

THE DM TOOL CHEST

# THE TALON'S MARK

## STRINGS OF POWER PART I

BARDS ARE BEING MURDERED IN HAVEN AND AN INVESTIGATION LEADS DEEP INTO THE HEART OF THE CITY'S CRIMINAL UNDERWORLD





## THE TALON'S MARK

**T**he *Talon's Mark* is a Fifth Edition adventure for **three to five characters of 3rd to 4th level**, optimized for **four characters with an average party level (APL) of 3**. A string of murders in the Glittering Quarter has the bards of Haven fearing for their lives. A deeper investigation uncovers a plot that eventually reaches into the highest echelons of power within the city's elite.

This adventure takes place in the Freelands setting and is easily adapted into an existing campaign that includes a large port city with various factions fighting for power.

### ADVENTURE RULES

The 5th Edition core rulebooks are recommended to run this adventure. A free copy of the 5th Edition System Reference Document (SRD) and basic rule set can be found online and can be used in place of the core books.

*A boxed description like this is meant to be read aloud or paraphrased for the players. These suggested prompts may be used or disregarded at the GM's discretion.*

In this adventure there are references that point to information presented outside the module. Magic items, spells, and equipment are *italicized*, and their descriptions are located in either the core rulebooks or the 5th Edition SRD.

NPC and creature names are **bolded** to indicate the stat block referenced for combat purposes. These statistics are located in the core 5th edition monster guidebook, the 5th Edition SRD, or presented in an attached appendix.

### STRINGS OF POWER

*The Strings of Power* is a three-part adventure series that plunges players deep into the intricate criminal underbelly of Haven, the city of crossroads. Throughout the series, the party uncovers complex schemes, navigates dangerous alliances, and confronts the city's darkest secrets as they find themselves inexorably drawn into a clandestine shadow war for control of the city.

In this first adventure, the characters unravel a string of mysterious murders, initiating their pursuit of justice that entangles brings them face to face with the Talons, a local gang of smugglers and thugs. The following adventures further plunge the party into a world of intrigue and treachery as they take on the underworld of Haven and its ruthless puppet masters.

Each adventure is designed as a stand-alone module that can be played independently of the full series. Parties can choose to tackle a single adventure for a shorter campaign or embark on the full series for a grand, city-spanning epic. Each installment builds upon the last, yet it also offers a unique and complete story arc. This design provides you the opportunity to tailor the adventure series to your campaign needs.

## BACKGROUND

Lenny Thistledown's hands were once strong and steady, skilled in the hard labor of the Waterfront docks in Haven. A cheerful grin always adorned his weathered face, and his laughter was a common sound in the bustling market. His sister, Juliette, adored her big brother, who was both her protector and a best friend to her sickly daughter. Life was simple but good.

However, as debts piled up and his family's needs grew, Lenny was drawn to the allure of the Widow's Web, where he would fight for gold and glory against both beast and man. His victories were celebrated, but his losses were devastating.

It was during one of these low moments that he encountered Daltos, the charismatic leader of the Talons, a local gang made up of disgruntled dockworkers and underpaid guards. Daltos saw potential in Lenny and introduced him to the more hidden aspects of Haven's underworld, where violence and money were intertwined.

However, nestled like a viper amongst the gang was Varik, a mage and former student of the Great College of Magic who had found solace in the dark arts of necromancy. A servant to the secretive Shadow Hand, Varik was tasked with ensuring certain influential bards in Haven were silenced. The Shadow Hand's plans were under threat by the members of the Gilded Jesters, a secretive guild of assassins whose members consisted of bards and other performers.

Lenny, along with other unsuspecting members of the Talons, became Varik's instruments in this sinister plot. His tasks grew darker and more violent, and the once joyful dockworker found himself trapped in a web of deception and manipulation. Under Varik's orders, Lenny and a select few Talons began a string of murders throughout the Glittering Quarter, becoming oblivious soldiers in a dark and deadly war. The streets of the Glittering Quarter ran crimson with blood as the city guard were unable to solve the murders.

Among the intended victims was the famous bard Mara, known as the Lady of Verses, but something went wrong. As Lenny and the assailants lunged at Mara as she walked home from her latest performance, something in him faltered, and the attack went awry. The slight hesitation was all the bard needed to cut Lenny's life short in a flash. The other assailants fled, leaving Lenny's slowly cooling body on the city streets as the first break in the case.

## ABOUT HAVEN

Nestled on the Breakwater Coast near Mt. Honris, Haven is a bustling, vibrant metropolis and the capital of the Freelands. It's a city of contrast, where ancient traditions meet novel ideas, and the sparkle of progress illuminates the shadows of the old ways. Districts with different characters, like the Glittering Quarter, the Waterfront, and the Sages Quarter, each hold their own distinct charm and mysteries. From the sunlit docks humming with traders from distant lands to the hushed whispers in the shadow-filled corners of the Undercrypt, Haven pulses with life, intrigue, and the promise of adventure.

For its citizens, Haven is a city of opportunity. Dreamers, adventurers, scholars, and beggars alike can find a place for themselves amidst its winding streets and sprawling marketplaces. Yet, beneath the city's bustling exterior, secret societies and hidden agendas weave a complex web, waiting to ensnare the unwary. But for those brave enough to navigate its complexities, Haven offers a chance at fame, fortune, and perhaps a place in history.

While this module includes all the information needed to successfully run the adventure, for a more detailed look into Haven, its landmarks, key NPCs, and secrets, refer to the *Haven: City of Crossroads* sourcebook. The sourcebook is a comprehensive guide that provides a more in-depth look at the city's history, politics, and the dynamics among its different factions.

## ADVENTURE SUMMARY

The adventure starts when the party encounters Mara, a local celebrity bard, who recently survived an attack while walking home from a performance. The party's initial investigation uncovers the identity of a slain attacker: Lenny, a dockworker who had recently fallen on hard times.

To trace the roots of this conspiracy, the party must conduct an investigation across several key locations within the city, including a waterfront market, a local fighting pit known as the Widow's Web, and a shady merchant known for dealing in stolen goods. Each location provides a piece of the puzzle, unveiling Lenny's connection to a local gang, his side job in illegal fights, and his family. Amidst their inquiries, the party faces confrontations with members of the Talons, the birth of a demospawn, and a rousing battle in an underground arena.

Once the links become clear, the party learns about the Talons' headquarters in a warehouse on the docks. The characters must either infiltrate the warehouse during a party or confront the Talons directly. Inside, they find evidence linking the Talons to theft but not to the murders. The real orchestrator of the crimes is unveiled as the expelled mage student, connected to the Shadow Hand smugglers, setting the stage for the next part of their adventure.

## STARTING THE ADVENTURE

The adventure kicks off as the characters are exploring Haven and enjoying the evening in the entertainment district known as the Glittering Quarter. Their stroll is interrupted as they pass an alley where an attempted murder is being thwarted.

Read aloud the following:

*As you stroll down the vibrant streets of the Glittering Quarter, the city of Haven unravels itself in all its splendor. Glowing lanterns sway gently in the evening breeze, casting long, dancing shadows over the cobbled streets. The melodious strains of a lute fill the air, weaving effortlessly with the symphony of laughter, chatter, and the distant clinking of glasses.*

*The spectacle of colors, smells, and sounds is suddenly shattered by a scream followed by a thud coming from a nearby alleyway. Rushing towards the commotion, you turn a corner to find a burly man in nondescript clothing lying prone on the cobblestones, blood pooling around his slowly cooling body. Standing over him is a woman holding a dagger, her elegant clothes splattered with fresh blood. An expensive-looking lute is strung across her back.*

*The clatter of armored footsteps echoes down the street as a patrol of city guards arrives on the scene. Their sergeant steps forward, her stern eyes quickly assessing the situation. "Stand back!" she commands.*

The 30-foot-long alley is narrow, with a couple of discarded crates and a broken wagon wheel on one side. The cobblestones under Lenny are stained with fresh blood, and the ground is slightly slick. A lantern, knocked over in the scuffle, provides dim light. The walls of the flanking buildings are tall and featureless.

## RUNNING THE INVESTIGATION

To ensure a smooth and immersive experience during the investigation, follow these steps when guiding the party through the encounter:

- **The Scene of the Crime.** The party can inspect the alleyway and Lenny's body. Based on their chosen investigative methods and the outcomes of their ability checks, provide the corresponding clues.
- **Engaging with the Characters.** Mara and Sergeant Zhalia are available for conversation. Their willingness to provide information will depend on how the party interacts with them.
- **Pointers from the Sergeant.** When the party uncovers clues indicating the assailant's maritime connections, Sergeant Zhalia recommends they investigate the Mariner's Respite at the Waterfront. She notes the locals' mistrust of the city guard and, if the party is hesitant, offers a reward of 100 gp for information that helps resolve the murders.

