to leave this place well alone. Mauno Unti (LG male human) is the shop's public face.
4. **Black Swan Manor:** An ornate black swan weathervane gives this place its name. This expansive (and expensive) townhouse is available for rent by the month or year. The rent includes a small retinue of servants but no guards. Visiting merchants or nobles from other realms often hire Black Swan Manor. The owner, Kustaa Tornia (LN middle-aged female human fighter 3), is reluctant to rent to adventurers after several unfortunate and unexplained events have necessitated extensive repairs to the cellar.



5. **Spine and Leaf:** This bookbinder and scribe does a roaring trade with the city's wizards and sages. The books to be had here are of excellent quality—suitable for spellbooks—and can be custom-ordered. Thororon Vonothvar (NG female elf wizard 5) runs Spine and Leaf.
6. **The Alanen Manor:** This crumbling townhouse once belonged to the accursed Alanens of Greystone. Its roof has long since fallen in, and sometimes, strange sounds emanate from the dilapidated structure.
7. **The Velvet Pillow:** Newly opened—and destined to shut shortly as vested interests work against the establishment—the Velvet Pillow is a high-class brothel. Open at all hours, the nondescript building sees a steady trickle of wealthy clients. Two liveried guards wearing polished breastplates flank the doorway. They only admit "the right sort" of visitor.
8. **The Crystal Bottle:** Exclusively serving fine wine and expensive spirits, this sumptuous private tavern features many snug rooms perfect for discreet meetings. The Crystal Bottle operates a membership scheme; only those paying the 200 gp a year fee may drink here (although members may invite correctly attired guests inside). A network of secret passages riddles the inn's thick walls and allows the duke's agents to spy on any supposedly private meetings held therein.
9. **Tapatora's:** This purveyor of fine clothes has operated from the same building for almost 300 years. The staff here are stuffy, pretentious and snobs. However, they tailor exceptional clothes for both men and women. For noble or particularly wealthy clients, they open late for private fittings. The prices here are outrageous.
10. **Tiaras and Torcs:** Magical lights blaze through the night from the windows of this fine jeweller. The lights show not only a selection of the jewellery available within but also the armed warriors patrolling the premises. The shop is rumoured to enjoy powerful magical protections.
11. **Katri Mieho's House:** Katri Mieho (LN middle-aged female fighter 5) serves as a broker between clients and their adventurous hirelings. She has many contacts throughout the city. Wealthy clients desiring privacy but needing the services of adventuring groups hire her as an intermediary. Consequently, she often receives visitors after dark and at other odd times.
12. **Montaja's Ironworks:** Established a century ago by a devout follower of Abarin (N greater god of industry and artifice), this large, semi-fortified building holds a ducal warrant for arms and armour. Its apprentices forge gear for Castle Languard's garrison, while its master armourers and weaponsmiths craft exceptional weapons for Ashlar's nobility. Specialist artisans currently work on *Black Fire*—the duke's newest and largest cannon.

FOLK OUT & ABOUT IN HIGH CITY

While the characters are out and about in High City they may encounter one or more folk of interest.

1. **Saara Otava** (N female human) hurries to meet her client, a wealthy, married merchant who tires of his wife. She wears a dark-hued cowed cloak. Beautiful, and in a hurry, she comes across as arrogant but is really just—literally—running late. Saara has debts and desperately needs the fee from this assignment to meet them.
2. **Ukko Tammi** (LN male human fighter 3) wanders High City looking for his friends. Dressed scruffily in ill-fitting studded leather armour, he sticks out from the norm. Friendly but getting increasingly lost he is looking for the Gold Cockatrice tavern. He asks the characters for directions, and if he discovers they are adventurers, he invites them for a drink.
3. **Yrjö Talvikki** (CN male human thief 3) sees himself as a lover not a fighter, when it comes to burglary and theft. Devastatingly charming, he ingratiates himself with a wealthy person before robbing them blind. Yrjö has an impressive tolerance for alcohol and often drinks his marks under the table before liberating them of their cumbersome wealth.
4. **Huaira Azakiarn** (N female half-elf wizard 5) seeks lodgings for the night. A snob and self-proclaimed food expert, she will only stay and eat at the finest place in Languard. If the characters seem like the right sort, she asks them for their recommendations. If they seem to be rough and ready, she pointedly ignores them. Huaira is well-travelled and an engaging conversationalist—if the person is worth her time.
5. **Suni Miela** (NE male human fighter 3) stalks the street in a foul mood. He has just been rejected by the lady he loves—she has discovered what an odious fellow he is—and he is looking for a drink. Suni is a charismatic conman dressed like a wealthy merchant. If the characters seem gullible, he latches onto them, eventually asking them to invest in his business.
6. **Ventla Koveri** (LG female human paladin [Darlen] 1) breathlessly revels in all High City has to offer. Newly arrived from Tor Abbey, she is giddy with excitement—she has never been in a city before—and seeks to experience everything Languard has to offer. Her paladinhood could be in jeopardy if she gets too carried away. She introduces herself to any obvious paladin or good-aligned cleric in the group.
7. **Albin Ilma** (NG male human fighter 4) feels and looks out of place. A mighty warrior and stout drinking companion, Albin is out of his depth among the monied folk of High City. Albin recently burgled a wizard's tower and is enjoying the fruits of his labour. Tall, handsome and clad in little more than studded leather armour, he stands out from the crowd.

8. **Elisa Aikio** (N middle-aged female human wizard 9) visits Languard to speak with Urmas Aalto, the sage and the duchy's foremost authority on Gloamhold. Elisa cannot find Urmas's house (location H3) and stops the characters to ask for directions. She is pleasant and to the point. She has newly arrived in the city and has not yet secured lodgings—do the characters have any recommendations?
9. **Mikael Joukahainen** (LG male human paladin [Darlen] 2) shines in gleaming plate armour. Atop his sable warhorse, he presents the image of a typical, chivalrous knight. Trained by his squire, he is heading out of the city to patrol the surrounds in search of evil-doers. If the characters are leaving the city, he may travel with them for a while if they seem like appropriate company.
10. **Vilutar Pakkanen** (LN female human) rides in an ornate open-topped carriage. Two servants and a bodyguard attend her. Vilutar is a wealthy merchant who owns several ocean-going vessels. Rich and powerful, she has many friends in the city and is often in need of trustworthy adventurers to guard her vessels on their many far-flung voyages. She is friendly but busy and does not suffer time-wasters or fools. She wears expensive, tasteful robes. (Vilutar Pakkanen appears in *Wreck of the Sea Sprite*.)
11. **Loviisa Repo** (LE female human assassin 7) stalks her next victim. She is an assassin-for-hire and has been engaged to slay Vilutar Pakkanen (see above). A perceptive character may spot her paying intense attention to her victim and wonder why. Alternatively, Loviisa may think a character is onto her and take steps to preserve her cover.
12. **Olavi Vartia** (N male human fighter 5) works as a bodyguard—when sober. As this hulking, fat warrior sinks deeper and deeper into alcoholism, he finds work harder and harder to secure. Olavi has just lost another job and is drowning his sorrows.



HIGH CITY BY DAY

High City is busy during the day—its folk (or their servants and hirelings)—are out and about on their business. Generally, however, High City is not as crowded as the rest of the city.

While the characters are out and about in High City, one or more things from the list below may occur:

1. **Capering Jester:** Kosti Urho (N male human) dances down the street. Clad in bright robes of mind-boggling design, he has been hired to spread the word about an upcoming event at the Emerald Medusa (location H12).
2. **Clattering Coach:** An ornate coach drawn by two white horses rattles along the street. Two mounted guards precede the coach, and another two follow in its wake. The guards are alert and well-equipped. Clearly, whoever is in the coach is wealthy, important and in a hurry.
3. **Patrolling Watch:** A six-strong patrol of the watch marches along the street. Its members are well turned out, and the officer's breastplate gleams in the sunlight. The officer also wears an impressive plumed helm, which nods and sways as she leads her men onward.
4. **The Bells:** Bells ring out from Watcher's Spire (location T4). At dawn and dusk, the bells call the faithful to worship. They could be rung at other times as a tribute to a fallen follower or as a warning if pirates—or some other threat—approach the city.
5. **Rain:** Hard, heavy rain falls over the city. Folk seek shelter in nearby taverns, inns and shops—whose owners are delighted at the captive customers the weather has provided them.
6. **Nobles on the Hunt:** A hunting party trots toward Duke's Gate (location G4). Several half-elves clad in the finest hunting leathers lead a small group of men-at-arms, servants and hunting hounds; some of the Nenonens are on the hunt—but for what?
7. **Stumbling Servant:** A tall, miserable man, laden with bundles, trips and falls in the street. He drops his burden. If the characters help him, he introduces himself as Lalli Vaino (N male human)—servant to master clothier Kerttu Neuvo. He offers to put in a good word for the party with his mistress.
8. **Well-Dressed Rakes:** A group of young men, clad in the latest fashions and armed with fine rapiers, lounge outside an upmarket tavern. At the sight of the characters, they start loudly commenting and laughing about “upstart adventurers” and a “lack of breeding”. They are full of the brashness and invincibility of youth.
9. **Wandering Priest:** Akatius Tornio (LN male human cleric [Conn] 1) wanders High City, seeking donations to aid the poor folk of the Shambles. He knows adventurers often have spare coin and politely intercepts them. He is insistent and doesn't take no for an answer.
10. **Beggar:** A brave beggar, Joakim Tulo (N old male human thief 1), has snuck into High City. The city watch has spotted him, though, and is in the process of teaching him a lesson through the medium of a clenched fist (or two). He is helpless and not resisting.
11. **Strange Companions:** If one of the characters has a strange animal companion or mount, a watch patrol stops them to “suggest” the creature be billeted at Miya's Stables (location H7).
12. **An Invitation:** The characters receive an invitation from Vilutar Pakkanen (“Folk out and About”) to dine with her at the Dragonheart Tavern (location H9). She may have a specific job for them or may just be feeling them out for the future.
13. **Barking Dogs:** The sound of incessant barking comes from inside one of the house fronting onto the street.
14. **Cart Unloading:** A cart is drawn up outside a shop, and workers are offloading heavy boxes and crates.
15. **Labourers Labouring:** A gang of labourers work to repair the sagging wall of a well-to-do house. Wooden scaffolding covers the front of the building, and a cart of building materials stands nearby under the watchful eye of an older man.
16. **Careless Riders:** Two men riding beautiful, but travel-stained, destriers canter along the street. The two wear fine suits of studded leather armour, and their horses are similarly barded. The two are in high spirits, they have enjoyed a good hunt, and are clearly not paying much attention to any pedestrians in their way.
17. **Cryer:** A cryer moves through the throng, shouting loudly about the amazing food and drink to be had at the Dragonheart Tavern (location H9).
18. **Busy Street:** Two carts have got tangled up on the road ahead, causing pedestrians and other carts and coaches to snarl up behind them. The characters can force their way through, find a side road or wait patiently.
19. **Sounds from Below:** Strange sounds emanate from below the street. This section of High City is well-served with sewers, and the characters have caught a snatch of sound made by a band of sewer workers clearing a blockage (or effecting a repair). Alternatively, the sounds could have been made by a band of thieves, a pack of wererats or something worse.
20. **Prison Wagon:** A wagon outfitted with a cage moves slowly through the throng. The cage is crammed with sad-looking folks on the way to Castle Languard's (location H1) dungeon or the courts at the Father's Hall (location T2). Most of the folk look dejected and defeated; a few look defiant, and one fellow has a curious smile on his face. Six guards escort the wagon.

