

DESTINY IN FREEPORT

A TRUE20 SYSTEM
ADVENTURE
FOR LEVELS 1 TO 3



GREEN RONIN PUBLISHING PRESENTS
FREEPORT
THE CITY OF ADVENTURE



DEATH IN FREEPORT

A TRUE20 STARTER ADVENTURE

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FREEPORT

THE CITY OF ADVENTURE

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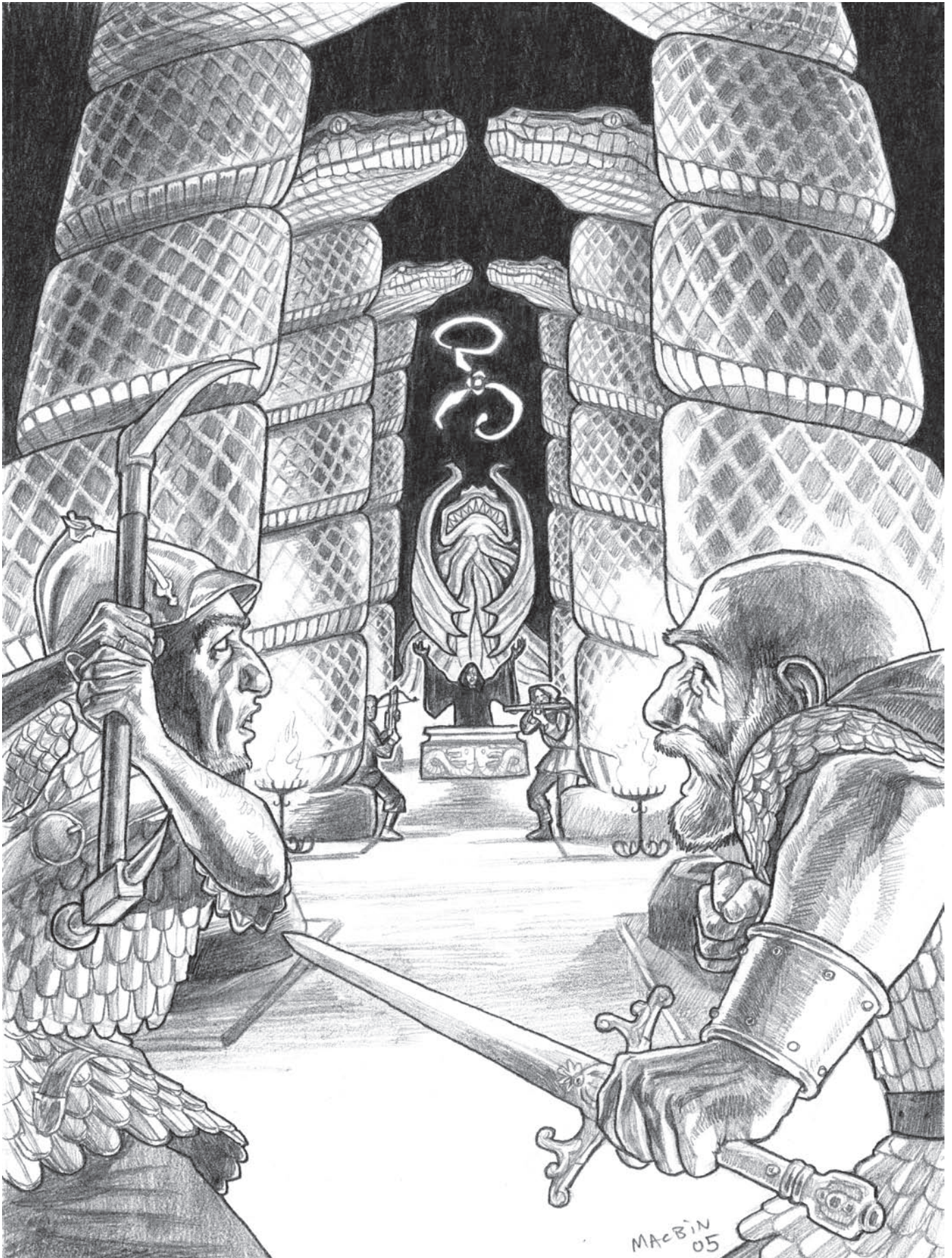


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~ WELCOME TO FREEPORT ~

Welcome to *Death in Freeport*. The adventure you're about to read has a surprisingly long and distinguished history. The original version of *Death in Freeport* was released on August 10, 2000, the very same day as the 3e PHB, one of the first adventures published under the Open Game License. Despite a very large print run, the adventure sold out within a year and has been out of print every since. It went on to win the very first ENnie Award and the Origins Award for Best RPG Adventure. In 2004, *Death in Freeport Revised* made the adventure available again in PDF format, with updated stats for the 3.5 rules, and in 2005, its text was included in *The Freeport Trilogy* compilation.

Now Green Ronin is pleased to offer *Death in Freeport* as the "gateway" adventure for *True20 Adventure Roleplaying*. As both the adventure and the city of Freeport itself have demonstrated, change is the only constant in the world and—in spite of whatever changes—Freeport adapts and goes on.

ABOUT FREEPORT AND THIS ADVENTURE

Freeport is a fantasy "free city" you can place in a fantastic setting. Its basic premise is a pirate city gone legit... at least on the surface. In truth, the pirate tradition is alive and well in Freeport, but camouflaged by a veneer of respectability. These days the city's pirates are privateers, legalized pirates Freeport loans out to the highest bidder. You'll learn more in the short history of the city that follows. This should help give you a taste of the flavor of Freeport before the adventure begins and the given background is all you need to run this adventure.

Narrator's Note: Throughout the adventure, you will encounter sections of boxed text. This is information meant for the players, which you can read aloud or paraphrase as you wish. Statistics for creatures and Narrator characters are detailed in the **Appendix**, with abbreviated information presented in each encounter.

~ A BRIEF HISTORY OF FREEPORT ~

While the current city of Freeport is only a few centuries old, the site has been inhabited for far, far longer. Some two thousand years ago, the area was part of a larger island known as Valossa. Stretching a thousand miles south to north and eight hundred miles east to west, Valossa was the heart of the empire of the serpent people. These sorcerous reptiles ruled vast swaths of territory when humanity was young, and pioneered magic and science when the elves still hid in their woods.

All was not well in the Valossan Empire, however. The serpent people had long worshiped Yig, the great snake god. But in the empire's latter days, a cult dedicated to the worship of the Unspeakable One, a dread alien power, sprang up in their cities. Called the Brotherhood of the Yellow Sign, the cult spurned Yig and embraced the madness of the Unspeakable One. The leaders of the serpent people, arrogant and vain in their high towers, allowed the cult to fester among the discontented. By the time the priests of Yig were roused to action, it was too late. The Brotherhood of the Yellow Sign enacted a ritual to summon their dark god, and the Valossan Empire was shattered for all time.

No witnesses survived to tell of the Great Old One's appearance, but evidence abounds of the destruction it wrought. Mighty Valossa was rent asunder, and sea water rushed in to drown the serpent people in their millions. Those who survived were driven mad, losing their civilization and magic in one terrible moment. Most of Valossa sank beneath the waves, leaving only scattered islands as evidence of the once-great empire.

The crazed serpent people fled underground, where their degenerate descendents live to this day. A few sorcerers and priests of Yig survived the Unspeakable One's wrath with their sanity intact. They retreated into the shadows as the elves and humans created their own realms. The centuries passed, and

few remembered the Valossan Empire had even existed or that the serpent people had once been civilized.

THE RISE OF FREEPORT

The largest surviving part of Valossa is the island chain known as the Serpent's Teeth. The name may be a distant echo of the Valossan Empire, though locals ascribe it to the shape of the islands themselves. The most important of the Serpent's Teeth, A'Val, has a natural harbor that is easily defended. As humanity took to the seas, A'Val was quickly found by roving captains. At first, it was a place to rest, get fresh water, and refit. Before long a village sprang up, and as the years passed this village turned into a town. It was able to thrive by offering services to passing ships and refuge to those unwelcome elsewhere. The sailors took to calling it "Freeport," and the name stuck.

With its remote location and natural attributes, Freeport became a magnet for buccaneers. Before long they had taken over the town, which became a notorious pirate haven. What made Freeport work in the early days was the simple pirate code: Do whatever you want on the high seas, but don't go against your comrades in port. That meant no stealing, no killing, and no kidnapping. Duels happened on occasion, but they were formal affairs conducted outside the city walls. Most satisfied themselves with drunken brawls, and of those there were plenty. By and large, though, the peace was kept in Freeport.

About two hundred years ago, the era of the rogue buccaneer came to an end. Lone ships increasingly faced threats from organized navies. At one time a single privateer could hunt merchant ships with impunity, but now it was a fox to the hounds of naval squadrons. As crew after crew was hunted down and destroyed, the pirates of Freeport knew they had to change their ways.

Freeport's captains realized it would take a navy to fight a navy, so they decided to form a force of their own and go raiding en masse. The only problem was choosing a leader. After much bickering, the pirates settled on two captains for the great fleet. Drac and Francisco were fierce rivals, and the assembled captains believed anything the two could agree on would be a good decision.

It was not an ideal situation, but the pirates had surprise and numbers on their side. The combined fleet went on a three-month raid that netted more money, valuables, foodstuffs, and booze than Freeport had ever seen. It was a spectacular success, and Captains Drac and Francisco were not slow in claiming credit. Before long, each had declared himself Sea Lord of Freeport.

WAR IN FREEPORT

The next ten years were tense ones in Freeport. The great raid set off a panic among the maritime nations, which spent huge amounts of money and resources building up larger navies. The Sea Lords were forced to fight battle after battle against determined foes. Freeport itself was assaulted on three separate occasions, but its defenses proved too strong for the attacking ships.

This undeclared war had no clear victor. Freeport withstood the assaults and inflicted several stinging defeats on its enemies, but attrition was high on both sides. In the end the conflict petered out as the warring navies ran out of ships and crews to hurl into

battle. After a decade of constant fighting, there was a long lull, during which each side licked its wounds.