- **Charting the Path Ahead.** The clues should direct the party to either the Mariner's Respite or the fighting club, the Widow's Web. If they need additional guidance, an interaction with a local or a hint from Sergeant Zhalia can provide direction.
- **Further Assistance.** If the party struggles to make progress, consider using Mara to use her network of informants and messengers to relay essential information. Her motivation stems from a strong desire for revenge and the recovery of her stolen locket.

## FINDING THE CLUES

Characters interact with the crime scene, gather information, and uncover various clues that will guide their investigation. Some clues are immediately apparent, while others may require keen observation or knowledge checks to discern. Remember, even if the party doesn't uncover every hint, the provided comments from NPCs can help steer them in the right direction.

**Distinct Tattoos.** Tattoos across the thug's forearms depict anchors, sea serpents, and other common maritime images. A large, distinct tattoo of a wyvern is spread across his back. Sergeant Zhalia comments that "tattoos are common markings of sailors frequenting the Waterfront."

**Dockworker's Hook.** A sturdy iron hook, designed for hauling cargo, is attached to his belt. Mara comments, "That's a cargo hook. The dockworkers down at the waterfront always have one at their side."

**Battle-Scarred Knuckles.** A character inspecting the body who succeeds on a DC 13 Wisdom (Medicine) check notices the knuckles are calloused and scarred. A cloth wraps around his wrists, a style distinct to those involved in unsanctioned fights. Mara comments, "The way his hands are wrapped, it's a method I've seen with pit fighters."

**Written Orders.** A search of the body with a successful DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check uncovers a hastily scribbled note hidden in a small pocket that reads, 'Ensure the Lady of Verses gives her final performance.' Mara comments, "This note... seems like someone isn't a fan. It almost sounds personal."

**Brass Coin.** A character searching the alley for clues who succeeds on a DC 14 Wisdom (Perception) check notices a weighty brass coin sitting in a puddle. It is embossed with a chained fist surrounded by a circle of flames. Sergeant Zhalia comments, "This coin isn't local. I can't say that I recognize the emblem."

**Fishy Odor.** The character with the highest passive wisdom (perception) score notices a lingering aroma of salt and fish surrounding the assailant, suggesting recent proximity to the sea.





## CHASING DOWN LEADS

The party's pursuit leads them through the web of the Waterfront District, bringing them face to face with the mysteries surrounding Lenny Thistledown and a local gang known as the Talons (see "The Talons" sidebar). Their path is marked by whispers in a well-trodden tavern, confrontations in a bustling market, trials in an underground fight ring, and a pivotal encounter at a notorious fence's shop.

Inquiring about the peculiar tattoo or the brass coin at the Mariner's Respite begins the unraveling of Lenny's story. He's revealed as a dockworker with a penchant for both alcohol and violence. Further clues lead the characters to seek further answers from Lenny's sister, a notorious fence, and an underground fighting ring.

**The Sea's Bounty.** The bustling Waterfront Market is where Lenny's sister plies her trade as a fishmonger. Though she tries to distance herself from her brother's seedy connections, her conversation with the characters attracts unwanted attention. While she disapproves of Lenny's associations, she divulges that financial struggles have caused him to fraternize with the Talons, especially after engaging in fights. The Talons

confront the party, unwittingly tying themselves to the attempted murderer.

**Makum's Emporium.** Another piece of the puzzle is found in the hands of an unscrupulous merchant named Makum in the Grand Exchange. Mara's stolen locket was fenced here, and, for the right price, Makum can point the characters in the seller's direction, but first they must help him deal with a customer with a personal problem.

**The Widow's Web.** Entry to this underground fight ring in the Glittering Quarter comes at a price, be it gold or blood. Winning a fight in the pit earns the party a conversation with Lenny's former fighting partner, Grogg "The Fist" Stoutheart. He confesses Lenny's financial woes and his descent into working odd jobs for the Talons.



MARA

## MARA

Standing tall with an innate elegance, Mara (neutral good, human **bard**; see Appendix for statistics) seems to belong to the world of artistic grandeur (see "The Lady of Verses" sidebar for more information). Adorned in luxurious clothes that catch and reflect the dim lights of the city, she exudes an aura of sophistication. However, the bloodied dagger she holds tightly in one hand clashes with the ornate lute strung across her back, hinting at a duality in her nature. Though she attempts to convey vulnerability and shock, her aloof and somewhat enigmatic demeanor betrays a certain calmness and composure even amidst chaos.

**Trait.** "A dance of melody and verse is my spellweave; it soothes the savage azure wolves and coaxes stories from the tight-lipped monks."

**Bond.** "Each note I pluck, each rhythm I pulse, is a beacon for Lyra, a message guiding her back to me."

**Flaw.** "In the orchestra of my relentless quest, I often forget to play the tune of my own wellbeing; let it echo in faint whispers."

Mara nonchalantly provides the following information about the assault:

- The assault was a sudden ambush, giving her no time to react or anticipate the move.
- There was one other assailant dressed in similar clothes to the slain attacker and wearing linen bandannas over their face.
- Her missing locket is a silver oval etched with a musical clef note and held a miniature portrait of her daughter.
- She has no prior knowledge or any form of acquaintance with the attacker.
- The Midnight Masque is her regular performance venue.

## THE LADY OF VERSES

Amidst the din and delight of the Glittering Quarter, the Midnight Masque holds a jewel that outshines all—Mara, the Lady of Verses. As she graces the stage, her soulful melodies resonate with a power that tugs at the core of every patron. Her raven-black hair cascades like the velvet of the night, and her intense gaze has been the downfall of many a suitor who dared to meet it. But beyond her mesmerizing beauty and musical prowess, she epitomizes the pulsating energy of the city.

But not all is as it seems. Each performance, while a testament to her unparalleled skill, is also a dirge for her lost daughter, Lyra. As the last notes drift into the night, an eerie lament can be heard from an empty room in her Moonbeam Lane abode, echoing the depths of a mother's grief. The city whispers tales of the wispwalker, a spectral being rumored to have taken Lyra. And so, by day, Mara becomes a seeker, pouring over legends of the wisp, believing that hidden within these tales lies the key to her daughter's fate.

Her quest has not gone unnoticed. The Gilded Jesters, a guild renowned for their performances, lend their aid. Their support, however, comes with a price—the secrets of the city's elite, who are all too eager to have the Lady of Verses play at their gatherings.

A character who succeeds on a DC 16 Wisdom (Insight) check notices that Mara's reaction to the attack is unusually composed. Should they question her about this observation, she deflects with a veiled hint of her own capabilities, stating, "Sometimes patrons get rowdy, and a bard needs to protect herself." In fact, Mara is a member of the Gilded Jesters, a guild of performers who are also assassins and spies for hire.

## SERGEANT ZHALIA BRIGHTSCALE

A towering and imposing figure, Sergeant Zhalia Brightscale (lawful good, brass dragonborn **sergeant-at-arms**; see Appendix for statistics), stands out even in the diverse crowd of Haven. The shimmering brass scales that cover her body catch any available light, making her presence known even in the darkest alleyways. Deep gold eyes, analytical and resolute, offer a window into her diligent, unwavering commitment to the city. These eyes, although exuding a steely determination, also hint at the heavy weight of responsibility she feels. Zhalia's meticulously maintained city guard armor is not just a testament to her discipline but also speaks to her unwavering pride and dedication to her position.

**Trait.** "Order and discipline are the pillars of a just city. Without them, chaos reigns."

**Bond.** "These streets are under my watch. Every innocent life lost is a wound to my very soul."

**Flaw.** "Sometimes I push myself to the edge, forgetting that even I have limits. Can't I catch a single break?"



Sergeant Zhalia knows the following information:

- She's been investigating the mysterious murders of three other bards in the Glittering Quarter over the last month, with attacks in dark alleys and each scene devoid of clues.
- Zhalia suspects these crimes are orchestrated parts of a larger scheme within the Glittering Quarter.
- The Council of Seven is considering a curfew in the Glittering Quarter due to the rising crime rate.
- Rumors among the guards suggest there might be an insider aiding the criminals, casting suspicion on their own ranks.