HIGH CITY BY NIGHT

At night, most of High City's shops and workshops close—although most will stay open if a client is wealthy enough. High City features many fine inns, taverns and eateries, and most do a roaring trade once the sun goes down and the day's business is done.

While the characters are out and about in High City, one or more things from the list below may occur:

1. **Merchant Abroad:** A richly dressed woman, attended by a servant and two armed, vigilant bodyguards, imperiously walks the street. The woman exudes wealth and privilege.
2. **The Watch:** An eight-strong patrol of the watch marches along the street. They are vigilant but mainly here to deter petty crimes—muggings, burglaries, and the like. Each watchman carries a whistle to summon reinforcements in the event of serious trouble.
3. **Manure Shoveler:** Two men shovel horse manure into a nearby cart. They work quickly and industriously. The two could be nothing more than honest workers, or they could be something more. Laukkanen's Collectors (location L7) uses street cleaning as a cover to move stolen goods around the city; the two workers could be on their way to meet a wealthy client.
4. **Careless Riders:** Two men riding beautiful destriers canter along the street. The two wear fine suits of studded leather armour, and their horses are similarly barded. The two are in high spirits, they have enjoyed their ride, and are clearly not paying much attention to any pedestrians in their way.
5. **Busy Street:** The seasonal weather is particularly agreeable, and many of High City's denizens are taking a turn in the evening air. Couples walk the street—many accompanied by servants or bodyguards—while groups of revellers make their way to and from their taverns of choice. The atmosphere is pleasant and relaxed.
6. **Merriment Aboard:** Sounds of laughter, drunken singing and general merriment reach the characters' ears. Moments later, a crowd of monied young folk—sons and daughters of wealthy merchants—fill the street. They are in irritatingly high spirits but do not want any trouble.
7. **Lurker on the Scaffold:** Wooden scaffolding covers a fine building fronting onto the street. A nightwatchman snores gently on a chair by the house's front door. Perceptive characters spot a small figure creeping along the scaffolding by an upper window. (The figure might be a thief or could be a youth sneaking out to meet friends).
8. **The Watch Watching:** A patrol of the watch takes an interest in the characters. Perhaps they just look shifty, or one of the party vaguely resembles (or is) a known troublemaker. In any event, the patrol stops the characters and enquires (politely) after their business in High City.
9. **Sounds from Below:** Strange sounds emanate from below the street. This section of High City is well-served with sewers, and the characters have caught a snatch of sound made by a band of sewer workers clearing a blockage (or effecting a repair). Alternatively, the sounds could have been made by a band of thieves, a pack of wererats or something worse.
10. **Annoying Merchant:** Simo Kekko (LN male human) has pretensions of greatness and is wrapped up in his own importance. While deep in a slightly drunken conversation of great import with a friend, he stumbles into the group. Of course, he is too important to apologise and becomes angry if the characters do not get out of his way.
11. **Help! Help!:** The characters hear the sounds of a scuffle in a nearby side street and someone calling for aid. This could be a rich merchant beating a servant, a (rare) mugging or something else entirely. (This is a good way for the characters to meet their next patron.)
12. **Ornate Coach:** An ornate coach rattles along the street, drawn by two beautiful horses. A driver and two footmen (really disguised bodyguards) are visible riding on the coach, but the cabin's curtains are drawn. As the coach comes alongside the characters, it slows and comes to a halt. The door opens, and a hand beckons one of the characters inside.
13. **Barking Guard Dog:** The deep, echoing bark of a guard dog shatters the relative quiet.
14. **Drunk Rakes:** A group of young men, clad in the latest fashions and armed with fine rapiers, stagger along the street; several clutch wineskins from which they enthusiastically swig.
15. **Cowled Pedestrian:** A heavily cowled figure moves purposefully along the street, holding a part-shuttered lantern to light their way. The figure could be a servant about their master's business or someone on the way to a discreet meeting. Either way, they do not want to stop and chat.
16. **Bats!:** Bats swirl and swoop in the air above the party's heads. The bats are searching for food and have just come from the attic of a nearby house. A perceptive character may spot the last few bats fluttering forth.
17. **Lights Burning Bright:** The windows of a well-to-house blaze with light, and the sounds of conversation and laughter come from within. A liveried servant stands by the front door.
18. **Empty Street:** Suddenly, the street is empty. Paranoid characters may wonder why...
19. **Drunk:** A drunk man wanders along the street singing quietly to himself. He is jolly and wishes the characters a good evening.
20. **Dark Clouds:** Dark clouds scud across the moon, plunging the street into near-total darkness—except for the lights shining from the nearby houses.

HIGH CITY WHISPERS & RUMOURS

Characters out and about in High City may overhear or learn some of the rumours (which may or may not be true) below:

1. **Noble Woman Abroad:** Elina Vuolle, ruler of the dismal village of Coldwater, is in the city. The word is that her title and lands are for sale, but that no one is buying.
2. **Thieves in High Market:** High Market (location H2) has suffered a sudden spate of thefts and pickpocketing. The market's owner, Eleonora Pasanen, is said to be enraged at the thieves' brazen actions.
3. **Sea Sprite Returned:** Thought lost at sea a year ago, *Sea Sprite* has been sighted floundering off the Mottled Spire. The vessel is one of Vilutar Pakkanen's ("Folk Out and About in High City") and was on a long voyage to the Coral Sea. Someone will soon board the wreck to loot its cargo. (Refer to *Wreck of the Sea Sprite* for more details.)
4. **Black Swan Manor:** There is something odd about Black Swan Manor ("Minor Locales in High City"). The owner no longer rents the building to adventurers after several strange, unspecified incidents resulted in extensive repairs to the cellar.
5. **Monstrous Hides Wanted:** Kristiina Vaania at Boots and Laces ("Minor Locales in High City") will purchase the hides of strange or outlandish monsters.
6. **Weird and Wonderful Food:** If you want to try weird and wonderful food, the Ruby Plate (location H14) is the place to go. You may or may not be disappointed.
7. **Ancient Oaks:** The oaks on Abbey Road are ancient and the home of nature spirits who were old when Languard was merely a village of crude huts. Damaging the oaks brings down their wrath on the perpetrators. Sometimes, lone folk go missing near the oaks.
8. **High Market:** Many of the most skilled and in-demand artisans pitch stalls at High Market to showcase their creations. If you are looking for something special and expensive, High Market is likely the place to find it.
9. **Trouble in the Catacombs:** Things are not right in the catacombs below the Father's Hall. Rumours speak of tombs broken open and missing bodies. Some priests report feeling the malign presence of some unseen force lurking in the endless shadows of the place.
10. **Cannon:** Work has started on another mighty cannon for Castle Languard's ramparts. This weapon will be even more powerful than the duke's current cannons. Rumour has it that the duke is planning to mount cannons on one of his ships as well, but such an undertaking would be extremely expensive. Perhaps taxes will soon rise.
11. **Missing Thieves:** Thieves working in High City sometimes disappear. The watch isn't concerned about missing thieves in High City—and the general consensus is that bodyguards or traps do away with the thieves. Given the influence of the folk involved, no one seems keen to investigate.
12. **Caves Under High City:** Caves riddle the ground under High City. Some are said to connect to Castle Languard's dungeons and—perhaps—even deeper locales. The watch maintains a small force (the Dark Wardens) to watch over the caves.
13. **Lights in the Chapel:** Faint lights and strange sounds have been reported coming from the Chapel of the Maiden of Death (location H20) on Abbey Road. Some people say the knights interred in the chapel's crypts have risen from the dead!
14. **The Vampire's Lair:** Tenhunen Mansion (location H21) was once the home of the master vampire Kaarlo Tenhunen. His home was said to be opulent beyond belief but also a charnel house. He hunted in the city for decades before being driven away. His home has lain empty since then; no one goes anywhere near it.
15. **Magic Potions and Tasty Pastries:** Old Mother Grumm's (location H10) sells some of the best pastries in the city. You can also sometimes buy magic potions there as well!
16. **The Wealthy Old Woman:** Eleonora Pasanen owns the land High Market (location H2) stands on and is said to be the richest commoner in all of Ashlar. She is a shrewd merchant, and few people boast that they have gotten the best of her. Her family's mansion is heavily guarded.
17. **Unspecified Foul Doings:** Odd and terrible things happen at the Screaming Halls (location H15), Languard's only asylum for the insane. Passersby often hear screaming coming from the building and its cellars. Many folk believe those given into the asylum's care are doomed never to be seen again and that the staff are corrupt and uncaring.
18. **Special Books in a Special Collection:** The Dreaming Spire's (location H4) Sequestered Hall holds the greatest collection of books in Languard and the second-greatest collection in all of Ashlar. However, the Dreaming Spires has a second, restricted collection—the so-called Special Collection—which contains books filled with forbidden, restricted or troublesome content.
19. **Whatever You Want:** The Dark Market (location H18) offers the wealthy illicit and exotic things from far-off lands. If you go there, though, watch out for the Dark Guard—a band of intensely loyal mercenaries charged with keeping trouble out of the market.
20. **Odd, Old Urmas:** Urmas Aalto (location H3) is an old, cantankerous fellow. A wizard in his youth, he explored some of Gloamhold before retiring to live off the proceeds of his adventures. He is the city's foremost authority on Gloamhold's doom-drenched halls but is a difficult man to like. Some say his time "across the water" changed him.

NOTABLE HIGH CITY LOCATIONS

G2: RIVER GATE

Two heavily fortified watchtowers watch over the Svart

River Gate is a bit of a misnomer—there is no actual gate at River Gate. Instead, a pair of squat watch towers commands the Svart's course at the point it widens before flowing into Hard Bay.

Each of the heavily fortified watchtowers boasts ballistae capable of sweeping the river and a small dock from where the garrison can intercept any vessels entering the city. Unless they are bored, or the day is slow, the men-at-arms don't usually bother with small craft—rowing boats and the like—and only meet vessels obviously bringing trade goods into the city. While vessels entering the city are subject to paying a toll, those leaving are literally and metaphorically free to do so. River traffic is light as the Svart is not navigable by ocean-going ships vessels, beyond a few miles south of the city. Thus, guards after an easy time, seek out a posting here.

NOTABLE FOLK

- **Tauno Niera** (LN old male human fighter 3) commands at River Gate. This grizzled old veteran is as tough as they come, but age is finally wearing him down. His sight is failing, and he gets very close to those he is talking to—sometimes uncomfortably so, for he suffers from terrible breath and does not speak quietly.
- **Irina Ahokas** (NG female human) lives in a small hut near the Svart's south bank and, for a small fee, takes individuals across the river. She is honest and does not get involved with dodgy folk. Her husband is dead, and she is raising two young teenage boys—Ossi and Uljas—alone; consequently, her nerves are fraught, and she is perpetually in debt—her children are eating her out of house and home!
- **Revv Naviv** (N old male human thief 1) hangs around the southern tower and mutters about the "Thing in the Water." This beggar is more than a little mad, but a month ago, he swears he saw a giant glistening tentacle briefly emerge from the waters to pull down an angler. No one else saw the attack—it was night-time—and no one believed his tale. Still, a fisherman is missing, and parts of his shattered boat have turned up on the muddy riverbank at low tide.

HOOKS

- **Bored Guards:** The guards in the north tower are bored and feeling mischievous. When they see the party's boat approaching, they move to intercept it. When they reach the party, they try to levy all sorts of impromptu levies and tolls. They don't push their luck if the characters seem to have rumbled their scam.
- **Decomposing Body:** A fisherman shouts and waves energetically from his boat in the middle of the Svart. He has snagged a badly decomposed body while fishing. The body does not look human—in fact, it has scales and a fin-like protrusion growing from its head!