During the war, adversity kept the pirates united. When the pressure eased, however, trouble was not slow in coming. The Sea Lords had long hated each other, and this animosity flared up anew—with deadly consequences. After a series of provocations, real fighting broke out in Freeport for the first time in its history. The followers of Drac and Francisco killed one another in the streets, breaking the pirate code that had bound the city together.

Neither Sea Lord gained an upper hand. Before the conflict could be resolved, word came of yet another hostile fleet bound for the city. The pirates called a truce, and the fleet sailed out to defend Freeport, united once again—or so it seemed.

Captain Drac realized this ongoing war was one they could not ultimately win: The only chance for survival was to become a part of the world that was trying to destroy them. Drac entered secret negotiations with the enemy, using a wizard as a go-between. He agreed to betray Francisco in exchange for a truce and recognition of Freeport as a free city. The enemy leaders were only too happy to sign such an agreement and end the ruinously expensive war.

With no knowledge of his comrade's duplicity, Captain Francisco led the fleet to the attack. Once his forces were engaged, Drac's ships simply sailed away, leaving Francisco's fleet exposed and without support; they were quickly surrounded and destroyed. In the meantime, Drac returned to Freeport to announce the new city-state and claim his new regime.



A NATION EMERGES

Captain Drac quickly consolidated his power. He declared himself the sole Sea Lord of Freeport and eliminated his remaining enemies before they could organize against him. Some of the other pirate captains left Freeport rather than serve Drac, whom they despised for betraying Francisco and blamed for violating the pirate code. Most, however, seeing which way the salty wind was blowing, chose to remain in Freeport and ride out the storm.

As it turned out, Sea Lord Drac's reign was less bloody than anyone had believed possible. He ruled Freeport with a firm hand for the next thirty years, turning a pirate haven into a commercial hub of substantial importance. He set up trade routes with former enemies, cracked down on rogue pirates, and organized a Captains' Council. Drac's word was still law, but the Council was in charge of the city's day-to-day affairs and advised the Sea Lord on important matters.

Although Drac fancied himself a king, he resisted the urge to take the title. Somehow he knew that the citizens of Freeport would not accept something so contrary to their natures. Similarly, he knew that he could not found a dynasty. The Captains' Council would never submit to Drac's son, a mere boy who lacked the experience of those salty dogs.

But Drac needed to ensure the survival of Freeport as an independent city-state after his death. With melancholy in his heart, he chose another old hand, Captain Cromey, as his successor. Furthermore, he even set into law a requirement that the Captains' Council approve the Sea Lord's nominee. At the end of life, Drac chose the interests of the city over his own glory, and for this he is remembered as a great man in Freeport.

A CENTURY OF GROWTH

The next hundred years were profitable ones. Freeport continued to grow, which necessitated building a newer and larger city wall. As new trade routes to the east opened up, the city became an even more important maritime center. Freeport was largely able to stay out of the wars that broke out on the continent, although it did cement alliances with several important powers. All in all, this was a period of stability and growth, with a succession of competent Sea Lords assuring the city's continued importance.

A BAD SEED

Things began to change fifty years ago, when a descendent of Captain Drac succeeded the outgoing Sea Lord. Marten Drac is rumored to have used blackmail and assassination in his rise to power, and he most certainly used them to maintain his position. Marten ruled for only fourteen years, but the damage he did to the city was substantial. A series of burdensome duties and taxes fattened his coffers but drove away many merchants. More ominously, he drove through a

new law—over the objections of the Captains' Council—that required the Sea Lord of Freeport to be a descendent of the original Captain Drac.

Marten's youngest brother, Anton, who became Sea Lord on Marten's death, saved the city from complete disaster. Anton Drac proved to be cut from the same cloth as his illustrious ancestor and was able to undo the worst excesses of Marten's reign. He abolished the unfair duties, as well as providing incentives to win back lost trade. He also provided limited military aid to several important nations, earning their thanks and their business.

Anton's one failing was that he did not abolish Marten's succession law. He was regularly urged to do so by the Captains' Council, but the Sea Lord could never quite bring himself to do it. Despite his enlightened rule, he did consider Freeport to belong to his family. This was to prove his undoing.

WHERE IS FREEPORT?

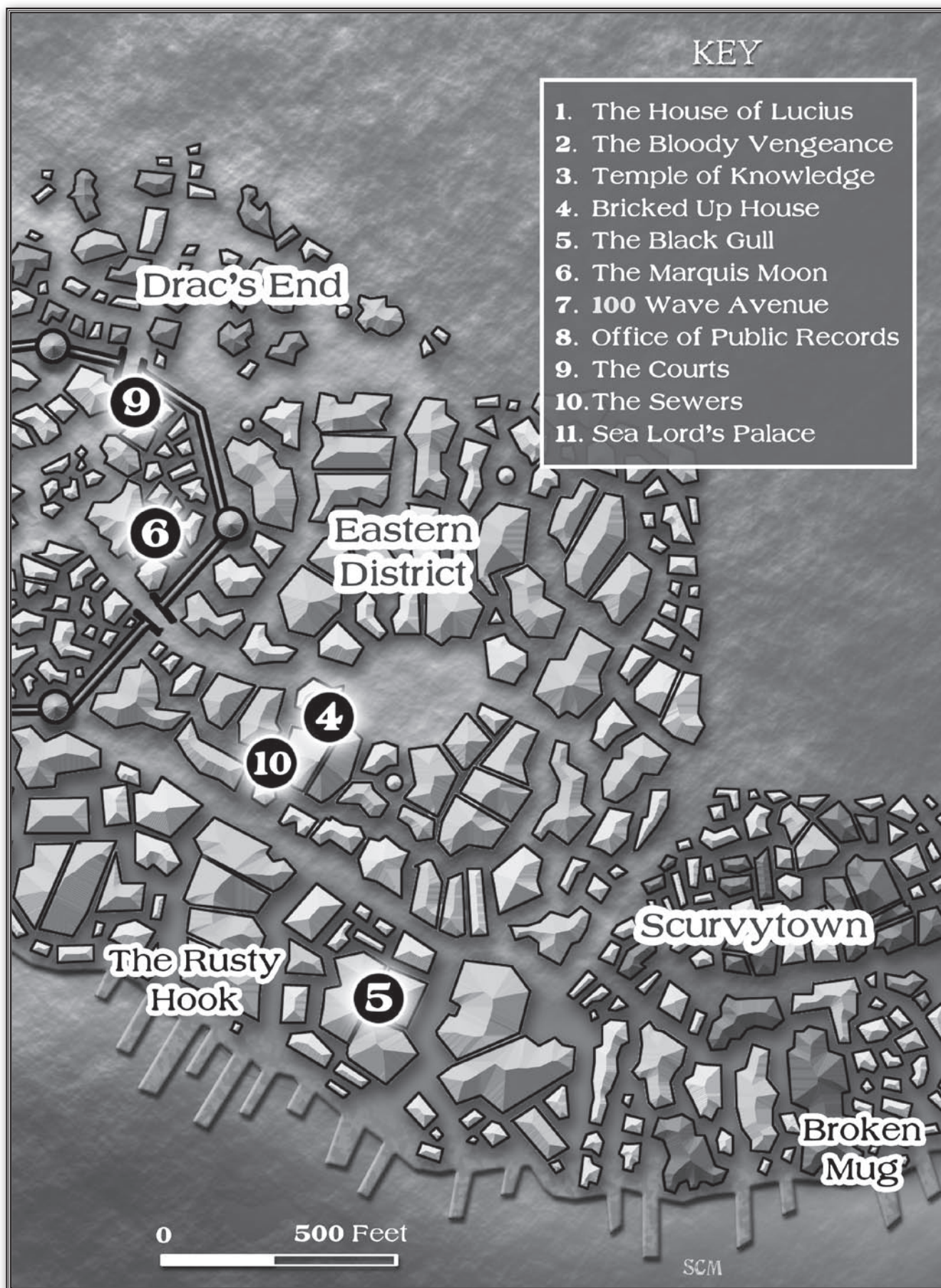
By this point you may be wondering where exactly Freeport is. The preceding history contains vague references to a continent, other empires, and naval powers, but no details. These have been deliberately left sketchy, so you can use Freeport in any campaign world you desire. The *Serpent's Teeth* is a small chain of islands that you can easily drop into a given setting, or you may decide to use this information to flesh out an island city in your existing world. If you've got a good candidate, a simple name switch is all that's necessary. Similarly, most references to gods in this module are generic. When the text refers to the God of Knowledge or the God of War, for example, substitute an appropriate deity from your campaign.

If you want more detailed information about Freeport, you'll want to get the *Pirate's Guide to Freeport* when it's released in the Fall of 2006. This is the definitive guide to the city of Freeport and it is set 5 years after the events of this adventure. The *Pirate's Guide to Freeport* is a pure setting book and does not include any game mechanics information in it. Green Ronin will also be producing the *True20 Freeport Companion* towards the end of 2006, however. This book will give you all the info you need to run a Freeport campaign using the True20 system.



THE CITY OF FREEPORT





DECADE OF DECEIT

Eleven years ago, a great war broke out, involving nearly every nation on the continent. Anton stayed out of it at first, but he knew he would have to honor the existing treaties. He announced to the Captains' Council that the Freeport navy would go to the aid of its allies in the spring—the first time the full fleet had sailed to war since the days of Drac and Francisco. The Council was torn on the issue, approving the move by only a single vote.

Anton allowed enough time for preparations to be made throughout the winter. Unfortunately, this also gave his enemies several months to concoct an ambitious plan. In fact, it was so ambitious that many suspected the plotters had outside help from agents of governments that wanted Freeport to stay neutral. Rumors continue to circulate to this day.

Toward the end of winter, as the Sea Lord was inspecting the fleet on the docks, a single yellow-feathered arrow flew from the crow's nest of an anchored ship, piercing Anton's chest. The wound should not have been mortal, but the arrow was enchanted with death magic. Anton died on the spot, leaving Freeport without a Sea Lord for the first time in two hundred years.