While she's initially wary of accepting outside help, if the party can convince her of their intentions with a successful DC 15 Charisma (persuasion), she'll gratefully include them in the investigation and mention that Councillor Rorik Ironscale would accommodate an appropriate reward of at least 500 gp for any information that would lead to the capture of the assailants. On a failure, Mara instead offers to hire them as private investigators for 500 gp and convinces Zhalia to work with them. Mara hints at the stretched resources of the guard and how they could use all the help they can get.

## TALON'S HEADQUARTERS

Once the characters have deduced that Lenny was a member of the gang, they can learn about the warehouse in the Waterfront they use as a base from Sergeant Zhalia, Mara, or Grogg Stoutheart. Once the party is ready to face the gang, proceed to the "Talon's Warehouse" section on page 15.

SERGEANT ZHALIA



## THE TALONS

The Talons of Haven are a clandestine gang born within the ranks of the Doralli Mining Company, consisting of disgruntled guards and dockworkers led by a charismatic foreman named Dalto. These members, frustrated by their quality of life, have initiated a series of illegal activities, hiding within the company and utilizing their resources.

Specific examples include the theft of valuable ores from the company's warehouses, which the guards have facilitated by manipulating patrol schedules and security measures. Dockworkers have smuggled stolen goods onto ships bound for distant markets, hiding contraband within legitimate cargo. All while using the company's dockside warehouses to protect their stolen goods.

These activities are not merely criminal endeavors but reflect a deeply rooted discontentment and a thirst for justice. Dalto's leadership channels these grievances into orchestrated actions, and the Talons' secret agenda is aimed at a redistribution of power and wealth within Haven. While they hide within the company and exploit its resources, their growing influence and increasingly daring exploits hint at a larger ambition. The Talons' unique position within the mining company and their clandestine operations in the criminal underworld are shaping to play a vital role in the unfolding events within the city of Haven.

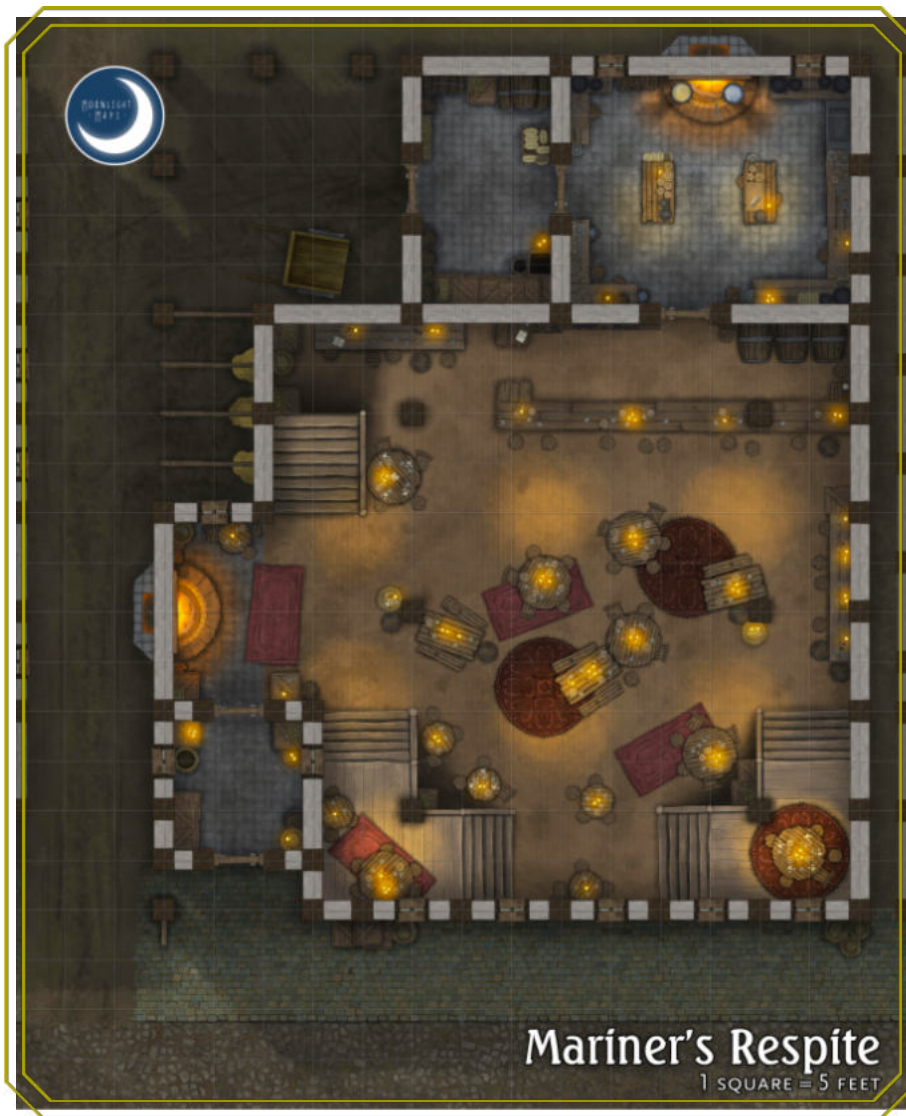
## HARBOR DISTRICT

*The harbor is alive with the resonant creaking of wooden boards underfoot and the noise of a busy port. A bracing blend of salty sea breeze and the rich aroma of fresh fish permeates the air. The rhythmic cadence of merchants striking deals punctuates the ambient noise, interspersed with the lilting melodies of distant sea shanties. Towering ships anchor, their sturdy ropes pulled taut by diligent sailors. Nearby, a gathering of dockworkers exchanged tales, their laughter and camaraderie echoing over their shared bounty.*

The Harbor District—known simply as the Waterfront to locals—is the lifeblood of Haven, characterized by its wide docks, busy warehouses, and maritime trade. Ships of all sizes, both for trade and defense, are anchored, making the piers a hive of activity.

Fish markets are a common sight, with vendors displaying their fresh catches and negotiating with buyers. Nearby, boat repair shops are scattered, their workers busy maintaining and fixing vessels. Taverns like the Mariner's Respite offer a place for sailors and dockworkers to rest and indulge after a hard day's work.

Between these more established places are a series of winding alleyways. These narrow passages, often overlooked by visitors, might conceal whispered secrets or lead to the district's less-known businesses. Some buildings bear the Marks of time and sea air, while others are built with modern techniques and materials.



## MARINER'S RESPITE

The Mariner's Respite, situated near the center of the Waterfront, is a beacon of warmth and camaraderie amid the bustling docks of Haven. With its worn wooden sign swinging gently in the breeze, depicting a sailor reclined in reprieve, it invites all who seek a moment of rest and refreshment.

The tavern stands two stories tall, its wooden exterior weathered from years of salty air but remarkably well-maintained. Windows, half-obscured by hanging plants and dried herbs, promise a warm glow from within. The ambient chatter and laughter spill out onto the cobblestone street, hinting at the jovial atmosphere inside.

Upon entering, visitors are greeted by a room alive with energy. To the left is a large stone fireplace, its flames crackling merrily and providing the primary source of warmth for the establishment. The walls, adorned with maritime artifacts and mementos, tell countless tales of the sea. Sturdy wooden tables and benches fill the space, occupied by a diverse array of patrons. Dockworkers discuss the day's labors, fishermen exchange tales of their biggest catches, and sailors share stories from far-off ports.

At the far end of the tavern is a well-stocked bar, its shelves boasting a collection of both local brews and exotic spirits. Behind the counter stands Cora, the half-elf innkeeper. Her hair, a cascade of golden waves, frames a face always ready for a smile. She moves gracefully, filling mugs, exchanging banter with regulars, and occasionally pausing to lend an ear to a downcast traveler.

Read aloud the following when the characters enter the tavern:

*As the door to the Mariner's Respite creaks open, a wave of warmth and jovial noise wash over you. The immediate aroma of seasoned wood, simmering stews, and fresh ale fills the air. A flickering fireplace casts a golden hue over a room packed with sailors and laborers deep in conversation and laughter. Maritime relics hang proudly on the walls, each bearing its own silent tale. Behind the bar, a half-elf with golden hair pours drinks and shares words with patrons, her laughter as infectious as the melody of a timeless sea shanty. The atmosphere, thick with camaraderie, feels like a balm against the brisk air of the outside world.*



## MENU AND SPECIALTIES

The Mariner's Respite offers a menu that caters to its clientele. Salted fish, hearty stews, and baked bread are staple offerings. However, the star attraction is Cora's clam chowder—a creamy concoction rich with chunks of clam and vegetables, seasoned to perfection. Many patrons swear it's the best remedy for chill bones after a long day on the water.