G4: DUKE'S GATE

Least used of Languard's gates; beyond lies the Ridgeway

Duke's Gate is heavily fortified and strongly garrisoned. This is the only gate that provides immediate access to High City, and thus, it is an important part of the city's defences.

Named in honour of Ashlar's dukes, this gate is the least-used of Languard's gates. The road here heads both northwards toward Black Tower and dismal Coldwater—this is the Ridgeway—and also loops around the city to eventually join the Great South Road after fording the Svart.

NOTABLE FOLK

- **Kaari Nikkonen** (LN middle-aged female human fighter 3) commands at Duke's Gate. Crippled in a skirmish with bandits a decade ago, she is a much-trusted servant of the Nenonen's and runs Duke's Gate like a military camp. Smugglers and other near-do-wells have learnt to avoid Duke's Gate. She is respectful, diligent and well-used to dealing with nobles and other entitled folk.
- **Leena Rautia** (LN female human fighter 2) masquerades as a normal guard but is actually in direct service of the Nenonens as a spy. She is tasked with watching for potential troublemakers entering the city. She is also watching for adventurers and mercenaries who could be useful to the duke. She is stocky, wears her brown hair in a ragged cut and seems like a normal warrior—albeit one with more intelligence than the norm.

HOOKS

- **Beggars:** A few beggars cluster on the road without the gate, waiting for a wealthy person with a conscience to pass through. They spot the characters and latch onto them. One or more beggars may attempt to grab a loose item and run off, gambling the characters won't use lethal force in front of the guard, while others simply ask for coin or offer to guide the characters in High City.
- **Heedless Noble:** All commoners are questioned before passing through Duke's Gate. As the characters wait their turn, a noble rides past with his entourage. Their horses splatter the characters with mud. The noble, heedless or uncaring, continues on his way. If the characters object or behave inappropriately, the noble remembers them and could work against them in the future.
- **Suspicious Guards:** The guards are vigilant and on the lookout for thieves, scoundrels and other ne'er-do-wells. Something about a character's appearance or demeanour raises a guard's suspicions, and they question the group closely before letting them pass. However, if they pass the guard's test, Kaari Nikkonen emerges from the gatehouse to speak with them—would they like a commission to hunt down bandits in the nearby Ochels? (Whatever the outcome of this interaction, Leena Rautia notices them and may pass the characters' names onto her master.)

H1: CASTLE LANGUARD

Seat of Family Nenonen and centre of Ashlar government

Castle Languard's grim walls and lofty towers loom over the city like an ever-watchful guardian. The castle stands on the site of Arndul Nenonen's first fort and is the oldest continuously occupied building in the city.

The centre of Ashlar's governance, it is the most heavily fortified and protected place in the Duchy. The castle has evolved over the centuries and has undergone several distinct building phases under various dukes. Even the castle, though, is dwarfed by the bulk of The Father's Hall (location T2.) The oldest part of the castle—the central keep—stands high on the bluffs with commanding views of both Languard and the Mottled Spire.

The ancient builders also discovered a network of caves riddling the bluffs and incorporated these into the castle's original design. Thus, the castle incorporates extensive subterranean workings. Rumours abound of long tunnels linking the castle to various buildings in High City, as well as a little-visited hidden level of oubliettes and cells wherein the Nenonen's enemies languish. Family Nenonen's family crypt also lies deep under the central keep, as does a well-stocked network of storage chambers and cisterns.

As well as housing the Nenonen family and their immediate servitors, the castle protects Ashlar's royal mint and printing house. It also serves as an armoury and barracks for the duke's household warriors.

NOTABLE FOLK

- **Chancellor Marja Pasanen** (LN old female human) oversees the mundane, day-to-day running of the duchy. She is learned and wise, and the duke implicitly trusts Marja. The two have worked together for decades, but now Marja grows old. Her mortality troubles her, and she has begun searching for a worthy replacement.
- **Duke Armas Nenonen** (LN male half-elf fighter 4/wizard 8) believes in the rule of law and his duty to keep his people safe. He has held the title of duke for almost a century but is not beloved by many of his subjects, who see him as harsh and inflexible. He is a joyless man—duty and honour consume him.
- **First Protector Elmo Rekunen** (LN middle-aged male human fighter 7) leads and oversees the Nenonen's household warriors. A skilled warrior, Elmo is steeped in warcraft and is reputed to unbeatable in battle.

HOOKS

- **Duke Armas Abroad:** The characters spot the duke as he talks with Elmo Rekunen in the courtyard. This is their chance to make an impression—good or bad!
- **Escape:** A bell begins to ring from within the castle. As the characters watch, a ragged man assisted by two heavily armed companions defeats the guards at the gate and dashes out into the street—straight toward the party!

H2: HIGH MARKET

All manner of fine and expensive goods are for sale here

In contrast to Low Market (location L1), High Market is well-ordered and regulated. Here, stand neat rows of tented stalls ready to receive wealthy patrons who can browse freely without fear of thievery or assault. All manner of fine and expensive goods are for sale in High Market. Many of the city's most skilled artisans maintain stalls here, staffed by their apprentices and servants, from which to sell their merchandise and hawk their services.

By ancient gift for loyal service, family Pasanen—a commoner family—owns the land on which High Market stands. Consequently, although they are obliged to pay a hefty tax on their income to the ducal family, they have grown exceedingly affluent. (In fact, they are reputed to be the wealthiest commoners in the duchy.) To protect their revenue, the Pasanens recruit guards to patrol the market, and High Market is one of the safest public places in Languard.

NOTABLE FOLK

- **Eleonora Pasanen** (LN old female human) oversees her family's business in High Market. Eleonora's frail health means she no longer walks the market but instead watches over day-to-day operations from her ornate, guard-flanked black carriage. There, she receives a stream of stallholders, society guests and the like, all eager to gain her attention and favour.
- **Reima Sianio** (LN old male human fighter 2) possesses unrivalled knowledge of the market, making him a useful man to know. The longest-serving guard in High Market, Reima is a beloved fixture of the place. His duties are now honorific rather than actual, but he still wanders the aisles using his spear as a walking stick.
- **Virpi Korpela** (N female human) nurtures ideas above her station (or so her rivals think). A clothier by trade, she has a stall in Low Market, but dreams of expanding to High Market. When the characters encounter her, she has just been denied a booth and is furious; she has invested much of her savings in a shipment of fine cloth and now has nowhere to sell it.

HOOKS

- **Pick Pocketing:** The characters witness a rare crime in High Market. If they intervene, the victim, Aaro Ahokas (LN middle-aged male human), is grateful. He is a wealthy merchant and could be a valuable contact for the characters in the future.
- **Magic Dagger:** Kirsti Purho (N middle-aged female human) approaches the party. Her family face mounting debts, and she has a magic dagger—a family heirloom—to sell. She doesn't want to sell the weapon but has no choice. She has approached the characters because they are not part of Languard's "high society", and thus—she hopes—the transaction will stay private.

H3: URMAS'S HOUSE

Home of Languard's leading authority on Gloamhold

Overlooking the Dreaming Spires on the Isle of Scholars, Urmas's house stands on the Svart's northern bank near Vonya's Span. The once-finely decorated three-storey townhouse has a faint air of dilapidation and neglect about it. Few people now visit the house's aged owner—the wizard and renowned sage Urmas Aalto, who is perhaps Languard's greatest authority on Gloamhold—and that's how he likes it.

Ground Floor: Little used these days, the front room is where Urmas met his friends, guests and patrons. Most of his friends are now dead, however, and he hates having to take on paying work. A thin layer of dust covers much of the room, a mute witness to its lack of use.

The room is outfitted as a comfy wizard's study; strange things clutter up side tables, and a dozen weighty tomes fill a sagging bookshelf. None of these things is magical or valuable; they are little more than props to augment Urmas's image as a sagacious sage and wizard.

First Floor: These rooms comprise Urmas's living quarters. They are dirty, disorganised and stuffy. Urmas doesn't care—and it shows. His children left home long ago, and their rooms lie empty and dusty. Sadly, for Urmas, his wife is dead—cut down tragically by an out-of-control cart a decade ago. Since her death, knowledge has been his mistress and companion.

Second Floor: Urmas's library, workshop and personal sanctum fill the house's upper floor. Rarely for Languard, the windows are glazed to let natural light into the well-heated rooms. Urmas is proud of his glass windows; anyone breaking them will suffer his ire; local children have learnt this the hard way and no longer throw stones at them.

NOTABLE FOLK

- **Urmas Aalto** (N old male human wizard 4) made his fortune exploring Gloamhold's outer halls in his youth, but sadly for Urmas, his fortune now dwindles. He is old and cantankerous, but his lust for knowledge yet consumes him. As death edges closer, he spends more and more time among his beloved books—he suspects he is on the verge of an important discovery about Gloamhold's ancient history, but it thus far remains maddeningly out of reach.

HOOKS

- **Short of Funds:** Urmas doesn't want to deal with the characters, but a shortage of funds may force him to take on paying customers. He exacts a hefty price for his help.
- **Urmas Needs Help:** Urmas's studies are reaching a climax, and he needs a copy of an inscription he saw long ago in Gloamhold's halls—he glimpsed it but could not copy it on one of his long-ago delves. He hires the characters to acquire it but delays or forgets paying his debt to them.

H4: THE DREAMING SPIRES

Ashlar's only university and greatest seat of learning

Languard's Dreaming Spires—or sometimes simply “the Spires”—is the duchy's greatest seat of learning and its only university. Sprawling over Alina's Isle, the Dreaming Spires stand in splendid isolation from the city's stink and clamour. It is here that those desirous of learning come.

Wealthy merchants and nobles send their children to the Spires to learn their letters and numbers as well as many other scholarly subjects, including the study of Elven—the language of Ashlar's courts and governance. Commoners rarely study here, for their parents cannot afford the near-ruinous fees required to secure a place at the university.

The Dreaming Spires maintains an impressive library—the so-called Sequestered Hall—for use by its students and teachers. The Sagacious Masters of the Eldritch Nexus hold the only library of greater extent in Ashlar behind the Black Tower's vitrified walls. The Sequestered Hall is a hard place for outsiders to reach. A gift of a rare book or handsome donation is, however, usually enough to secure a brief visit to the stacks.

NOTABLE FOLK

- **Master of Tomes** (LN old male human wizard 6) oversees a small staff and cares little for anything happening beyond his small empire. He is responsible for safeguarding the Sequestered Hall and, in truth, resents letting anyone into the library, including the students. The Master of Tomes is almost sixty years old.
- **Mistress of the Spires** (NG old female human wizard 9) has not left the Dreaming Spires in years and has dedicated her life to the pursuit and sharing of knowledge. She is tired—exhausted by old age—but a near-fanatical devotion to her duty keeps her going.

HOOKS

- **Get Me a Book:** The Master of Tomes is in a bad mood, irritated by adventurers constantly nagging him. Thus, when the characters ask for admittance to the Sequestered Hall, he will only accept the gift of a rare book—almost no amount of gold will change his mind.
- **Love Sick:** Kanbrar Nuninrae (NE male half-elf thief 3) approaches the characters. He has been hired to steal a certain book from the Sequestered Hall but knows he needs help. He lies to the party, spinning a tale of forbidden love between himself and Eeva Laitnen—the daughter of a wealthy merchant studying in the Spires. He begs the characters to help him break into the Spires so he might steal some tender moments with his love.
- **No Boats Available:** Normally, visitors must be rowed over to Alina's Isle by a ferryman, but none are available. A Takolen boatman from the Wrecks approaches the party and offers to row the group to the island. While he does so, he tries to lure them into visiting the Wrecks by speaking of the forbidden delights available therein.