FREEPORT TIMELINE

Time Before Present	Notable Events
2,000 years	Valossa destroyed in cataclysm; Serpent's Teeth formed.
800 years	Future Freeport founded on island of A'Val.
200 years	Captains Drac and Francisco lead combined fleet; each declares himself Sea Lord of Freeport.
190 years	Civil war in Freeport; Drac betrays Francisco and assumes sole control of the city.
160 years	Drac dies and is succeeded by Captain Cromey, initiating a century of prosperity.
50 years	Marten Drac becomes Sea Lord, nearly bankrupting Freeport; institutes Drac succession law.
36 years	Anton Drac succeeds Marten and repairs much of the damage but does not repeal succession law.
11 years	Anton Drac assassinated; Milton Drac becomes Sea Lord.
10 years	Construction begins on Lighthouse of Drac.

The assassin was cornered and killed before he could talk, and his body disappeared before priests could try to speak with the dead man's spirit. The Captains' Council dismissed the attack as the act of a lone renegade. The Council had more pressing business to attend to, namely, who would succeed Anton?

At this juncture, Milton Drac stepped onto the stage of history. A distant cousin of Anton, Milton appeared as if from nowhere. He was not a member of the Council, but he enjoyed tremendous support there. Those most likely to oppose him were strangely silent, as if they feared the consequences of such an action. In a matter of weeks, this previously unknown Drac became the new Sea Lord of Freeport.

Milton's first official act was to cancel all military aid to allied nations: The fleet was to restrict its activities to guarding commerce, nothing more. As war raged on the continent, Freeport stood neutral. This was a grave disappointment to the nations counting on its navy, who branded Milton a traitor. Some called him the puppet of foreign agents or a religious cult. Milton pooh-poohed these accusations and continued his rule of Freeport with little opposition.

After canceling the fleet action, Milton used the war chest to build a monument to his ambition: the Lighthouse of Drac. It has been under construction for the past ten years, on the closest island of the Serpent's Teeth. Meant to be one of the wonders of the age, the Lighthouse soars towards the heavens, taller than any structure in the world.

The Sea Lord's stated goal is to make Freeport the preeminent maritime power of the world, but the reality has fallen short of that ideal. The Lighthouse of Drac, or "Milton's Folly," as some have taken to calling it, nearly bankrupted the city. Taxes and duties have risen steadily during its construction, and an army of migrant workers was needed to finish the structure on time. It is finally approaching its scheduled completion date, three months from now. Milton is planning a gala celebration for its inauguration, and ships from around the world are expected to attend. This is an event not to be missed—or so Milton hopes.

FREEPORT TODAY

Milton is obsessed with his Lighthouse, but the Captains' Council still governs Freeport. Their task grew more arduous over the past ten years, as more and more money was sunk into Milton's Folly. Services have degenerated: The garrison has shrunk and is largely confined to the Old City; the docks are policed haphazardly, if at all. Crime has skyrocketed, but as long as it remains in the shadows the Council is content to look the other way. Known pirates have even taken to frequenting the port again. As long as they bribe the dock officials, they can enjoy what Freeport has to offer. Ironically, the city is returning to its roots.

~ DEATH IN FREEPORT ~

The temple to the God of Knowledge is one of the largest in Freeport. A repository of ancient scrolls and arcane learning, it is a magnet to scholars and wizards alike. In addition to priests, the temple employs a large group of librarians, who maintain the collection and deal with visitors. Lucius was one of these librarians. He had grown up in the temple and lived to serve.

Six years ago, something very strange happened to Lucius. An extraplanar entity stole his body, displacing his consciousness and taking over his existence. For five years, the alien mind controlled Lucius's body, seeking to learn as much about the world as it could. The new "Lucius," nothing like the old, was expelled from the temple within a year for violating the sanctum. He then left Freeport altogether, traveling the world for four years before returning.

When the real Lucius returned to his rightful body, he did not remember where he had been or what he had done, and was mortified to learn of his possessor's activities in his absence. With deep shame he approached the temple, asking for forgiveness and re-admittance. He offered the priests an amazing collection of scrolls and artifacts, apparently accumulated while his possessor journeyed abroad. They were in such awe of this collection that they reinstated Lucius and forgave him his transgressions. Both he and the priests were now happy, and each tried to forget the librarian's strange behavior.

Life for Lucius was tranquil for the next eight months. His life fell into its old patterns. The calmness of the library soothed him, and he lost himself in a world of books, scrolls, and artifacts.

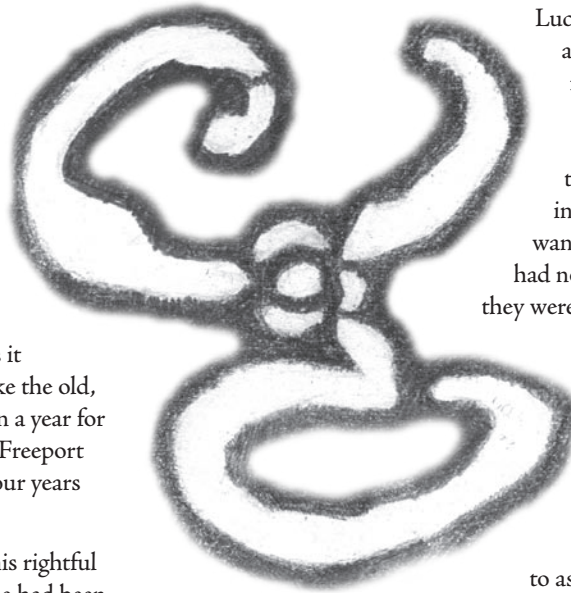
Then the dreams came.

Lucius awoke screaming every night, again and again, his brain reeling with strange memories of gargantuan, cyclopean cities, monstrous creatures, and unspeakable rites. At first he hoped that the nightmares would simply go away; instead, they got worse. Lucius did not want to accept the truth, but in the end he had no choice. Whatever these dreams were, they were somehow connected with those five years of missing time. If he ever wanted to have a normal life again, he knew he would have to find out what exactly had happened to him.

The man who had spent so much time researching past lives now turned his skills to his own. He began to ask questions about what "he" had done and how "he" had acted during those five years.

He spent countless hours reading over "his" journals, trying to find out who had possessed his body and why. The priests of the temple grew uncomfortable with Lucius's line of questioning. They wanted this incident buried, not subject to new scrutiny. The high priest begged Lucius to let the past stay in the past, but the librarian could not agree.

Two days ago, Lucius disappeared.



~ ADVENTURE SYNOPSIS ~

Death in Freeport drops the player characters into the midst of political and magical intrigue, as the hidden Brotherhood of the Yellow Sign manipulates events to bring its dread god to the world. Freeport is still a bustling center of trade, but evil currents run beneath the surface. There are secrets here, and questions unanswered. The characters will undoubtedly learn there is more here than they expect in a simple seaport. The question is, will that knowledge kill them?

As the adventure begins, the player characters (PCs) have just come to Freeport on a merchant ship. While on the docks, the PCs are attacked by a press gang, who mistake them for easy marks. The press gang is handily beaten off; since they are unused to real resistance.

A bookish young man named Brother Egil then approaches the PCs. He says that he's been looking for a group that can take of itself, and that he has a job for them if they are interested: finding a missing librarian. The missing man, Lucius, disappeared two days previously, and Egil is eager to find him.

Egil gives the PCs some background on Lucius and his strange behavior. The PCs are then free to investigate: They are likely to visit Lucius's home, the temple to the God of Knowledge, and an orc pirate ship. This should form a picture of Lucius as a man searching for his own past—who found something he wasn't counting on.

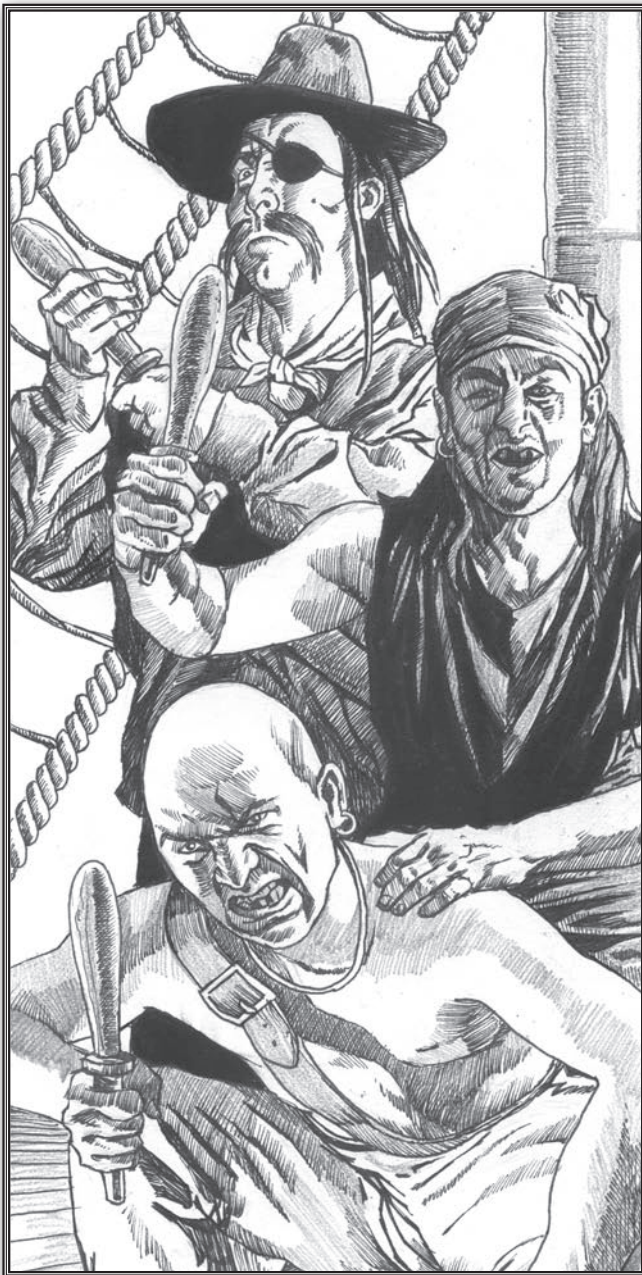
Following a trail of clues, the PCs learn about the Brotherhood of the Yellow Sign. With a little luck, the PCs can trail the cultists back to their hideout, penetrate the lair, and discover secret tunnels underneath it. Deep underground they find degenerate serpent people, and eventually Lucius himself. The librarian has been tortured badly and will die without aid.