- **Salted Fish.** A popular choice, served with a side of tangy sauce Price: 5 cp.
- **Hearty Stew.** A chunky mix of meat and vegetables in a thick, flavorful broth. Price: 7 cp.
- **Baked Bread.** Freshly baked every morning, it's crusty on the outside and soft on the inside. Perfect for dunking into the stews. Price: 2 cp per loaf.
- **Clam Chowder.** The pièce de résistance, Cora's chowder is creamy, filled with chunks of clams and diced vegetables, and seasoned to perfection. Many say a bowl warms the soul as much as the body. Price: 1 sp.

## LOCAL RUMORS

Cora's talent for listening has made her a reservoir of information. Over the years, she has heard tales from every corner of the world and every depth of the sea. While she's not one to spread gossip, she has a knack for knowing just when to share a useful tidbit that might aid a troubled soul. The Respite, as regulars fondly call it, is also a hub for rumors. In hushed tones, over foamy mugs of ale, many mysteries of the Waterfront District are speculated upon here.

Here are a few local rumors going around the tavern:

- **The Ghost Ship.** Whispers circulate of a phantom vessel that appears during foggy nights, only to vanish by dawn. Some say it's the cursed ship of Captain Longstrider, doomed to sail the waters for eternity.
- **Mermaid Lagoon.** There's a secluded lagoon somewhere east of the city. Recent tales suggest shimmering figures dancing in its waters during the full moon. Are mermaids more than just sailor tales?
- **Treasure of Dagger's Cove.** An old sailor, deep into his drinks, often rambles about a hidden cove that guards a pirate's treasure. Most laugh it off, but some are listening with rapt attention.
- **The Lost Boy.** A child went missing three weeks ago. His family claims he was lured away by magical music, but the guards believe he's just another runaway.
- **Jenna's Cat.** A lighthearted rumor, yet still the talk of the town, is the story of Jenna's cat—a feline that has supposedly learned to mimic human speech. Some say it's just Jenna's ventriloquism skills at play, but others swear they've heard the cat speak.

## GM NOTE

While these rumors may not directly tie into the main adventure, they can serve as side quests, distractions, or additional flavor to breathe life into the city.

## LEARNING ABOUT LENNY

When the party inquires about the man with the Wyvern tattoo or brass coin, they get a variety of responses about Lenny. His involvement with Mara's assault and subsequent death is met with sadness, but not surprise, given his reputation. Through various conversations and exchanges, the characters can piece together the following information:

- **Lenny's Identity.** “Ah, that'd be Lenny Thistle-down. 'Drake', they used to call him on account of his tattoo. He'd haul crates by day, but by night? Entirely different, fellow. He drank like a fish and had the temper of a bull.”
- **Lenny's Family.** “He's got a sister, Juliette, who works down at the Bounty. She sells fish, she does. I feel bad for her, what with Lenny's reputation and all. Not easy, especially when she's got a sick wee one.”
- **Brass Coin.** “Ah, that there? That's an entry token to the Widow's Web. Only fighters and those in the know carry them. If you've got that coin, it means you've either got a lot of guts or a lot of trouble coming your way.”
- **The Widow's Web.** “Drake? Ha! I saw him fight at the widow's web a couple of times. He fought with the first a couple times. Ruthless they were, especially when gold was on the line.”
- **Stolen Locket.** “If it's lost goods you're after, especially around here, you'll want to check out Makum's Emporium. Makum's got his fingers in many pies, if you catch my drift. He's the one to see about 'misplaced' items.”

Any of the locals or Cora can give directions to the Sea's Bounty in the Waterfront, Makum's Emporium in the Grand Exchange, or the Widow's Web in the Glittering Quarter.



## THE SEA'S BOUNTY

Located adjacent to the active docks, this market thrives with commerce and is busy day and night. Vendors from across the Freelands and both empires display a variety of wares: luminous pearls, succulent dragonfruit, and daily fresh seafood. The Talons regularly visit certain merchants to extort money for “protection.”

Read aloud the following when the party enters the market:

*The cries of gulls blend seamlessly with the vibrant shouts of eager merchants in this bustling coastal market. Sunlight glints off nets dripping with today's fresh catch. Amidst the plethora of stalls, one modest fish stand stands out among the more prominent merchants. Here, a sturdy woman deftly prepares fish for sale, while a sickly-looking young girl plays nearby.*

Juliette Thistledown (neutral good; human **commoner**) is a seasoned fishmonger who tends to her stall while her frail daughter Siri occasionally breaks into soft coughs nearby. Siri's pale complexion and weak constitution stand out against the market's vibrancy. A suc-

cessful DC 13 Wisdom (Medicine) check identifies weak lungs as the cause of her chronic cough, a physical condition that can be cured by a *lesser restoration* spell or similar effect. The cost of Siri's medicine was the primary source of Lenny's need to earn extra funds.

When informed of her brother Lenny's fate, Juliette's face is a mix of grief and resignation. She was not blind to Lenny's troubles and knew that they would catch up to him one day. She willingly shares the following information with the party:

- **Widow's Web.** “Lenny had been going to that damned widow's web for months. He was both hooked on the thrill of the fights and the coin. My brother had a bit of a temper.”
- **Fighting Partner.** “He wasn't alone in this. He'd teamed up with a brute named Grogg. They always fought together and always drank together. It seems like they had a falling out, though.”
- **The Talons.** “He'd mentioned some of those thugs from the Talons came to him after a fight one night. I offered him something lucrative, but he wouldn't tell me what. I just said it was a game-changer.”



After Juliette mentions the Talons, read aloud the following:

*Juliette's voice barely fades when a cold interruption slices through the market chatter. "The Talons? An interesting topic." Figures clad in leather vests swagger towards you, the crowd parting to make way. The leader, marked by a jagged scar bisecting his face, levels a threatening gaze. "I might want to reconsider your interests," he suggests, his tone dripping with menace.*

The group of Talons consists of three human **bandits** and a dwarf **scout** led by a human **bandit captain** named Percy. They'll first seek to intimidate the party, holding off on overt violence unless they discern a direct threat or if they suspect the adventurers possess damning knowledge of their operations. If the characters mention that Lenny was killed in the course of an attempted murder, Percy's face flashes in surprise before denying knowing the name. A successful DC 15 Wisdom (Insight) check determines he is lying but is honestly surprised at the circumstances; the Talon's are unaware of the darker dealings Lenny was involved in with Varik. A successful DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion or Intimidation) check convinces the Talons to leave without resorting to violence.

DEMONSPAWN



## THE GRAND EXCHANGE

The western edge of Haven is home to a sprawling bastion of commerce known as the Grand Exchange, more formally recognized as the Marketplace District. This area is a symphony of negotiation and trade, with its winding cobbled pathways dotted with a myriad of establishments ranging from humble stalls to grandiose shops. Within the district, myriad tongues negotiate, cultures intertwine, and goods of every conceivable nature exchange hands beneath the radiant sun.

At its core, Merchant's Row pulses vibrantly, catering to both the discerning and the curious shopper. Meanwhile, the Coin's Toss Inn offers solace to weary travelers and adventurers. Yet, not all that occurs in the district is above board; Whisper Alley stands testament to the covert dealings that intertwine with the district's more lawful operations, serving as a reminder of Haven's dualistic nature.

## MAKUM'S EMPORIUM

Located in an off-street area near Whisper Alley, Makum's Emporium is not as well-traveled as the more contemporary storefronts in the Grand Exchange. Yet, its large wooden doors, bound in thick iron bands beneath a simple wooden sign, have opened for a diverse clientele, from simple townsfolk to the more sinister figures of Haven. The store is filled with curiosities from all over, and it's common knowledge that if you have to get rid of stolen goods quickly, Makum can make it happen—for a price.

Read aloud when the party enters the emporium:

*Dusty sunlight filters through narrow windows, revealing an interior dimly lit by flickering candles. Shadows dance over shelves cluttered with peculiar artifacts, some bordering on the bizarre, others straddling the line of legality. A goblin with piercing yellow eyes and a sharp nose stands behind a heavily scarred counter. He grins broadly and opens his arms in welcome. "Ah, new customers! How can this poor merchant help you today?"*

Makum (neutral evil, goblin **spy**) is a forest-green goblin with piercing yellow eyes who stands at 3 and a half feet tall. His weathered face and bald pate is lined by age, and silver streaks through his wiry black beard. A prominent, twitching nose overshadows his face, and he wears a velvet robe adorned with a gold pattern to show off his wealth. This shrewd merchant thrives on reading his clientele and skillfully navigating the gray areas of trade. While coin often dictates his loyalties, he holds a genuine appreciation for rare items and their collectors.



