

Dark Obelisk: Berünncoorte



Players' Guide



A Fantasy Roleplaying Adventure
by J. Evans Payne



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FlexTale

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Thanks

To my friends from middle school, who embraced this silly nerdy hobby as a welcome escape from the pressures everyone endures in that environment.

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And finally, to **Endzeitgeist** (endzeitgeist.com), for reviewing indie RPG products with a passion that surpasses that of most those who author such products, and whose high standards, critical eye, thoughtful thoroughness, and exceptional writing are an inspiration to all in the hobby.

Special Thanks: Kickstarter Backers

Thank you for believing in me, when all I had to prove myself was an idea, a blurb, a handful of maps, and a dream.

The product you hold in your hands—or store on your hard drive—is a direct result of your faith, and support. I can't thank you enough.

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Dedication

This book is hereby dedicated to my wife, who, despite my predilection for doing stuff like this, has stuck with me for more than twenty years.


Now *that’s* dedication.

Quick Start: So Your Game Begins in 10 Minutes


Jumping Right In


There's lots of detail in this book. But sometimes, you just want the executive summary, due to time or attention-span limitations.

Where Are We?

The entire adventure of **Dark Obelisk: Berinncorte** takes place in a city called  **Berinncorte**.

It's a typical fantasy city of 100-200 citizens and visitors. For its size, it hosts a number of amenities, such as a **Library**, **Textiles Shop**, and **Butcher**.

Berinncorte is ruled by its Mayor,  **Dominika Symms**. Her estate and offices may be found in the north-center of town.

There are two  **churches** in town: One *Lawful Neutral* (**Zugul Church**, in the northeast), and one *Chaotic Neutral* (**Sheergath Temple**, in the northwest). There's conflict between the two factions.


A city map is available on page


Why Are We Here?

That's up to you as a player, your character as a PC, your party as an adventuring group, and perhaps most significantly, to your GM as a guiding force.

There are lots of reasons for an adventurer of any race, class, and background to seek **Berinncorte** out; several options are described herein.


What Do We Know?

There is some basic information in the form of  **Rumors & Lore** (p 37) that any PC would know.

In addition, your PC would realistically have some knowledge of the various  **Factions** (p 26) in play within and outside the City.

Who is Here?

There are more than 50 NPCs to be found, each with their own backstory, personality... and, in most cases, Quests associated with them.

Some of the most prominent members of society are described in the  **Dramatis Personae** section (p 39).

What's Going On?

Here are some good starting points to get the action going quickly:


- The city's  **Cistern** is long abandoned, and nobody seems to be aware of it being on the map... even when they are selling you the map that they themselves drew!
- Tensions between the two churches are mounting; nearly everyone in town has an opinion on the matter, and the staff of the churches themselves have an even stronger perspective.
- If all else fails, the city's **Mayor** may have some tasks that need doing... perfect pick-up work for a group of adventurers!

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About Infinium Game Studio

Founded in 2015, **Infinium Game Studio (IGS)** came about as the result of a simple mission: Make shared storytelling games easier and more fun for both players and referees alike.

Our vision is that **Infinium Game Studio** empowers referees, players, and the industry entire with innovative gaming tools; high-quality, deeply-designed products; and creative takes on established paradigms.

Values and Key Differences

Plays Well With Everyone

IGS products are engineered to be usable by both novice and veteran gaming groups. As a result, they must contain everything a novice GM might need to react quickly to his/her play group.

Comprehensive and Immersive

Each **IGS** product should “feel real” and come with everything the referee might require to make the setting, context, environment, or other content come alive.

Everything You Need

The ideal adventure should contain practically everything you need to run the game, except the core rulebook. Even the most skilled GM wastes time looking things up in multiple books. It’s so exceedingly rare that an adventure contain all of the crunch and fluff necessary to run it.

Maps: Where Are We, Again?

A picture is worth a thousand words... and also, a thousand seconds of prep time. Visually appealing, easy-to-use, and extensive Maps are an essential part of any shared-storytelling experience.

Pervasive Maps

Don’t put a building on a map if I can’t go inside it.

Prepared for Anything

In a gaming session, a good referee must be prepared for the PCs to explore any aspect of the content. All too often, an otherwise outstanding adventure will fail to provide for a major percentage of its content. If there are twenty buildings in a town, but maps for only two of them--well, it’s fairly apparent where the Big Bad is going to be holed up! Not every map will be riddled with secret passages, custom random encounters, and combat, but there should be something of interest in every building. Otherwise, it shouldn’t be there!

Thoroughness: But What If...?

It’s possible to have a 16-page adventure that’s wonderful and exciting. It’s also possible to have a 255-page sourcebook be boring and repetitive. Striking the right balance between over-padding and under-describing is challenging, but an important part of what we do at **IGS**.

Flexible

Each product should be usable on its own, completely out of context; as a start to a completely new campaign; as part of the “intended” Adventure Path or associated suite of **IGS** products; or to insert into an existing ongoing campaign.

Reusable

No **IGS** product is “one and done” by design.

FlexTale and Comprehensive Design enable this flexibility and reusability.

Production Quality

Our goal is to produce world-class products with high production values.

FlexTale

What is FlexTale?

FlexTale™ is an attempt to make roleplaying game adventure content dynamic and interesting. A module created using **FlexTale** is different each time it is run. Treasure, monsters, plot activities, NPC backstories and character arcs, and various actions and plot elements can all occur differently.

Differences can occur using the roll of dice, or the GM can simply choose the content that s/he prefers or feels would be most engaging to the play group.



There are two ways that **FlexTale** can help make an adventure dynamic: **Dynamic Content** and **Dynamic Plots**.

Dynamic Content

“**Dynamic content**” is a **FlexTable** term that refers to anything in an adventure that can be modified. Whether one NPC is in love with another, or who murdered the vagrant in the alley behind the town pub—**FlexTale** dynamic content makes it possible to have several explanations or paths through a story.

Why This Matters

There’s lots of ways this approach matters to the GM herself.

GM materials (e.g., adventure books and related materials used by the GM to run adventures and campaigns) describe the tools used to give **FlexTale** its dynamic capabilities.

As a player, you shouldn’t notice much of a difference at first. The GM will still present things to you, you’ll respond, and together, your gaming group will tell a story.

It’s just that this story might turn out differently, depending on what you do.

Some non-**FlexTale** adventures have multiple endings, so this is hardly a unique feature in and of itself. It’s the complexity, the interrelatedness, and the depth of options that give **FlexTale** adventures and campaigns their dynamic nature.

Conclusions for Players

All of this, simply to take away a straightforward realization:

What you do matters.

More specifically, things might be different, depending on a number of factors.

Show up to a bar in the morning, and different NPCs might be there than you might find later in the evening.

Talk to an NPC after having slain a villain, and she may have a different reaction to your requests than she did last week.

Ask for help at a local church, and you may find a cold reception, depending on what you’ve been up to recently!

Introduction

What Is This Book?

This book is intended to be any or all of the following. These are listed in no particular order.

- An introduction to the city of **Berinncorte**, for players and PCs alike, as preparation prior to the first gaming session in which your PC encounters the village and its denizens.
- A reference, for use during the adventure, to provide the player (i.e., you) with information your character (your PC) would realistically have in-game.
- **Inspiration** for roleplaying, in that it provides a bunch of content from which you can design your character's motives, backstory, and other "hooks" into the adventure. This will make it easier for your GM to help tell and guide the story, and for you to act out your character.

In short, how you use this book is really dependent upon you and your needs as a player.

Audience: Players, Not the GM... But...

The **Players Guide** to some adventures or campaign settings is sparse, thin, and to the point. Not so, this book, and for several good reasons.

First, conciseness is not in the style of **Infinium Game Studios**. So there's that.

Second, and perhaps much more importantly, it will help gameplay for the players to understand as much as possible about the adventure's context, *without* risk of spoilers to the actual plot and events of the story.

The more the players roleplay the involvement of their PCs with intent, the smoother things will go; though the GM is at the helm, every participant in the gaming group has a responsibility to help make sure everyone has fun!

Notes & Conventions

Below please find some visual conventions used in this document.

Obstacles

Doors, locks, and other obstacles that don't necessarily incorporate a trap. You'll find these prefaced by little brown symbols like this one:


Locked Secret Wooden Door (example)

5" thick; **Hardness** 5; **hp** 60; **Perception** DC 16; **Break** DC 20; **Disable Device** DC 18

Skill Checks

Whether it's a single, simple check, or a series of checks in escalating difficulty, skill checks may be an opportunity to either avoid disaster or discover what might otherwise remain hidden and ignored. Such chances are indicated via

yellow symbols as follows:

Some PCs may have insight into the Blacksmith's wealth; make a  DC 12 **Knowledge (Profession)** check.



Skill Challenges



Skill checks are typically a single roll, often made in secret by the GM. A **skill challenge** is usually a bit more involved than a simple check—or there's simply more at stake. Either way, a challenge is a more formal, and explicit, exercise, intentionally engaged in by the players.

You'll find a skill challenge in a yellow box such as this:

Falling Timbers (example)

First Check: DC 18 **Perception** (16 if aflame) to notice the falling building; success cancels subsequent checks.

Second Check: DC 15 **Acrobatics** to avoid the debris; failure inflicts  **2d6** points of crushing damage plus a possible  **1d8** points of fire damage; success cancels subsequent checks.

Third Check: DC 12 **Strength** to dislodge one's self from the debris; failure inflicts  **1d4** points of crushing damage plus a possible  **1d8** points of fire damage; success quits the challenge.

Rewards

Treasure, swords, gems, keys, filthy lucre—this is the stuff your players are really gunning for, right? Well, that, plus a good time with friends. And maybe, if you're lucky, a good, engaging session of shared storytelling that you'll all remember for a long time. At any rate, rewards are shown with blue boxes like this one:

Treasure Chest (example)

+1 *dagger*; 15 pp; two **diamond necklaces**, each worth 75 gp.

Traps

Hey, blame the rogue—who in all likelihood is suffering the brunt of the trap s/he either failed to detect, and/or to disarm. Whether it becomes a bragging right, a bargaining chip, or an epitaph, traps of all manner are shown in a purple box like this one.

Acid Needle Trap (CR 1) (example)

Type Mechanical; **Trigger** Touch; **Reset** Repair

Perception DC 18; **Disable Device** DC 17

Effect Atk +2 melee and melee touch (1d2+1d8 acid)


Items

Be they simple items, magical items, rods, staves, potions,

books, or something wondrous, items share a common block of information like the following... note that this format is used for all manner of non-weapon, non-armor equipment and usable items, both magical and mundane:

Adventurer's Chronicle (example)

Value 50 gp; **Weight** 1 lb.; **Materials** paper; **Nature** non-magical; **Aura** none; **Slot** usable; **CL** n/a

This book is chock full of useful information. When used as a reference (an action that typically takes  **1d4** full rounds of searching the text), an *adventurer's chronicle* grants a **+2** competency bonus on a specific **Knowledge** check for which the book is designed.

Construction Requirements means to assemble a physical book; the author must have at least **10** ranks in the skill for which you are designing the book; **Cost** 30 gp

NPCs and Monsters

Crunch time! You'll find monster stat summaries and full-crunch blocks in red boxes like this one.

Berinncorte Militia (example)

CR ½; **XP** 200; **TN** Male or Female Human Fighter 1

hp 11; **AC** 12; **Fort** +3, **Ref** +0, **Will** -1

Init +0; **Speed** 30 ft.; **Senses** Perception +2

Str 14, **Dex** 11, **Con** 12, **Int** 9, **Wis** 9, **Cha** 10

BAB +1; **CMB** +3; **CMD** 13

Melee light mace +3 (1d6+2)

Feats Alertness, Light Armor Proficiency, Combat Reflexes

Skills Climb +1, Perception +2, Sense Motive +2, Swim +1

Special Qualities Bonus Feat, Bonus Feats, Skilled

Possessions light mace; leather armor

PC Replacement Opportunities

No way around it: **Dark Obelisk: Berinncorte** is a gruesome, brutal, and challenging adventure, particularly for low-level parties. Unless the PCs are exceptionally fortunate with their dice, or if you take the most expedient route to the adventure's conclusion, it's possible that you will lose some party members along the way.

Each gaming group has its own perspective on what to do about PC demise. Many GMs enforce death as a consequence of decision-making, and if your beloved PC dies, so be it; roll up another character and start over again. Other groups are more in the storytelling aspect of things; lenient GMs will take every measure necessary to make sure that every single PC makes it through, no matter how bone-headed their decision-making or horrible their luck.

If one or more PCs die in the course of this adventure, the GM has some options. You may of course enforce the death, and either have the player roll up a brand-new first-level character, or create a character of a level matching the lowest current level of surviving party members.

Alternately, sprinkled throughout the adventure are **PC Re-**

placement Opportunities, denoted like this:

Replacement: Dimplegruffe (example)

The blacksmith is an excellent replacement for Fighters, Barbarians, Paladins, or other martial characters. Please refer to page 43 for her detailed information.

These opportunities are chances for the specified NPC to be “taken over” by the player who lost a PC. This way, the player doesn't have to slow down play creating a new character, and the party can keep going.

This should be viewed as an opportunity for roleplaying: the GM may consider showing the player the detailed information for the NPC they are assuming control over, and the player should be encouraged to act as though their new PC had that background, secrets, and so on.

The gaming group is encouraged to roleplay the “taken over” NPC as though s/he still had their place in society and the greater scope of the adventure, and **Adventure Path**. For example, if a player takes over an NPC who hates a rival NPC, then subsequent interactions between the “taken over” PC and that rival should reflect that animosity in the player's roleplaying.

Variable Challenge

Dark Obelisk: Berinncorte was designed initially as an adventure for four to six first-level PCs. However, one of the things that has frustrated many GMs is that adventures are almost universally designed in this manner: for a specific level of challenge, or at most, a very narrow range of PC levels (e.g., “4th to 6th level”).

There are many advantages to this approach, not least of which being the guarantee that all challenges (monsters, traps, and NPCs) are calibrated very specifically to that narrow zone of difficulty.

The drawback, of course, is the narrowness of that range. GMs wishing to run a module designed for 10th-level PCs, for example, are either flat out of luck, or have to do some fairly intensive work to scale the content up or down to better align with the PCs she is playing with.

The degree to which a particular GM, or even gaming group, enjoys perusing and tweaking game statistics—“crunch”, in common parlance—varies, of course. Some GMs love crunch, and spend a majority of their prep time creating and refining their challenges to ensure the crunch is accurate and appropriately challenging. On the other end of the spectrum are “by the seat of their pants” GMs, who ignore crunch almost entirely, rarely referring to stat blocks lest it distract from the focus of storytelling.

This adventure, and in a broader sense, **Infinium Game Studio**, does not want to judge as to which approach is “better” or “worse”. What matters is that you have fun and enjoy yourselves!

However, we do want to make it as easy as possible to play this adventure no matter what level your PCs happen to be.

Experience Points and Reward Nuggets

There are many ways of calculating, dispersing, and account-

ing for experience points (XP) in a Pathfinder gaming group. What follows is a method that I have used over the decades, and it's been a lot of fun. Although it may not be for every gaming group—your mileage may vary—it's an interesting spin on traditional methods, and the approach may work for you.

Whether this approach works for you or not, however, it's worth reading through, because all of the Quests in this adventure denote XP awards using this method.

I Want Candy

In the author's early days as a GM, I tossed out candies as rewards to the players when their characters did a good job. Candy could be distributed for defeating a kobold, picking a lock, dodging an attack, convincing the castle guard to look the other way, or any of the ordinary actions whose consequence typically involve experience points.

However, I also gave out candy for good roleplaying, convincing dialogue, outstanding (or horrid) emulation of accents, meta-jokes about the circumstances of the game that were truly hilarious, suggesting things to me as the GM or other players that took the story in a new direction, or—and I have to be honest, here—helping me as a GM.

My general rule was, if I forgot a rule, and you pointed it out in a way that didn't make you seem like a jerk, then you got rewarded. This could be something as innocuous as reminding me that your elf ranger's longbow was firing +1 arrows, or as significant as reminding me that a certain piece of equipment granted a reroll to a critically-failed outcome.

Generally speaking, candy rewards were given out in my games for anything—literally, anything—that made the gaming experience more fun. Doorbell rings, and the pizza's here, and your character is tied up in the cyclops' cave, so you know you won't be doing anything for a few minutes, and so you go and grab the grub, and tip the delivery guy—that's worth a candy. Tell a funny joke—that's worth a candy. Save the life of your comrade, only to drug him unconscious and use him as a prop, in the manner of Weekend at Bernie's—okay, that's a little ghoulish, but it's in character, and amazing, so, yeah, that's three candies right there.