The PCs also have to deal with the leader of the cult, a man they may recognize from the temple. When the cult priest is slain, they are in for an even bigger surprise. He was not human at all, but a serpent man in disguise. What this means for Freeport only the gods can say.

~ PART I: BAITING THE HOOK ~

IN WHICH THE PLAYER CHARACTERS BEAT OFF A COWARDLY ATTACK AND FIND GAINFUL EMPLOYMENT IN THE CITY OF FREEPORT.

The setup of the adventure assumes the PCs have just arrived in Freeport after serving on a merchant ship. You can easily alter the circumstances if that lets you kick off the adventure more smoothly; for example, perhaps one of the PCs is a friend of Egil's from the continent. This would give them more reason to trust the young librarian and a better motivation to help him find his friend. The only real requirement is that none of the party should have been to Freeport before. Having inside knowledge of how the city works ruins some of the fun, so it's best if the characters are from elsewhere.



THE PRESS GANG

You stand on the docks of the great trading city of Freeport. Your journey here was long and uncomfortable, so it's with a sense of freedom that you walk the bustling dockside. Unfortunately, you are not laden down with gold, or even silver. The merchant that hired you on had to cut you loose after his shipment of foodstuffs went bad during the voyage. You were supposed to travel to ports beyond, but now it seems that you're going to have to fend for yourselves in Freeport—at least for a while.

The action on the docks is mesmerizing. There are ships in port from all over the world, carrying every manner of exotic goods. Sailors and merchants of all races and backgrounds mingle on the wharves, with money changing hands so fast you can barely even follow. The sights and sounds are so overwhelming that you almost don't notice the group of men that casually coalesce around your party. They are a rough lot, scarred and crusty sailors armed with saps and belaying pins. The leader of these scurvy dogs, a toothless man with tattooed knuckles, smiles crookedly and says, "You've all just volunteered for an exciting life at sea. Do you want to go the easy way or the hard way?"

These men are, of course, a press gang out looking for able bodies to sell as crew to visiting ships. The heroes appear inexperienced and easy to overwhelm, making them a prime target. They may notice (Notice check, Difficulty 15) a young man in robes who stays to watch with fight with great interest. You can allow any hero with a Notice bonus of +5 or better to pick up on this automatically (as if taking 10).

Eight sailors from the press gang surround the heroes (see details in the **Appendix**). Old toothless picked his point of ambush well: Boxes of goods dot the wharf, making it difficult to maneuver. The crowd is also thick, though it will begin to disperse if a fight breaks out.

These sailors are old hands at the press gang game. They don't wear armor, but they are handy with their saps, which they use first to deal non-lethal damage in an attempt to knock the heroes unconscious and drag them off. If things get serious, they switch to their belaying pins. The sailors are not trying to get killed—they're expecting easy marks. Press gangs prey on weakness, so these bullies clear out when it becomes obvious the heroes can take care of themselves. Once three of them have been overcome, the rest flee.

AN OFFER OF EMPLOYMENT

As the last members of the press gang flee into the crowds, a young man in robes approaches you. "That'll teach them to pick on newcomers," he says, laughing. "But where are my manners? Allow me to introduce myself. I am Brother Egil, and I've been looking for people who can take care of themselves in a scrap. If you'll allow me to buy you a round of drinks, I'd like to talk to you about a job. What do you say?"

If the heroes are amenable, Brother Egil takes them to a nearby tavern, the Bilge Rat. It's just as charming as it sounds, but the beer is better than one would expect. Egil buys the first round, and then makes his offer.

"Two days ago, a librarian from my temple disappeared. For reasons that are somewhat complicated, the high priest has declined to look into the matter. The missing man, Lucius, is a dear friend of mine, and I'm worried that evil may have befallen him. I'm willing to offer you 50 gold pieces each, 10 now and 40 on completion of the mission, if you can find Lucius and return him to the temple. I will provide you with any information I can, and healing should you require it. Interested?"

Considering their current straits, the heroes should indeed be interested. If they are suspicious and don't accept right away, Brother Egil says that it's a standing offer and that he can be found at the temple to the God of Knowledge. Once they accept the job, Egil fills them in on the situation. He'll also volunteer this information if the party wants to hear more about the job before accepting. He is honestly concerned for his friend's well-being and has nothing to hide (as any attempt at Sense Motive or the like should reveal).

Egil's description of the case follows, along with his responses to some likely questions.

"I have known Lucius for most of my life. We were both brought up in the temple. He became a librarian and I, a priest. But six years ago, something strange happened. He seemed to change overnight. One day he was my friend of many years, and the next he was a complete stranger. He asked bizarre questions, seemed to remember nothing of our friendship, and treated the temple as his own personal library. Some months later he was caught violating the sanctum and was expelled from the temple. Shortly thereafter, he left Freeport entirely and was gone for four years.

"When Lucius reappeared, he was like his old self. He came to the temple and begged to be readmitted, saying that he had no memory of the previous five years. Thuron, the high priest, seemed adamant about refusing Lucius's petition but changed his mind after a private meeting with him.

"Lucius returned to the temple, and it was just like old times for eight or nine months. Then he started to look haggard, and he told me he wasn't sleeping well. Something was disturbing him, but he wouldn't say what. He started asking a lot of questions about what he had been like right before his expulsion. The high priest talked to him about it, but Lucius wouldn't let it go.

"I grew increasingly worried for my friend. He seemed on the brink of insanity, as if one small thing could push him over the edge. Two days ago, he failed to come to the temple. I went to his home and found it empty. I searched all over but could not find him. The priests of my temple deny it, but I know that something has happened to Lucius. I want you to find out what."

NEWS AROUND FREEPORT

Enterprising characters may start out by making a few Gather Information checks around town and spending some coins to pick up the news of the city. They can pick up the following rumors (Difficulty 10):

- The Lighthouse of Drac is almost done now: Only three more months until it's ready. They say the Sea Lord is planning a big celebration too.
- They don't call that infernal lighthouse "Milton's Folly" for nothing. Ten years to build, and now the city coffers are empty.
- The Sea Lord's Guard (Freeport's watch) has been cut back so much that thieves are running wild. Only the Old City gets real protection.
- Pirates don't even bother to disguise themselves when they come to port these days. There are pirate ships here right now—some of the crews are even orcs!
- The Captains' Council has had enough of Sea Lord Milton Drac. He may have an "unfortunate accident" before his precious lighthouse is finished.

WHAT EGIL KNOWS

The PCs are likely to have some questions for Brother Egil. Below are his answers to the most probable. He answers to the best of his knowledge, as he is sincerely concerned for his friend, so be reasonably open with information that he can be expected to have.

- Where did Lucius go when he left Freeport?
I don't know for sure, but Lucius seemed to think he had traveled quite widely.
- Why did the high priest let him back into the temple?
That question has puzzled me as well. Thuron is not a man who changes his mind easily, yet something that Lucius said or did during his meeting with the man swayed the high priest.
- Can we search his house?
Yes, certainly. I can take you there whenever you like.
- Can we talk to Thuron or other members of the temple?
Yes, but please do not mention my involvement with the matter at all. Better to say that you are old friends of Lucius from abroad and that you've come to Freeport to see him.
- Can you recommend a place to stay?

Certainly. *The Scholar's Quill* is a fine tavern located between Lucius's home and the temple. Many visitors to the temple lodge there, and it doesn't have the rough clientele that many local inns do.

GETTING SETTLED

Unless the heroes have other plans, Brother Egil guides them to the Scholar's Quill. It is a quiet inn off the main thoroughfare that caters to academics. The first floor consists of a dining room, kitchen, and larder, and upstairs there are eight guest rooms that sleep two each. The innkeeper, a matronly woman named Desi, lives on the third floor with her two serving maids. Brother Egil can get the heroes a good rate: 1 gold piece per day for the group, which includes a light breakfast and dinner. Breakfast is at 8:00 A.M. sharp and dinner is at 5:00 P.M. Those who miss meals have to fend for themselves—or try to sweet-talk Desi's staff (Difficulty 15 Diplomacy check).

Should the heroes disdain the Scholar's Quill—because they don't quite trust Brother Egil or they prefer more rough-and-tumble surroundings—Freeport has plenty of inns to choose from. Here are some alternatives to throw at them if you need to: The Rusty Hook (near the docks, notoriously dangerous), The Keelhaul (in the old town, attracts pirates), The Broken Mug (on a wharf, fights happen hourly), and The Black Rose (in the old town, caters primarily to fat merchants).

~ PART II: A PROMISING LINE OF INQUIRY ~

IN WHICH THE PLAYER CHARACTERS CONDUCT AN INVESTIGATION
AND UNCOVER SEVERAL ITEMS OF INTEREST.

The heroes now have a mystery on their hands. You should be flexible as they investigate, since there's no way of knowing where they'll want to look first. What seems obvious to you may not be so obvious to the players.

The best place to begin the investigation is Lucius's home. Chances are the party will head there right away, but a nudge in that direction might be necessary. Brother Egil could guide them there, for example. ("Do you want to see Lucius's house now? We'll have to hurry so I can be back at the temple in time for evening prayers.")

Brother Egil accompanies the heroes to make sure they don't just loot the place. Not that there's much to steal here, but he's got Lucius's interests at heart.