## MAGIC ITEMS AND GOODS

Makum's Emporium is a treasure trove of both mundane and magical items. Its wares range from the common to the exotic, and prices vary accordingly.

**Standard Items.** All general items typically found in a marketplace are available here at their standard prices, as listed in the core rulebooks. This includes, but is not limited to, common tools, adventuring gear, and basic supplies.

**Weapons and Armor.** A diverse selection of weapons and armor can be found, again priced as per standard rates. The stock includes everything from simple daggers and leather armor to more specialized equipment like glaives and plate armor.

**Magic Items.** The Emporium also boasts a collection of minor magical items at the GM's discretion. Makum prices these at a steep 50% markup compared to their typical value.

**Simple Potions.** Potions of healing, water-breathing, featherfall, and the like can be found among Makum's stock. As with his magic items, these are priced at 50% more than they are typically charged.

It's worth noting that while Makum's prices, especially for his special stock, can be steep, he has a reputation for procuring hard-to-find items. Bargaining might also be an option for those with a silver tongue or a heavy purse.

## MARA'S LOCKET

Makum doesn't know Lenny, but the locket stolen from Mara during the altercation in the alley was sold to him by a Talon thug named Jorran, who was with him at the assault. The fence also has an entry token to the Widow's Web for sale if the party missed out on finding the coin in the alley.

When asked about the silver locket, Makum's eyes glinted with mischief. With a flourish, he presents it, drawing attention to the clef and the image of the young girl. "Ah, this, my friends, is a priceless artifact! This belonged to a heartbroken queen. See that young girl? That's the lost princess, and this locket has the only known depiction of her. Quite the collector's piece! Yours for a mere 50 gold pieces."

There are a few ways this interaction can be played out:

**Intimidation.** If the characters choose to intimidate Makum into giving up the locket, citing the law or the illegal nature of the transaction, they must succeed on a DC 15 Charisma (Intimidation) check. On success, Makum's bravado falters: "Alright, alright! No need to bring the guards into this!" He reluctantly hands over the locket. "Just a simple merchant making a living, I am! Go take it up with Jorran if you want; he sold it to me and swore it was his dear old mom's. You can find him down at the widow's web."



On a failure, he laughs at their audacity and doubles the price to 100 gp.

**Persuasion.** If the characters opt for a more diplomatic approach, they can attempt a DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion) check to convince him to return the stolen item to the distraught owner. If the characters mention Mara, the goblin goes slightly pale (he's heard the whispers about her affiliation with the Gilded Jesters), and the check automatically succeeds. On a success, Makum hesitates, his eyes darting side to side, then leans in conspiratorially as he slides the locket over. "Okay, you didn't hear it from me, but the fella who sold me this goes by the name Jorran 'Stonefist'. Rough sort. Fancies himself a bit of a champ down at the Widow's Web. No need to mention my name to Mara, alright friends?"

Before parting, Makum taps the side of his long nose. "If you're looking to get into that pit, I might have just the thing." He produces an entry token, a brass coin emblazoned with a fist wreathed in chains. "For 5 gold pieces, this can be yours." He winks. "It makes getting in touch easier, doesn't it?"

## SURPRISE VISITOR

As interactions with Makum wind down, the large wooden doors slam open. A broad-shouldered, hooded figure stumbles in with a pained groan. With a voice laced in agony and fury, the figure accuses, "Makum, you cheated me! The potion... something's wrong!" Before the goblin can muster a response, the hooded individual's back arches in torment. An ear-piercing scream resonates throughout the room as the hood slips away, revealing the emergence of twisted horns and rampant scales spreading over once-human skin. In mere seconds, the agonized individual horrifically transforms, standing as a demonspawn with menacing claws and eyes ignited with flames.

The demonspawn uses **weretiger (hybrid-form only)** statistics with the following modifications:

- It is a Fiend (demon).
- It doesn't have the Shapechanger trait or a Scimitar.
- It has the following new trait: **Blood Frenzy.** The demonspawn has an advantage on melee attack rolls against any creature that doesn't have all its hit points.
- It has the following new action: **Flame Breath (Recharge 5-6).** The demonspawn exhales fire in a 15-foot cone. Each creature in that area must make a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw, taking 24 (7d6) fire damage on a failed save or half as much damage on a successful one.

Makum uses an amulet to cast a *resilient sphere* spell around himself as he frantically urges the characters to protect his shop. The goblin bemoans any damage to his goods and angrily criticizes characters who fight recklessly. As a reward for defeating the demonspawn, the goblin freely gives the identity of the locket's seller (see

above) if he hasn't already. Additionally, he rewards them with either the stolen locket and information about Jorran or their choice of a single weapon from his personal collection. He tells its elaborate history, but a successful DC 17 Wisdom (Insight) check reveals it is completely fabricated.

*"Ah, ah! Gather close, my friends, and let me recount the fabled tale of this weapon, one that I hold in the highest regard!*

*Many, many moons ago, when the sky was clearer and stars shone brighter, a singular event befell our world. A shard of pure, radiant light broke free from the heavens themselves, plummeting into our mortal realm. Now, this wasn't just any shard, mind you, but a piece of celestial brilliance!*

*In a quiet hamlet, a blacksmith of unmatched skill named Ildor beheld this falling star. With awe and reverence, he approached the crash site and found the luminous shard still pulsating with heavenly energy. Recognizing its significance, Ildor worked day and night, pouring all his passion and craft into melding this shard into this very weapon. And oh, the tales that have followed it! Passed down through the annals of time, wielded by heroes, coveted by kings, and now, it is my honor to pass it on for the next chapter in its illustrious journey."*

## THE GLITTERING QUARTER

The characters find themselves returning to the Entertainment District, or the Glittering Quarter, as it's affectionately known locally, bathed in the gentle illumination of multi-hued lanterns, presenting a feast for the senses. Nestled to the south of the Council Citadel and bordering the harbor, this district offers an enticing medley of sights and sounds, captivating Haven's locals and visitors alike. As night falls, the vibrancy of this district becomes palpable, echoing with melodies and merry chatter.

A maze of cobbled pathways reveals a rich tapestry of entertainment and culture. Buildings, wearing their whimsy proudly, are cloaked in murals and bathed in the lanterns' warm embrace. Popular venues like the Whimsical Lyre and the Grand Stage Theater provide spaces for talents to shine and stories to unfold. Meanwhile, the Painted Path offers a visual treat, with art vendors lining the street and selling their wares. And at the heart of it all, the Midnight Masque stands, its grandeur amplified by the allure of Mara, its star attraction.



## THE WIDOW'S WEB

Nestled among the opulent structures of the Glittering Quarter, an unadorned and unassuming building stands in stark contrast to its glittering neighbors. Devoid of any defining markings or signs, its mere presence emanates an air of mystery, drawing the curious and the brave alike. While the underground fighting ring is not illegal in itself, as the fighting is not to the death, the practice is frowned upon by the general public.

Here, the characters can fight for the right to enter Club Silk and meet with Lenny's former fighting partner, Grogg Stoutheart. After speaking with the gladiator, they learn that the dockworker had been working with the Talons recently, and Grogg ended their partnership when he found out.

### GAINING ENTRY

Two imposing half-orc **gladiators** named Brik and Brak stand guard at its entrance, their unwavering gaze enough to deter most. Stoic and unwavering, they remain unaffected by bribes or silver-tongued persuasions and are unwilling to discuss patrons or fighters. An entry token can be purchased from Makum or found in the alley after Mara's assault. Holding the entry token is akin to a rite of passage. Possession of this token as a newcomer binds the holder to an unspoken contract: fight in the arena to access the private facilities therein, where victors and patrons revel, conspire, and celebrate

in a hedonistic blend of luxury and secrecy. If the characters don't have an entry token, the manager, Letho (see "The Manager" below), is requested to speak with them. He agrees to let the party fight tonight, but they must fight every night for free for one week if they lose.

### THE FIGHTING PIT

Once the characters gain entry, the front doors open to reveal a 100-foot-long flight of stairs flanked by softly glowing orbs enchanted with *continual flame* spells; the fighting ring is literally underground.

An attendant at the bottom of the stairs leads them to a waiting room covered in bloodstains, both old and recent, with a stone door that leads to the arena. They are told to wait here until their time to fight, which should be shortly.