Candy as XP

Candy is awesome, though for one of my gaming group, who was a diabetic, it was a controlled and mindful awesomeness. But even the most free-wheeling player wants their character to level up. I get it.

At the end of each gaming session, my players would “turn in” their candy wrappers. Each wrapper represented something gone right, a good deed done—and therefore it was converted to XP. Generally speaking, no matter what the PCs' levels, no matter what the adventure, 10 candy wrappers meant you advanced to the next level. If you fell short—let's say, you only got 6—then it meant you were closer for next gaming session (i.e., 4 needed in this example).

As years went on, it became a bit less practical and/or healthy to urge my friends to consume at least ten pieces of candy every time we got together, and so the approach was tweaked. Instead of candy wrappers, gold stars, or spare dice in a particular color, or Warhammer 40,000 figurines. The point was, you got a token, a “nugget” of reward, which was later converted into XP.

Rules lawyers hate this method, and I respect that. But even the most hardened min/maxer eventually recognizes that this approach, despite its drawbacks, keeps play flowing quite quickly, and keeps everyone focused on what I believe should be the goal of any roleplaying game session.

Namely: to have fun!


Reward Stars: The Formalized Approach

Whether or not you appreciated the above anecdote, or the approach it describes, it's required reading, because now we'll get to how it applies to **Dark Obelisk: Berinncorte**.

As with everything else in this book, the GM is encouraged to completely ignore or change this approach if you feel it would make it work better for your gaming group.

The following represent opportunities to gain an experience point reward in this adventure:

- **Defeating** monsters and NPCs.
- Avoiding traps, picking locks, or otherwise **overcoming obstacles**.
- Succeeding in **skill challenges** or checks.
- Fulfilling other objects in pursuit of a **Quest**.

Monsters and NPCs in this adventure list the **XP** reward the PCs should obtain for defeating them in combat. They also list the number of “**Reward Stars**” players should receive for success. This is denoted like this:  +2.

Think of a **Reward Star** as a sugar-free and abstracted version of a piece of candy from the earlier anecdote: players receive one or more most times that they achieve something in the game.

Locks, traps, and skill checks are typically “quadded”; each level of **CR** lists a suggested **XP** reward, but also a number of **Reward Stars**.

Quests only list **Reward Stars**. This is because **Quests** should be fun, interesting, and above all, useful to the PCs, but shouldn't be game-breakingly powerful or ignorably impotent. A simple delivery quest, for example: what should that be worth? **500 XP**? For a level one character, that can be almost halfway to levelling up; for a level 19 character, that makes for a completely worthless diversion. Using **Reward Stars** solves this problem, by automatically scaling the reward to be significant regardless of character level.

If you follow the approach I've used, then at the end of each gaming session (or in between sessions, or at the start of the next session, whatever works best for your schedule), convert the **Reward Stars** to traditional **Experience Points**.

The GM is heavily encouraged to augment the rewards documented with additional rewards, for perhaps-less-tangible contributions: good jokes, helpful behavior, playing fair and nice, being a good sport, paying for or even just ordering dinner, that sort of thing.

Such “intangible rewards” should be general in nature: a good, timely joke should be rewarded with a chunk of XP that's meaningful and helpful to the PC in question, whether they're level 1 or level 19.

Stay In Character... Or Else

In rare cases, or with certain gaming groups, the GM should

reserve the right to remove or revoke the **Reward Stars** a particular player, or the group entire, has earned.

Such penalties should not be applied in a discouraging manner, or against players who are genuinely trying, but whose luck is simply poor, or for whom things just aren't working out. Indeed, successful roleplaying in the face of dire circumstances should be rewarded more!

Reward Stars should only be revoked if the player is detracting from play, distracting others, making inappropriate jokes not appreciated by the rest of the group, not paying their fair share... or just generally being a jerk.

Converting Reward Stars to XP

Each **Reward Star** represents different **XP** depending on what your current level is.

If you've assigned **Reward Stars** to a particular PC, use the character's current level on the table below to convert to an **XP** reward.

On some occasions, you may instead have granted **Reward Stars** to the party as a whole. In this scenario, calculate the **Average Party Level** (APL) as you normally would, and use that on the table below to convert the reward to standard **XP**.

If a PC has more than the minimum sufficient **Reward Stars** to advance in level, they may continue to advance! In such a scenario, count Stars using the PC's current level, until they level up. Any remaining stars are converted to **XP** using the character's new level. In exceptionally rare circumstances—or with exceptionally indulgent GMs!—this may involve a PC levelling up multiple times between sessions, though such power-levelling is generally discouraged.

Finally, in addition to different methods of determining rewards, gaming groups tend to have different theories as to how rapidly characters should level up. Slow, average, and fast tracks are shown here, which scale to the corresponding Character Advancement experience point totals in the *Pathfinder Core Rulebook*.

For purposes of **Reward Stars**, the following standard has been used:

- **Slow** advancement requires 15 **Reward Stars** to advance.
- Advancement with the **Average** progression demands 10 **Reward Stars** per level.
- Only 5 **Reward Stars** are needed to advance following the **Fast** track.


Table 1: Converting Reward Stars to XP


Level, CR, or APL	Slow	Avg	Fast
1	200	200	260
2	300	300	400
3	433	400	540
4	600	600	800
5	800	800	1,000
6	1,200	1,200	1,600
7	1,600	1,600	2,200
8	2,533	2,400	3,200


Level, CR, or APL	Slow	Avg	Fast
9	3,000	3,000	4,200
10	5,000	5,000	6,800
11	6,333	6,500	8,000
12	9,667	9,500	13,000
13	12,667	13,000	17,000
14	19,333	19,000	26,000
15	26,333	25,500	35,000
16	36,667	41,000	50,000
17	53,333	50,000	70,000
18	76,667	75,000	100,000
19	100,000	105,000	140,000
20	n/a	n/a	n/a


"Quadded" Stat Blocks


Toward the goal of having an adventure that can be run with PCs of various levels, all NPCs and monsters in this adventure have four separate sets of statistics.

 These represent iterations of the creature in four distinct scales of challenge. These scales are referred to, in ascending difficulty, as **Low**, **Moderate**, **Advanced**, and **Elite**.

 **Low**-level statistics are the default, and are intended for parties of 1st to 4th level PCs. Typically, the **Low CR** for a creature will be in the range of fractional, up to 4.

 **Moderate** statistics present a bit more challenge, and are meant for 5th to 8th level PCs. **CRs** can be in the range from 4-10.

 **Advanced** creatures give even more of a fight, representing **CRs** in the range of 10-15, and are meant for adventurers of the same levels.

 **Elite** monsters and NPCs are the most evolved, and present formidable difficulty in the 12-20 **CR** range. These stat blocks are designed for PCs above 15th level.

To avoid confusion, elsewhere in the text outside of the creature's quadded stat block definition, the statistics referred to are the **Low**, or default, block. For example, the condensed, "vital stats" block that is shown in red where the NPC or monster is introduced in the adventure uses the **Low** values.

Quadded Challenge Blocks


Skill challenges and checks, traps, poisons, and obstacles sometimes have quadded stat blocks as well.

Although nearly all NPCs and monsters have quadded stat blocks, not all other game elements do. This is intentional. It represents the reality that although monsters and people might be of advanced difficulty, the city of **Berinncorte** exists in a typical, average fantasy realm—DC 50 Mythic-caliber locks simply doesn't exist, let alone on every door in town!


Below is an example of a door that has a quadded challenge block. The icons represent the scale of increasing difficulty; from top to bottom, they are **Low**, **Moderate**, **Advanced**, and **Elite**.

Locked Secret Wooden Door

 5" thick; **Hardness** 5; **hp** 60; **Perception** DC 16; **Break** DC 20; **Disable Device** DC 18

 5" thick; **Hardness** 5; **hp** 60; **Perception** DC 20; **Break** DC 24; **Disable Device** DC 22

 5" thick; **Hardness** 5; **hp** 60; **Perception** DC 22; **Break** DC 26; **Disable Device** DC 24

 5" thick; **Hardness** 5; **hp** 60; **Perception** DC 24; **Break** DC 28; **Disable Device** DC 26

Players' Guide

Incorporation

Some gaming groups are comfortable just sitting down around a table and starting things off by the GM informing everyone “all right, you’re in the Central Tavern on Main Street of Middle Town. What do you want to do?”

However, many gaming groups desire a bit more context. Particularly for play styles that emphasize storytelling, it can help for players to have a bit of information about the game world. What sort of law and order are kept, and by whom? What good and evil forces roam the land? What is the history of the region, and what wars or struggles have occurred or whose influence lingers still? And above all, what does the surrounding territory look like, and what are our options in terms of travelling elsewhere?

To play **Dark Obelisk: Berinncorte**, there are a few options to choose from to introduce players to the larger world. Which option is selected by the GM, and as a roleplaying game group, will depend mainly on how your GM and gaming group want this adventure to tie in to the larger world and/or campaign setting.

Although the nature of Incorporation is typically the role and decision of the GM, this section is useful to players because it provides some context to your adventure’s commencement.

As a Start to the Adventure Path


This is the simplest option to using this adventure: simply generate your party’s new characters and get going! Make sure you have a good variety of characters, races, classes, and so on represented.

You may simply begin at the **entrance** to the city, or in the town’s somewhat stereotypical **tavern**.

Using With an Existing Campaign

The plot, NPCs, and other elements of **Dark Obelisk: Berinncorte** do not hinge on a dependence to a particular gaming world. As such, it should be straightforward to use this adventure as a one-off module in the context of a grander, established campaign setting—either one “off the shelf”, or one of the GM’s own creation.

In fact, **Dark Obelisk: Berinncorte** does not require your gaming group to have any larger gaming world established, described, or chosen. You can just play it as-is.

Alternately, if your GM chooses to continue playing the other modules in the  **Adventure Path**, she may spool out additional details about the gaming world as they become relevant; for any given moment in time, your gaming group can focus simply on the plot and action happening that moment, and leave the world-building and grandiose backstory for a later time.


It could also be, of course, that you as a player may not even know which of the above scenarios is in play!

Where In the World..?


Berinncorte City was designed to be somewhat typical in nature and needs in terms of where it could be placed in a n existing or new game world.

Realistically, it can “go anywhere”, so long as that context isn’t too extreme—for example, it probably doesn’t make much sense to have **Berinncorte** atop a mountain surrounded by a moat of lava!

Berinncorte can be situated in any temperate climate. The intended, explicit environs surrounding Berinncorte will be elaborated upon in subsequent campaign material, but suffice it to say that all of the following elements are nearby:

- **Forest**, very close by.
- The **river** that flows through the city in the southwest corner, of course continues to the west and south.
- **Hills** to the north. These will play a major role in the second component of this intended  **Adventure Path**.
- **Mountains**, a bit farther off to the north.

As a Start to a New Campaign

Your GM may wish to use this adventure to kick off a new campaign... but he may not necessarily want to follow the  **Adventure Path** to which it leads. Or, your gaming group may have an established campaign in mind. Finally, your group may have just finished with an adventure or campaign setting, and are looking to “transition” to a new one.

Dark Obelisk: Berinncorte can play any of these roles for your gaming group.

Hooks and Links

If you’re looking for reasons that your character seeks out **Berinncorte** or begins their tale of adventuring there, here are some ideas. Of course, you are by no means bound to selecting from among these... but it’s always useful to have some inspiration or something to get started quickly.



Generally speaking, the GM is responsible for defining why a party of adventurers happens to be in the same place, and why they should probably stick together for the duration of the adventure.

However, it’s always an enormous advantage to goodwill if each player has some sense of why their PC has come to this circumstance.

Class-Based Hooks


These connections and motivations are based on the presence of one or more characters in the party who have at least one level in a particular class. Your GM may judge that only one of these is a sufficient motivator; alternately, you can combine multiple class hooks to provide the entire party a believable reason to travel to **Berinncorte**.

Paladins


Rumor spreads of a growing angst between the  **Sheer-gath Temple** and the  **Zugul Church** in **Berinncorte**. A Paladin’s local church, priest, or lay staff may request that the party’s paladin assist, or explicitly task the PC with a mission to investigate the source of the strife and negotiate a truce between the factions.

Rogues


Every thief worth her lockpick knows that **Berinncorte**

sports a wide variety of lucrative challenges—the fishery, the apothecary, the two richly-appointed churches, and the elaborate  **Mayoral estate**. Such a test of the nimble-fingered adept's talents should prove more than enough to merit a journey. If none of the party's rogues takes the bait, you could always have a known ally or fellow rogue mention outright that **Berinncorte** has “good sport” and is “worth yer while”.



Fighters and Martial Characters

For such a small village, **Berinncorte** boasts a substantial militia, and its training facilities and  **Barracks** are renowned for their combat prowess. Even the most skilled or jaded warrior could learn a thing or two... or so go the rumors.

Arcane Classes

Berinncorte's  **Library** is one of the best in the region, and its magical services outstrip those of towns much larger in size and economy. It's said that the library contains spells not otherwise available in the area... and that its workers, properly motivated, cater to all manner of arcane leanings.

Divine Classes

Between the  **Sheergath Temple** and  **Zugul Church**, and the growing turf war between them, there's more than enough incentive to provide clerics of virtually any alignment. Those of Chaotic or Lawful faith will have an immediate sympathy with the church that is given to their alignment. Those of Evil or Good faiths may have reasons to support one or the other church, but may not immediately see it as a priority to get involved. True Neutral faiths may feel compelled to remain impartial.

If you are still having difficulty engaging players along the lines of faith, you can always indicate that although the particular faiths involved may not relate directly to the interests of the party's cleric, the strife is but an example of the threat of greater ecclesiastical conflict in the region—peace between faiths that are not meant to have actively at war is ultimately in the interest of all gods!



Monks and Druids

These classes have a bit more difficulty being drawn to a place such as **Berinncorte**... at least initially, before the Obelisk's arrival. The town does feature some excellent natural resources, a beautiful river, gardens in excess of what might normally be found in a village of such size... it could be that a monk or druid wants to investigate further in order to find peace and ensure that the townsfolk are living in harmony with the bounty they have found themselves near.


General Hooks

These hooks are not linked directly to any particular race, class, or other party element, and can be deployed as the GM sees fit as best matches the play style and existing motivations of the party.

Ecclesiastical Strife

Mentioned before, and in more detail later, the growing conflict between the  **Sheergath Temple** and the  **Zugul Church** in town is cause for interest across the region.

Solid “Base Camp”

Divine and arcane spells, a talented—if evil—apothecary, arms and armor galore: **Berinncorte** has abundant resources for any adventuring party. If nothing else, it could serve as an outstanding base of operations from which to explore other dungeons, caves, and areas of interest in the greater geography. Although the details of the region are discussed in greater focus in subsequent elements of the  **Adventure Path**, a party looking to start their adventuring careers could do far worse than **Berinncorte**.

Friends of Olde

Many of the prominent NPCs in **Berinncorte** come from an adventuring background. It's feasible that one of them was mentor to a party member years ago, or a close ally to their mentor now. A dying relative or father figure, a deathbed nostalgia for exploits “back in the day”, or other motivation could be just enough to convince a party member to make the journey to the city... or simply to justify why they are starting their career in the town.

Feel free to adjust the manner of introduction for key NPCs if this approach is taken. For example, the PCs may enter the town with instructions to go directly to the **Blacksmith's hut**, or they may simply begin their adventuring in the **Town Square**.

The City of Berinncorte

Much of this adventure takes place in the city of **Berinn-corte**.

Most GMs will find a convincing way of getting a copy of the town's map into your hands very early in the story; it could even be the very first thing that happens in your first gaming session!

As a result, there's little spoiled in having access to the town map as part of this **Players' Guide**.

City Overview

Generally speaking, Berinncorte is a peaceful, lawful town. It's home to a diversity of races and backgrounds, and cultures.

There are two churches in town: one Lawful, and one Chaotic. Unsurprisingly, there's more than a bit of strife between them, and more to the point, between their followers. The conflict has yet to come to a point of violence, but many feel that point is drawing nigh.

Berinncorte City Profile

LN small town

Corruption -2; **Crime** -3; **Economy** -1; **Law** +1; **Lore** +1; **Society** +1

Qualities academic; good roads

Danger -5; **Disadvantages** none

Government autocracy (Mayor Dominika Symms)

Population 133 (88 humans; 8 half-orcs; 14 dwarves; 23 elves or half-elves)

Mayor Dominika Symms, LN female half-elf fighter 3/aristocrat 4

Base Value 500 gp; **Purchase Limit** 2,500 gp; **Spellcasting** 3rd

Minor Items 2d4; **Medium Items** 1d4; **Major Items** none

General Rules

Berinncorte is a comfortable place to live and do business. While not rich, it certainly is prosperous—and the general feeling of the townsfolk reflect this. Very few are truly destitute, and although there is certainly no shortage of strife and struggle, true misery is virtually unknown to the populace here.