Note: When your players first hear about Milton's Folly (see the **News Around Freeport** sidebar), they may want to run off and investigate it right away. While the lighthouse is a key in later Freeport adventures, at this stage it's simply a construction site. Let your heroes look around if they want to, but they won't find anything at this time. During this adventure there is nothing suspicious at or about the lighthouse.

LOCATION 1:

THE HOME OF LUCIUS

Apparently, being a librarian in a trading city is not a particularly lucrative job. Lucius's small home has only one floor, consisting of two rooms, although there is a basement. Most of the main room is cluttered with books, scrolls, quills, inkpots, and other tools of the scholar's trade. A cot is jammed into one corner, and there's a small writing desk under the front window. The small backroom is part kitchen, part junk storage. A trapdoor in the floor leads down to the basement.

1A. MAIN ROOM

Most of the books and scrolls here are geographies detailing far-flung locations, with titles like *Of Dwarves and Men: The Lands of Naranjan*. A Search check can turn up some useful information, depending on the check result:

15 to 19: Among the scattered papers is a hastily scribbled “to do” list; see **Handout A**.

20 or higher: The desk has a drawer with a false bottom, concealing a diary written in the same hand as the list. It takes about half an hour to skim through the entries, the most interesting of which are compiled in **Handout B**.

Keep in mind the heroes can take 10 on the Search check, or take 20 if they take the time to do a careful search of the room.

IB. BACKROOM

There is nothing here but dry goods and dirty clothes.

IC. BASEMENT

The trapdoor is not locked, and opening it reveals a staircase down. The basement is actually larger than the house, although strangely empty. There are bookcases lining the walls, as well as a display case. Searching turns up nothing, but a successful Notice check (Difficulty 15) shows the display cases are of more recent construction than the basement itself. The wood still has a “new” smell—probably no older than a year.

LOCATION 2:

THE BLOODY VENGEANCE

Lucius’s list mentions a Captain Scarbelly. Brother Egil doesn’t know of such a man, though he admits he doesn’t get out of the temple much. If the heroes did not go to Lucius’s house first, they may still decide to check out the pirate ship. Not only does it loom large in city gossip, it is moored in plain sight, with its inhuman crew not bothering to hide themselves or their vocation.

A successful Gather Information check (Difficulty 15 in town or 10 by the docks) reveals the privateer *Bloody Vengeance* is in port now. Its captain, Scarbelly, is a notorious orc pirate operating out of Freeport. The heroes may make additional Gather Information checks to learn more about the ship, its captain, and its crew. The table below summarizes what they can find out; reduce the listed Difficulty by 5 if they continue to make inquiries around the waterfront. The players can take 10 on Gather Information checks, but they can’t take 20 (since such numerous and repeated inquiries are certain to draw unwanted attention).

GATHER INFORMATION

Difficulty	Information
15	The <i>Bloody Vengeance</i> pulled into port eleven days ago.
20	The crew has largely stayed on their ship. They seem edgy and hostile.
20	The ship has a crew of ten orcs, including a brutal first mate.
25	Captain Scarbelly has killed twenty-nine men in hand-to-hand combat.

Read or paraphrase the following when the heroes take their first look at the *Bloody Vengeance*.

The Bloody Vengeance is a crudely built orc ship, roughly 90 feet long. The ship is battle-scarred but seaworthy, and you note that no other ships have moored nearby. The sail is furled, but the crow’s nest holds an orc lookout armed with a short bow. Two other orcs guard the gangway, their scowls and jagged swords encouraging passersby to keep on walking.

The guards are as hostile as they seem. Anyone attempting to talk to them or request a meeting with Captain Scarbelly is told to clear off in no uncertain terms. The orcs will follow up this instruction with a physical demonstration if the heroes persist and do not appear much of a threat. Otherwise, the pirates call for the first mate, Aggro.

Aggro ducks out of the forecastle, revealing a huge frame. He loudly snorts, hawks, and spits while you inquire about Lucius. When you are done, Aggro says, “He was here last week, sniveling for an audience with the captain. I told him the same thing I’m telling you: Sod off!”

You notice that the archer in the crow’s nest has an arrow nocked. Aggro and the guards are fingering the pommels of their wicked scimitars. They’re clearly itching for a fight. It’s obvious they have something to hide on their ship, all right—but is it Lucius?

Actually, Aggro is telling the truth about sending Lucius on his way. The orcs are touchy because a powerful wizard named Kenzil hired them to attack a particular ship and acquire a magical staff for him. Captain Scarbelly doesn’t like dealing with wizards, but the money was too good to pass up. He has the staff locked up in his cabin, and his crew is guarding it around the clock until Kenzil shows up to claim it. Scarbelly is on edge and eager to see the staff safely delivered—he is certainly going to resist anyone who attempts to board his ship.

What Aggro does not know is Lucius did manage to talk to the orc captain while he was visiting a tavern. Lucius had come to suspect he had spent time on the *Bloody Vengeance* during his missing years, so he sought out the orc captain. Turned away by Aggro, Lucius followed Scarbelly and asked him some questions. See the **Captain Scarbelly** sidebar for more information.

ALL HANDS ON DECK

The heroes have several options for handling the orcs. They might simply rush the crew and start a brawl, or they can watch the ship and try to spy on Scarbelly. Stealthy heroes may try sneaking on board at night to have a look around.

Attacking *Bloody Vengeance* and taking on a dozen orc pirates at once is definitely a mistake, but the players might not realize this right away. The lack of the Sea Lord's Guard on the docks means a fight can rage without interference. Although Lucius is not here, there is loot to be had—if the party survives the experience.

A. MAIN DECK

The main deck is 55 feet long and 20 feet wide with the thick mast in the center, and coils of rope and other supplies scattered across it. Two large trapdoors lead to the hold below: This is mostly empty but does have some food and grog stores.

There are usually two (sometimes three) orc pirates guarding the gangplank and one each in the forecastle and aftcastle. These structures provide cover from missile fire, and their elevated positions offer a good view.

B. OFFICERS' QUARTERS

Captain Scarbelly and First Mate Aggro share a cabin underneath the forecastle (unlike human sailors, they like the way the ship's prow goes up and down!). The room is roughly

15 feet by 15 feet and crammed with stuff. There are two beds, a table, and a chest, all nailed to the floor (to keep things from flying about during storms). The chest is quite large (it could easily hold a person) and doubles as a table.

During the day either Aggro or Scarbelly is here, and both are at night.

At the moment, there are sea charts and navigational equipment spread across the chest, but a large iron lock is clearly visible. The lock is trapped with a spring-loaded poisoned needle. It requires a Search check (Difficulty 20) to locate and a Disable Device check (Difficulty 21) to disarm. Trying to open the lock without disarming the trap means the needle "attacks" the character with a +8 combat bonus. A successful hit means the victim must make a Fortitude saving throw against the poison (Difficulty 14). Read the results of a failed save on the Damage Track: with a failure as a hurt result, failure by 5 a wounded result, failure by 10 a disabled result, and so forth.

The chest does not contain Lucius, but rather pirate swag: 100 gold coins, 1,250 silver coins, and 500 coppers. On top of this bed of money lies a 5-foot-long wooden staff carved with a scale motif. This is a supernatural item containing the following powers: Elemental Resistance, Light Shaping, Psychic Shield, and Ward. The staff contains 50 charges and each use of a power costs 1 charge. The user must be an adept and the staff's powers function at the user's level. This is the item the wizard Kenzil hired Scarbelly to find.

C. CREW QUARTERS

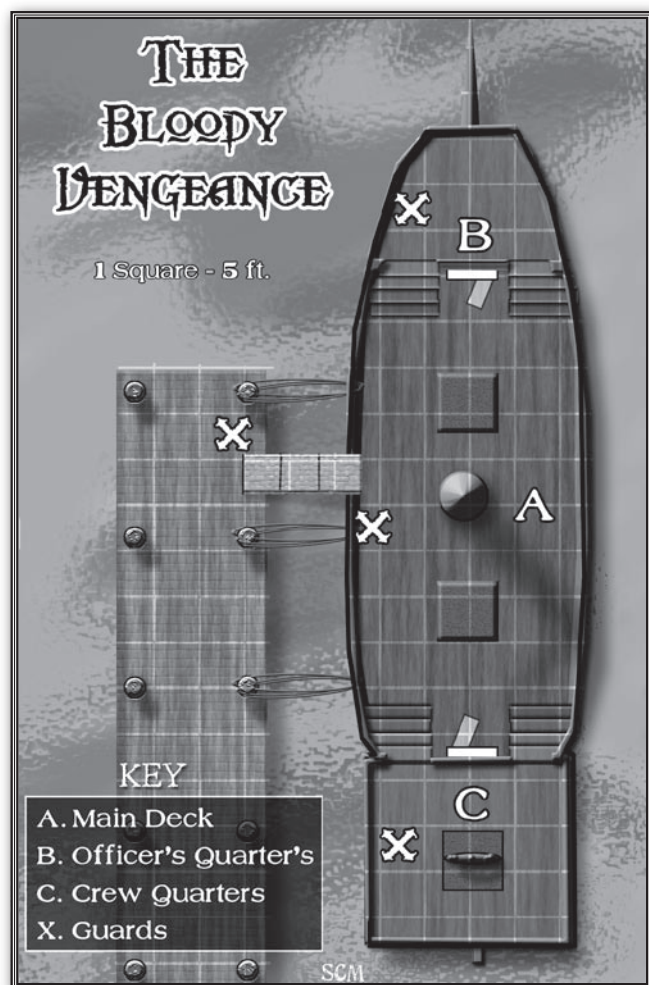
The remaining crewmembers share this 20-foot-by-20-foot room under the aftcastle. Each wall has two hammocks and a small chest for personal effects. While the ship is in port, there are always two or three pirates sleeping here. The heroes are welcome to poke through dirty orc laundry, if the wish, but there is nothing of any value.