H5: ANKU SENNRA'S GEMSTONES

Larcenous gem merchant with an impeccable reputation

Anku has the best gemstones in Languard, as long as you don't ask too many questions. Her small but fabulously well-equipped shop shows no hint of skulduggery. However, Anku maintains a network of thieves and informants throughout High and Low City alike. Most of Anku's patrons suspect the truth (particularly if they recognise a neighbour's gemstone for sale) but feign ignorance in exchange for better prices.

Anku is careful to leave no trace of her dealings. Given the store's prestigious location on Market Street, she never meets her contractors here. Instead, she dresses in a black shawl and goes to the Mixing Pot tavern (location L5) to organise heists and collect gems.

Shopfront: The shop is small, but the white marble countertops shine with obvious care. A few small gemstones sit behind thick glass, illuminated by candles and mirrors. These gems are nothing more than a taste of what Anku keeps in the backroom.

Second Floor: The "good stuff" is kept in a locked iron vault worthy of High Bank (location H6). By keeping illicit goods hidden, Anku minimises the risk of a patron recognising their stolen stones.

NOTABLE FOLK

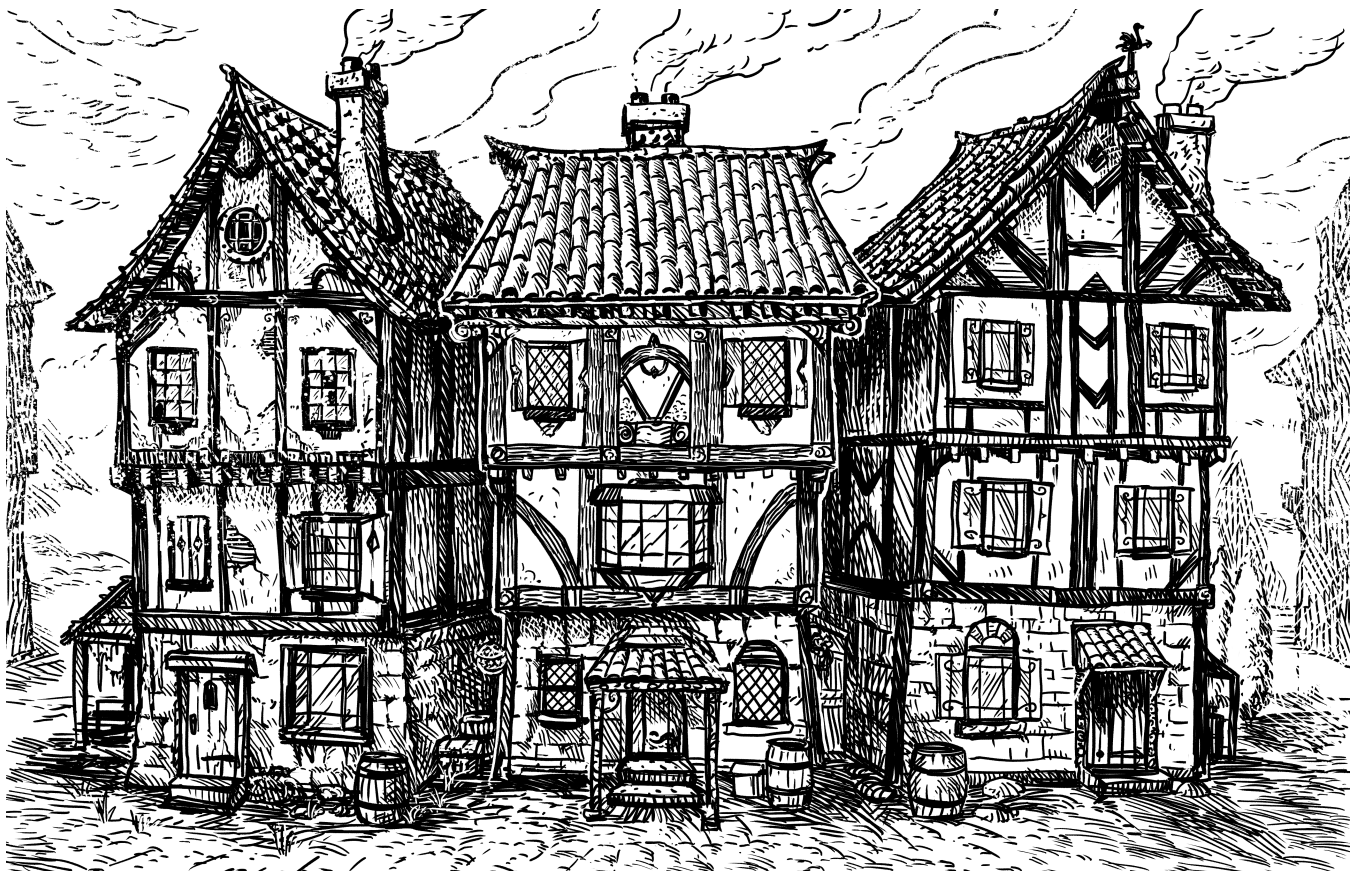
- **Anku Sennra** (LE female human) grew up a servant's daughter in High City but spent her time with the poor in

the Shambles. She was a fence there for Jere Millo, eventually earning enough money to purchase her shop. Silver-tongued and raven-haired with an ageless face, Anku can switch between charming and brutally cold at a moment's notice.

- **Jere Millo** (NE male human fighter 3) is Anku's partner and part-time lover. Jere is a lifelong social climber with blackmail material on nearly everyone he meets. Slick, strange, and always smiling, Jere hangs around the shop with two bodyguards and whistles at passers-by through bone-white teeth. There's nothing Jere likes more than watching his henchmen beat a debtor to a pulp.

HOOKS

- **Envoy in Danger:** A wealthy envoy from a foreign land arrives in Languard with a ruby the size of a fist. Anku wants the gem, which is embedded in the diplomat's chest and makes a plan to steal it—and the characters blunder into the middle of the action.
- **Missing Black Diamond:** A mansion vault was burglarised, but only a single flawless black diamond was stolen. The owner suspects Anku but doesn't have the evidence to force the city watch to search the premises.
- **She Who Wears the Black Shawl:** One of the characters spots Anku Sennra as she heads to the Mixing Pot tavern (location L5). Something about her demeanour sparks the character's suspicions.



H6: HIGH BANK

Impregnable bank used by Languard's great and good

Many fortunes flow through Languard, and most of them spend time in High Bank. Situated next to Castle Languard and heavily guarded, High Bank stores High City's wealth. Ironically, the richest place in Languard is perhaps the least ostentatious—the black marble facade is as severe and humourless as the stone-faced employees.

High Bank is the ultimate ambition of every thief in Languard, but if anyone has plundered its reputedly impregnable vaults, they have kept their mouths shut.

Ground Floor: The interior is dimly lit by wax candles and oil lamps, which drip onto the black marble floor. After entering, visitors wait on hard velvet benches in a stiflingly hot room. When Tacitus is ready, the patron is summoned to a small office to discuss matters. When their business is concluded, the patron is escorted from the building. There are no warm welcomes or friendly exceptions here.

Underground Vaults: There is no single vault in High Bank. Instead, the wealth is subdivided into three dozen iron compartments, all connected by a web of twisting stone passages. High Bank employs ten guards to roam these halls in pairs. The vaults' doors are of the highest calibre, thick iron portals which would take a skilled thief hours to defeat. A lead-lined compartment of water surrounds the entire underground complex area. If a would-be burglar punctures this liquid barrier, the water slowly drains away and sets off numerous alarms.

NOTABLE FOLK

- **Tacitus Greev** (LN male human) suffers no break from protocol or procedure, no matter the circumstance or personage, as the Manager of High Bank. He is as cold as the wealth he oversees, and his thin face is pale from years spent underground.
- **Antero Kaapo** (LE male human fighter 5) revels in inflicting pain on his lessers and thoroughly enjoys catching and punishing criminals. He is a brute but well suited for his role as Captain of the Guard. Antero rose through the ranks of the city watch and now lords his august position over his minions.

HOOKS

- **Store Our Treasure:** The characters decide to store their wealth in High Bank. Opening an account could be an adventure in itself, as Tacitus must ensure they are not thieves looking to rob the place. Do they have any references from a source Tacitus trusts?
- **Unknown Threat:** Tacitus has learned that a mysterious outsider is planning an impossible heist of High Bank. If the characters find the outsider, they can prevent the heist from happening and earn favour with Tacitus.

H7: MIYA'S STABLES

Stables for the well-to-do and those with exotic animals

These stables quarter mounts for the well-to-do. Obviously, the High City's rich residents won't stand for horses wandering the streets and won't hitch their animals outside a tavern like a commoner, so this is a frequent stop for wealthy visitors. Miya Orava owns the stables and tends to the animals and exotic mounts quartered here.

Miya has carved out a little patch of land upon which her charges roam. Due to the value or bizarre natures of the mounts, she or one of her grooms accompanies creatures set loose from the stables. Miya owns two horses—one abandoned at the stables and the other taken from an abusive owner—and offers free riding lessons to youngsters when she is not otherwise occupied with her duties.

Miya employs seven young women and men as grooms (most of whom are unremarkable commoners) and slyly attempts to inculcate a love of nature in their breasts—she grows old and knows she must soon find a successor to take over her business.

TARIFF

- **Stabling:** Dog or other small animal 5 sp/day; horse or other large animal 1 gp/day; exotic animal or creature 2-5 gp/day (depending on its dietary requirements).

NOTABLE FOLK

- **Miya Orava** (N old female human druid 5) settled in Languard after her final expedition. Taken by the parade of horses, riding dogs and other unusual creatures serving as mounts, she settled down. Her husband died two years ago, and she has thrown herself into maintaining the grounds and caring for her charges. She closed off one of the stalls and uses it as modest living quarters so she can keep watch over her clients' mounts. Miya dresses smartly in clothes of bright green and brown and takes a business-like attitude when negotiating fees. She turns away abusive or neglectful owners and conspires to liberate their animals from them.
- **Jarno Vähänen** (CN male halfling thief 1) has proven himself Miya's most skilled worker despite his dodgy background—he is on the run from thugs to whom he owes money and pretends to be a young teenage boy while serving as a stablehand.

HOOKS

- **Captive Griffon:** Miya has learned that the Dragonheart Tavern (location H9) has a captive griffon, which will be cut up into steaks two days hence. She implores the characters to rescue the beast and offers a considerable reward for its release.
- **Missing Horse:** A customer's horse disappeared from the stables overnight. Evidence suggests the horse burst out of its stall, but Miya suspects otherwise and asks the characters to investigate.

H8: KILPIKONNA'S FINE BAKED GOODS

Famed baker and secret assassin

Standing near High Market, Kilpikonna's exudes pleasant aromas at all hours of the day. This two-storey bakery employs several expert bakers and other employees to help with mundane tasks. Kilpikonna's offers an assortment of typical cakes, pies and other pastries, but Mirja Kilpikonna prides herself on her and her staff's ability to promptly satisfy special requests (for suitable recompense).

Kilpikonna's would be a prime target for freelance assassins who use poison, but Mirja is ever vigilant. The assassin Ohto Paivanen already uses the bakery as cover for his activities and ensures no outsiders use the location to get to their mark. Mirja alone knows a frequently changed code word that customers can use to gain Ohto's attention.

The bakery is a centre for other shady activities. Mirja uses her confections to send coded messages or to hide items useful for prison breaks, for which she charges a ransom since she considers this use of her creations a bad show. A private room in the building's second storey is available for clandestine meetings.