Mayor Symms (<>) is perhaps a bit heavy-handed in her approach to ruling the citizenry, but even those who feel personally slighted by her acts and rules will, if pressed, admit that they bear her personally little ill-will, recognizing that the laws probably come from a place of good intent.

Law and Order

Of course, the plot of the overall **Adventure Path** presents

the greatest element of true conflict in due time... but in the meantime, there are still plenty of interesting players in the game of everyday life.

Town Militia

Berinncorte's militia is composed mostly of volunteer citizens, with a few mercenaries mixed in as need (and funds!) dictate. For combat purposes, unless the party is engaged with a named NPC, treat all members of the militia as **Berinn-corte Militia**.

Generally speaking, unless given an explicit reason to engage one of the party members, the militia will leave townsfolk alone. **Berinncorte** is not an enormous city by any means, but it is not without its share of visitors; the party's presence is likely not a major event worth of investigation.

Getting Arrested

For a variety of reasons, the party (or some subset thereof) may at some point become arrested.

Generally speaking, law and order in **Berinncorte** are what you would expect of a civilized society—theft and murder, for example, are typically illegal, though self-defense is a viable explanation for the latter. Of particular note, dueling is legal if both parties involved agree to the showdown with at least one impartial witness.

Areas of Interest

Denizens of the town will be only too happy to point your party in the direction they desire, if they're looking for a particular person or service.

Whomever gives (or sells!) the party the map to the right, featuring symbols, can be of assistance too, in interpreting the iconography.

As a further reference, however, please refer to the **Areas of Interest** version on the following page.

The legend below describes the nature of each building or region.

- 1: Zugul Church (*Lawful Neutral*)
- 2: Cryptkeeper's Shack
- 3: Graveyard
- 4: Town Square
- 5: Stage
- 6: Mayor's Offices & Residence
- 7: Mayoral Guard Post
- 8: Militia Guard Posts
- 9: Blacksmith's Hut
- 10: Zugul Church Gardens
- 11: Zugul Cleric House
- 12: City Gardens
- 13: River



- 14: Bridges
- 15: The Leaky Cask Tavern
- 16: Inn
- 17: Apothecary
- 18: General Store
- 19: Stables
- 20: Fishery
- 21: Sheergath Temple (*Chaotic Neutral*)
- 22: Library
- 23: City Gates
- 24: Garrison / Barracks
- 25: Textiles Shop
- 26: Butcher
- 27: Cistern
- 28: Upper-Class Residential District
- 29: Lower-Class Residential District

Public Zones


The GM will reveal specific map areas and interiors of buildings as, and if, your party explores them.

There are several “public zones”, however, that your party will likely be aware of simply by walking about town.

Maps for each of the following areas is included for ease of reference.


Included as well is descriptive text offered to your party by the GM upon entering the area.

3: Graveyard

 This patch of grassland is dotted with the expected gravestones, ranging in sophistication from simple stone markers to elaborately-carved plinths. The yard itself appears well-maintained, with trimmed grass and occasional wildflowers here and there.


4: Town Square

Although geographically a bit north of center, this open area is clearly the heart of the city. Read the following when the party approaches the square.

 A hearty hubbub of noise and discussion greets you as the path enters onto a large open area. Prominent buildings surround the square, and a garden with a well-kept pathway sits to the east. Dozens of townsfolk of all ages mill about here and there. Some are merchants, others are musicians, and others appear to be on their way from one destination to another.

Sunlight and a light breeze wash over your skin, and despite the loudness of the surroundings, you feel at relative calm.

10: Zugul Church Gardens


 A broad garden sports a lazy, quarter-circular stone path that approaches the church entrance to the north. Wildflowers and well-kept grass sprawl everywhere. A tiny wooden guard post lies on the southeast side.

12: City Gardens

Nestled against the L-shaped wall that marks the city's southwestern corner is a triangle of lush greenery 50 ft. wide at the base and 70 ft. tall.

The hypotenuse is formed by the **river**, with two **bridges** serving to connect the park to the village to the north and east.

23: City Gate Square


 This massive open area is paved with well-worn deep brown flagstones. It's bumpy and uneven in some places, smooth as a well-paved road in others. Citizens and visitors alike sweep past, largely in ignorance of each other from the looks of it.

Campaign Setting Overview

Aquila, the campaign setting in which **Berinncorte** is located, will be elaborated and described in detail in other books by **Infinium Game Studio**.


This is partly due to limitations of length: a focused narrative on the campaign world would itself take longer than the adventure itself! Scope is a factor, as well—too much about the broader game world may distract from the immediacy of the “day-to-day” plot of this particular adventure.

However, the biggest reason for an abbreviated depiction of the game world is that there is much, much more to this realm than meets the eye... and the events of this adventure, while seemingly isolated and bizarre, play a large role in the revelation of these attributes.

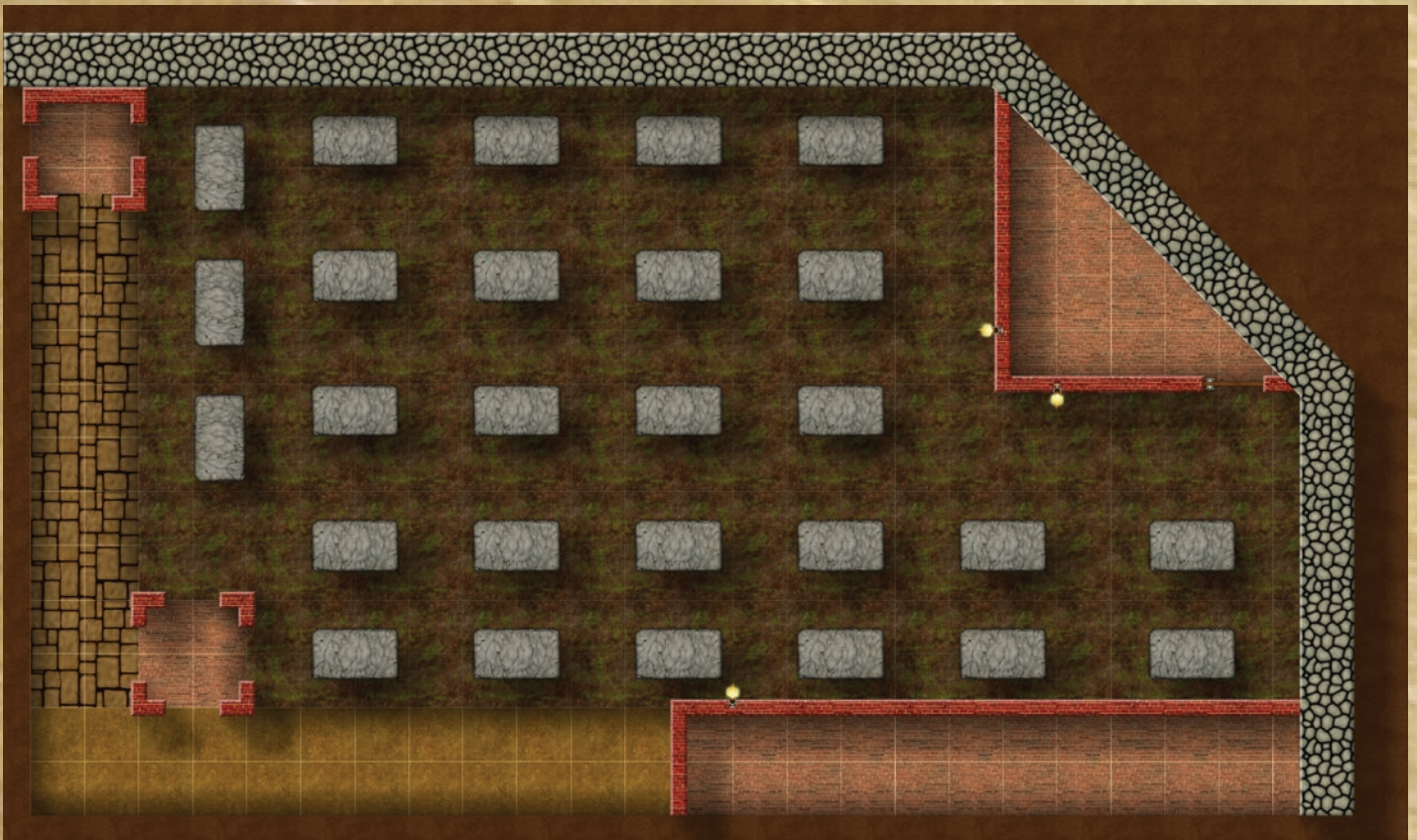
Dark Obelisk: Berinncorte aims to provide sufficient description of the larger campaign setting so you as a GM have what you need to run the adventure. While this is primarily limited to things that directly affect the narrative and activities in the adventure, there are some aspects of **Aquila** that you may want to bear in mind as you guide the PCs through events—so you don't have to “backtrack” in subsequent components of this  **Adventure Path**.

What You Need to Know

Here's an executive summary of important aspects of the realm. Any traveler or denizen of the Realm will know these basic attributes of life in **Aquila**:

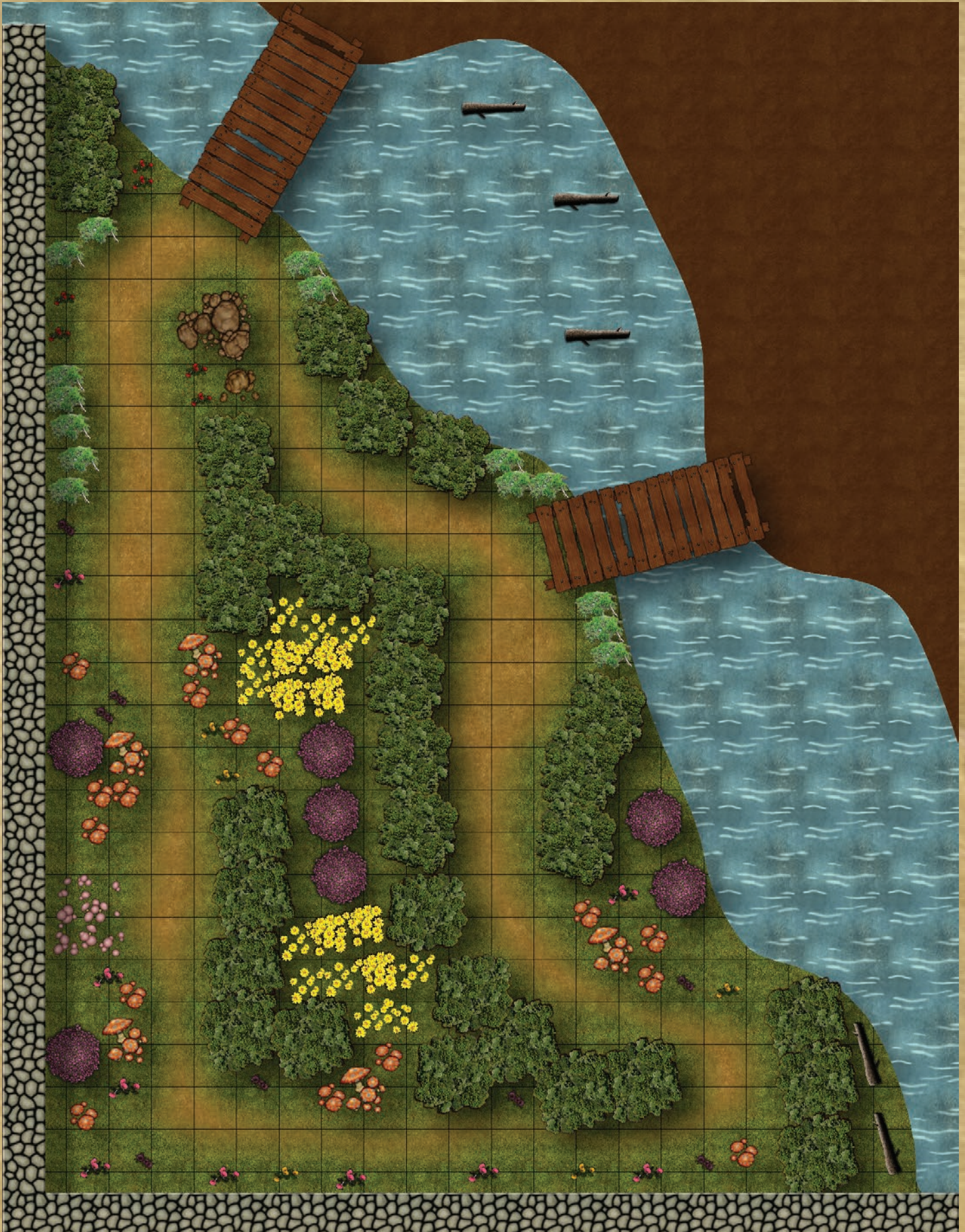
- **Gods** are real, and many. (See **Religion**, below.)
- Nearly every sentient being pays  **tribute** to one


















or more gods. (See **Tribute**, below). Typically this is through tithing to the appropriate **church**, or **government**.

-  **Tribute** can be done in the form of monetary wealth, artwork or valuables, or a devotion of magical power. No matter what the form, nearly all tribute actually does end up being transported to the gods themselves!
- There is a power struggle between  **Sheergath**, the chaotic-neutral god, and  **Zugul**, the lawful-neutral deity. Both gods have churches in town.:
- **Zugul's** church is larger (and even has its own administrative building and garden).
- Though officially neutral in the matter of religion, and though officially the city has no formally designated religion, it is difficult to ignore the political and social implications that  **Mayor Symms** is a devotee of **Zugul's**.
- The  **Berinncorte Militia**, a major faction in town, is by nature a lawful organization. Though many members of its ranks worship **Zugul**, the militia itself has no official religious leanings.

High Ability, Low Tech

“What I’m fighting for is to prove I’m a better man than the others. There’s many a man worse than me, and some better.”

—Sgt. Buster Kilrain, *Gettysburg*

There are many ways to approach NPC capabilities and talents in a fantasy setting.

In **Dark Obelisk: Berinncorte**, you will find that NPCs have abilities far beyond the layperson. Any named NPC will likely pose a fairly even match, one-on-one, for your party!

Your GM may choose to handicap or otherwise ignore this approach, and indeed may either volunteer this guidance, or be receptive to questions along these lines.

Religion

Gods play a major role in **Aquilae**. The pantheon is varied and vast—dozens, perhaps hundreds, of supremely powerful beings.

It is exceptionally uncommon to find someone who is not a devotee of at least one higher power—and there are many who are advocates of multiple gods. The general mindset of most sentient beings in **Aquilae** is an open acknowledgment, an agreement that all gods exist. Devotion to one or more gods in particular merely means that you favor their perspective on things... and, with any luck and enough tribute (see below), those gods return the favor by aiding you from time to time when it is needed most.

One might think of Roman and Greek mythology as a good comparison here: there are many gods, and while they are all immortal and wield immense power, they all share certain “human” weaknesses, such as a proclivity for playing tricks and engaging with mortal affairs.

Some gods are more powerful than others, and the “society” of gods is a rich and storied plot unto itself which most mere mortals rarely glimpse.

Tribute

If you pray, you pay! Everyone, in every religion, gives money and resources to their god. In almost all cases, this is done through the church, though in remote situations, tithing in this manner can be quite difficult. Even isolated hermits typically worship at least one god.

Many devotees do not live near a temple of worship for their deity. The pantheon is flexible, however: any worshipper, of any god, can visit any church, and donate their tribute there. Part of each church’s responsibility is to make sure all tribute eventually gets sent to its appropriate god.

To be clear: in **Aquilae**, churches are kind of a form of tax center. And all tribute does in fact end up being shipped off to the gods themselves.

The mechanics of tribute, of how it gets processed and where it goes, how it actually gets to the objects of worship, and the nature of the gods themselves will all be discussed in greater detail in subsequent campaign books.

About Religion Profiles

The profile of a religion contains the following information. It’s important to note that the descriptions provided apply to the religion entire, and not merely to the presence of the religion within Berinncorte city limits.

Icon / Badge / Symbol:

A description of the kind of iconography used to represent the religion, as well as an example of the badge itself. This symbolism finds its way into sculpture, vestments, armor, shields, flags, writing, personal and atop-building holy icons, and other visual representations involving the faith.

Alignment:

Most religions have one or more alignments that describe the majority of the faithful. In most cases, this is a single alignment, and adherence to it is either a strict prerequisite for membership, or at minimum a strong recommendation.