ORC TACTICS

Captain Scarbelly has not survived this many years as a pirate by being stupid. His crew is well trained, and they know what to do in case of an attack. When the first blows are struck, the orcs on guard raise the alarm with a terrific shout. They concentrate their defense on the officers' quarters and stay on board the ship no matter what. The orcs in the forecastle and aftcastle use their bows to neutralize obvious threats, with adepts displaying supernatural powers at the top of that list: Sleeping orcs wake and join the fight in whatever area needs it the most. Aggro comes out to the main deck to organize the defense. However, if the captain is not aboard, the first mate guards the staff in the officers' quarters.

DEVELOPMENT

The heroes don't know about Kenzil. He still wants his staff, and if the party took it he'll try to track it down. He may pursue



CAPTAIN SCARBELLY

Captain Scarbelly is rightly feared by merchants and seafarers alike. He and his crew have terrorized the sea-lanes for years, and they know whom to bribe in Freeport to keep it that way.

Since he's waiting for the wizard Kenzil, Scarbelly spends most of his time on the ship. Once in a while, though, he slips off for a drink and meal, and this may give the heroes a chance to talk to him. The old pirate won't say anything about Lucius unless he's bribed, but with sufficient incentive he relates the whole story:

The captain recognized Lucius right way, for he had indeed been on the *Bloody Vengeance* some four years ago. The librarian bought him a drink and asked many questions about that time, which seemed odd to Scarbelly: The human had been right there! Lucius paid Captain Scarbelly a handsome sum to travel with the pirates, observe them, and take notes. The orcs found it strange, but his coin was good, and he stayed out of the way. After a few months, Lucius moved on, and that was the last Scarbelly saw (or thought) of him until a few days ago.

In his money pouch the captain also has a note from Lucius, passed to him by Aggro. It reads:

Captain, my name is Lucius and I believe you know me. I'd like to talk to you about my time on your ship. Please tell your mate to let me aboard next I call.



the heroes immediately on his arrival in Freeport. Alternatively, it may take him some time to learn the item's fate, making him a suitable challenge for a more powerful party. The wizard is peripheral to the adventure, so no details are provided here: This provides an opportunity to introduce a suitable Narrator character from your own setting, if you wish. He could become a thorn in the heroes' sides, or appear just once as a seemingly random encounter.

LOCATION 3: THE TEMPLE

Sooner or later, the heroes should investigate the temple of the God of Knowledge. The building is quite large and easily visible from most parts of the city. The first time they go there, read or paraphrase the following description.

The temple is an impressive structure, its vaulted frame soaring up one hundred feet. Large bronze doors stand open, revealing a tiled atrium. Statues of the god indicate this chamber is the center of worship, but balconies lined with books reach all the way to the frescoed ceiling. This place appears as much library as temple, and the rows of silent, robed scholars working in the balconies attest to this fact.

A young man approaches you. He introduces himself as Norton, a temple novice, and asks how he can be of assistance.

Norton can take the heroes to the high priest's office, which is one level down. There they are passed on to Milos, a slight man with horn-rimmed glasses who is the assistant of High Priest Thuron. This is as far as they can get. Milos simply will not allow them access to the high priest. Should the heroes attempt violence in the temple, a dozen clerics will be on the scene within minutes. This is obviously not a good idea, and may have far-reaching repercussions.

Your requests to speak with High Priest Thuron are flatly rejected by Milos. "I'm afraid such a meeting is impossible," he says. "The high priest is extremely busy planning the dedication ceremony of the Lighthouse of Drac. He cannot be disturbed. However, I am Thuron's eyes and ears around the temple, and you may ask me your questions."

MÍLOS SPEAKS

Here are some likely questions and Milos's answers.

- What is the Lighthouse of Drac?

You must have seen it on your way into Freeport—an enormous structure. Sea Lord Drac, the ruler of Freeport, is building it to commemorate his glorious ancestors. The lighthouse has been under construction for some ten years now, and its dedication is in just a few months.

- What can you tell us about Lucius?

He is an excellent librarian, though he made some poor choices. He was away from the temple a good four years but returned last year. He has not been here in a couple of days, and I do not know where he is.

- Has Lucius been acting strange lately?

He has appeared increasingly haggard over the past several months. He also began asking some very strange questions. The high priest himself had a talk with the man, but it seemed to do no good.

- What sort of questions was Lucius asking?

He was asking about his activities in the temple in the time leading up to his expulsion. As if he weren't here himself! No one needs to be reminded that Lucius violated the sanctum, but he would not let it rest.

- What did the high priest say to him?

Lucius has been lax in his duties of late, and Thuron warned him to be more diligent. The high priest told him to forget the past and concentrate on the present. The events of five years ago are best forgotten.

- Did Lucius have any enemies?

None that I am aware of. Anything may have happened in the years he was gone from Freeport, of course, but I know nothing about that time.

- Why was Lucius let back into the temple?

He acquired a very interesting collection of books during his worldly travels. He offered to donate this collection to the temple as a penance, and the high priest accepted.

- Can we see these books?

They have not been made public yet. Our experts are still evaluating them and checking their authenticity. They should be available next year.

Narrator Note: These books were in Lucius's basement—hence the “new” smell to the shelves—and include the travel logs mentioned in the “to do” list. Lucius wrote these logs during his

possession, but they have proven difficult to decipher. Not only is much of the writing in an unknown language, but also in a complex cipher. Even after the librarians manage to break the code, they will have the same problem they face with the other donated books: The subject matter is rather esoteric, and much of it is simply *alien*.

- If Lucius is missing, why aren't you looking for him?

We do not have the resources to mount search parties for every librarian who fails to come to work. In any case, there is no evidence of foul play. I am sure Lucius is just sleeping off a hangover somewhere or the like.

QUESTIONS AT THE TEMPLE

After their interview with Milos, the heroes are free to talk to others around the temple. They can find four types of people here: priests, lay librarians and clerks, scholars, and worshipers. Temple regulars know Lucius, but they are not forthcoming with information. (Milos has already instructed the staff to put Lucius from their minds.) Should the heroes run into Brother Egil at the temple, he pretends not to know them. Especially persistent questioning results in the heroes being asked to leave the temple and stop pestering the clerics and scholars there.

At a later time, the heroes may want to ask Egil about Milos. He can tell them that Milos, although not a priest himself, is Thuron's right-hand man, and the high priest doesn't make a decision without him. He's been at the temple for fifteen years and is dedicated to his own ambitions, the temple, and Thuron—in that order.

YELLOW SHIELDS AT SUNSET

The heroes' investigation does not go without a response: Milos is in fact a high-ranking member of the Brotherhood of the Yellow Sign. After the party's visit to the temple, he decides he must take action and orders one of the cultists to arrange their elimination. This cultist, Enzo, recruits a small band of mercenaries known as the Yellow Shields, providing them with a description of the heroes.

Members of the Yellow Shields fan out across the city. When exactly they do this is up to you, but a good time is shortly after the heroes have visited the three locations above. You should save the mercenary encounter for when they are out of clues and need a bit of a push in the right direction, or are about to do something really stupid (such as fighting their way into the temple to see Thuron or storming the *Bloody Vengeance*).

Once the mercenaries have established where the heroes are staying, they organize an ambush. They strike at sunset, hoping to hit the party on their way back from a long day of investigation when their guard is down.

MİLOS

Milos has been living in Freeport for decades, posing as a variety of city folk and changing identities when necessary. His parents were both members of the Brotherhood of the Yellow Sign, and he was brought up in the faith. His position in the temple to the God of Knowledge has been very useful: He not only has access to enormous amounts of research material, but also has the ear of an influential figure in the city.

In his research, Milos learned of extraplanar beings that possessed mortal hosts to study different times and places. When Lucius underwent a personality change overnight, Milos knew just what was happening—but, to his frustration, he also knew when the real Lucius returned, he wouldn't remember anything of his time away. When the librarian began having nightmares and memory problems, Milos took notice. Apparently, Lucius *was* remembering something of his time on another plane. Milos decided to kidnap the man and get the information out of him. Such arcane knowledge could benefit the Brotherhood greatly.

This scheme did not work out, though. Lucius had some vivid memories, but they were fragmentary and of little use. More significantly, the kidnapping put investigators on a trail straight to the cult's temple. Freeport is the nexus of an ambitious plan, and the Brotherhood's leaders don't need their underlings drawing attention at this crucial juncture. In the unlikely event Milos survives



The sun is setting in the west, silhouetting the Lighthouse of Drac with its dying rays. You are nearly back to the inn, ready for a hot meal and a stiff drink, when you hear the unmistakable thwack of crossbows firing. As the bolts fly through the air, you see a group of warriors carrying yellow shields burst out of a nearby alley with swords drawn.

Looks like dinner will have to wait.

The six mercenaries have planned their attack, positioning themselves along a lengthy block so as to hem the party in. There is a crossbow-armed warrior on a rooftop at the front of the block. The mercenary leader Rittoro and two of his followers come out of an alley to seal off the street ahead of the party, while the group's adept Belko and another archer block off the back. Unless the heroes have taken unusual precautions, they are caught by surprise (see Surprise in Chapter 6 of True20 Adventure Roleplaying).

The mercenaries' plan is to bottleneck the heroes and then finish them off with a combination of crossbow fire and focused hand-to-hand combat, targeting adepts and well-armed

warriors first. They stand fast until Rittoro, their leader, falls. Then those in the best position to flee (especially the mercenary on the roof) do so.

Narrator Note: As detailed in the Appendix, Rittoro and Belko are antagonists, but the mercenaries accompanying them are considered minions, which should give the heroes a slight edge in the fight.

If any of the mercenaries are captured, they quickly admit they don't know who hired them. Rittoro took care of that, and he won't be able to talk if he's dead. Should Rittoro be captured, he plays tough for a while but eventually reveals a man named Enzo hired him. Even Rittoro doesn't know anything about Enzo, though: He had money, and that was enough for the Yellow Shields.