Mirja's wares command high prices. Most of the cakes and pies are prepared overnight, so the bakery stays open to customers at all hours.

TARIFF

- **Drink:** Tea (cup) 2 sp, tea (pot) 1 gp.
- **Food:** Cake or pie (slice) 5 sp, cake or pie (whole) 2 gp, special request (completed within 24 hours) 5-10 gp.

NOTABLE FOLK

- **Mirja Kilpikonna** (N female human) served in the kitchens at Castle Languard, where a distant Nenonen cousin noticed her aptitude for pastry baking. The noble sponsored the opening of her own bakery, leaving her to her own devices. She surprised herself with her ability to manage the bakery, but demand required her to engage additional bakers and helpers to alleviate the pressures on her time.
- **Ohto Paivanen** (LE male human assassin 6) arrived at Kilpikonna's hoping to poison one of the cakes Mirja was making for a client. She caught the assassin in the act, but Ohto used his masculine wiles to weasel out of any legal entanglements. He decided to remain and use the bakery as a cover for his activities, which Mirja insists cannot be traced to the business. The two are occasional lovers.

HOOKS

- **Accidental Codeword:** One of the characters accidentally uses Ohto's password, and once the assassin realises they are not clients, he investigates the party.
- **Cake Delivery:** Mirja pays the characters to deliver one of Ohto's cakes in the hope they won't attract the suspicions of those guarding her client.

H9: DRAGONHEART TAVERN

Exotic meals for the wealthy

Excess money breeds a lust for unique experiences, and the Dragonheart Tavern caters to culinary cravings. The proprietors claim to be adventurers who travel the duchy and lands beyond to procure roc breasts, bulette flank steaks and cockatrice eggs. One draw to dining here is enjoying specially prepared food with potentially lethal consequences. Whether the inn provides truly exotic meals or uniquely flavoured deceptions is unknown. For the less adventurous who don't mind losing face by selecting them, mundane yet well-prepared meals are also available.

As a notable tavern, this location is one of the High City's favourite public meeting places where business between merchants and other well-to-do residents is done. Rarely, tempers run high, and patrons come to blows. If opposing groups cannot reconcile their differences, the inn's guards break up fights in a way that ensures no side receives preferential treatment.

TARIFF

- **Drink:** Wine (glass) 1 gp, wine (bottle) 20 gp, whiskey (cup) 5 sp.
- **Food:** Sumptuous meal (steak, roasted potatoes, cheese) 1 gp, exotic meal (basilisk cutlets, poached cockatrice eggs, etc.) 5-50 gp.

NOTABLE FOLK

- **Niilo Majatalonisäntä** (NE male dwarf fighter 3/thief 2) inherited the tavern from his parents and seeks to honour the neutrality they established here. However, he is not above accepting gold to ensure a customer's dinner is laced with slow-acting poison.
- **Herrta Syöksyhammas** (N female half-orc) gained Niilo's attention while chopping wood. He hired her as a guard, but she proved to be an excellent bartender; despite the initial reaction her appearance may engender, she gets customers to open up to her. This makes her an excellent source of information about High City. She freely supplies Niilo with this information but only shares it with others for the right price.

HOOKS

- **Dine with Me:** The characters receive an invitation from a wealthy merchant to dine with them at the inn. The merchant expects them to provide muscle in case a touchy negotiation goes awry. As discussions progress, it becomes obvious that the deal is detrimental to the other party, and they react accordingly. The characters gain favour with their host if they intervene on her behalf or earn a powerful enemy if they do nothing.
- **Get Me a Basilisk:** Niilo asks the characters to capture a basilisk, or, if they must kill it, to do so within 24 hours of delivery. He promises a sizeable bounty for the creature.

H10: OLD MOTHER GRUMM'S

Drinks, confectionery and magic potions

Supplementing her baking skills with potion sales and spellcasting services, Old Mother Grumm is a favourite among locals and adventurers alike. From sticky toffee to bespoke potions, many things can be found for sale here.

Inside: Bubbling cauldrons and alembics steam alongside large ovens and fantastically expensive glass cabinets. Counters filled with jars of sweets, tangled toffee sticks, and gingerbread men clutter the walls, while a counter of baked goods and sweets dominates the far end of the room. Signs proudly state that all goods are homemade, many with ingredients taken from the tiered garden growing over the shop's roof. The shop sells everything from fruitcakes and sweets to magic potions and elixirs of love.

Aila is here from dawn till dusk, brewing potions while supervising her three staff who bake most of the goods. She offers potion-making and spellcasting services, usually withdrawing to the roof garden to discuss such jobs with her customers. She dwells above the shop in a small apartment.

Urchins and beggars know Aila is a kind-hearted soul and watch over her shop in return for the sweets and cakes she gives them at the end of each day. Recently, the shop has become popular with adventurers for its sugared trail rations and raisin and cherry rock cakes.

TARIFF

- **Drinks & Confectionery:** Tangled toffee sticks (bag, 2 cp), gingerbread man (1 cp), sugared and fruited rations (week, 3 gp), sugary berry flavoured drinks (flask, 2 cp).
- **Magic Items:** *Potion of growth* (300 gp), *potion of reduce* (300 gp), *potion of healing* (400 gp), *potion of climbing* (500 gp).
- **Spellcasting Services:** Aila charges normal fees for spellcasting services.

NOTABLE FOLK

- **Aila Grumm** (NG old female human wizard 4) wears her hennaed hair in a bun and is often covered in flour. She is diminutive, good-natured and popular. An old injury—a badly fixed broken leg—aches fiercely when it rains; thus, she hates the autumn and winter.
- **Tiggy** (N female cat) usually sleeps in the front window or sits by the front door licking some sugary substance off her paws. Tiggy is Aila's tubby flour-dusted familiar, and she follows Aila around incessantly.

HOOKS

- **Fire:** A minor fire breaks out in the shop, and smoke begins to billow from the front door. The fire is easily contained, but Aila is grateful to anyone helping do so. The shop closes for the day but opens the next day.
- **Hungry Children:** Hungry children wait outside the shop for free sweets; several of them are pickpockets with sticky fingers and see the characters as easy targets.

H11: NEEDLE'S POISE

Renowned tailor and adventurer's outfitter

Perfection has a price, and the renowned tailor of Needle's Poise caters to the few who can afford it. Airi Luoma's shop is a two-storey stone-brick building boasting two tall, fabulously expensive glass windows to display the shop's offerings. Its mannequins are decked with vibrant colours, silk brocade and golden thread fit for nobility, but also practical leather and fur garments designed for adventurers. This duality makes Airi an intermediary between the noble and adventuring classes; she draws noble attention to promising adventurers and helps adventurers find wealthy patrons.

Ground Floor: The sales floor contains rows of mannequins, each one garbed in a unique style. All of the clothing here is for display rather than purchase, used to show off Airi's skill and provide samples of various techniques and options. A desk at the centre is staffed by Airi or one of her apprentices, who personally assist every customer.

Basement: This is Airi's workshop, a space well-lit with magic lamps to avoid fire and heat. The workspace is filled with in-progress garments, and someone is always working here, but Airi maintains strict order and tidiness. Customers may be invited in to try on unfinished garments but are otherwise kept out.

Second Floor: Airi's living quarters fill the second floor, and they are out of bounds to most. The comfortable sitting room, furnished with well-cushioned chairs, is only seen by trusted clients and friends. When Airi needs a quiet environment to educate adventurers on niceties or speak about private matters, she sometimes brings them here.

NOTABLE FOLK

- **Airi Luoma** (NG middle-aged female human) responds enthusiastically to any interest in fashion or her elegant creations. She is proud of her work and won't dress just anyone. If she thinks an adventurer has promise, Airi offers them education on fashion and etiquette and will bring them to the attention of her wealthy clients. Anyone who accepts may get more than they bargained for: Airi is a demanding teacher.

HOOKS

- **Magical Clothes:** If a character wants to craft a magical cloak, hat or other item of clothing, there is only one place to go for a garment so fine it can be enchanted—Needle's Poise!
- **Noble Interest:** One of Airi's apprentices approaches the characters and invites them to her shop. A noble has taken interest in them but wants them presentable before they meet. Airi has already been paid for their attire but needs to take their measurements and quickly teach them proper etiquette.
- **Special Fabric:** Airi needs a special fabric—the fur and feathers of an owlbear—for a special creation, and she offers to pay the characters if they can get her some.

H12: THE EMERALD MEDUSA

Floating high-class eatery renowned for its entertainment

Once a large multi-decked sailing ship, the Emerald Medusa is a popular eatery and fest hall permanently moored in Languard. It is famed for its food and “enchanted” evening dances. A place for the wealthy to meet, the Emerald Medusa is the perfect place to discuss adventures or plot intrigue. Moored close to the docks, it has several ornate gangplanks leading to the main deck. Here, small bands of musicians play beautiful music under wide canvas canopies.

The Medusa’s Head: The vessel is named—unsurprisingly—for its intricately sculpted medusa figurehead, which now stands prominently on deck. The medusa holds intricate carved magical lens amid its beautifully carved, breathtakingly realistic writhing snake-hair.

The medusa figurehead is positioned so that its large enchanted glass lenses watch over the dancing crowds below and periodically emit beams of twinkling light to which dancers must freeze when they are touched. As the night goes on, more and more lights are emitted, making the dance around the pretend statues harder and harder. The last person dancing at midnight wins access to the Captain’s Table—a private dining room much in demand among Languard’s elite.

Below Decks: Here, the choicest tables offer a view of the river and bay through finely made portholes. Long tables in the main hold provide space for larger groups to dine.

TARIFF

- **Evening Entertainment:** Includes food, drink and dancing 30 gp, elven wines and sweetmeats 50 gp, light meal on deck 10 gp.
- **Evening Specials:** Each night, a presentation of beautifully crafted food, from swordfish baked in rock-salt to venison with exotic plum sauce, is made at the eighth bell. It is customary for the person hosting a dinner for others to pay for the meals.

NOTABLE FOLK

- **Mira Rantanen** (NG middle-aged female wizard 3) owns the Emerald Medusa. She is popular among Languard’s elite, who vie with each other to win her favour. She is friendly but a shrewd judge of character.

HOOKS

- **Help Me Win the Dance:** The party is invited to dinner to help a merchant’s son win the evening dance contest.
- **Petrified Lovers:** A dancing couple is turned to stone during the nightly dance. Mira asks the characters to discover if anyone is behind the attack, as she fears foul play and can’t trust any of her customers to get to the bottom of the matter.
- **Spare Table:** A wealthy merchant has cancelled her table, and Mira offers it to the characters who happen to be passing by at just the right time.



H13: PHARRAN'S SHROUD

High-class brothel whose owner has a secret identity

This large townhouse holds a high-end brothel, providing a wide range of services to Languard's powerful and wealthy. Run by Pharran, a tall silk-shrouded lady of unknown origin, "The Shroud," as it known to the locals, serves the needs of the rich and famous. All the workers wear ornate face masks to hide their identity, and it is rumoured some of the workers are nobles' sons and daughters sating their lusts among the common folk.

Ground Floor: Burly, well-dressed guards watch well-made oak doors with leaded glass and silken drapes. Beyond lies a large hall and several rooms dedicated to meeting people. Food and drinks are available all night.

Upper Floors: A balcony overhangs the ground floor on which the working girls and lads, known as "Masques", strut about. Curtained archways lead to many different themed rooms—from elven boudoirs to sumptuous palaces. Most themed rooms are rented for the night; smaller rooms are available for short periods.