Once the characters are prepared to fight, read aloud the following to kick things off:

*As the massive stone door before you grinds slowly open, the muted echoes from beyond swell into an unmistakable cacophony: the roar of a bloodthirsty crowd, eager for the next bout. Beyond the doorway, a sprawling arena stretches out, bathed in the glow of numerous enchanted orbs set along the edge. Stone and sand underfoot bear the stains of countless previous battles, while tiered seating rises all around, packed with patrons whose faces are twisted in anticipation.*



When the characters are ready to face their opponent, roll a d6 on the Arena Combatants table to determine their opponents. The combatants and characters are introduced by an unseen announcer whose voice is magically augmented to carry them across the arena. A 40-foot-tall arcane dome that acts as a *wall of force* protects the stands from errant spells and projectiles. Additionally, those knocked unconscious are teleported out of the pit once they hit 0 hit points and given a healing potion from an arena attendant.

## ARENA COMBATANTS

### d6 Combatants

1	The Red Death (red dragon wyrmling)
2	Mr. Boom Boom (troll)
3	The Bone Boys (a minotaur skeleton and four skeletons)
4	Winter Soldiers (a winter wolf and two albino wolves)
5-6	The Widows (four giant spiders)

If the party successfully defeats their opponents, they are rewarded with a prize of 25 gp per character and given entry to Club Silk. Otherwise, they are healed up and told to come back another time to try their luck again.

## CLUB SILK

Club Silk, a private tavern and casino adjoining the arena, caters to those who thrive in the shadows of Haven. Dark mahogany tables are spread throughout, with patrons throwing dice, shuffling cards, or exchanging clandestine whispers. Velvet tapestries adorned with spider motifs drape the walls, and the chandeliers overhead cast a golden hue, creating a dimly lit ambiance. Hushed conversations mix with the clinking of glasses and the occasional cheer or groan from gamblers.

**Grogg Stoutheart.** Grogg “The Fist” Stoutheart (neutral good, half-orc **gladiator**) is a massive, sinewy half-orc with a physique marked by numerous battle scars. His olive-green skin displays the toll of countless fights, attesting to his seasoned history as a brawler.

If the characters ask about Grogg, the half-orc fighter is pointed out at his private table, enjoying a rare moment of respite, occasionally being approached by patrons either congratulating him on his recent victories or daring to challenge him for the next bout. If they approach him, Grogg is initially wary, sizing them up. “Who are you, and why do you come to my table?” he inquires dispassionately.

If they ask him about Lenny or the Talons, Grogg challenges one of them to a game of dice, his favorite pastime. “Win, and I’ll tell you what you want to know. Lose, and you owe me a favor.”

Whether they win or lose, Grogg eventually warms up to them, especially if they express genuine concern about Lenny’s fate. However, if they lose, he tells them the favor they owe is to volunteer to help out at the Hearth of Hope orphanage for a day. Either way, he shares the following information willingly:

- “Lenny got mixed up with those Talons, and it was no good. I’ve had my run-ins with those thugs, and let me tell you, they’re bad news.”
- “After I found out Lenny was taking on jobs for that gang, I had to cut ties. I couldn’t stand by and watch him go down that path.”
- “Every evening, those Talon goons gather in a warehouse, one that belongs to the Doralli Mining Company over by the Waterfront.”
- “Hearth of Hope is a special place full of real good kids. They can always use a helping hand to fix things up. You should swing by sometime.”



GROGG STOUTHEART

# TALON WAREHOUSE

Situated on Haven's docks, this warehouse is owned by the Doralli Mining Company, a wealthy and powerful faction within the city. By day, the warehouse is a bustling hub of legitimate trade and storage. By night, it serves as a stash point and unofficial headquarters for disgruntled dockworkers and underpaid guards who make up the Talons gang.

The complex consists of a large main warehouse, a smaller adjacent building with an upstairs office, and a connecting bridge. The main warehouse is filled with crates and various goods, providing a labyrinthine environment. A smaller side storage room and a central room for gatherings complete the main building's layout. The adjacent building's upstairs office houses critical documents and other evidence. Armed guards patrol the grounds and the connecting bridge, and a night shift composed entirely of gang members ensures the warehouse's security.

Currently, the Talons are celebrating a successful smuggling operation within the main room of the warehouse. The atmosphere is boisterous and filled with revelry, as the gang enjoys music, dancing, and games. The noise from the party could potentially be used by those attempting to infiltrate the building unnoticed.

## ARRIVING AT THE WAREHOUSE

The Talons are active during the nighttime hours, and the party must visit the warehouse during the evening. Once the characters arrive, read aloud the following:

*As you approach the dimly lit streets leading to the Talon's Warehouse, the salty tang of the nearby sea mingles with the smell of wet wood and tar. A hulking silhouette of the warehouse stands stark against the moonlit night, its weathered timbers and cold stone creating an aura of foreboding. A gentle breeze carries with it the vague scent of ale and sweat. You can see a couple of shadowy figures patrolling near the entrance, their low, grumbling conversation barely audible over the distant sound of waves lapping against the docks. From within the building, a faint but persistent echo of raucous laughter and clinking glass drifts to your ears, hinting at a celebration hidden behind those heavy walls.*

The characters can choose to approach the warehouse along the docks from either the north or south.

## GENERAL FEATURES

These general features are prominent throughout the warehouse, unless otherwise noted in the area descriptions.

**Ceilings, Floors, and Walls.** The ceilings in the warehouse are 40 feet high and 10 feet high in the side rooms, supported by sturdy wooden beams. Floors are made of cobblestone and packed dirt, well-worn by constant traffic, while the walls are made of thick stone, strong enough to withstand the coastal weather.

**Doors.** Doors within the warehouse are made of heavy oak reinforced with iron. Locked doors can be opened with a successful DC 15 Dexterity check using Thieves' Tools or forced open with a successful DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check.

**Lights.** Oil lamps hang intermittently throughout the warehouse's smaller rooms, casting an inconsistent dim light.

**Windows.** The upper floor of the warehouse is lined by windows protected by 1-inch-thick iron bars spaced 6 inches apart. A successful DC 20 Strength check can bend them apart far enough for a medium- or smaller-sized creature to squeeze through.

**Climate.** The warehouse is musty and damp from its proximity to the water. In some places, the scent of seaweed and salt permeates the air, mingling with the odors of the various goods stored within.

## KEYED LOCATIONS

The following descriptions correspond to the keyed locations on the provided map of Talon's Warehouse.

### 1. OUTER STREETS

The cobbled streets surrounding the warehouse are littered with piles of crates and barrels, along with loading cranes near the docks. Some of the crates can be climbed, allowing a peek into the windows of the common room in area 6. The distant sound of laughter and clinking glasses and the flicker of lights can be seen from these upper-story windows. Two gang members (**dockworkers**, see Appendix), Oliver, a lanky human with a sharp nose, and Grusk, a stocky oceanic dwarf with a bushy beard, patrol around the entire warehouse. Grusk carries the key and passcode for the back entrance (see area 1a below). Each circuit takes about 10 minutes to complete as they pass a wineskin back and forth, grumbling about their guard duty. Characters will have to use stealth or disguise to slip past the guards, who challenge anyone attempting to enter without proper identification. A successful DC 15 stealth check allows characters to bypass them undetected.





# Talon's Warehouse

1 SQUARE = 5 FEET



## 1A. BACK ENTRANCE

This smaller, less guarded door at the rear of the warehouse might seem like an easy entrance, but it is secured with a heavy lock. A successful DC 15 Dexterity check using Thieves' Tools is needed to unlock it. Additionally, an unseen *alarm* spell is set on the door, and the code to disable it, 'sparrow's nest,' is written in scrawled handwriting on a piece of scrap paper carried by Grusk. Unauthorized entry triggers the spell, alerting the Talons in area 6, who rush to defend area 3.

## 1B. LOADING BAY DOORS

On the north side of the main warehouse and the south side of the side warehouse, there are a total of three large, sturdy loading bay doors leading to areas 3 and 2, respectively. Above them is the bridge (area 5) connecting the office (area 2a) to the upper walkway in the main warehouse (area 3). The wooden beams keeping the doors closed from the inside weigh 50 lbs each and require a DC 20 strength check to be removed. Forcing them open is noisy and might alert the patrolling guards.

## 2. SIDE WAREHOUSE

Adjacent to the main warehouse, this smaller storage area is filled with crates, barrels, and tools. The room is connected to the main building via a bridge (area 5). Inside the crates and barrels, characters will find goods such as spices, fabrics, and small trinkets, many of which are marked with the mountain and pickaxe crest of the Doralli Mining Company. A character spending 10 minutes or more searching through the goods and succeeds on a DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check discovers a crate tucked behind the others with a stash of stolen silverware worth 100 gp.