Worshippers:

The sorts of followers this faith tends to attract.

Domains:

One or more domains and/or subdomains associated with the deity. Particularly important for clerics of that deity to determine domain-oriented spells.

Favored Weapon:

One or more weapons that tend to be associated with the deity. Clerics of this faith tend to carry this sort of weaponry.

Description:

General notes and comments about the religion, its members, its power and influence.

Sheergath, God of Resigned Fate

This Chaotic Neutral deity has a significant presence in **Berinncorte**—the second-largest building of religious significance is devoted to her. Most lower-class citizens worship **Sheergath**; nearly all well-off citizens do not.

Sheergath, God of Resigned Fate



Icon / Badge / Symbol: A goat head, or a female face with goat horns and/or goatee

Alignment: Chaotic Neutral

Worshippers: peasants, laborers, commoners

Domains: Chaos, Liberation, Death, Earth

Favored Weapon: sickle

Description: Usually depicted as a female, humanoid but with some goatlike features (goatee, and three small horns atop her head). Followers typically worship her out of a sense of disenfranchisement, of feeling as though their voice is not heard and their interests not served—either by government, faction, or other religions.

Religious Strife in Berinncorte

There is a power struggle of a sort between **Sheergath** and **Zugul** in the city. **Zugul** has the advantage in many ways: larger houses of worship, more powerful followers, and the influence of several key factions in town, most notably the **Berinncorte Militia**.

However, **Sheergath** has the advantage of numbers: the downtrodden and disenfranchised significantly outnumber the prosperous and powerful. The divide between gods in **Berinncorte** represents not only an alignment or theological difference, but one of perspective: chaos and law are at odds with one another, and each feels there should be less of the other if society is to be improved.

Zugul, Lord of Order

Law and peace are the main tenets of **Zugul**... though he doesn't seem to care much how these goals are achieved. Paintings, carvings, sculptures and stories evoke a calm, rational man focused on the betterment of his fellow people. And although his depictions de-emphasize weaponry, his simplified sigil is a mace over a lightning bolt: force is a very real part of his character, and his following.

Zugul, Lord of Order



Icon / Badge / Symbol: Lightning bolt and mace.

Alignment: Lawful Neutral

Worshippers: Merchants, military, government

Domains: Law, Community, Protection

Favored Weapon: Light mace

Description: A bearded knight with long, greenish hair is typically how **Zugul** is rendered. He always carries a mace in his right hand, though it is depicted as smaller scale than the man himself, representing the necessity of force in a lawful society—but the preference for it not to law's foremost tool. His left hand sometimes bears a shield; other times, it is raised in greeting or command.

Factions

Dozens of factions, religious and secular, struggle for control and influence in the greater world of **Aquillae**. **Berinncorte** is a smaller village, somewhat remotely located, and although it is proximate to natural resources, it is not a crucial part of the greater territory.

Faction Information: Too Much

Ideally, the GM will reveal information about the various **Factions** in an organic manner. However, it's reasonable to expect a certain amount of pre-existing background knowledge about such matters, even for travelers, adventurers, or first-time visitors to the city.

The information provided below about the various **Factions** is really overkill for most purposes; you may simply skim over it. Your GM will inform you if background knowledge of a particular **Faction** is crucial to the immediate aims of the adventure.

About Faction Profiles

The factions discussed here are the ones with the greatest influence in the city, and those with whom the residents are aligned.

Each faction has quite a bit of information associated with it, as follows:

Badge / Icon: Iconography can be important in factions. The symbol of a faction might be used to inform members as to the whereabouts of meeting locations, signal membership to others, or simply as a form of medieval "advertising" to spread knowledge of the faction's presence.

Type: The general nature of the faction and its goals.

Alignments: Some factions enforce only certain alignments in their membership; others tend to attract those of a particular alignment. Many factions don't care so much about alignment, and welcome members from all backgrounds and demeanors.

Motivations: The driving force of the faction itself, or the common goal, behavior, or desires of its membership.

Day-to-Day Goals: What the group hopes to accomplish on a day-to-day ongoing basis. Typically, this is a more humble hope than Long-Term Goals.

Long-Term Goals: In addition to short-term goals, most factions have an over-arching agenda they realize may take a long time to bring to fruition.

Notable Philosophies: A phrase or mantra that best summarizes the beliefs of members.

Influence: How much power the group and its members wield, if pressed to do so. This can be political power, military strength, magical prowess, etc.

Reputation: The general sentiment those outside the group have of the group itself.

Leadership: The nature of the faction's leader(s), how they come to power, and under what circumstances leadership can change.

Inner Circle: In addition to Leadership, some factions also

have an “inner circle” or group of Elders within their ranks. Such elite members are often privy to secrets about the faction and its motivation.

Size: Most factions have a fluctuating membership; the Size noted here is typically a range.

Stability: Thousand-year guilds or start-up social clubs, this indicates how likely the group is to still be around in a few years.

Enemies: If the group has enmity with any other factions, they are listed here. Sometimes, this is a general statement as to what sorts of people or organizations would be unwelcome in the midst of this faction.

Allies: Any formal alliances, or informal relationships, between factions are noted here.

Resources: This section describes how many resources the organization as a whole has at its immediate disposal—this can be arcane knowledge, money, or other assets.

Description: A summarization of the nature of the faction and its behavior. Anything noteworthy about the group that doesn't belong in another heading goes here.

Membership: Most groups won't let just anyone into their ranks—at least without getting to know them. Many groups demand something else, too: money, in many cases, but in certain factions, it may be necessary to embark upon a quest, create an item, discover new knowledge, save the life of an existing member, and so on.

Members: Description of the membership of the faction, whether any races, classes, etc. are forbidden.

Common Traits: If members have anything in common—either formally as part of their membership, or if many of them just happen to frequently have something notable about them—it is mentioned here.

Demeanor: The attitude of members, both in general (are they paranoid? Devout? Irrational?), and in the context of the faction itself (do they deny the group even exists? Are they proud of their membership?).

Tribute & Dues: Factions are not religious, but the gods and governments of **Aquilae** demand that even those who choose a secular lifestyle contribute as they are able. Nearly all factions collect at least a 1% tribute from each member annually. In all but the most extreme cases, members are not prevented from giving additional tribute to other religions or groups as they wish.

Factions in Berinncorte

Berinncorte City

Icon / Badge: A rounded-kite shield, quartered with crimson and parchment.

Type: Government.

Alignments: Any allowed, though Lawful predominates.

Motivations: Keeping a city running.

Day-to-Day Goals: Keep **Berinncorte** running; maintain order.

Long-Term Goals: Help the city and its inhabitants to thrive



by establishing relationships, trade, and investing back in infrastructure.

Notable Philosophies: Law and order are the most effective means of running a city.

Influence: Average.

Reputation: Good.

Age: Mature (~125 years).

Leadership: Autocracy (**Mayor Symms**).

Size: Small (~30 members).

Stability: Highly Stable.

Enemies: None officially.

Allies: Other cities in **Aquilae**.

Resources: Above Average.

Description: This is the government of **Berinncorte**, to which some notable NPCs are allied.

Membership: All members are either hired or appointed by the government.

Members: Typically Lawful or Lawful Neutral citizens with a knack for administration, or a special skill.

Common Traits: Other than their Lawful alignment, government officials tend to like their city. **Berinncorte** may not feature the social life, culture, or other features of larger cities, but it is prosperous enough, and most of its citizens enjoy their lives and feel secure.

Demeanor: Effectiveness and efficiency, law and order are the goals of most government employees.

Tribute & Dues: Employees are expected to **Tribute 1%** of their wealth annually to the city. Citizens are also expected to tribute, either directly to the city, or to one of its factions or religions. As always, employees or citizens are welcome to tribute additional wealth to **Berinncorte**, though in practice this hardly ever happens unless the citizen in question needs something specific from the government. In theory, this is not quite as quid-pro-quo as it might seem; typically the extra tribute is paid to the city by way of thanks for extra effort.

Berinncorte Militia

Icon / Badge: The **Berinncorte** coat of arms, crossed by a silhouetted sword.



Type: Defense.

Alignments: Any allowed, but tend toward Lawful.

Motivations: Keeping the peace.

Day-to-Day Goals: Maintain order, stop crime.

Long-Term Goals: Hunt down criminals and help improve the quality of life of all citizens by providing for the common defense.

Notable Philosophies: Peace comes from a well-trained and capable security force who walk among the people and know their neighbors.

Influence: Above Average.

Reputation: Good. Though some may balk at the Lawful

state of things in the city, few can argue with the results.

Age: Mature (~100 years).

Leadership: **Militia Master Tansden** is in charge of the force.

Size: Large (100-500 members).

Stability: Highly Stable.

Enemies: No true enemies as such, but many magic-oriented guilds and factions tend to be at odds with their goals.

Allies: None.

Resources: Very high.

Description: Rogues and knowledge workers, inventors, problem solvers, sages... any geeks who love the thrill of adventure are welcome to join, so long as they prove their creativity.

Membership: Requires inventing something and giving the schematics to the Order.

Members: Inquisitive and creative people of all races and backgrounds.

Common Traits: Members tend to be a bit, um, odd, in their demeanor, easily distracted, but also easily focused on a single purpose. Driven, dedicated, and unshakable in their belief that they can and will execute what the dream about.

Demeanor: Members aren't secretive, but they do guard membership quite jealously—it's a mark of prestige to them to be a member, and they want to ensure new members are up to snuff.

Tribute & Dues: Members are required to Tribute a minimum of 1% of gained wealth, though general expectation is that members will also gift additional resources, particularly those who create inventions. Non-members wishing to Tribute to the faction may pay an additional 1% or more as they desire.

The Scarlet Path

Icon / Badge: A dark red road-shaped triangle pointing north.



Type: Intelligence, Politics, Policy.

Alignments: Lawful Evil (predominantly).

Motivations: Power and control.

Day-to-Day Goals: Know everything, of everything, about everyone.

Long-Term Goals: Gain control and influence of everything.

Notable Philosophies: Wealth is of use only as a means to furthering the ends of the faction.

Influence: Below Average.

Reputation: Poor.

Age: Ancient (though with different names over the years).

Leadership: Council, with Councilmaster. Councilmembers are elected via open ballot. Bribes to leaders are outlawed, though gifts as thank-yous are commonplace. Leadership is typically competent and decisive. Audiences with the Council are rare, and by special arrangement only.

Size: Large (100-500 members).

Stability: Highly Stable.

Enemies: All other factions, really, in theory.

Allies: Typically any LE-aligned faction. Other Lawful and/or Evil factions, for convenience.

Resources: Many. Merchants, politicians, and sages belong.

Description: Secretive and operating under the cover of shadow, The Scarlet Path nevertheless wields immense influence across Aquilae. In some cities they operate nearly in the open as a poorly-kept secret; in others, their presence is known only to those agents stationed there.

Membership: Requires influence, action, and acknowledgment by existing members.

Members: No distinguishing characteristics... that's the whole point!

Common Traits: Appear as normal people, but nearly all members are Lawful Evil.

Demeanor: Members tend to be secretive about the faction, but not necessarily secretive individuals—they “hide in plain sight”.

Tribute & Dues: The Scarlet Path requires a Tribute of 1% of gained wealth, kept by the faction for its own purposes. Those wishing to Tribute to the faction may pay an additional 1% or more as they desire.

Lowman's Group



Icon / Badge: A utensil (frequently a spoon) silhouetted against a plate (typically a simple circle).

Type: Social / Support.

Alignments: All allowed and accepted.

Motivations: Support of the needy.

Day-to-Day Goals: Ensure all members have access to basic human requirements such as food, shelter, and transportation.

Long-Term Goals: Ensure all members prosper by lending whatever form of other assistance a given member requires at a certain point in their lives.

Notable Philosophies: There is no one so noble who cannot fall low; there is no one so low who cannot gain ground.

Influence: Average.

Reputation: Excellent. Though many disagree with either the aims and/or the methods the group employs, ultimately, it's only members who are affected.

Age: Recent (<10 years).

Leadership: Head of Household and a leadership committee of 4 other Family Leaders. All positions rotate twice a year: the current Head of Household may become a Family Leader; any Family Leader may be elected Head of Household by the other Family Leaders; any Member may be elected a Family Leader by her peers. Family Leaders who do not become Head of Household rotate out automatically. While this approach introduces a fair amount of chaos and inconsistency, it meets the group's goals of fairness and offers ample oppor-

tunity for always-fresh perspectives in positions of authority.

Size: Medium (80-300 members).

Stability: Fairly Stable. Membership waxes and wanes a great deal; the largest problem is ensuring members maintain their commitments to the faction after achieving prosperity of their own.

Enemies: None.

Allies: Medical, religious, or other factions who help the impoverished, ailed, downtrodden.

Resources: Slight. The institution itself has almost zero resources to speak of; individual members have their own wealth such as it is.

Description: Lowman's Group was formed by a bartender whose best customer drank himself to death, alone. Out of guilt that the bartender never got to know the customer, even though he was there constantly, he started this faction as a kind of a social club, networking, and outreach program all in one.

Membership: Members must guarantee shelter and food, or accompaniment for travel, for any other member. Any member may apply for financial, protective, magical services, or other assistance from the Head of Household and the Family Leaders. Outside of brief room and board, supplicants must inquire formally at the faction lodge, and make their case. Any supplicants whose request is denied automatically suffer demotion of one level of membership. There are "levels" of membership in Lowman's Group. Each level increases the burden: one week's room and board, one day's journey, one spell level of magic per month, and one percent wealth tithe contribution, per level of membership.

Members: Used heavily by very unfortunate or low level adventurers, or former adventurers who have fallen on hard times. Drunks, addicts, and others chronically in need of external assistance also tend to be foul-weather adherents.

Common Traits: None, though it's rare to find a truly prosperous / wealthy member.

Demeanor: Members tend to have a relaxed, calm, and generally warm attitude toward strangers, out of the knowledge that anyone else might also be a member.

Tribute & Dues: **Lowman's Group** collects no tribute itself, and keeps no resources on-hand as a central body. Members are required to donate up to 1% of their wealth to other members per level within the faction, within certain limits. Beyond that, special one-off gifts or devotion of wealth or resources are coordinated by the Head of Household and Family Leaders if a supplicant's request is granted.

Order Mechanique

Icon / Badge: One or more black gears against a dark field.

Type: Trade guild of inventors and tinkers.

Alignments: Any allowed, but tend toward Evil or Neutral alignments. Those of any Good alignment tend not to be allowed into the Inner Circle.

Motivations: Creativity, invention, advancement of technology.

Day-to-Day Goals: Get, and help others get, a little bit better



at tinkering.

Long-Term Goals: Change the landscape of civilization by making truly impressive things possible through technology.

Notable Philosophies: Anything magic can do, technology can do... and perhaps a bit more reliably!

Influence: Below Average.

Reputation: Good.

Age: Mature (200 years).

Leadership: A single Guildmaster holds the reigns, but he/she is elected and holds office for only a single year at a time.

Size: Large (100-500 members).

Stability: Highly Stable.

Enemies: No true enemies as such, but many magic-oriented guilds and factions tend to be at odds with their goals.

Allies: None.

Resources: Very high.

Description: Rogues and knowledge workers, inventors, problem solvers, sages... any geeks who love the thrill of adventure are welcome to join, so long as they prove their creativity.

Membership: Requires inventing something and giving the schematics to the Order.

Members: Inquisitive and creative people of all races and backgrounds.

Common Traits: Members tend to be a bit, um, odd, in their demeanor, easily distracted, but also easily focused on a single purpose. Driven, dedicated, and unshakable in their belief that they can and will execute what the dream about.

Demeanor: Members aren't secretive, but they do guard membership quite jealously—it's a mark of prestige to them to be a member, and they want to ensure new members are up to snuff.

Tribute & Dues: Members are required to Tribute a minimum of 1% of gained wealth, though general expectation is that members will also gift additional resources, particularly those who create inventions. Non-members wishing to Tribute to the faction may pay an additional 1% or more as they desire.

MeatSmiths

Icon / Badge: A black cleaver against a dark field.

Type: Trade guild of butchers and animal farmers.

Alignments: Any allowed and supported.

Motivations: To ensure meatcraft is viewed as a prestige profession, and to encourage high protein prices.

Day-to-Day Goals: Advocate for, and increase, meat sales.

Long-Term Goals: Identify ways to reduce cost and increase quality and diversity in the harvest.

Notable Philosophies: Butchers and farmers have difficult jobs, and it's not easy to ensure a quality product.



Influence: Below Average.

Reputation: Poor. In addition to being a somewhat gruesome profession, many question why these workers in particular need a guild to begin with.