The "Dungeons": A concealed door leads to hidden stairs that descend into dimly lit chambers below the house. Here Varg, a half-ogre of immense proportions, manacles and throws customers into curtained-off cages to await the intentions of their masque. Whilst frightening to some, this is all part of the show.

TARIFF

- **Masques:** Masque 2 gp, "specialist" masque 10 gp.
- **Rooms:** Small room 1 gp/hour, themed room 5 gp/hour, the "Dungeons" 10 gp/hour.

NOTABLE FOLK

- **Pharran** (NG [fe]male human cleric 5) uses her trademark shroud to disguise herself. He is actually Silas Morganstern, a priest of Melandia (CN [NG] lesser goddess of fire, passion and love). A good person at heart, he donates much of his earnings to local charities and invests in local businesses. As Silas Morganstern, he is a popular gentleman in High City.
- **Varg** (N male half-ogre fighter 3) prefers to be in a state of undress. Massively strong, he is an impressive and imposing sight; his presence is incredibly intimidating to those not used to violence.

HOOKS

- **I Want Information:** A wealthy merchant is enraged that his son works at the Shroud. He seeks information on his son's activities in a clandestine manner and hires the characters to make discreet enquiries.
- **Meet Me in the Dungeon:** A well-to-do potential patron wishes to meet the party at the Masque. He is an idiot and thinks meeting in the Dungeons will be atmospheric.

H14: THE RUBY PLATE

Open air eatery famed for its exotic, ever-changing menu

Roaring fire bursts from pans, knives flip through the air and colourful arrangements adorn plates in this open-air restaurant. Thick wooden columns and a mess of tables surround Jalo's central cooking station; a shingled roof keeps out the elements. The sizzle of frying fat and the aroma of dill and chives float from its corner of Market Street, enticing market-goers to see the spectacle. This is The Ruby Plate, the pride of cook and proprietor Jalo Rinne.

Jalo strives to provide something unique, and it doesn't stop at his constant showmanship; the menu changes daily as Jalo buys exotic and bizarre ingredients and cooks meals he may never be able to prepare again. Truth be told, the quality of the food suffers from this, but the opportunity to try sea-serpent meat, shrieking mushrooms and ankheg legs keeps customers coming back. The Ruby Plate's menu is unreliable and changes daily.

TARIFF

- **Food:** Glow pie (savory game pie with phosphorescent fungus sauce for the glow) 6 sp, stone-egg pastry (pastry with rice and cockatrice-egg filling) 8 sp, sealord platter (giant crab leg, fish stew and fresh bread) 1 gp.
- **Drink:** Assassin berry wine (half bottle) 10 gp, oozing mead (diluted gelatinous cube acid, milk and honey; pitcher) 1 gp.

NOTABLE FOLK

- **Jalo Rinne** (LN male human) engages customers and passers-by with cheerful banter. He is as exuberant and outgoing as he is optimistic and confident, sometimes overly so; he underestimates the difficulty of tasks and throws himself into projects far beyond his ability.

HOOKS

- **Get Me That Boar:** A dire boar was spotted a few days ago in the Ochels, and Jalo yearns to make a feast of it. He speaks of it to every adventurer who passes by, including the characters. Jalo's enthusiasm and the substantial reward he's offering for the boar are sure to turn the hunt into a competition.
- **Owlbear Steaks:** Jalo is cooking up a storm with his owlbear steak creation, which is proving popular. He has employed cryers to spread the word throughout the city of his new creation and the street around the Ruby Plate is noticeably busier than normal.
- **You Kill It, I'll Buy It:** Keeping the Ruby Plate supplied with intriguing dishes is challenging, so Jalo leans on adventurers to help him. Jalo quietly offers to buy any interesting ingredients the characters come across. He'll buy anything fit to eat, whether monster meat, magic fungus or exotic spice.

H15: THE SCREAMING HALLS

Insane asylum beset by dark rumours

Riddling the ground beneath a grand house of fine aspect, the so-called Screaming Halls are Languard's insane asylum. The Screaming Halls is not its real name, but its proper moniker—the House of the Clouded Mind—is only used by those who have consigned a friend or family member to its care. The Screaming Halls gets its somewhat disturbing name from the faint screaming sometimes audible on the stretch of the Svart running past the grand house. Few patients willingly pass into its care.

As the Screaming Hall's proprietor—Sauli Itkonen—tells visitors, the mind is a strange thing. Both endlessly resilient and easily broken, it is a mystery to even the greatest, most accomplished healers and sages. That is why Languard needs the Screaming Halls. This argument has persuaded Languard's great and good to overlook the rumours swirling about the Halls. In truth, Languard seems to suffer from more madness and mental illness than other places in Ashlar, and the Screaming Halls are the humane solution to the situation.

The Screaming Halls is an imperfect solution, however. Sometimes, families dump their ill relatives at the Screaming Halls and then, after a short while, stop paying their bills. Other times, they understate the scale of their relative's madness, and Sauli is forced to take regrettable steps to ensure the safety of his staff and other patients.

The aboveground portion of the House of the Clouded Mind is quite pleasant. The rooms are airy, there are communal areas for the residents, and attentive staff see to their charges' needs. Below ground, conditions are much worse. Rooms are cramped, and few patients are ever allowed out of their locked communal chambers.

NOTABLE FOLK

- **Sauli Itkonen** (N middle-aged male human) genuinely wants the best for his "guests." He is a well-meaning but easily duped man. Jolly and fat, Sauli rarely visits the lower halls now, confining his efforts to the wealthiest guests staying aboveground.
- **Aila Eskola** (NE female half-orc thief 3) happily takes money to ensure a patient's increased comfort but rarely passes on the benefits of the enhanced payments. She is Sauli's right-hand woman and a consummate actor, utterly without compassion. She is only here to cream off as much gold for herself as possible.

HOOKS

- **Sauli is a Charlatan:** Rumours, that he is a charlatan and a dark-hearted man, swirl about Sauli Itkonen. When the characters hear them they might feel compelled to investigate the Screaming Halls.
- **What's Going On?** Strange, terrible experiments are wrought upon the Screaming Hall's inmates. Few patients who disappear into its depths are ever seen again. One night, the characters hear faint screaming as they pass by.

H16: SHRINE OF THE UNDERFOLK

Subterranean shrine to the dwarven pantheon

Buried in the cliffs of High City, this dwarven shrine is set deep in a network of natural caves.

Main Level: Low natural tunnels lead a short distance into the cliff from street level before entering a finely crafted temple of stone lit from above by natural light filling a shaft in the ceiling. A small pressure plate at the entrance alerts the Shrine Keeper, Beryl Stonehammer, to visitors, and she usually meets them as they enter the shrine proper.

Intricate statues of the dwarven pantheon stand vigil around the walls of the hexagonal chamber of polished granite and marble comprising the shrine's centrepiece. Five alcoves contain the lifelike statues of the dwarven gods and a small altar. At the top of the room, on thrones of gold-leafed stone, sit Duregal and Varla the father and mother of the dwarven race, with a heavily cloaked dwarf—Grondinn the Wanderer—kneeling before them on the dais. Varla smiles happily while resting an affectionate hand on her husband's hand and looking down into the chamber.

Around the alcoves to the right are Thaun the Forgemaster at work at his anvil, and watching over him is Dalrak Grimtooth, whose thunderaxe—a special weapon wielded by the dwarves of fallen Vongyth—Thaun is repairing. Dalrak's face is set in a scowl.

In the left alcoves stands Vorng Grimm the Trickster laughing happily at Khanoss the Miser as gold spills from his outstretched hands. The last god depicted is better known as Khanoss the Black; he has turned his back on the rest of the gods and clutches a bulging sack of coins to his chest.

Upper Level: A hidden stone door leads up a spiralling set of stairs to a small domicile above the shrine where the Shrine Keeper, Beryl Stonehammer, lives.

NOTABLE FOLK

- **Beryl Stonehammer** (LG female dwarf cleric 5) devoutly tends the shrine and welcomes visitors with a bright and cheery smile. She is small for a dwarven woman, and her striking dark green and gold eyes and amiable personality conceal the fact she is not very clever, something she is aware of and does her best to hide. Young for a temple warden, she has surprised many older dwarves with her knowledge of the pantheon and her unwavering faith. She is adept with her namesake's stone-headed warhammer and usually yells "Break toes!" as she strikes at enemies' feet.

HOOKS

- **Deal with the Vandals:** Recently, the entrance to the shrine has been marred by vandalism wrought by a local gang; Beryl wants this dealt with and asks any dwarves among the characters for help.
- **Teach Me:** Beryl seeks someone to show her how to write in Common and to help her explore the city above.

H17: THE LOW SHARD

Subterranean meeting place set about an unbreakable rock

Set in the centre of a large cavern, this huge spear of dark rock is embedded deep into the rocky bottom of a natural pool. The Shard is of some kind of unnatural rock. The original builders of the sewers tried to break down the Shard, but it proved to be impervious to their tools. Now the cavern in which it stands is a popular meeting spot for people to discuss business or catch up with friends. At night, it is a popular meeting place for courting well-to-do couples.

A stone gate wards access to the Shard, and visitors must pay the Gatekeeper to enter the cool tunnel beyond. Two hundred steps lead down a long, lantern-lit, winding natural stone passageway to the chamber holding the Shard.

Anduin's Tower: Built above the arching stone gate to the tunnels, this squat stone tower is home to Anduin and his stray cats. Untidy and infested with fleas and a growing number of kittens, the tower is slowly falling into disrepair.

The Pool and the Shard: Here, people meet and chat in the chamber's many alcoves. A walkway of planks and railings surrounds the Shard, resting just above the bubbling dark green pool, wherein the flickering light of many lanterns is reflected and magnified.

The shard resists all magical effects and any tools striking it, sometimes with extremely unexpected results, such as electrical shocks or a low humming vibration that goes on for days, giving visitors a headache. Due to these irritations, experimentation on the Low Shard is outlawed.

THE OFFERING

- **Admission:** 1 sp.

NOTABLE FOLK

- **Shardkeeper Alduin** (NG old male human wizard 3) shuffles about the Shard, inspecting it with a thick-lensed magnifying glass. Originally tasked with divining its purpose and origin, Alduin is now the caretaker of the cavern. He is a bent-backed old man.
- **Gatekeeper Gandin Volaire** (NE male human thief 2) poses as a barely literate buffoon. This clever thief works as a lamplighter in the cavern and collects the admission fees, half of which he secretly pockets for himself. He lives in a small room beside the gates.

HOOKS

- **I Need a Guard:** A local merchant, Sauli Rinne (LN male human), needs a guard as he discusses a business deal with an unscrupulous trader.
- **Subterranean Pick Pocket:** Many visitors have complained of a pick-pocket targeting their meetings at the Shard and have begun to look for other places to conduct business. Alduin wants someone to solve this problem for him.

H18: THE DARK MARKET

Subterranean marketplace for illicit and exotic goods

The light from countless red and green lamps struggles to penetrate the dark of this rambling, incense-filled tent city filling a cavern below High City. Narrow paths twist between stalls of exotic goods from far-off lands, and a freak show of entertainers and shopkeepers call to passers-by, offering goods and services not available in the sunlit city above.

The Dark Guard is an elite group of 20 or so mercenaries who patrol the market to dissuade thievery. They have a reputation for brutality and are the subject of disdainful discussion among Languard's elite.

Main Floor: Tents of red and black, embellished with bright signs, comprise most of the market. Exotic incense burns at the head of each of the narrow alleys in intricately crafted clay pots shaped like marvellous fantastical creatures. It is from these pots the alleys get their name.