However, Rittoro does have a piece of parchment with an address written on it. This is where he's supposed to meet his contact after the job to receive payment. If the heroes search his possessions, they also find an ivory-handled dagger with an "L" carved in the hilt. The dagger belonged to Lucius and was given to Rittoro as a down payment on the contract. He has no information about its origin.

~ PART III: THE TRUTH SINKS IN ~

IN WHICH THE PLAYER CHARACTERS UNCOVER A DEVILISH UNDERSIDE
TO THE CITY AND REVEAL AN AGENT OF EDIL.

After the attack by the Yellow Shields, the heroes should realize their investigation has aroused interest of a most unfriendly kind. At this point, they can solve the mystery in two different ways depending on what evidence they have amassed.

CHECKING OUT THE ADDRESS

If the heroes have taken the address from Rittoro, they find it corresponds to a tavern called the Black Gull. This is a rather seedy dive near the docks. Rittoro, if interrogated, tells them he was supposed to meet Enzo there after sunset with proof of his completed mission. Otherwise, the heroes may have to stake the place out. Enzo is easy enough to spot. He's a thin, nervous-looking man—definitely out of place in the tough crowd at the Black Gull. The easiest thing to do is simply follow him: He can lead them straight to the cult's temple, a bricked-up house on an out-of-the-way street.

ENZO

While Enzo dreams of gaining power from the Brotherhood of the Yellow Sign, in truth he is nothing more than a peon and errand boy. A tailor by trade and a weak, unfocused individual,



he turned to the occult in a desperate attempt to take control of his own life. The Brotherhood recruited him after he was seen visiting curio shops and booksellers, asking after magical secrets. (Yes, Enzo *is* that much out of touch.) Enzo has not yet been fully initiated into the cult, but he has proved a useful gopher. Milos had him hire the Yellow Shields to see if the man could be discreet, not considering the heroes a real threat.

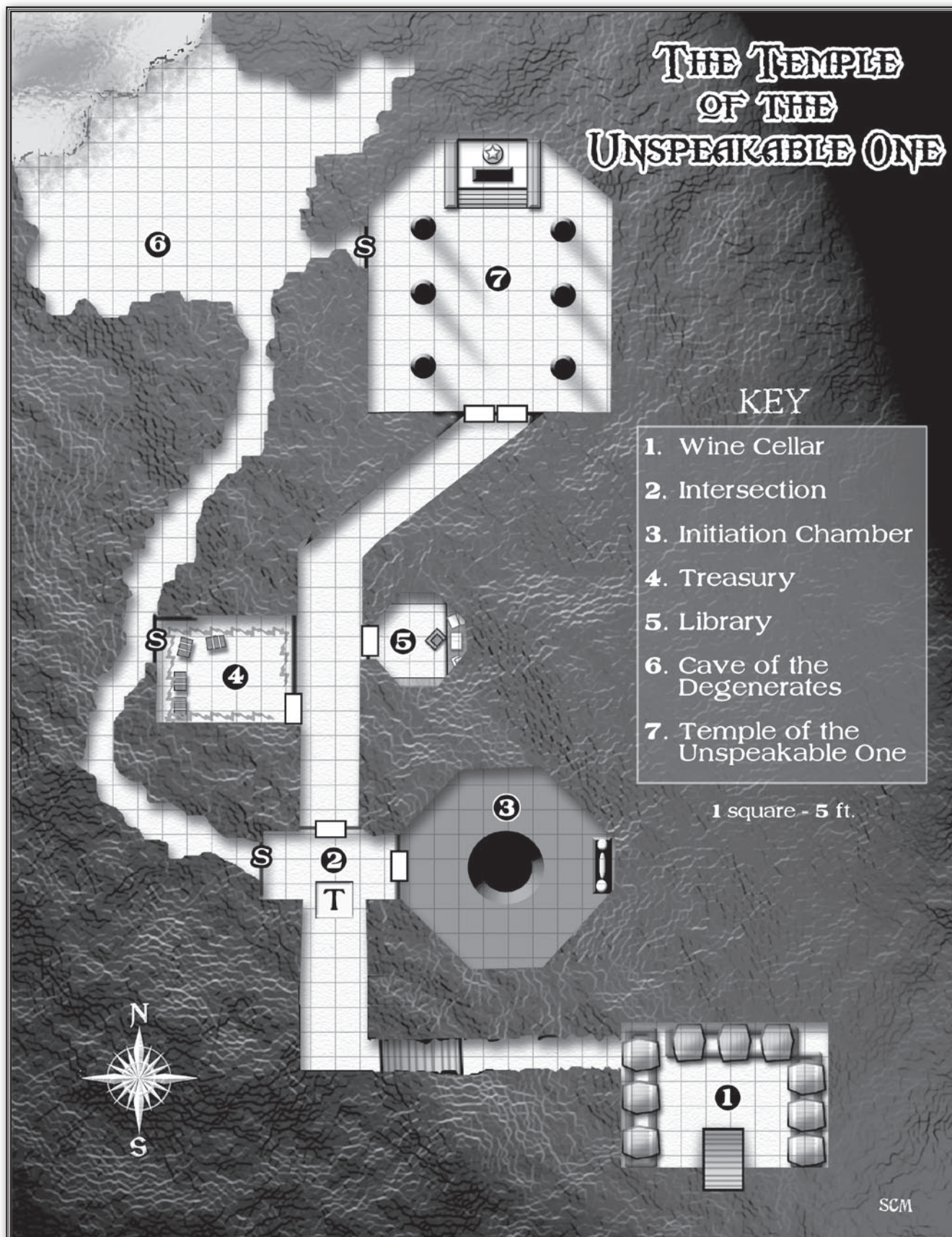
Enzo is a 1st-level ordinary minion and won't fight. Should the heroes confront him, he immediately crumbles. He's a coward at heart and has been bullied so often throughout life that groveling is second nature. He reveals the orders he was given and can lead the party to the cult's headquarters. However, Enzo's knowledge is quite limited.

- The cult is called the Brotherhood. Enzo is not yet worthy to know their dark patron's name.
- The leader of the cult is a very powerful adept. Enzo knows him only as the Master.
- The heroes angered the Master and so earned a death sentence.
- There are some rooms beneath the bricked-up building, but Enzo has never been down there.
- Enzo was ordered to bring food to the building twice in the last few days. This doesn't usually happen.

FOLLOWING MILOS

After visiting the temple to the God of Knowledge and being stymied in their investigation by Milos, the heroes may become suspicious of him. They can learn quite a bit by shadowing him. He doesn't leave the temple often, but when he does he visits some strange places. On a typical outing, Milos might stop in at a curio store or wizardly supply shop to purchase esoteric spell components (strange for someone who is supposedly not an adept), or an open-air market for a live animal, such as a black goat (even though the God of Knowledge doesn't require blood sacrifices). Eventually, he heads to a bricked-up building on a little-used side street and disappears inside.

If the heroes are stumped and can't figure out their next move, you can gently steer them in the right direction. For example, they might catch sight of Milos across the crowded marketplace. Although not dressed in his temple robes, he is unmistakable, yet does not respond to any hails. This should rouse the heroes' interest enough to follow him, although this is difficult in the busy streets (requiring Stealth checks opposed by Milos's Notice check result, as well as Notice checks by the heroes to keep him in sight). Milos eventually disappears inside the bricked-up building. This isn't the cleverest way to find Lucius, but it gets the job done.



LOCATION 4: THE BRICKED-UP HOUSE

This abandoned-looking building is the cult's headquarters, and the place where Lucius can be found. It is on a side street that is usually deserted.

The house is nondescript and seems a perfect hideout. It is a simple, one-story construction, roughly 20 feet by 30 feet. The dilapidated exterior is made of wood, but the windows have all been bricked up. Two steps lead up to a stout-looking wooden door.

The door is locked (Disable Device, Difficulty 25). A successful Strength check (Difficulty 18) can knock it down but makes a lot of noise, alerting the Brotherhood to the heroes' presence.

Once inside, the heroes can see the place is a wreck. There are piles of masonry and refuse everywhere, and it's impossible to tell how many rooms the place may have once had. Anyone who succeeds at a Notice check (Difficulty 20) see parts of the foundation belong to an older construction: The stone is of better quality and finished with more skill.

Toward the back of the house there is a wooden trapdoor in the floor. This is not locked or trapped, and beneath it is a staircase leading down.

1. WINE CELLAR

The stairway leads down to an old wine cellar. The walls are lined with nine large casks made of oak, each about 6 feet tall and nearly 8 feet long. They appear to have been here for a long time, though the room contains remarkably little dust.

Five of the casks actually still have wine in them, but it is quite spoilt. The remaining four casks make hollow sounds if struck. One on the west wall houses a concealed entrance. A character with the Track feat can attempt a Survival check (Difficulty 20) to notice faint footprints leading from the stairs to the cask. (Tracking should be done before the entire party stomps around the room—otherwise all traces are obliterated.)

The cask is hinged on the inside, and releasing a hidden latch causes the entire front half to swing out, revealing a stone passage and more stairs leading down. A Search check (Difficulty 17) locates the secret mechanism. Should the heroes decide to investigate the casks "the adventurer way" (that is, hacking at them with axes), the oaken barrels are Toughness 5.

The concealed entrance sets off a silent supernatural alarm when opened, warning Milos of the heroes' approach, no matter where he is. If he is not already onsite, he finds a secluded area and uses his Teleport charm to travel to the cult's temple proper (area 7).

Milos then runs to the caves (area 6) and rouses the degenerate serpent people there. He orders them into the tunnels to ambush the heroes in the intersection (area 2) or the treasury (area 4). Once he's sent off the serpent people, Milos readies himself and his attendants to confront the intruders.

2. INTERSECTION

The narrow stairs open into a corridor of finished stone, about 10 feet wide, that heads north about 25 feet and ends in a T-intersection. There are doors on the east and north walls.

At the beginning of the intersection is a covered pit trap. Once the presence of the pit is known, it is easy enough to walk around. It requires a Search check (Difficulty 24) to find the pit and a Disable Device check (Difficulty 20) can disable and keep it closed. Anyone who triggers the pit trap must make a Reflex saving throw (Difficulty 20) to avoid falling in and suffering +1 falling damage at the bottom of the 10-foot pit.