**Poisoned Dart Trap** The hallway is protected by a pressure plate connected to a poisoned dart trap in the eastern wall. A character with a passive Wisdom (Perception) score of 15 or higher or who succeeds on a DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check notices the pressure plate. A creature placing 20 or more pounds of pressure on the plate must make a DC 15 Dexterity-saving throw to avoid the darts. On a failure, the creature takes 1d4 piercing damage and must make a DC 13 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned for 1 hour. The trap must be manually reset.

## 2A. OFFICE

This is the personal office of the gang's leader, Daltos, and is filled with documents, ledgers, and maps. The door to the office has a simple lock that can be picked with a DC 12 Dexterity check using Thieves' Tools or unlocked with the key found on Daltos. A search of the office reveals evidence linking the warehouse to the Talons' illegal activities, including shipping manifests and coded messages. The following items can be found on top of the desk:

- **Shipping Manifests.** Details of goods shipped in and out of the warehouse, with added annotations for those containing smuggled goods
- **Coded Messages.** Correspondence with other Talon members, written in a simple cipher that can be decoded with a DC 12 intelligence check. The messages include the names of various merchants the gang was targeting and guards who accepted their bribes.
- **Map of Haven.** Marked with the key locations of Talon targets across the city.

**Trapped Drawer.** A character searching the desk who succeeds on a DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check uncovers a drawer with a hidden compartment containing interesting notes and treasure. However, the drawer is trapped with a spring-loaded blade that can be discovered with a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check to notice the tension on the drawer. The trap can be disarmed with a successful DC 15 Dexterity check using Thieves' Tools, triggering the trap on a failure. If the trap is triggered, the character must succeed on a DC 17 Dexterity saving throw to avoid the blade or take 1d4 piercing damage and be poisoned for 1 hour. Inside the hidden compartment is a gold signet ring depicting a hawk in flight worth 50 gp, a pouch of small pearls worth a total of 100 gp, and a small iron key that unlocks the door leading to area 4 from area 6.

## 3. MAIN WAREHOUSE

The heart of the operation, this vast chamber is filled with stored goods, containers, and machinery for moving heavy loads. The high, raftered ceiling offers support for balconies along the eastern and western walls that overlook the main floor. The majority of the crates and barrels bear the mountain and pickaxe crest of the Doralli Mining Company and are filled with various supplies and tools destined for their various

If the gang was alerted by the *alarm* spell on the door in area 1a, two of the bandits (see area 6) came out to investigate and took up positions along the eastern balcony, gaining half cover as they use ranged attacks. Otherwise, the noise of raucous laughter, music, and revelry from the Common Room (area 6) spills into the space, giving advantage to stealth checks made in this location.

Two **quasits** lurk invisibly within the warehouse, having been summoned by Varik and ordered to kill any non-Talon intruders. They focus their attacks on spellcasters before any others, revealing themselves only when they attack.

**Crates and Barrels.** The piles of crates and barrels scattered across the warehouse provide three-quarter cover for both characters and NPCs.



## 4. SIDE STORAGE

An isolated storage room adjacent to the main warehouse, this area is filled with tools, ropes, barrels, and chests, arranged haphazardly along the walls and corners. The musty scent of oiled metal and old wood pervades the room. Large double doors connect this room to area 3, barred from the inside with a heavy 50-pound wooden beam. A locked door leads to area 6, and the key to unlocking it can be found in the hidden drawer in area 2a.

**Hidden Cache.** A character searching through the crates and barrels who succeeds on a DC 18 Intelligence (Investigation) check reveals a false bottom in a barrel holding piles of rope. Inside are two *potions of healing* and a *wand of magic detection*, along with the torn and bloody uniform of a student mage from Haven's Great College of Magic.

**Zombie in a Box.** Tucked behind the other supply crates is a large scratched and dented chest. It has an intricate lock that can be picked with a successful DC 15 Dexterity check using Thieves' Tools. Inside is a **zombie** that bursts out. This is all that remains of Jorran, the assailant who pawned Mara's locket to Makum.



DALTOS

## 5. BRIDGE

This narrow, open-air bridge serves as a connector between the side warehouse (area 2) and the main warehouse (area 3). A roughly built wooden structure, it spans 15 feet across and is barely 5 feet wide.

**Trap Door.** A concealed trap door in the center of the bridge can be detected by a character who succeeds on a DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check. Characters who step on the trap without noticing it must succeed on a DC 15 Dexterity-saving throw or fall 15 feet to the streets below, taking 1d6 bludgeoning damage and landing prone. The noise of the opening trap door alerts the patrolling guards in area 1, and they come to investigate if they have not already been dealt with.

## 6. COMMON ROOM

The common room of the warehouse is filled with the sounds of boisterous laughter, music, and spirited conversation. Aromatic scents of spiced food and ale pervade the air, adding to the lively atmosphere. This room is adorned with simple furniture befitting the warehouse aesthetic, creating a casual gathering space for the gang. If the gang has not been alerted to the party's presence, a character listening at the windows or the doors to this area who succeeds on a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check overhears the gang celebrating a recent lucrative smuggling job.

### THE GANG'S ALL HERE

Daltos (**bandit captain**; instead of a Scimitar he has a *scourge of striking*, see Appendix), a burly human and the gang's leader, commands the room with his cruel smile and swaggering demeanor. Power-hungry and unapologetic, he radiates authority and greed. His four loyal **bandit** followers join him in toasting their success while Varik (**novice mage**; see Appendix), a neat and ambitious young mage in a dark robe, sits at a small desk, studying his spellbook. Lastly, Lily, a charismatic half-elf **bard**, provides the room's lively music.

If the *alarm* spell in area 1a is activated, Daltos sends two of his bandits to handle the situation while the rest continue to enjoy their evening. Once the characters enter this location, read aloud the following:

*Raucous laughter reverberates through the room, where men and women with rugged appearances and flushed faces celebrate around a rough wooden table. A burly man with a cruel smile, unapologetic eyes, and a swaggering demeanor raises a tankard, while a young man in a dark robe, absorbed in a book, sits at a desk nearby. In the corner, a young bard strums a lively tune on her lute. The room falls into sudden silence as the leader's eyes fix on you. "Well, well," he sneers, his voice dripping with contempt as he brandishes a wickedly gleaming scourge. "Look what the owlbear dragged in! I don't recall sending invitations to the riffraff. Come to join the party or simply become the jesters?"*

The gang is not appreciative of their celebrations being interrupted and is more than eager for a fight. Daltos leads the charge in melee, commanding his followers to flank and engage opponents, while Varik supports with spells, casting *mage armor* on himself first, and then attacking with *fire bolts*.

## DEVELOPMENTS

Lily stays out of the fight but decides to support the characters if they mention anything about the Talons being responsible for the murder of bards in the Glittering Quarter.

If characters attempt to negotiate, a successful DC 18 Charisma (Persuasion) check may convince the gang to parlay. However, Varik is quick to interrupt, accusing the characters of insulting them if they bring up the murders. Varik attempts to flee if the characters convince the gang of a more peaceful solution, knowing his extracurricular activities will be uncovered.

## TREASURE

Among the spoils, the characters can find the following items:

- Daltos has a keyring to unlock areas 1a, 2a, and 4.
- Daltos's *scourge of striking* and a pouch with 100 gp.
- Varik's spellbook is on the desk and contains all the spells in his stat block, as well as doubling as a journal written in ciphers. The code can be unraveled by a character who spends at least 1 hour studying the book and who succeeds on a DC 17 Intelligence (History) check. The journal details Varik's exile from the Great College of Magic for unethical experimentation, as well as orders from a member of the Shadow Hand named "The Dread Master." The book is evidence that Varik used Lenny and Jorran (now a zombie in a trunk in area 4) to commit the murders, though the reasons behind these actions remain a mystery.

## CONCLUSION

After the defeat of the Talons and the discovery of Varik's ties to the Shadow Hand, Sergeant Zhalia is quick to take the surviving gang members into custody. She congratulates the party and rewards them with the promised 500 gp, as well as the thanks of the city. With the new information linking the murders to the Shadow Hand, however, the reasons behind the bard's murders remain a mystery. However, the streets can breathe easier knowing that Varik's plot has been stopped and the gang's actions have been thwarted.