The Way of the Dragon: Here, the stalls exclusively sell herbs, spices, and dried goods from far-off lands. Several illegal forms of pipeweed are available, but only to trusted buyers or those with excessive amounts of coin.

The Way of the Lion: The traders here deal in exotic weapons and armour; this narrow alley is always popular with nobles, bravados and adventurers.

The Way of the Eagle: This circular alley in the centre of the market surrounds a huge, multi-roomed tent bounded by smaller stalls. Inside the tents, exotic silks and satins from faraway lands are sold at exorbitant prices alongside pure white lace of linen or silk. Some of the wares even have gold and silver threads woven into their design.

The Harpies' Nest: Tucked away in the back corner of the market, this drinking establishment provides food and drink to shoppers and a welcome break from the market's hubbub. Set aside from the rest of the market behind brightly covered wagons, beautiful women in diaphanous silks and half-naked men sing from a raised stage, entertaining customers and drawing in people from all over the market.

NOTABLE FOLK

- **Fazar Al'Shera** (N male human) runs the Harpies' Nest and employs many women to wander the market selling his spiced drinks and food. He is a small, swarthy man.
- **Maeve Dranagar** (N female dwarf fighter 2) sells weapons and armour crafted in Don Galir's subterranean forges. Her stall is the only grey tent in the market and is one of the most popular on the Way of the Lion. She also repairs damaged weapons and armour.

HOOKS

- **Dark Guard Suspicious:** A Dark Guard grows suspicious of the party and demands they leave the market.
- **Looking For Something Exotic:** If the characters are searching for an exotic weapon or suchlike, someone tells them they can find it at the Dark Market.

H19: TUNNEL OF SHADES

Part-flooded tunnel claimed by smugglers and pirates

Centuries ago, to stave off a series of riots sparked by a terrible harvest and resultant widespread hunger and unemployment, Duchess Aelliah Nenonen II decided to build a tunnel under the Svart. She reasoned the project would provide both a second useful link between the city's two halves and widespread employment for years to come, which in turn would quell the populace's riotous proclivities.

The project was a disaster. Although the duchess engaged a small cadre of master dwarven miners and masons to lead the project, the ground on the southern side was unsuitable for deep tunnelling, and the human miners' efforts were lacklustre. Drunkenness, discontent among the workers and accidents marred the project's early stages. After four years of stop-start construction, the project was abandoned after a final near-catastrophic flood drowned over two-score miners.

But that doesn't mean the tunnel is abandoned. Much of the tunnel under the river is only partially flooded and can be navigated by shallow-bottomed skiff or raft or by swimming. Additionally, several raised side tunnels—originally built as refuges for the miners and storage areas—radiating out from the main thoroughfare remain dry.

On the north side, the tunnel entrance is hidden under a large waterside warehouse controlled by Einar Teuvo, a seemingly wealthy and upstanding merchant. Einar is anything but and has contacts with the human (and inhuman) pirates of Deksport (a pirate town lying to the west). He numbers orcs and goblins among his servants, although they lurk in the tunnel and rarely, if ever, walk Languard's streets.

NOTABLE FOLK

- **Einar Teuvo** (LE male human fighter 3/wizard 3) deals in anything—stolen goods, drugs or even slaves. He is wealthy, self-centred and utterly ruthless. One of Languard's wealthiest commoners, he presents a reputable front but is anything but respectable. He is the Deksport pirates' main contact in Languard.
- **Thokk** (CE male giant orc fighter 5) oversees the goblins and orcs working in the Tunnel of Shades. He is Einar's chief enforcer and a savage, but cunning, warrior.

HOOKS

- **An Orc? In Languard:** Abroad late one night, a character stumbling home from a carouse bumps into a cloaked stranger. As the burly stranger hurries away, the character gets a look at his face—the stranger looks to be a full-blooded orc!
- **Nefarious Rowboats:** The characters overhear talk of rowboats seen in the dead of night in the waters near a certain waterside warehouse in High City. The implication of the overheard conversation is that someone is up to no good.

H20: CHAPEL OF THE MAIDEN OF DEATH

Abandoned church dedicated to Tuonetar and her knights

Standing on Abbey Road, the Chapel of the Maiden of Death has been abandoned for almost 200 years. Originally a small church dedicated to Conn, the Father, it was reconsecrated to Conn's daughter, Tuonetar, the sullen-eyed Maiden of Death, when the Knights of the Black Swan were founded in 384 NR at the start of Languard's Haunted Years. The chapel was an important place for the knights—here, they could pray and seek guidance from their mistress.

The chapel was abandoned after the knighthood was honourably disbanded in 387 NR. Since then, it has stood silent and (mostly) undisturbed as a monument to, and the final resting place of, the knights who lost their lives seeking an end to Languard's Haunted Years.

The chapel is a small affair with an ornate stained glass window on its south wall. The window depicts, in muted colours, Tuonetar, standing before two kneeling knights. A crypt lies beneath the church; it holds the remains of a dozen or so knights.

HOOKS

- **Ghostly Knights of the Haunted Years:** The characters are wandering High City's streets at night. Perhaps they are returning from seeing another patron, staggering between taverns while carousing or engaged in other business. As they pass the chapel, one of the group, the most perceptive or least drunk, notices an odd, flickering light coming through one of its grimy stainless windows. Intrigued, they investigate. If the characters don't notice the flickering light, they bump into a drunk beggar, Veini Sotijalo (N male human), who, in a loud and slightly hysterical voice, tells them that ghostly knights lurk in the chapel and that they will soon emerge to slay the living.
- **Secret Tunnel:** Some believe the chapel is not really abandoned and that it is actually a front for a gang of thieves busy digging a tunnel under the city wall so they can smuggle goods and even people into and out of Languard. The characters overhear two High City residents discussing this or are approached by a concerned citizen who asks them to investigate.
- **Strange Doings at the Chapel:** Wan lights and faint sounds have been observed coming from inside the Chapel of the Maiden of Death over the last week or so, and the locals are getting nervous.

MORE ABOUT THE CHAPEL

To learn more about the Chapel of the Maiden of Death, refer to the Languard Backdrop *Forsaken Chapel of the Maiden of Death*. The Knights of the Black Swan also appear in the Sacred Blood storyline.

H21: TENHUNEN MANSION

Shunned and crumbling mansion once home to a vampire

This once opulent mansion had the opulent trappings of a palace, but it concealed a terrible secret—its lord was the master vampire Kaarlo Tenhunen.

Kaarlo Tenhunen first came to Languard in 325 NR. At first, he was subtle and slowly built a small group of devoted (living) minions to do his bidding and bring him food. Kaarlo sought long-lived, pliable servants, preferring elves and their kin, and bound them to his service with promises of immortality after 150 years of service.

As Kaarlo's hunger and appetite grew, though, so did rumours of a merciless and voracious predator dwelling somewhere in the city. In 473 NR, the Fellowship of the Light discovered his lair and drove him from the city. He fled to the dismal swamp-village of Thornhill but was slain there later that year.

Unbeknownst to all, however, some of Kaarlo's loyal minions survived his fall and remained in the city to prepare for his inevitable return. They still await him to this day, lurking in a hidden cellar below the mansion and emerging to sate their own lusts and unnatural proclivities in the city.

Terrible stories now hang over the abandoned, crumbling and ignored mansion, which has stood empty for over a century. It moulders amid a dense stand of tall trees that have grown tall and gloomy, casting the once opulent manor into near-perpetual shade. While no one has dared enter the manor in decades, virtually every High City resident knows of the place and its sinister, blood-soaked history.

The manor is a large, rambling three-storey structure with extensive cellars (and extensive deeper hidden cellars). An air of decrepitude and decay hangs over the seemingly abandoned mansion, but at least two of the vampire's servants dwell within amid the darkness and await their master's return—and the fulfilment of his long-ago promise.

HOOKS

- **Missing Child:** A child goes missing in High City, and talk invariably turns to the old abandoned Tenhunen Mansion. All remember the story of Kaarlo Tenhunen and his unholy, depraved hungers.
- **The Vampire's Demesne:** A character overhears two citizens talking about the abandoned Tenhunen Mansion and its former master, the vampire Kaarlo Tenhunen.

MORE ABOUT KAARLO TENHUNEN

To learn more about Kaarlo Tenhunen, refer to *Forbidden Isle of the Nightstalkers*, an adventure set in and around the dreary and dismal backwater swamp-village of Thornhill.

T2: THE FATHER'S HALL

Gigantic cathedral dedicated to Conn

The most impressive of Languard's landmarks, The Father's Hall, is an immense structure—perhaps the largest in all Ashlar. The main body of the massive building is 70 feet high; the cathedral dwarfs the finely appointed townhouses of the wealthy and the various other places of worship scattered throughout the city. Dedicated to Conn (LN greater god of community, family and rulership), the cathedral is not only a place of worship but also the city's law court. Here, the Lawgiver's priests sit in judgment upon those accused of all but the most heinous of crimes.

With an impressive stepped entrance dominated by carved statues of Conn in his various guises, the cathedral comprises four separate law courts arrayed around a central, cavernous hall of worship. It stands in the middle of a walled compound containing an almshouse, a prison for those awaiting trial, housing for its priests, staff, visiting pilgrims and so on. Beneath it, extensive catacombs pierce the earth. Their full extent is unknown to all but the dour priests of Tuonetar who tend them, but it is nevertheless a matter of conjecture, not least among Languard's thieves who idly wonder what burial goods may lie interred within.

Hundreds of folk live, work at and visit The Father's Hall. Most are nothing more than ordinary folk—cooks, labourers and so on. Scores of minor priestlings dwell within.

NOTABLE FOLK

- **High Priestess Hannele Auvuinen** (LN middle-aged female human cleric 9 [Conn]) is the ultimate arbiter of Conn's wisdom in Ashlar and is arguably the second most powerful person in the duchy. Such is so powerful that she can recall the worthy from Death's domain.
- **Nuluani Sehiateir** (LN female half-elf cleric [Conn] 6) approaches middle age and believes she would make an excellent high priestess when the time comes. To this end, she has built a network of alliances within the clergy and is politically influential both in the cathedral and the surrounding city. A skilled communicator and orator, she is one of the most well-known of the Hall's clergy. She has dwelled in the Father's Hall for almost 40 years.
- **Teuvo Eskola** (LN middle-aged male human cleric [Conn] 6) often clashes with the more liberal Nuluani Sehiateir over punishments for wrongdoers. One of Conn's Arbiters, Teuvo is a stern, rigid fellow obsessed with the rule of law as written in *Law and Duty*.

HOOKS

- **Hard-up Adventurer:** Aapro Vaino (LG male human fighter 6) needs funds to remove an embarrassing curse afflicting his nether region. He offers to sell a character his +1 *longsword*.
- **The High Priestess Abroad:** Hannele Auvuinen walks slowly through the cathedral. Three officious acolytes flank her to keep petitioners, such as adventurers, at bay.

T3: THE GREAT FORGE

Abarin's church—a centre of industry, commerce and invention

The centre of Abarin's faith in Ashlar, the Great Forge, is a buzzing hive of industry and commerce. Here, the Great Craftsman's faithful—reputedly the most skilled artisans in Ashlar—work at their forges or toil over their workbenches in search of new creations and inventions. While most such folk have a shop or workplace in the city, they congregate here to share news, stories and new techniques. Scores of folk live, work at or visit the Great Forge.

The clamour arising from the Great Forge and clouds of smoke often belching into the air make the residences near the church less salubrious and desirable than other locations on the Svart's northern bank.