Age: Mature (100 years).

Leadership: A single leader, called “the Cleaver”. He or she rules the entire guild alone, and gets to decide when and if they retire, and who takes over the position. In practice, political and peer pressure are exerted if the Cleaver is found to be doing a poor job; the voice of members is certainly heard, even if there is no formal obligation to respond to them.

Inner Circle: There is also an Inner Circle of high-level members, typically between 19-40.

Size: Medium (50-200 members).

Stability: Somewhat Stable. The “face” of the guild is certainly stable, as the profession will always endure... but the faction’s ulterior motives, if discovered, would lay waste to the group fairly quickly.

Enemies: Lawful Good professions.

Allies: Typically any LE-aligned faction. Other Lawful and/ or Evil factions, for convenience.

Resources: Slight. Butchers tend not to be the wealthiest of tradespeople, and those elite in the Inner Circle tend to be of arcane bent, spending nearly all their resources on necromantic components, research, and books.

Description: Butchers and animal farmers from all over are welcome to join the Meathsmiths, who focus on animal husbandry, creature farming, butchery work, sales and trade. They prefer the term “flesh artisan” to the simple “butcher”, though in practice their term is used almost exclusively by members.

Membership: Automatic, if you’re an animal farmer or a butcher and wish to pay Tribute to the faction.

Members: They’re all butchers or farmers. Though those in the Inner Circle are members of these professions in name only; they are nearly all necromantic wizards.

Common Traits: Most butchers are members, and nearly all members are butchers. If anyone did some proper research and inquiry, they would quickly find that the faction’s ranks hold zero members of Good alignment, however.

Demeanor: Members will name-drop the guild as often as possible, and imply that to be a butcher is to continue a long, and storied, tradition of flesh artisans who have worked and honed their technique for thousands of years, and so on.

Tribute & Dues: Those wishing membership in Meathsmiths must comply with Tribute of 1% of gained wealth, kept by the faction for its own purposes. Those wishing to Tribute to the faction may pay an additional 1% or more as they desire.

Liquid Guardians

Icon / Badge: A stylized water droplet, typically dark green, against a dark field.

Type: Trade guild.

Alignments: Any allowed and supported, though Chaotic is



most popular.

Motivations: Knowledge. Specifically, the secret of life... and of power over death.

Day-to-Day Goals: Promote and exercise the practice of potion-making and brewing.

Long-Term Goals: Discover the secret of immortality in a bottle.

Notable Philosophies: If it’s possible to create, forge, or evoke, you can put it in a bottle.

Influence: Below Average.

Reputation: Fair. Nobody really pays them much mind until they need a potion.

Age: Ancient. Was popular long, long ago, but a “dark age” of the sect prevented its practice until recently (about 15 years ago).

Leadership: Single leader called the “Imbiber of Truth”. Appointed for life, but given leadership’s habit of themselves trying out the next attempt at a potion of immortality, this is significantly shorter a span of time than it might seem. Most Imbibers only last between 1-3 years.

Inner Circle: 19 designated Elders, all of whom are privy to the guild’s secret: Historians are convinced that the sect of long ago did in fact succeed in their attempt to discover ancient and terrible secrets. Their dark knowledge, power over life, is said to be forbidden by the gods themselves, and brought about the ruin of the faction, though Elders differ on what happened exactly. Some believe they were punished by the gods themselves for their illicit knowledge, destroyed in a fiery wrath. Others believe that those who knew the secret instead became gods themselves. Cynical Elders think it’s more likely that the gods played no role whatsoever—those in power wanted to keep the secret for themselves, and destroyed the entire cult lest others uncover their mysteries.

In truth, this last rendition is most accurate: Elders from long ago acquired what amounts to a functional immortality, and leaked just enough info to local Paladins to have them destroy and purge the cult. Surviving the extinction were but small handfuls of elders... who, gifted with the secret of eternal life, walk among us still!

Size: Small (50-125 members).

Stability: Somewhat Stable.

Enemies: Everyone else, though other factions aren’t even aware of this enmity.

Allies: Liquid Guardians trust no others with their work or the secrets they pursue.

Resources: Average. Potioncraft is an effective means to profit, but as the guild is effectively limited to arcane brewers, there are precious few among their ranks with actual political power or trade influence.

Description: Brewers and potionmakers from all walks of life claim affiliation with the Liquid Guardians. Their goal is the elevation of their tradecraft, which they view as a skill and practice above practically any other.

Membership: The sect assumes a total membership—that is, if you brew potions, the Liquid Guardians will eventually find you and ask that you formally join their ranks. And pay your share of Tribute, of course.

Members: Secretive to the point of paranoia, members of any rank will defend the guild to the last, firm in their belief that they are doing the work of the gods themselves... or, at least, seeking their power.

Common Traits: All members must have the Brew Potion feat, and preferably, practice the art. This can be either as a business, or as part of adventuring or other endeavors—members need not make potions as their sole focus.

Demeanor: Liquid Guardians tend to be shy and protective about the existence, let alone the nature, of their faction.

Tribute & Dues: Liquid Guardians require a Tribute of 1% of gained wealth, kept by the faction for its own purposes. Those wishing to Tribute to the faction may pay an additional 1% or more as they desire. In addition, the Imbibder of Truth or her Inner Circle of Elders may approach any member for special additional services, which include surveillance, information-gathering, potion-brewing, attempts at a new concoction, and, in rare cases, they might ask for a guinea pig to try and drink a new mixture to test its effects. Such “extra services” as these typically earn the giver significant favor in the faction... if they survive the endeavor, that is.

Antimagic Shell

Icon / Badge: Orange shield atop a dark field, with a circle in the middle bisected by a line from southwest to northeast.



Type: Belief, Lifestyle

Alignments: All are allowed and accepted, though Lawful (and particularly Lawful Evil) alignments are most common.

Motivations: Prevention and elimination of perceived “taint” through lifestyle modification and living in accordance with their beliefs.

Day-to-Day Goals: Avoid being “tainted” with magic, and seek cleansing redemption if it’s unavoidable.

Long-Term Goals: Reduce, or eliminate, the role of magic in society as a whole.

Notable Philosophies: Magic is a subtle form of evil, loosed upon this world by dark forces who seek to undo the gods themselves.

Influence: Very Low.

Reputation: Poor. Magic is so useful in so many ways, most people find it very difficult to understand the group’s perspective... or their motivation.

Age: Recent (10 years).

Leadership: No formal leader. Some in the group are more respected and their will more acquiesced to than others. The group does own a single stronghold which it uses as its headquarters. Some members are labeled “Elders” but it’s unclear to most how this designation occurs.

Size: Small (20-125 members).

Stability: Unstable. Membership fluctuates a great deal; attrition is a major factor. Most members discover quickly how dependent they had been on magic and on magical effects... this either hardens their resolve to abstain, or helps them justify reverting to “normal” life.

Enemies: All magical factions, certainly, though they would not “war” with them formally.

Allies: Members of the Antimagic Shell respect those of the Order Mechanique. For their part, the Mechanics think the Shell to be silly and bizarre, but they’re only too happy to take advantage of the perceived camaraderie on occasion.

Resources: Very Low. Forbidding magic, and dealings with those who traffic in magic and magical items, severely limits commerce and opportunities for influence.

Description: Detractors will joke that this is a tiny cult formed by people too stupid to become magic-users... and there’s probably a grain of truth in that assessment. No matter its origins, however, the present-day Antimagic Shell preaches a strict no-magic way of life, and claims all sorts of benefits from adherence to its doctrine.

Members: see magic as an unclean taint, almost an infection of mind, body, and soul. Their “evidence” for this belief is society’s over-reliance upon magic and magical items and effects.

The name is a none-too-subtle play on the spell of the same name; they envision themselves as a protective shell that shields civilization from the fouls of magic. Any member caught casting magic of any form (arcane, divine, Ranger, Druid, Bardic—anything at all) is immediately expelled from the faction.

Those using magical devices (wands, staves, magical arms or armor, or even a potion) or affected by magical spells must defend the action informally to at least three other members. Based on their assessment, the offending user may be expelled, or be required to do cleansing penance to purge the taint. This takes the form of an immediate Tribute to the faction of 1% of current wealth for each spell level (or magical item bonus) used or suffered, plus one day’s “voluntary solitary” confinement and labor in the faction’s stronghold.

In practice, this is fairly lenient—after all, if someone is the victim of a fireball, or must quaff a potion of cure moderate wounds to avoid death, it’s certainly understandable.

Some magical items are permissible. These must undergo a “protective ceremony” conducted by the faction’s Elders. In truth, this ceremony doesn’t do anything concrete to the weapon or armor, but the Elders require a 1% Tribute of the owner’s wealth per spell level of effect or Caster Level of the effect granted by the device.

“Pre-protected” magical items are available for sale at the faction’s stronghold... for twice the retail price.

Despite the obvious mercenary cynicism in this structure, nearly everyone in the faction truly believes that their choice of lifestyle is the “right way”, and makes them purer, more complete, and less tainted than those who walk a different path. The useless ceremony, the penance, and the multiple forms of extra tribute are merely to enforce the lifestyle and underscore its importance to those who are on the fence as to following it.

Membership: Requires only the disavowal of magic—which is more difficult than it might seem. No spell-use, of course, but beyond that, no magical healing, no magic weapons or equipment, no wands, staves, or other magical devices... and perhaps most frustratingly, members should not themselves be a target of magical spells or effects. No races with innate spell-like abilities are allowed membership, regardless of promises to abstain from use.

Members: Aside from owning no magical items, casting no

spells, seeking no magical assistance, and picking non-magical jobs, they tend to be normal people in all other respects.

Common Traits: There's usually something (aside from mere membership in the Shell) that causes them to be, or feel, separate from other people.

Demeanor: Tend to be somewhat reclusive. If questioned about their devotion, they will gladly spell it out for you (pun intended).

Tribute & Dues: The Antimagic Shell requires a Tribute of 1% of gained wealth, kept by the faction for its own purposes. Those wishing to Tribute to the faction may pay an additional 1% or more as they desire. It should be noted that although the mechanism for delivering and coordinating Tribute involves magic, the faction views this as an unavoidable sin—if the gods themselves demand that magic be involved in their tribute, it can hardly be toxic. Man-made, or man-executed, magic is the real evil to be avoided.

Platinum Flag

Icon / Badge: A silver-blue flag atop a dark field.



Type: Financial.

Alignments: Any, though Lawful Neutral predominates.

Motivations: Money. And the power, influence, control, and things that come with it.

Day-to-Day Goals: Acquire wealth.

Long-Term Goals: Acquire more wealth.

Notable Philosophies: Money first. Investment is the truest form of power.

Influence: Extremely High.

Reputation: Fair. Their acumen and business savvy is respected far and wide, though their tactics and “money above all else” approach to things tends to rub most people the wrong way.

Age: Ancient.

Leadership: A single executive leader, the Platinum Head. This position is confirmed or changed once a year in a voting ceremony. Typically this is the member with the most accumulated wealth, though in rare circumstances it has been the member who has grown the most wealth in the past year.

Inner Circle: Membership has ranks with precious-metal terminologies. The most elite inner circle is the Platinum Bar, a council of 19. Second most important is the Gold Bar, a council of 29 members; next the Silver Bar, with 49 members, and finally the Copper Order, which is the balance of the common membership.

Size: Huge (200-1,000 members).

Stability: Highly Stable.

Enemies: Formal enmity is typically not good for profit, so the Platinum Flag tends not to bear a grudge... at least not in a formal manner. They will war with any group interfering with their investments or operating against their schemes, but only if profit is threatened—they are not a fantasy “mafia”.

Allies: Formal alliances are not uncommon, but tend to be

short-lived and only to fulfill a specific purpose. The Flag has found that the best way to keep good relations and to ensure others operate in your interests is to invest in their endeavors—and so the faction has a stake in nearly every single government, religion, and organization that seems successful.

Resources: Extremely High.

Description: A financial group, the Platinum Flag began long ago as a means of encouraging investment in long-term projects, and has been credited with enabling enormous advances in all manner of civilization. Power is one of the things money leads to, but money for the sake of what it makes possible is the core of the group's belief.

Membership: Requires a one-time Tribute of 10% of current wealth, and advocacy from at least one member of the Silver, Gold, or Platinum Bar. This gains you Copper membership; advancement from Copper to Silver costs another 10% and requires someone of Gold or Platinum membership to advocate for you. Going from Silver to Gold, you guessed it, another 10%, and this time, it has to be someone in the Platinum Bar that speaks on your behalf. To move from Gold to Platinum requires the Platinum Head herself to nominate you, and a majority of those in Gold and Silver status must vote for you to ascend... oh, and of course, they'll be needing that extra 10% Tribute.

Members: Merchants, business owners, tradesfolk, politicians, magicians, government officials—those from all walks of life who are wealthy or who would aspire toward wealth join the ranks of the Platinum Flag.

Common Traits: It's considered a bit garish to flaunt one's wealth, though exceptional taste is always respected. But the Flag strives to represent itself well, and will have a frank conversation with any member who behaves poorly, particularly if they do so in the name of the faction.

Demeanor: Members are almost universally proud of membership. While they won't name-drop their participation, they will speak freely of the Flag and its principles, its good works, the advances it has made possible. This typically turns to boasting quite quickly, however, and a smug confidence pervades many members' attitudes.

Tribute & Dues: Unlike many other factions, the Platinum Flag expects a Tribute of not one, but 3% of gained wealth, kept by the faction for its own purposes. Those wishing to Tribute to the faction may pay an additional 1% or more as they desire. Those at Silver status or above are expected—though not formally required—to pay a greater percentage, and in rare circumstances, faction leadership may approach particularly prosperous members for a special donation—say, if a particular project is spinning up and they want additional capital to make it happen.

Katkalls

Icon / Badge: White musical notes against a dark field.



Type: Casual guild / social club of performers, and entertainers.

Alignments: Any, though Chaotic tends to be the case.

Motivations: Ensure employment and well-being for its members, and advocate for the profession.

Day-to-Day Goals: Get members work.

Long-Term Goals: Ideally, get bards, singers, and dancers into positions of power. Though most members are realistic as to how long that will take, and how unlikely it is.

Notable Philosophies: Music, laughter, and camaraderie are the true magics of the world.

Influence: Low.

Reputation: Extremely Good. Who doesn't like music and dancing?

Age: Ancient (though with different names over the years).

Leadership: There is a Head Jester, the tongue-in-cheek title of the group's de facto leader. She's more a figurehead than an actual decision-maker, though. Typically, the Jester is chosen in a wild night of revels and debauchery—sometimes as often as once a year, though frequently it's every other year, or every three or even five years.

Size: Large (100-500 members).

Stability: Highly Stable, though the group's power and membership grows and shrinks quickly.

Enemies: Some governments or Lawful organizations, if their zeal for order would punish those simply looking for a good time.

Allies: Musicians and singers don't really have formal allegiances.

Resources: Low. Though you'd be surprised what a large gang of impassioned, driven bards can accomplish if given direction.

Description: When times get tough, society tends to cut things out of its agenda—and spending on lavish entertainment is one of the first things to go. Katkalls feels that revelry serves and important function in any civilization, and that continued employment and job security for those who practice the various arts of performance should be one of the most fundamental human rights.

They also like a good mug of ale, if truth be told.

Membership: Any entertainer is welcome to join, but to do so, one must find at least two existing members and give them their best performance—preferably one that impresses.

Members: Bards, singers, musicians, dancers, orators, storytellers, comedians... pretty much anyone who entertains.

Common Traits: They're all entertainers, but that label applies to a quite broad spectrum of folk. Some influential and powerful government and religious officials are also members, if they strum a good lute in their spare time.

Demeanor: Friendly, effervescent, and whimsical. Or lugubrious, cynical, and biting. Alternately, snide and cunning. The only thing they all have in common is the ability to make things interesting.

Tribute & Dues: Unlike most other factions, Katkalls doesn't require any tribute annually. However, 5% of all fees gained through performance contracts must be handed over to the faction; this rate is 20% for contracts arranged by the group itself.

Those wishing to Tribute to the faction may pay 1% or more as they desire.

Mace and Blade



Icon / Badge: A mace and blade, crossed. Usually the mace takes the form of a morningstar, or bears spikes.

Type: Private military.

Alignments: All are allowed and accepted, but Lawful alignments are most popular.

Motivations: Security and enforcement.

Day-to-Day Goals: Ensure security contracts and employment for its members.

Long-Term Goals: Privatize and take over security for the entire realm. It goes without saying that Mace and Blade contractors would be the ones providing the security. For a reasonable fee, naturally.

Notable Philosophies: Civilization is nothing without security... and security must be independent, private, if it is to be trusted. Factions, be they government, religion, or secular, cannot be trusted with their own defense.