## MARA'S LOCKET

If the characters retrieve Mara's locket and return it to her, she praises their adeptness and rewards them with 50 gp and entry tokens to come see her perform at the exclusive Midnight Masque casino. Her performances are famous throughout the Freelands, and she promises to dedicate the next one to their heroics.

## FURTHER ADVENTURES

The characters' brush with the criminal underworld of Haven has introduced them to a variety of characters with colorful pasts and motivations. While the true masterminds behind the murders have yet to be discovered, the characters are now known to a variety of interested parties whom they will meet in the next adventure, *The Haunting of Wisteria Manor*.



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## LICENSING

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The DM Tool Chest, Author TJ Phoenix



# APPENDIX

## SCOURGE OF STRIKING

Weapon (whip), uncommon (requires attunement)

This whip is made of black leather intertwined with silvery threads. You gain a +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with this magic weapon. The whip has three charges. When you hit with this weapon, you can expend one charge to cause the whip to crack with thunderous energy, dealing an additional 1d4 thunder damage. The weapon regains all expended charges daily at dawn. If you expend the last charge, roll a d20. On a 1, the whip loses its magical properties and becomes a mundane weapon.



### BARD

Medium Humanoid (any race), any alignment

**Armor Class** 13 (leather armor)

**Hit Points** 27 (5d8 + 5)

**Speed** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	11 (+0)	12 (+1)	16 (+3)

**Skills** Deception +5, Performance +5, Sleight of Hand +4

**Senses** passive Perception 11

**Languages** Common plus any two languages

**Challenge** 2 (450 XP)

**Proficiency Bonus:** +2

**Spellcasting.** The Haven Bard is a 3rd-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 13, +5 to hit with spell attacks). The Haven Bard knows the following bard spells:

Cantrips (at will): *minor illusion, vicious mockery*

1st level (4 slots): *charm person, disguise self, expeditious retreat, sleep*

2nd level (2 slots): *invisibility, suggestion*

**Street Savvy.** The bard has advantage on Intelligence (Investigation) and Wisdom (Insight) checks made to gather or understand information in urban environments.

#### ACTIONS

**Dagger.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d4 + 2) piercing damage.

**Distracting Performance (Recharge 5-6).** The bard gives a captivating performance, distracting all hostile creatures within 30 feet that can see and hear it. Each creature must succeed on a DC 13 Wisdom saving throw or have disadvantage on Perception checks and attack rolls until the start of the Haven Bard's next turn. This action doesn't affect creatures immune to being charmed.

#### BONUS ACTIONS

**Bardic Inspiration (3/Day).** The Haven Bard can choose one creature other than itself within 60 feet who can hear it. That creature gains a d6 Bardic Inspiration die. Once within the next 10 minutes, the creature can roll the die and add the number rolled to one ability check, attack roll, or saving throw it makes.

### DOCKWORKER

Medium Humanoid (any race), any alignment

**Armor Class** 12 (leather vest)

**Hit Points** 11 (2d8 + 2)

**Speed** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	12 (+1)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	8 (-1)

**Skills** Athletics +4, Perception +2

**Senses** passive Perception 12

**Languages** any one language (Usually Common)

**Challenge** 1/2 (100 XP)

**Proficiency Bonus:** +2

**Heavy Lifter.** The dockworker counts as one size larger when determining its carrying capacity and the weight it can push, drag, or lift.

**Seaworthy.** The dockworker has advantage on Strength (Athletics) and Dexterity (Acrobatics) checks made in aquatic environments or when handling maritime equipment.

#### ACTIONS

**Unarmed Strike.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d4 + 2) bludgeoning damage.

**Heavy Hook.** *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage.

**Brawny Bash (Recharge 5-6).** The dockworker makes an Unarmed Strike attack. If the attack hits, it deals normal damage, and the target must succeed on a DC 13 Strength saving throw or be pushed up to 10 feet away and knocked prone.

## SERGEANT-AT-ARMS

Medium Humanoid (any race), any alignment

**Armor Class** 17 (half plate, shield)

**Hit Points** 58 (9d8 + 18)

**Speed** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	12 (+1)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	13 (+1)	12 (+1)

**Saving Throws** Str +5, Con +4

**Skills** Athletics +5, Perception +3

**Senses** passive Perception 13

**Languages** any two languages

**Challenge** 3 (700 XP)

**Proficiency Bonus:** +2

**Standard Bearer.** The sergeant-at-arms has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks and on saving throws against being charmed or frightened.

### ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** The sergeant-at-arms makes two melee attacks.

**Longsword.** Melee Weapon Attack: +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 7 (1d8 + 3) slashing damage, or 8 (1d10 + 3) slashing damage if used with two hands.

**Heavy Crossbow.** Ranged Weapon Attack: +3 to hit, range 100/400 ft., one target. Hit: 6 (1d10 + 1) piercing damage.

**Command (1/Day).** The sergeant-at-arms targets one allied creature it can see within 30 feet of it. If the target can hear and understand the sergeant, the target can make one weapon attack as a reaction and gains advantage on the attack roll.

### REACTIONS

**Defender.** When a creature within 5 feet of the sergeant-at-arms that he can see is targeted with an attack, the sergeant can impose disadvantage on the attack roll. The sergeant must be wielding a shield.

## NOVICE MAGE

Medium Humanoid (any race), any alignment

**Armor Class** 12 (15 with mage armor)

**Hit Points** 18 (4d8)

**Speed** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
9 (-1)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	16 (+3)	12 (+1)	11 (+0)

**Skills** Arcana +5, Investigation +5

**Senses** passive Perception 11

**Languages** Common plus any two languages

**Challenge** 1 (200 XP)

**Proficiency Bonus:** +2

**Arcane Recovery (1/Day).** The Journeyman Mage can recover expended spell slots once per day during a short rest. The spell slots can have a combined level equal to or less than half the mage's level (rounded up), and none of the slots can be 6th level or higher.

**Curious Researcher.** The Journeyman Mage has advantage on Intelligence (Arcana) checks related to identifying new spells or magical phenomena.

**Spellcasting.** The Journeyman Mage is a 3rd-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 13, +5 to hit with spell attacks). The Journeyman Mage has the following wizard spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *fire bolt*, *mage hand*, *minor illusion*

1st level (4 slots): *detect magic*, *mage armor*, *magic missile*, *shield*

2nd level (2 slots): *misty step*, *scorching ray*

### ACTIONS

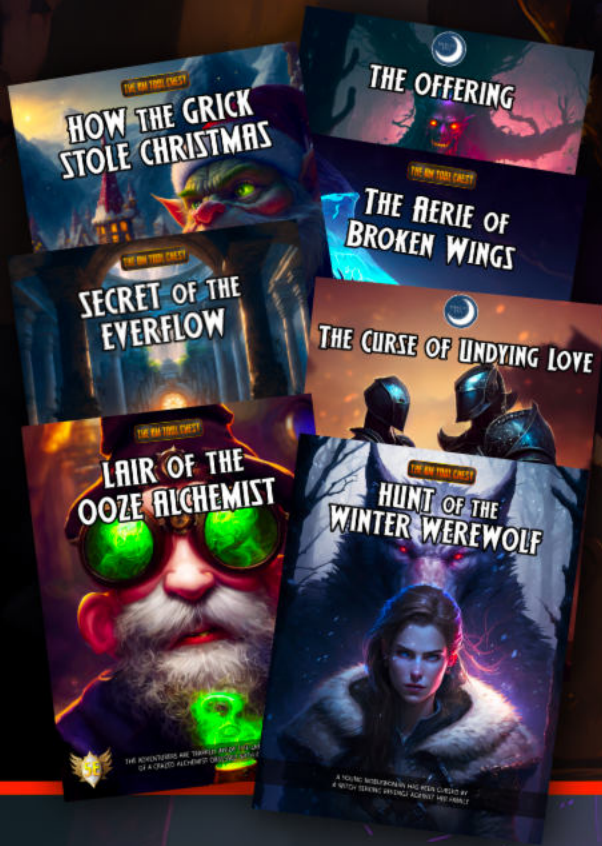
**Quarterstaff.** Melee Weapon Attack: -1 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 2 (1d6 - 1) bludgeoning damage, or 3 (1d8 - 1) bludgeoning damage if used with two hands.

**Fire Bolt.** Ranged Spell Attack: +5 to hit, range 120 ft., one target. Hit: 10 (2d10) fire damage.

**Arcane Burst (Recharge 5-6).** The mage releases a wave of raw arcane energy. All creatures within 10 feet of the mage must make a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw, taking 14 (4d6) force damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. This feature doesn't affect constructs and undead.



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