An extensive network of underground storerooms lies beneath the temple. Here are stored not just the mundane engines of industry—charcoal, wood, coal and so on—but also more esoteric and valuable materials, including—it is rumoured—small stocks of mithral and adamantite, which the clergy sometimes make available to devout worshippers. Complicated mechanical traps, magical wards and merciless clockwork guardians protect the restricted areas.

NOTABLE FOLK

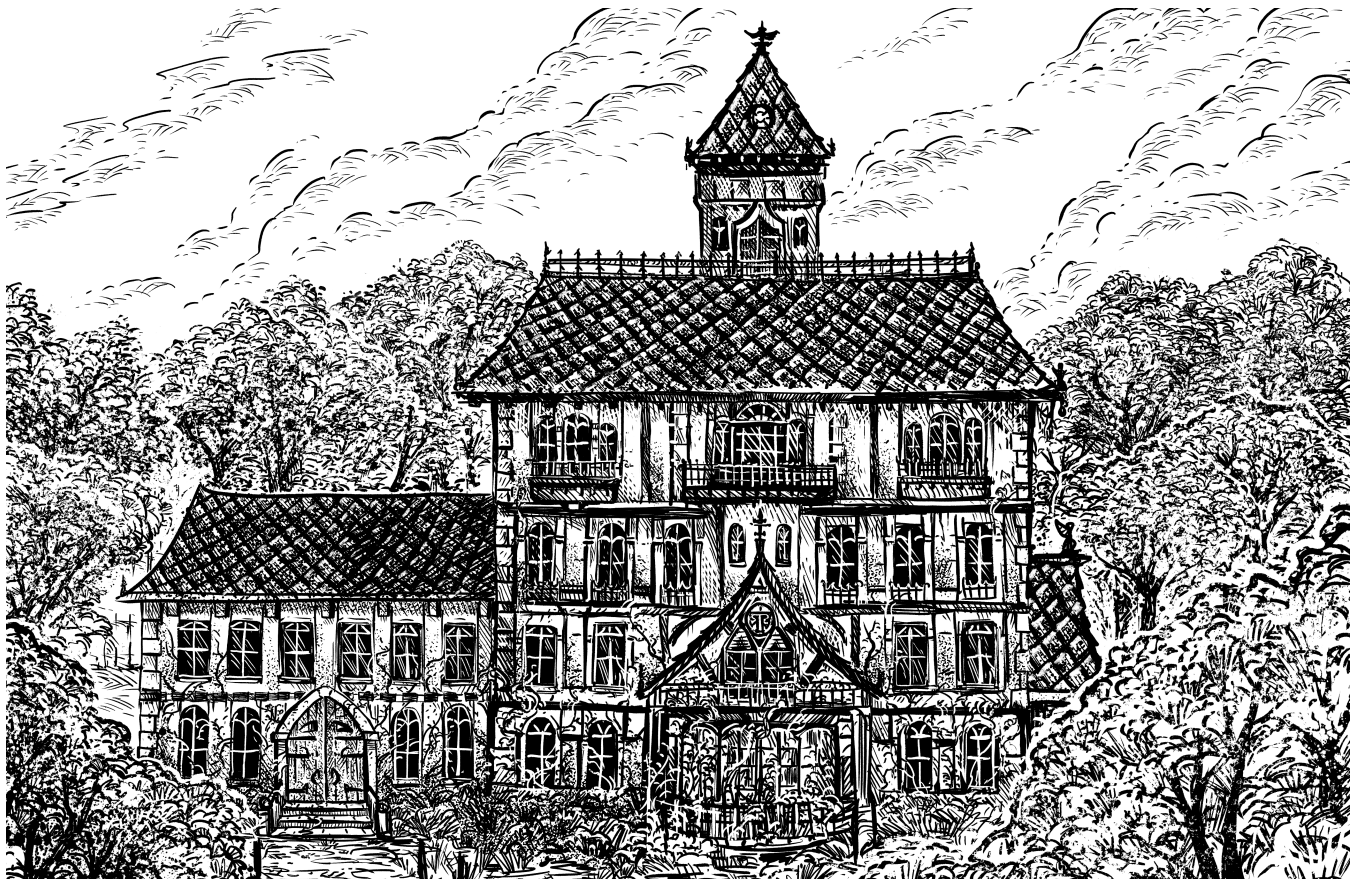
- **High Priest Heimo Karppanen** (N male human cleric [Abarin] 6) is renowned as a weaponsmith and armourer. He is also fascinated with crafting elaborate clocks.

Examples of his work adorn several nobles' homes and other notable buildings, such as the Dreaming Spires. His work is expensive but sought after; consequently, there is a long waiting list for his services.

- **Janaela Vonothvar** (LN female half-elf cleric [Abarin] 3) is obsessed with the movement of the planets and the influence they have upon the world. She has constructed a giant orrery in her private workshop. Pale-skinned—from long hours spent toiling over her mechanism—she only emerges to speak with other learned craftsmen and women or to visit the library at the Dreaming Spires.

HOOKS

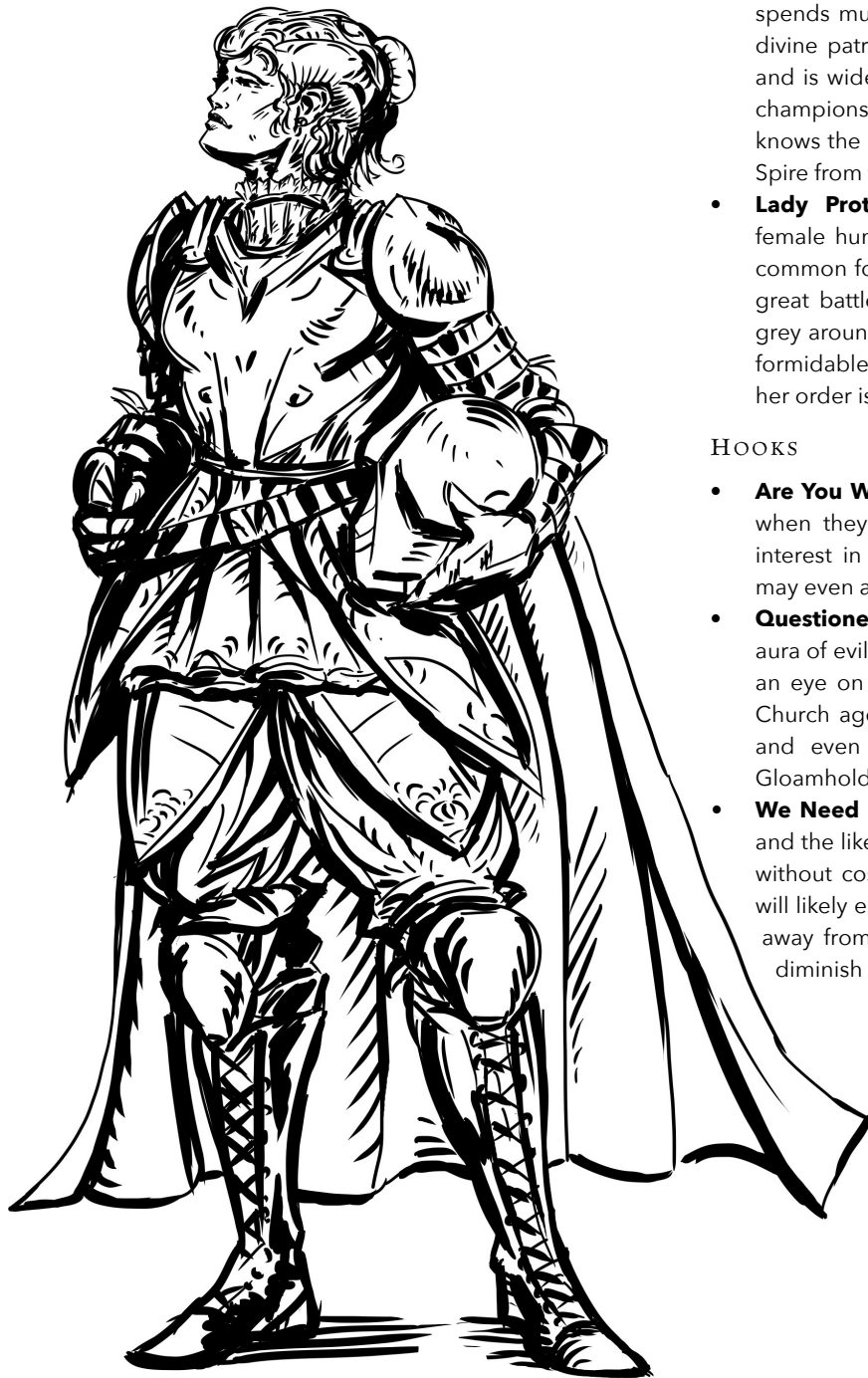
- **Janaela's Obsession:** The party has recovered the twisted remnant of a small orrery. While trying to sell it, they hear of Janaela Vonothvar's interest (or perhaps obsession) in such objects.
- **Mithral Required:** A priest requires a small quantity of mithral for a special work. A character supplying the metal will receive preferential treatment in return.
- **We Need Magic Weapons:** The party has encountered an unusually tough creature resistant to mundane weapons. Following rumours, the church possesses a small supply of magical weapons—or weapons crafted from unusual metals—the characters come here to purchase the weapons. Unfortunately, they are not for sale. Instead, Heimo Karppanen requests a favour.



T4: WATCHER'S SPIRE

Heavily fortified temple dedicated to Darlen

The home of Darlen's faithful in Languard, the Watcher's Spire—also known as Champion's Abbey—is a heavily fortified temple complex in the north of the city. Girded by 20-foot-high walls—and part of Languard's city wall in places—it is an integral part of the city's defences. Here dwell Darlen's militaristic followers, including a large contingent of the Order of the Watch Eternal, in a perpetual state of readiness.



The complex's main feature is a stout, massively fortified donjon upon which stands a slender watch tower fully 50 feet high. From its battlemented roof, sentinels watch Languard's western seaward approaches.

Much smaller than The Father's Hall (location T2), the relative size of the two compounds speaks volumes about the two sects' political power and influence. While Darlen's faithful are ever-watchful against evil's rise, they have little influence over the commoners' day-to-day life, many of whom see them as an unwanted irrelevance.

NOTABLE FOLK

- **Irina Vitikka** (LG female human paladin [Darlen] 5) spends much time at prayer, waiting for a sign from her divine patron. She is a rising star among the Darlenites and is widely acknowledged as one of Darlen's greatest champions of recent years. She is well-travelled and knows the duchy well. She has just returned to Watcher's Spire from the fortified monastery of Tor Abbey.
- **Lady Protector Varma Nikkonen** (LG middle-aged female human paladin 5/cleric [Darlen] 3) chafes at the common folk's opinion of the order and yearns for some great battle or test to prove her followers' worth: Now grey around the temples, she is a skilled diplomat, and a formidable warrior, beloved by the common folk (even if her order is not).

HOOKS

- **Are You Worthy?** The characters encounter Irina Vitikka when they visit the church. The lady paladin takes an interest in the characters and, if they are suitable folk, may even accompany them on a quest.
- **Questioned by the Order:** All too aware of the lurking aura of evil pervading Gloamhold's halls, the faithful keep an eye on adventurers, frequently plumbing its depths. Church agents question the adventurers on their return and even preach to them to keep them safe from Gloamhold's encroaching darkness.
- **We Need Help:** The party needs help—perhaps healing and the like—after a delve into Gloamhold. Aid will not be without cost—even for a fellow adherent. Such payment will likely entail some form of service that keeps the party away from Gloamhold, so its influence over them may diminish with time.

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