Influence: High.

Reputation: Average. Those who use their services swear by the quality and efficiency. Many others point out that the faction's ultimate goal is a police state for profit, and although they're not far from the mark, Mace and Blade members will point out that their biggest detractors are either those with no need of security, or those who unknowingly benefit from the defense efforts of others.

Age: Old (100 years).

Leadership: Organized like a military, there is a Commander-in-Chief who is in charge of the entire operation. There are generals, lieutenants, and so forth.

Size: Enormous (500-2,000 members).

Stability: Highly Stable.

Enemies: Other security and military services, though they ally on occasion, say, for a large contract.

Allies: The group is open to working with any other faction... for a price. In practice, most alliances are short-lived, for the duration of the contract, usually.

Resources: High.

Description: They're not quite military—they won't fight a war for you. But any other need of defense, security, enforcement—they're your men, women, and monsters. Mace and Blade have been serving the small- to medium-scale security needs of the realm for dozens of generations.

Membership: Requires fighting prowess, so certainly at least one class level in a hand-to-hand combat discipline. But no class is ruled out, as some clients would prefer their security forces to be less obviously brutish. To gain membership, all that's needed is the Tribute described below, and a brief demonstration of one's abilities.

Members: All walks of life, all races, and all classes. Adventurers may belong part-time as a means of a stable income to augment their dragon-slaying, dungeon-diving attempts.

Common Traits: They all have some combat ability, and most have seen combat themselves.

Demeanor: Members are proud of the faction and its services. They will freely discuss their membership and anything they know about the group.

Tribute & Dues: Mace and Blade requires a Tribute of 1% of gained wealth, kept by the faction for its own purposes. Those wishing to Tribute to the faction may pay an additional 1% or more as they desire. There is an informal, and rarely enforced, expectation that the higher one's "rank" within the organization, the greater the percentage of tribute should be.

Emerald Garden



Icon / Badge: A green leaf, or leaves, against a dark field.

Type: Outreach / support and defenders of a belief.

Alignments: Neutral Good almost exclusively, with some Chaotic Good.

Motivations: To help the growth and sustenance of all life.

Day-to-Day Goals: Keep people fed and prosperous, and preserve nature.

Long-Term Goals: Encourage the growth and diversity of life in the realm.

Notable Philosophies: Magic is the essence of life, given physical effect.

Influence: Below Average.

Reputation: Fair. It's hard to argue with the group's goals or motivation, but most others feel as though there are much more pressing matters that need to be addressed before we devote energy to helping trees grow. "Life grows fine enough without our help" tends to be a popular criticism from outsiders.

Age: Ancient (though with different names over the years).

Leadership: A Circle of Seers, a group of 7 elder members, makes leadership decisions. Seers typically serve a life-long commitment once appointed, regardless of infirmity or insanity... mental instability or impairment is viewed to be simply another part of life, and must therefore be part of the plan of life, so including that perspective actually helps rather than hinders the diversity of opinion.

Size: Large (100-500 members).

Stability: Highly Stable.

Enemies: Any faction whose purpose involves preventing or destroying life of any kind. Military factions tend to be enemies.

Allies: Any other group that aims to help life that finds itself threatened.

Resources: Low. Farms, gardens, forests, and parks tend to be under their protection, but these rarely require protection.

Description: Benevolent do-gooders with an ultimate goal of helping all life, the Emerald Garden is a loosely-organized group of

Membership: All magic is respected and revered, though its use is not required for membership. Rangers, druids, and

clerics aligned with a life-oriented deity are very popular.

Members: Will calmly and rationally tell you how all governments and militaries are in the business of preventing life. Many retired adventurers of certain classes are among their ranks.

Common Traits: They're not all vegetarians or vegans, and many wear leather armor and other products taken from the lives of animals. Their efforts are focused on the long view—helping life flourish all over. They recognize that some life (e.g., people!) requires that other life (e.g., apples, cattle) be sacrificed that it might thrive.

Demeanor: Tend to be calm, serene, and know a lot about history.

Tribute & Dues: The Emerald Garden asks a Tribute of 1% of gained wealth, kept by the faction for its own purposes. Those wishing to Tribute to the faction may pay an additional 1% or more as they desire.

This is rarely enforced, however, and faction leaders in various areas have gotten in trouble with authorities and in some cases the gods themselves at not collecting and coordinating tribute properly.

Almost exclusively, retained tribute is used to purchase land, either to gift to members to farm and maintain, or to prevent its use for other purposes that would be counter to the group's aims.

Wild Kingdom



Icon / Badge: Golden long-grass against a dark (or no) field.

Type: Exploration, warfare, and adventure.

Alignments: Any are allowed and accepted.

Motivations: Help countries wage war, see the world, have fun.

Day-to-Day Goals: Explore and travel the world.

Long-Term Goals: Visit every region, wage war with successful armies, and "see it all".

Notable Philosophies: No matter how long you live, and how far you travel, there are always lands and wars yet to explore and fight.

Influence: Average.

Reputation: Good. Soldiers are often necessary, and Wild Kingdom members make outstanding adventuring companions.

Age: Very old (100+ years).

Leadership: Tribal Council of 5 leaders makes decisions. Officially, each of these positions may be challenged by any member at a ceremony once a year; in times past, the challenger must defeat and slay the incumbent in single combat to take the seat.

These days, succession decisions are political, and arrived at months ahead of time. The ceremony of challenge and combat is vestigial, and instead of death, the retiring Council member will lay down their sword, and beg mercy, which is then granted by the challenger, who assumes the seat thereafter.

Size: Huge (1,000-5,000 members).

Stability: Stable. Membership surges during wartime, and declines sharply when the battle is actually fought.

Enemies: The faction itself rarely wars with other groups, though almost by definition, members are part of warring forces. Wild Kingdom struggles to remain, or at least appear, neutral, apart from and above politics of the realm.

Allies: Any other military faction, so long as their ranks are on the side for which the Kingdom fights at the moment.

Resources: Average. Although an enormous population of members, attrition by combat (and dangerous exploration!) is unavoidable.

Description: Exploring the world without fear, and fighting the realm's wars for them—that's the life of a member of the Wild Kingdom. A martial faction devoted to warfare and exploration, Wild Kingdom has been fighting wars and slaying dragons for a hundred years.

Although detractors criticize them for being mercenaries and believing in no true cause, they will point out that they fight for the truest purpose: exploration and experience. No matter your politics or background, these are heady intoxicants to the stalwart.

Members of this faction are a favorite of caravans, merchants, and those wishing a combination of security and adventuring. Some are hired as bodyguards for well-to-do novice adventurers; they're also great resources to fill out the ranks of an adventuring party.

Membership: Sign here, and pay your tribute; congratulations, you're now a member. If you're looking to go adventuring, let us know; there's lots of your new colleagues who would love another sword at their side.

Members: Barbarians, fighters, warriors, ex-soldiers, mercenaries... even a few paladins who are disgruntled or bored.

Common Traits: A sense of adventure and a bold outlook on life. And weapons. Lots of weapons.

Demeanor: Most Wild Kingdom members will regale you with tales of their exploits. Although not a formal military, members have a great deal of respect for one another, and by default will stand shoulder-to-shoulder with anyone if they're a known member.

Tribute & Dues: As an enormous, pseudo-military organization, the Wild Kingdom requires a Tribute of 1% of gained wealth, kept by the faction for its own purposes. Those wishing to Tribute to the faction may pay an additional 1% or more as they desire.

Although most factions collect tribute once a year, Wild Kingdom members tend to embrace a higher degree of volatility in their deeds... and so, the group collects their tribute from a given member whenever they are "back in town", so to speak, or in between wars or quests.

Adamantium Trail

Icon / Badge: A white signpost.

Type: Merchant and trade guild.

Alignments: All are allowed and represented.

Motivations: Money, trade, and the flow of product within the realm.



Day-to-Day Goals: Conduct and expand business.

Long-Term Goals: Gain money, influence, and control the economy. Though most members recognize that the group is composed of selfish, personally-focused businesspeople, and organizing toward some greater purpose is a huge challenge.

Notable Philosophies: Buy it for one gold piece, sell it for two.

Influence: High.

Reputation: Good. Though some will call them money-grubbing profiteers, it's unavoidable that ultimately, everyone benefits from trade.

Age: Very old (200 years).

Leadership: A single Trailmaster leads. She buys her way into the position, outbidding her competitors in a fiscal ceremony that occurs every five years (or upon the death of an existing Trailmaster).

Size: Huge (500-1,000 members).

Stability: Highly Stable.

Enemies: Other trade guilds.

Allies: Also other trade guilds. Depends how profitable the other party is being in comparison.

Resources: Significant. Even a poor merchant tends to still do well.

Description: There are many trade guilds and merchant organizations. The Adamantium Trail attempts to unite all traders under a common banner--some sub-factions have been applying this a bit aggressively, of late.

Today, they are slowly morphing into a mafia kind of situation, edging out solitary and family-owned businesses and smaller guilds as their power and profit grow.

Membership: If you buy and sell, you may apply. To prove your worth, you are given a single platinum piece; your job is to generate at least 10 pp from it using your skills, connections, and knowledge. You have as much time as you like to do so; some members take more than a year to complete the task, but if they're successful, they're admitted.

Members: Most wear the icon of the faction—embroidered into their clothes, emblazoned on their wagons, or carved into their shop.

Common Traits: There are very, very few members who are not active traders or who own a stake in a mercantile company.

Demeanor: Always out to cut a deal, Adamantium Trail members are hustlers by nature.

Tribute & Dues: All members are expected to provide a Tribute of 1% of gained wealth, kept by the faction for its own purposes. Those wishing to Tribute to the faction may pay an additional 1% or more as they desire.

It's an unspoken rule that the more profitable you have been, the greater percentage of tribute you should provide. Many high-ranking members tribute more than 10%.

In addition, intra-faction bribery is commonplace, particularly when vying for the position of Trailmaster. It's not uncommon for a new Trailmaster candidate to run unopposed and assume the position without contest... because she has

paid the other major contenders off so they won't run.

Squirrelheel Couriers



Icon / Badge: Squirrel silhouette against a light-green, easterly-pointing chevron.

Type: Guild of message deliverers.

Alignments: Any allowed, but Neutral alignments are encouraged, particularly Lawful Neutral.

Motivations: Secure delivery of messages, profit.

Day-to-Day Goals: Deliver the message.

Long-Term Goals: Help empower all factions, governments, and citizens to trust that communications are secure.

Notable Philosophies: With a delivery job, trust is the real product that's being delivered.

Influence: Strong.

Reputation: Excellent. They're reliable and take no sides.

Age: Mature (200 years).

Leadership: A single Head Nut coordinates things, but the faction is so decentralized and its members so autonomous that she hardly ever gets involved in most matters.

Size: Large (100-500 members).

Stability: Highly Stable.

Enemies: No true enemies. Some messages are of woe, and there is a tendency to blame the messenger, but such fury rarely survives for long, and is almost never pinned to the organization of which the messenger is a part.

Allies: None.

Resources: Low. Members keep most of what they earn making deliveries, as the needs of the organization as a whole are few.

Description: Nimble and capable riders from all backgrounds take up the scroll case and the saddle, though most are young and many are former (or inadequate) adventurers.

Membership: Requires performing a delivery for a current member, and returning in a time representative of a challenging pace.

Members: Loners who are almost always on the job.

Common Traits: It takes a strong combination of wanderlust, adventure, and love of being alone to hack it with the Squirrels for very long.

Demeanor: Are typically proud, if not boastful, of their guild and its service. Most jobs are secured via word-of-mouth, or repeat business.

Tribute & Dues: Members are required to Tribute a minimum of 1% of gained wealth. Non-members wishing to Tribute to the faction may pay an additional 1% or more as they desire. As most members do not belong to a particular city or village, this tends to be the only tribute they pay.

The Ever-Present Oculus

Icon / Badge: A golden stylized eye atop a black globe.

Type: Diviners, mystics, and fortune-tellers who practice

the craft either as entertainment, or for more formal purposes.



Alignments: Any allowed, but tend toward Neutral or Chaotic. Lawfully-aligned members tend to avoid the entertainment aspects of the trade.

Motivations: Enhance the public perception of divination as a valuable component of society.

Day-to-Day Goals: Help members improve their skills, get work, and communicate significant findings amongst their community of members.

Long-Term Goals: Move diviners into places of prominent power—every government and faction should at least have a vizier or spiritual consultant who reports directly to the king, chieftain, leader, captain, or leadership.

Notable Philosophies: How can you plan when you do not know? How can you know if you do not ask?

Influence: Below Average.

Reputation: Average.

Age: Ancient (>1,000 years).

Leadership: The Eye is the all-powerful leader of the group, though only

Inner Circle: 33 Lenses are senior officials who coordinate things on a more granular basis—typically each Lens is associated with a geography, city, or region.

Size: Very Large (500-2,500 members).

Stability: Stable.

Enemies: Most factions who derive their influence or belief from alternative powers—e.g., religions, wizardly powers of a nature not specifically oriented toward divination—look upon the Eye as a self-important cult who is trying to boost in importance an art that may have its place, but not in a formal power structure.

Allies: None.

Resources: Low. Diviners as a general rule tend not to be too wealthy, though some in well-placed leadership or counseling positions may wield enormous influence.

Description: Anyone with an ability to cast Divination spells, or anyone interested in the performance or entertainment aspects of the craft, band together to improve their lot and that of their art.

Membership: Requires demonstrating their talents to one of the Lenses in the Inner Circle, and having them advocate for their entry into the faction.

Members: Diviners, bards, entertainers, and craftspeople.

Common Traits: Almost always, members will have the faction sigil embroidered, branded, tattooed, or stamped onto either their clothing, or their own skin. This may be quite difficult to locate in the case of some members, however.

Demeanor: For those who actually do cast Divination spells, as well as for those who merely practice at it as entertainment, much of the impact and power of the craft relies upon willing suspension of disbelief on the part of the audience... or at the very least, being granted benefit of the doubt. As a result, members of the Eye may not be secretive about their

membership or the existence of the faction, but will wreathe their every statement and gesture in meaning and mysticism, whether it's merited or not.

Tribute & Dues: Members are required to Tribute a minimum of 1% of gained wealth. Non-members wishing to Tribute to the faction may pay an additional 1% or more as they desire.

Other Factions

There are numerous other factions in Aquilae—traders, guilds, bandits, thieves, assassins, governments, clergy, and so forth. However, none of them holds formal sway within the city limits of Berinncorte.

This is hardly an anomaly: most settlements in the realm are ruled from within by a small handful of factions, who among them wield total power. Outsiders as individuals may be welcome, but external influences are typically not.

Rumors & Lore

There are more than 100 pieces of miscellaneous information your party might come by in the course of this adventure. You might come by such rumors and lore by a number of means: conversation with NPCs, bribery, social skill checks with NPCs, as a reward for completing a **Quest**, and so on.

Below please find a handful of informational tidbits that form a decent starting point of understanding the landscape of the city of **Berinncorte**, and its complex tapestry of factions, people, and forces.

In reviewing these pieces of knowledge, take care: while some may be useful gems of intellect and observation, others are midwives' tales, and some may even be patently false!

Type	Rumor
NPC	The village Blacksmith once led a far more interesting life, but gave up a female lover and an adventuring career so that she could safely focus on her current trade.
NPC	A dwarven mercenary frequents the Tavern ; his talents can be bought for the right amount of coin, and he will ask no questions as to the task required of him.
NPC	Aramil , the apothecary, is forgetful, and will occasionally give the wrong potion to a customer.
NPC	If you catch her in the right light, a Cleric of the Zugul Church is truly beautiful—they say she may have been a courtesan, or an artisan's model, in her former life. Perhaps she moonlights still in such professions!
NPC	The Sheergath Temple's Elder is a woman of exorbitant tastes, and unsatiable desires.
NPC	Berinncorte's resident seamstress has talents far beyond this humble town. She stays here only out of love for her husband.
Setting	There's only one entrance or exit into or out of the city: the City Gates.

Type	Rumor
Setting	Dark, evil Fey powers rest, patient and vile, underneath the beauty of the City Gardens .
Setting	Some say that in a city of this size, it's normal to have some sort of repository for water, in case of emergencies—either to provide clean drinking water to the people, or to aid in putting out fires. Nobody in town is aware of such a structure existing in Berinncorte .
Realm	Deep beneath the surface, far under the tallest mountains, there dwell the remnants of ancient creatures who ruled the Realm in times long past.

Dramatis Personae

Aramil Xiloscient (Apothecary)

Appearance

A half-elf he may be, but **Aramil** appears an amalgamation of sinister features from various races. His jawbone and facial structure seem reptilian, as though perhaps there is some lizardfolk in his family tree (there is, in fact, though Aramil himself is unaware of this as fact). His eyes are uncannily bright, vibrant, and soulful, giving a clear genetic tip of the hat to his elven mother. His insincere smile and gleaming teeth evoke the very essence of human deceit, and his physical frame and silhouette seem almost verminlike in shape and movement.

NPC 1: Apothecary (Aramil Xiloscient)



Ash "Executioner" (Militia Trainer)

Description

Though he pretends to be just another one of the lads, **Ash** is in fact something of a genius. His eyes speak to a wide spectrum of deeds witnessed and performed, and every once in a while, you'll catch something in his demeanor that makes you wonder: just how old is this dwarf? Where did he come from? What has he seen?

Ash will speak in generalities about experiences far and wide, but as though they are common knowledge, never in the specifics as to whether he personally has been involved

with, say, a certain war, or battle... or even if he himself has ever been to that nation.

Appearance

A tall, muscular dwarf with thick ropes of braided gray beard, **Ash** seems the quintessential trainer. He's quick with a quip, picks on his trainees constantly, and ultimately helps everyone become a better soldier and fighter. For a dwarf, he's quite tall.

Biggen Gurble (Library Reader)

Description

This charismatic, whip-smart halfling is too clever by half... so what is he doing as an assistant and reader in an average-sized city's **Library**? His colleagues **Gunnloda Balderk** and **Tudra Coppereye** suspect he's more than he seems, but they lack the evidence and the interest to press the matter, seeing as how **Biggen** does his job well and seems to contribute a great deal to the establishment.

With patrons of the **library**, he's efficient and personable, often so much so that he gets them to reveal much more about themselves and their purpose than they perhaps had intended.

Appearance

Small in stature even for a halfling, **Biggen** is a cherubic waif of a librarian, with spectacles perched at the end of his considerable nose. He's lithe and dexterous, and knows his way around the **library** like the back of his hand. His silvery hair is thick and curly, and frames his puffy cheeks in quite the adorable manner.

Brock Runnaheim (Stablemaster)

Description

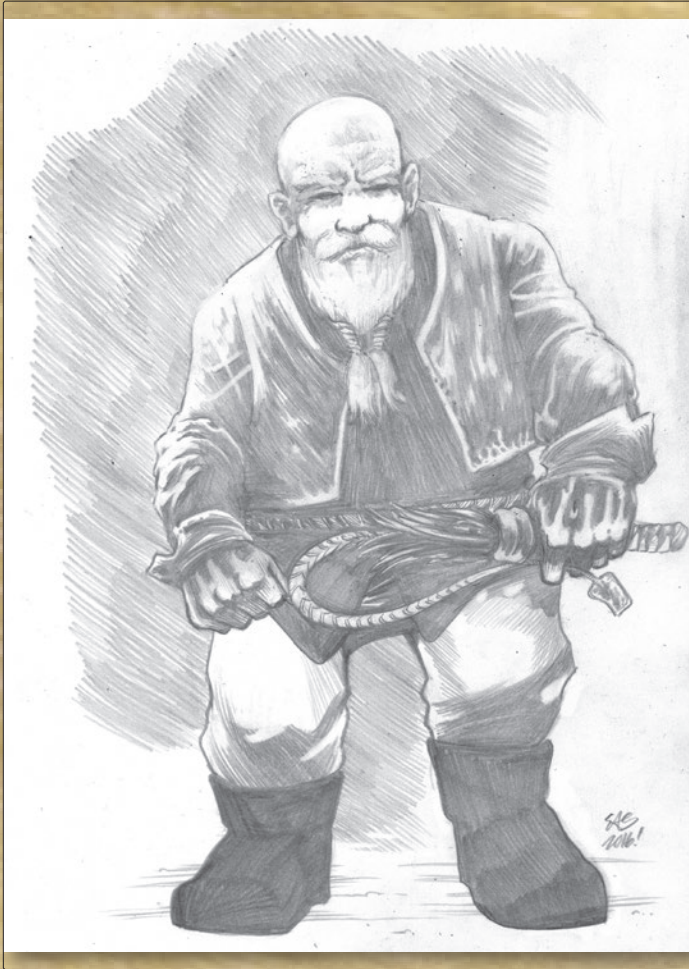
This solidly-built and aging dwarf is master of horse in **Berinncorte**. If the GM determines that the party arrives in the city via horseback, it's in his accommodations that their conveyances will be kept for the duration of their stay in town; this is a possible means of introducing the knowledgeable and helpful stablemaster early on.

Brock is comfortable and laid-back, an older dwarf with the attitude and demeanor of a long-retired general. He has a great sense of self-deprecating humor about a dwarf being a master of horses, but he knows his trade well, and is well-regarded among other townfolk.

Appearance

For a man who spends day and night in the stables, he smells not too strongly of horse; his location near the river helps greatly in his routine of daily washing. He is otherwise a stout and unremarkable dwarf of advancing age, with the elaborate facial hair to prove it.

NPC 2: Stablemaster (Brock Runnaheim)



Cannock (High Priest of Zugul)

📍 Description

As a former adventurer, his sermons are filled with slightly-exaggerated confrontations and tales from his adventuring days. If he lacks the outward fervor of **Denzys**, it's only because he feels more secure in his position: his church is larger, more supported by the village, with a greater congregation, and more beautiful grounds. This is in large part because he volunteered his church for the social support of cemetery, burial, and most of the healing and hospital duties, but the general mindset of citizens tends to be more lawful than chaotic in these parts.

📍 Appearance

Cannock was once a well-built man with broad shoulders sitting above a narrow waist, yet with agility and grace in his step. His recent life as a cleric has eroded much of his former musculature, but he retains the grace and broad shoulders, and above all, the kind and attentive demeanor that make him yet a charming man of the cloth. He bears a faint scar above his left eye; if asked, he will dismiss it as a remnant of a childhood incident brought about by foolish play. In reality, the scar was given him by a wyvern during his adventuring days.

Cannock (High Priest of Zugul)

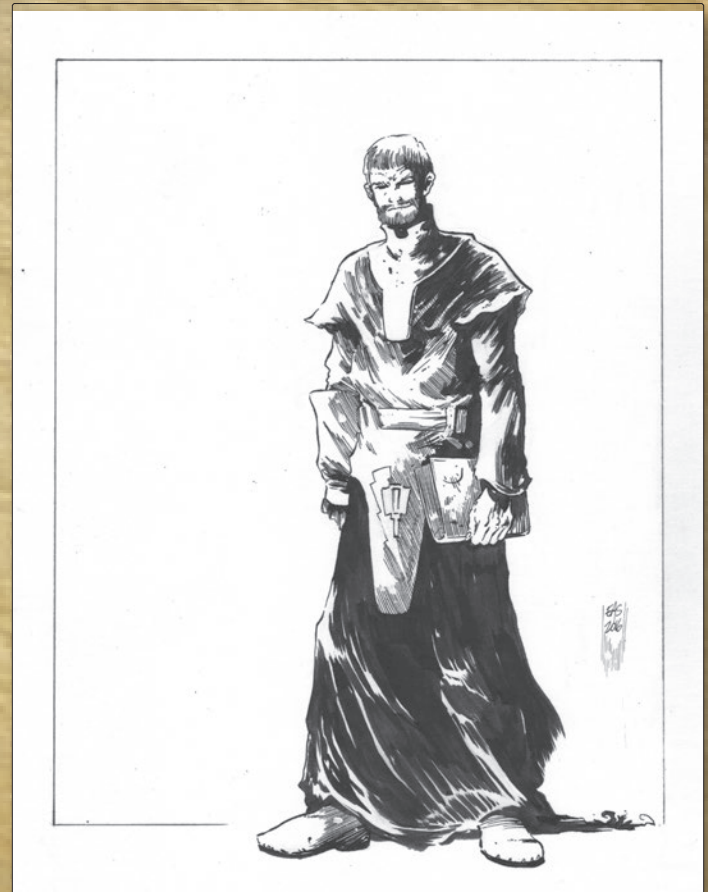
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NPC 3: High Priest of Zugul (Cannock)



Daratis (Seamstress)

i Description

Daratis does a fine job serving the city's clothing and textiles needs. She and her husband **Otibus** work together and alone at the shop. She and her husband tan hides in her farmhouse outside of town; in-town, she does the majority of clothing and non-metal armor manufacture and repair.

f Appearance

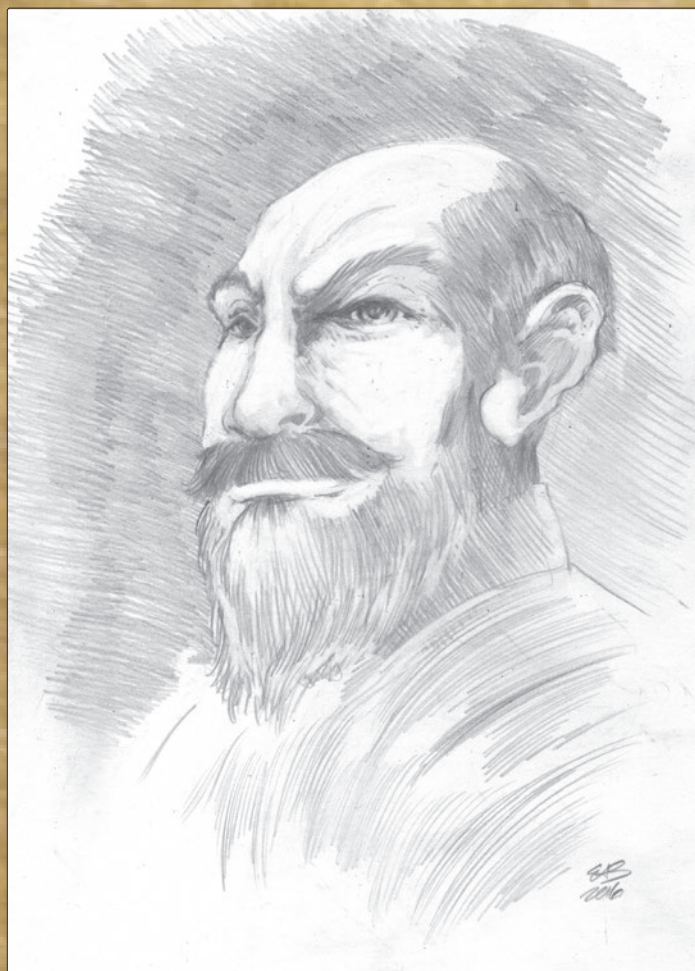
A middle-aged gnome with a heart of gold, **Daratis** gets in trouble with her husband from time to time for being too generous. He keeps the books and manages the money, and when his well-meaning wife gives away clothing and supplies to needy or impoverished patrons, it enrages him to no end. At the end of the day, the gray-haired, dimpled, and wart-nosed seamstress has a warm place in nearly everyone's hearts; to a person, she reminds them of a grandmother or distant relation.

Debran Ormrick (Militia Treasurer)

i Description

Debran is the treasurer of the **Berinncorte Militia**. He controls the purse strings of the town's security forces... and, to an increasing degree, the city itself. He is well-liked and

NPC 4: Preacher of Sheergath (Denzys)



respected in both the **Militia** as well as the government.

f Appearance

At first glance, **Debran** may not seem a soldier: he's more charismatic and nimble than brutish, and he looks like he could barely hold a sword. He tends to opt out of the uniform of his office, preferring instead to dress conservatively, but fastidiously, aside from a large garnet amulet around his neck.

Denzys (Preacher of Sheergath)

i Description

He and **Larissa the Elder** maintain a loose flock of between 10-50 brethren, depending on how things are going: in a bad economy, his numbers surge. Things are fairly good now, but even small numbers of his disciples rankle at the perceived order and lawfulness of the town. In particular, **Mayor Symms** and her perfectionist approach to running the town irritate the **Preacher**; he views her and the **High Priest** as being in cahoots... and if pressed, insinuates that he believes the two to be having an affair.

f Appearance

A grim man with little smile, his face seems persistently caught mid-smirk, as though **Denzys** has just now figured out a way to get the better of you... a secret that he plans to lord over you in ways that work to his will. He's a fine ora-

NPC 5: Blacksmith (Dimblegruffe)



tor, and a motivational leader, but only to those whose predilections already lean toward his faith and its aims. With a bit of early-onset male-pattern baldness, he's chosen to shave his head entirely, save for a bit of scruff around each ear—this makes him seem both older than he actually is, and (because it suits his head shape ill) less wise as a result.

Dimblegruffe (Blacksmith)

i Description

Berinncorte's resident blacksmith is a dwarf of no mean skill, who plies her trade day and night. Adventurers, common folk in need of tools, and of course the town Militia—**Dimblegruffe** serves all comers, and her work is renowned even outside the city's immediate area.

f Appearance

She's got greasy dimples and is gruff—which is pretty much how she got her name. With a bit of a misspelling when her parents logged her name in her home village's records; her mother told **Dimblegruffe** it was a smudge, from tears at how beautiful **Dimblegruffe** was. In truth, it was drops of ale from her father's beard, having celebrated the birth a bit too much the night before.

NPC 6: Mayor (Dominika Symms)



Dominika Symms (Mayor of Berinncorte)

i Description

A former adventurer, **Mayor Symms** only leads **Berinncorte** because nobody else will... and her prickly approach to things demands perfection. She's concerned about the state of the lower-class residential neighborhoods; if asked about the church disputes she shrugs and claims it's an ecclesiastical issue that she wants no part of and has no role in.

f Appearance

Symms is a tall, imposing woman, lithe and powerful. She has shoulder-length straight black hair and is missing her left earlobe; her businesslike demeanor and position of power have meant that it's incredibly rare for anyone to ask her about this, and when asked, she likes to glare the questioner down until they change the subject on their own. In truth, it's an emotionally-painful reminder of her failure to her lover during her adventuring days. Her eyes are a bit sunken, her cheekbones high—but not pronounced enough to grant her the distracting comeliness of her fairer rivals. Hers is a stark, intimidating form of beauty, and she likes it that way—it forces those who deal with her to see her first as an administrator, second as a woman.

Esk (Innkeeper)

i Description

As one of the only lizardfolk in **Berinncorte**, and as its only Summoner, **Esk** takes a little getting used to... but is generally as pleasant as can be. He knows he's an aberration in these parts, and goes the extra mile not just to fit in, but to avoid conflict.

He claims to have no opinion on any matters, but can always be relied upon to point you in the right direction to someone who can opine.

f Appearance

To a humanoid observer, **Esk** seems both alien and quite human—he's quite strong and nimble, but most folk don't notice, particularly if they've never seen lizardfolk. He dresses conservatively and simply, and prefers dark blue and white colors. When outside, he prefers cloaks with hoods so as to minimize the impact of his uncommon appearance on those who might be prejudiced against strange races.

Ganyc (Butcher)

i Description

Ganyc is a solid butcher—he might be great at it, or merely competent, but there's nothing so complex in his profession that would allow you to tell the difference. Animals in the area are straightforward, simple, and not difficult to butcher and break down into sellable portions. He does his job well enough, but keeps to himself. This is partly his own preference and demeanor, but also brought about by his trade; not many want to hang out with a man elbows-deep in offal.

Appearance

The stereotypical image of a village butcher is an overweight, balding, sweating, and somewhat burly middle-aged man who swears a lot. **Ganyc** does not fail to deliver on this ideal, if ideal it might be called.

Gorin Bakelight (Tribute Magister)

Description

Gorin is a greedy, selfish, jerk of a man with a knack for finances and accounting—and with just enough of an occasional ability to turn on the charm and press the flesh when the circumstances demand it. His skills and personality are tailor-made for his role as **Tribute Magister**: sociable enough to impress political allies and religious zealots, yet vehemently introverted and snooty enough to form no lasting friendships (and thus maintain his impartiality).

Appearance

Gorin is a pale, nearly-middle-aged, balding man with a burgeoning paunch. That his underlying physical architecture and habits have doomed him to a life of eventual obesity seems nearly guaranteed; a somewhat early demise from heart disease or gout would appear to be a similarly foregone event. His eyes are somewhat sunken, and his chins doubled; his ears are tiny little things that still manage to stick out from his head sufficiently to give the subtextual impression of goblinoid appearance. Yet when he speaks, it's with the voice of a chorus of demanding angels—a deep baritone, as though the human throat had been fashioned into a divine trumpet. He's far from perfect, but seems altogether balanced sufficiently to have it all work to his favor.

Gumbrew (Fishmaster)

Description

Trained as a barbarian, **Gumbrew** didn't take to it at all, all he wants to do is fish in peace. Although master of the fishery, he turns the public-facing aspects of things (sales, negotiations) to his apprentice **Stewy**.

One might wonder at the circumstances by which a burly, tall, and hardy half-orc such as **Gumbrew** came to be a simple fisherman. There are many theories the townsfolk whisper to one another, but the truth is far from sinister: he simply prefers this sort of life. Simple, peaceful, and quiet, where he can go about his business without owing allegiance or money to anyone.

It's an odd sight, a middle-aged, peaceful half-orc, whistling to himself as he fishes in the river.

Appearance

Gumbrew is large and sturdy, even by half-orc standards. He has slightly grayish skin, but the effect is one glimpsed most out of the corner of one's eye; he seems normal when viewed head-on. His teeth are thick and unsharp, his hair disheveled; his general appearance is unkempt and laid-back. He dresses casually and simply, and owns but three pairs of clothes as he can wash them in the river as often as he likes.

Gunnloda Balderk (Librarian)

Description

Jack of all trades, master of... well, many of them, actually; that's **Berinncorte's** librarian, **Gunnloda**. Spine a bit hunched, eyes a bit pinched, she is every of her few inches a book-mongering literate.

Appearance

Gunnloda is approaching middle-age, but has the bearing and demeanor of a dwarf twice her years; she actually paints her hair white so as to appear a bit more venerable (and thus, she believes, more respectable and wise).

Whether this technique is effective or necessary, it almost doesn't matter: as the woman in charge of the town's only source of terrestrial wisdom, **Gunnloda** is in a unique position and is taken seriously and respected regardless of any trickery.

Gurth (Cryptkeeper)

Description

No way around it—**Gurth** is an unsavory gnome, but he likes it that way. He keeps to himself, even actively avoiding other people whenever possible.

NPC 7: Jester / Greeter (Hueykins)



† Appearance

He's a crusty, filthy, and altogether unpleasant-looking example of his race. Townsfolk joke that he's never taken a bath—but soberly, some wonder whether how often he bathes. His clothes are tattered and soiled, and his hair is greasy with bits of twig inexplicably here and there.

Hueykins (Jester)

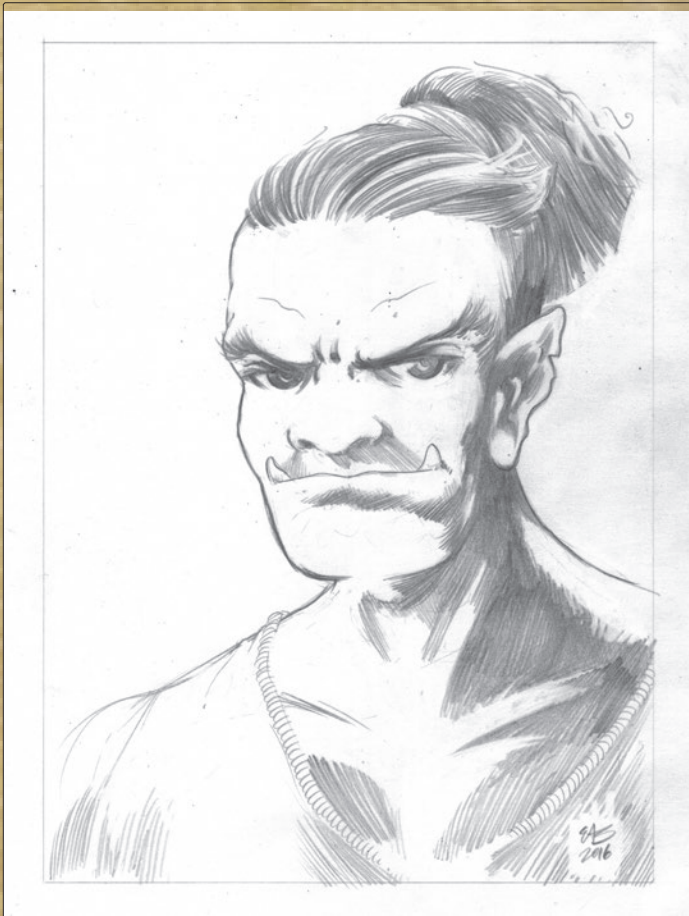
† Description

In a regal, court setting, this bard would be a fool, a jester—but hanging out by the city gates, his lively manner and good-natured cavorting antics take more the form of a greeter, an unofficial “welcomer” into the city. He's good with faces and names, as most bards must be, and quick to identify strangers. When he spots someone he doesn't yet know, he will swoop in with an impromptu performance to catch their attention, then welcome them to the city.

† Appearance

Hueykins is a bizarre, nimble little man. His clothes are garish colors, but the nature of his armor remains easy to spot. He has flowing, straight, shoulder-length brown hair, a moustache, and grimy fingernails.

NPC 8: Barkeep (Jozan)



Jozan (Bartender)

CR 1/2; XP 200

† Description

Jozan is a charismatic half-orc, used to unfair prejudice and used to shrugging it off. He suspects he's capable of much more in life—either as an adventurer, a mercenary, or as a merchant of more than just a simple bar... but he likes it this way. The word that best describes him is comfortable.

† Appearance

There's a notch in one of his ears; not even Jozan himself recalls how it got to be that way, but the tale he tells is that his mother thought it would be cute. His smile is broad and welcoming, and he has a knack for including each and every patron in his gaze as he works. None feel as though they wait for a drink, even when they are in fact waiting.

Larissa (Elder of Sheergath)

† Description

Her powerful voice, her command of language, and her intimidating glare seem custom-made for her role as an elder of a Chaotic Neutral deity. She cherishes her duties and role in society, and sees her religion as a necessity, a balancing

NPC 9: Sheergath Elder (Larissa)



force to those (such as the **Mayor**) who would wish to control things unduly.

Appearance

A tall, slim stick-figure of a woman, **Larissa** is an imposing presence in any room. Slightly built, she has grown out her blonde hair to waist-height, and uses black dye to streak alternating strands to create a startling vertical pattern golden and black. Her face evokes her elven ancestry far more than her human, but her ears lack the graceful pointedness her race typically has.

She's well aware of the sexist perspective that many of her flock might normally have, and aware too of her un-imposing frame. Though her stentorian oration immediately nullifies any who would view her as unimportant, she nevertheless tends to arrive at the pulpit in full battle gear, wearing her entire array of weaponry.

Rumors say that once, she actually fired her crossbow in the middle of a speech, aiming it mere feet above the head of a congregant who dared to fall asleep during her preaching. Needless to say, all who attend the Temple of Sheergath now remain conscious the entire time.

Lingona (Bard)

Description

Lingona is a vibrant, free soul, born to bard. She lives for excitement, experience, and interacting with interesting people. Her lover, **Phadian Gess**, is of similar perspective, though of more criminal bent. It was he who talked her into their current coordinated racket of distraction and robbery.

Appearance

She dresses in comfortable, loose-fitting tops that tend to show plenty of cleavage, and men's trousers a size or two too large. **Lingona** is an entertainer, but also an opportunist; she dresses for comfort and flow, but also because it's easier to conceal weapons and stolen items. She's somewhat short in stature, but her personality fills the room when she turns on the charm.

Amadan (Militia Armsmaster)

Description

Amadan is a mysterious figure.

He is a wise, but mute, armsmaster, a man who collects jewels, both as trinkets, and as payment for favors from those who know (or suspect) he knows quite a bit more than he lets on. Whether it's information, connections, or rarities, **Berinncorte's** armsmaster has a whispered reputation as a guy who can make sure you get what you need.

His position as Armsmaster allows him the pick of equipment, and between his muteness and his reputation, none challenge that he might deserve the best arms and armor the Militia comes across.

Appearance

Amadan seems to always wear studded leather armor and

full combat gear. He wears a hooded cloak with myriad pockets within; rumors joke that he has everything you could want in that cloak, for the right price.

His shortswords swing in sheaths to either side, and an array of daggers nestle in bandoliers across his chest.

His eyes are a dull gray, like the sea at midnight; at times they capture and throw back elements of the color of his surroundings. This has an unsettling, intimidating effect to most who glimpse it.

Maghana (Cleric of Zugul)

Description

A former adventuring companion of the High Priest, she followed **Cannock** to the town when he decided to focus on more formally ecclesiastical pursuits.

Appearance

Maghana is beautiful, but her femininity is not so overpowering that she can't mask it with clerical robes and a general state of unkemptness. She has high cheekbones, a small nose, and long light-brown hair. In her day-to-day life at the Church, she struggles between looking the part of a woman of the cloth, and appealing to **Cannock**. Although usually quite solemn, this is due to her duties and her conflicted feel-

NPC 10: Cleric of Zugul (Maghana)



ings for the man with whom she works... her actual nature, however, is quite bubbly, and her broad smile is infectious.

Oneib (Salesman / Security Guard)

i Description

Oneib is an unlikely salesman, to say the least: once a rough-and-tumble caravan guard, he has lately turned his surprisingly well-balanced set of talents to a mixture of security and salesmanship for the **General Store**, owned by his good friend and longtime comrade **Welby Goodbarrel**.

Oneib's is a gruff form of presence, and his salesmanship is best defined as "here's the product; any questions?" However, there are many folk who seem to prefer that sort of straightforward, no-haggle approach to purchases. He walks around the store in full battle dress with weapons slung; clearly a bold statement as to his security role... but also, occasionally an incentive toward purchases.

f Appearance

His face is pock-marked, sandblasted from so many years guarding caravans and living on the road. **Oneib's** skin is scratchy, and his beard is an unsightly combination of light brown and grey. He's not burly enough to appear overly threatening as a barbarian, but neither is he nimble enough to make it as a full-on rogue or ranger.

Ota Kuiduru (Chief Clerk)

i Description

Trained as a monk, **Ota** now staffs the **Mayor's Office Reception Desk**, and acts as the city government's chief clerk. To bystanders, this may seem a truly bizarre turn of events, but **Ota** himself will point out that much of the day-to-day business of helping citizens navigate bureaucracy demands a calm soul and a serene presence to manage effectively.

In truth, the pairing of his skills and station seems to be to great benefit to the town, and **Mayor Symms** has come to rely upon the half-elf's steady hand and calming demeanor in executing the crucial duties of his role.

f Appearance

No trace of a smile can be seen in the half-elf's calm and neutral visage... unless you catch him in one of his common moments of dry wit. His jokes can be difficult to absorb, but those who look closely will observe a definite curl of the lip and twitch of the cheeks as puns and mocking analogies are delivered.

Ota's long brown hair is tied back in a severe bun to the top-rear of his head; a whisper of a moustache of the same color underlies his definitely elfish nose. Though somewhat slight in stature, he is brutally nimble in execution of his duties; it's easy to tell at a glance that the man was trained for much more than administrative duties.

Skutt Krundar (Militia Vice Captain)

i Description

The second-in-command of the **Berinncorte Militia** is a somewhat brusque dwarf with ambitions of power: he sees the time is nearly nigh for someone like him to take over either the **Mayor's** or the **Militia Captain's** position. He stops short of openly disrespecting either figure in public or to their faces, but it's obvious to any who watch that having to obey them both rankles the dwarf to no end.

f Appearance

Skutt is a tall dwarf with lanky arms and legs but a solid and thickly-built chest. His beard is reddish-brown with streaks of black; he likes to say that it looks like volcanic rock.

Stewy (Apprentice Fisherman)

i Description

He's a young, weakling apprentice to a half-orc boss who couldn't care less about him. And the profession he's apprenticing is *fishing*. **Stewy** has no illusions about his lowly station in life; he realizes full well that if there's a bottom rung on the ladder of society here in **Berinncorte**, it's him.

f Appearance

Stewy is rail-thin and sparsely built. His nose is a thin and sharp wedge, stark amidst his gaunt cheekbones. His forehead seems much larger than it should be, an effect of early-onset receding hairline. The young man keeps his straight black hair clean, but loose and long; it falls in a strangely soft halo to either side of his head.

He typically wears dark colors of simple clothes, and knee-high black boots—the one piece of obvious finery he displays.

Tansden (Militia Captain)

i Description

He's stern and tough and unrelenting, but fair, and sweet in his own way. Though it's merely the militia of a medium-sized town, the **Berinncorte Militia** is nevertheless run with military efficiency. **Tansden** has seen and heard enough of war that he greatly fears being unprepared, should the factions at strength in the area turn their greed toward his benevolent and lovely village.

Mayor Symms is attracted to him but has never pursued it given their positions; little does she know, however, that He's gay and sees this as a weakness, hiding it from everyone. he grew up in a family that viewed it as a sin, but what he doesn't realize is that nearly everyone in town wouldn't care in the slightest... and more than one young man in his service would welcome the news!

f Appearance

A handsome and rugged man, **Tansden** wears a full beard, neatly trimmed into severe lines. Even when not strictly necessary, he wears his armor and full kit of weaponry—he feels this not only sends a strong message to his troops that

NPC 11: Militia Captain (Tansden)



they should always be ready and prepared for combat, but it's also a means of keeping fit

With his heavy armor, longsword and heavy steel shield, he is the prototypical strongman fighter.

Tarsheva Hornwood (Landlord)

i Description

The strong-willed force of nature that keeps the **Upper-Class Residential District** running single-handedly, **Tarsheva Hornwood** is a cool, efficient half-elf who dominates any situation quietly and with a serene sense of calm. She has an uncanny knack for walking into a situation where one or more people are yelling, screaming, even threatening herself or others, and leaving the room some time later with all parties satisfied that their honor, or sense of being wronged, has been addressed... whether or not any “give” was actually given.

If you put a large handful of **Berinncorte's** most powerful and wealthy individuals together in a single building, there's bound to be drama and interesting occurrences. Though **Tarsheva** tries to keep a sense of secrecy to her dealings, and certainly wishes to maintain trust with her tenants, she's also been known to keep **Amadan** informed of nefarious goings-on around the building. Sometimes this is done for a price, and other times simply for the knowledge that she has

done the right thing by letting someone else know.

Through these dealings, **Tarsheva** has come to suspect **Amadan's** secret (that **Amadan** is in actuality a woman), but has never pressed the matter. She sympathizes with any number of possible reasons **Amadan** might have for being as she is and acting as she does, and none of it is **Tarsheva's** business. And neither does it matter to the landlord anyway; she keeps the possible secret not out of a sense of honor, or respect for **Amadan**, but out an obliviousness that it should even be an issue worth reporting to others.

i Appearance

Tarsheva Hornwood is a striking half-elf. Her dark brown hair flows straight to her shoulders; while on the job (which is nearly all the time!), she ties it back in a braid or bow. She's slender, and her arms appear too thin to support much at all, and she's constantly fending off assistance from her staffers whenever she lifts anything.

She wears conservative, but smartly-cut and expensive-looking, outfits that she typically has custom-made from **Daratis**; the two entrepreneurs have a good friendship and a strong mutual respect born out of camaraderie, similar senses of humor, and their shared devotion to church.

Tudra Coppereye (Sage)

i Description

Berinncorte's resident Sage, **Tudra** operates out of the **Library**. She's part of why the building is often referred to as the “Library/Sage's”.

She typically keeps to herself, isolated and in a strange combination of research and communing with... something. What, exactly, it is that she speaks to, when she's alone and the door is closed, not even her colleagues know.

Despite her bizarre habits and creepy practices, she's often consulted by those who are seeking answers, guesses, or something far beyond what mere books and first-hand experience can provide.

i Appearance

Tudra is a hunched, wizened dwarf with cloudy eyes and tons of off-putting black ear hair. Her movements are jerky, unpredictable, and spastic; they are the motions of something not quite dwarven, not quite humanoid.

An Oracle, she's prone to holding conversations heard one-way, with someone or something unseen. Some of these are legitimate Oracular séances; other times, it's more like she's speaking to herself, but aloud, and in a way that mimics those spiritual connections.

She dresses in multicolored robes and cloaks, often several piled atop one another. As such, it's very difficult to tell how large she is; a sizable percentage of her apparent volume is simply clothing of various natures.

Welby Goodbarrel (Merchant)

i Description

Berinncorte's General Store is owned by a childlike, che-

NPC 12: General Store Owner (Welby Goodbarrel)



rubric halfling. **Welby Goodbarrel** is a humorous, energetic chap with a taste for fine wine.

Appearance

Welby appears to be an indulged child, writ slightly larger: chubby cheeks, wet eyes, perpetually-tousled light-brown hair, and freckles dotting his face and arms. Nevertheless, he's a ruthless tactician and negotiator, and though his demeanor feels ingratiating and generous, he is ever focused on his profit.

He dresses in extremely fine, well-made, and hand-tailored clothes, with only slight embroidery: riding the line, visually, between appearing fashionable and excessive.