HOW UNSPEAKABLE IS UNSPEAKABLE?

Once they learn the nature of the cult, players may want to find out if their characters know anything more about this Unspeakable One. Either Knowledge (supernatural) or Knowledge (theology and philosophy) can reveal some things.

Difficulty	Information
15	The Unspeakable One is an evil god whose worship is proscribed in many nations.
20	The god is dedicated to madness and destruction, and his cults have been suppressed numerous times over the centuries.
25	Worship of the Unspeakable One dates back to ancient times. Legends speak of a race of serpent people dedicated to his worship.
30	Even scholars are afraid to whisper the name of his cult: The Brotherhood of the Yellow Sign.

Neither of the doors is locked. The north door opens into a 40-foot-long corridor that veers northeast, with two doors visible. The east door of the intersection leads to the initiation chamber (area 3). The west wall of the T-junction hides a secret door (Search, Difficulty 20) connected to the caves. Up to five serpent people may attack out of this door depending on how much time Milos had to warn them.

Should the serpent people miss the party, they lurk in area 2 and await a suitable opportunity. They are most likely to attack when the heroes are heading down the corridor towards the temple proper (area 7).

3. INITIATION CHAMBER

The door swings open to reveal a 30-foot-by-30-foot octagonal chamber. The entire room has been painted black, and the ceiling shimmers with stars like the sky at night. There is a circular depression in the center of the room some 10 feet deep. On the far wall you can see a sturdy table covered with ritual paraphernalia: a gong, incense burners, two candelabras, and some other items you can't make out. No one is in sight, but the room seems to radiate quiet menace.

This strange room is the initiation chamber of the Brotherhood of the Yellow Sign. It is painted black in honor of the Unspeakable One's starry home. Recruits who have proved themselves are brought here to be judged by that dread entity. A candidate undergoing initiation is stripped naked and pushed into the depression. Milos then enacts a ritual to draw the attention of the Unspeakable One. This is by no means a pleasant experience, and one cowards like Enzo are unlikely to withstand.

The items on the table are of considerable interest. The candelabras are made of pure silver and shaped like coiling serpents. They are quite old, and the craftsmanship is exquisite. Each would fetch 50 gold pieces on the street, twice that if sold to a knowledgeable adept. The candles are black, but are otherwise unremarkable. The incense burners are made of bronze (worth 5 gold pieces each). They are full and ready for the flame. Several small cases lie nearby, containing additional cubes of incense. The large gong has place of honor on the table. It too is made of bronze and features a serpent motif (worth 10 gold coins).

4. TREASURY

As you open the door, your eyes are immediately drawn to the garish purple curtains that hang from the walls. Your attention quickly turns to the center of the room, however, where skeletal figures come to life and start towards you with claws extended. You can see many chests scattered about, but you'll have to fight your way through the walking dead first!

NOW YOU'VE DONE IT!

Adventurers usually can't resist messing around with things they find. Often unwise, in this case doing so is very dangerous, as it may accidentally trigger the ritual. Should the heroes manage to light the candles and incense, and strike the gong three times, the Unspeakable One takes notice.

The room reverberates with the sound of the gong. Above you the stars seem to twinkle as if you really are looking at the sky. Then you feel a presence—and the circular depression erupts with black tentacles.

You don't need to be a paladin to feel the evil here. It is ancient and potent, and you can only hope those tentacles have not come for you.

Anyone in the chamber when this happens must succeed at a Will save (Difficulty 20) or suffer a point of temporary Wisdom damage. The tentacles do not attack anyone outside of the depression. Casting spells at or attacking the tentacles has no effect, for the Unspeakable One conforms to an alien reality beyond the ken of mortals. The tentacles remain for two rounds, then withdraw and vanish.

Characters actually in the depression are in for a horrific experience. The tentacles engulf them, squeezing, pulling, and prodding. Inhuman voices fill their heads, whispering terrible words and evoking images of horror. Though this lasts for only two rounds, it seems like an eternity. Finally, the tentacles withdraw and disappear. Those who suffer through this lose 5 points of Wisdom (Will save, Difficulty 20, to lose only 2 Wisdom). This Wisdom loss is temporary except for 1 point, which is permanently drained. No one survives such direct contact with the Unspeakable One unscathed.

Those reduced to -5 Wisdom fall into a catatonic state, tormented by nightmares of the Unspeakable One until they recover. Temporary Wisdom damage returns at the rate of 1 point per full day of rest (24 hours).

This small, cramped room is the cult's treasury: Milos has stored a lot of wealth in here over the years. A cult superior who recently visited has animated the remains of some deceased initiates to guard the treasure.

The purple curtains are mostly decorative but do help conceal a secret door to the ancient tunnels of the serpent people (Search, Difficulty 20).

The number of skeletons is equal to the number of heroes in the group. The fighting is likely to be at very close quarters. The five degenerate serpent people from area 6 may also attack if they have not yet been encountered and the heroes are dealing with the skeletons too easily.

There are four chests in the room, all of which are locked (Disable Device, Difficulty 20). Milos carries the keys with him at all times. Should the heroes slay him first, they can open the chests with ease. The chests are Toughness 7 if the heroes try to smash them open.

Chest #1 contains 500 gold coins and 1500 silver coins.

Chest #2 contains 3000 silver coins and a potion that is a Charm of Cure +5.

Chest #3 contains 2500 silver coins and four onyx gems worth 60 gold pieces each.

Chest #4 contains 2200 silver coins. Lying on top of the coins is a supernatural large shield that provides a +4 dodge bonus.

The curtains also hide an old spear standing upright in the southwest corner of the room. The spear is a supernatural weapon (see **Chapter 5** of *True20 Adventure Roleplaying*).



5. LIBRARY

Another octagonal room, this small chamber looks to be a study or library. A teakwood desk stands against the far wall, flanked by low shelves crammed with books and scrolls. An oil lamp hangs from chains in the center of the room, its flame burning low—the room seems alive with flickering shadows.

Milos inherited this library from his predecessor. Some of the books date back a thousand years or more, and many are in languages that have been dead at least as long. A scholar would have a field day with this treasure trove, except nearly every tome is full of blasphemous secrets.

The desk is a beautiful piece of work and has been lovingly maintained. On it lays a large book bound in black leather and finished with silver. The tome's title is rather ominous: *The Book of the Unspeakable One*. It is full of rituals and stories involving the dread god, and its pages are for cult members only. Anyone who has not been through the Brotherhood's initiation must make a Will save (Difficulty 20) upon reading the book suffer 1 point of temporary Wisdom damage, plus lethal damage on a failed save, read on the damage track like normal lethal damage (except with the Will save rather than a Toughness saving throw).

The rest of the library is full of old books and scrolls. Most are in no language known to the heroes. A few titles suggest they are best left alone: *Cult of the Bloody Heart*, *Spawn of the Ages*, and *Rebirth of the Old Ones*. Any of these books would be worth a great deal of money to the right people, but shopping them around would surely attract the wrong kind of notice.

There are several letters scattered across the desk. Two of them are progress reports on the construction of the Lighthouse of Drac. The third is short but to the point:

Our preparations are almost complete. We will arrive in Freeport on schedule. Make sure that all is ready for us. The Brotherhood is counting on you.

—N'Tal

Narrator Note: This letter's implications are important in future adventures. For now, it serves to make clear this temple is not the cult's only center of operations.

This room is a great place to plant some seeds for later adventures. A clue here can lead the party into the next situation, if you have one in mind. This makes your campaign more of an ongoing story and less like an episodic TV show.

6. GAVE OF THE DEGENERATES

Unbeknownst to the inhabitants of Freeport, bands of degenerate serpent people still live in tunnels underneath

the city. The small section shown here actually connects to a much larger network. When the civilized serpent people of the Brotherhood built this temple complex, they made sure to connect it with the crude tunnels of their cousins. This gives the cult access to mindless force when needed.

The heroes are not likely to encounter the degenerate serpent people at this location, though they may find the secret tunnels (Difficulty 15 Search check to locate). Unlike the rest of the complex, these tunnels are rough-hewn and unfinished. They lead to a large cave where the degenerates spend most of their time. Read the following description the first time the heroes discover the cave.

A large, irregular cave stretches out before you. It is different from the other rooms you've seen, looking both older and more primitive. At least 40 feet by 50 feet, and larger in places, the cave is scattered with bones, refuse, and filth. You can hear the lapping of water from the northwest corner, where there lies a dark pool. The water looks black, and you can tell neither its size nor depth.

Searching the cave uncovers nothing of interest. A short corridor heads east and then ends abruptly. A secret door here (Search Difficulty 20) leads to the main temple (area 7). There is a tunnel below the surface of the pool that leads deeper underground. This is not important for this adventure but may come into play in future Freeport adventures, as well as your own stories.

7. TEMPLE OF THE UNSPEAKABLE ONE (EL5)

A pair of double doors leads to the temple proper. Amazingly, they are not locked. By this point Milos is well aware of the intruders and wants to deal with them under the gaze of the Unspeakable One.

Opening the doors, you are met with blazing torchlight. As your eyes adjust to the brightness, you can see you have reached the heart of the temple: a long hall, flanked with six pillars, some 40 feet long and 35 feet wide. Each pillar seems to have a giant carved snake coiled around it, and the motif continues on frescoes along the walls. An altar of black basalt stands at the far end of the hall, and a strange yellow symbol is inscribed on the wall behind it. There is a statue of a tentacled horror—it must be the Unspeakable One itself!

Two figures in robes lurk behind the far pillars, loaded crossbows at the ready. Behind the altar stands a small man wearing black robes with a full hood. As you enter the room, he throws back his hood, exposing familiar horn-rimmed glasses. Milos smiles at your reaction and says, "You are the first outsiders to ever reach the Temple of the Unspeakable One. Your achievement deserves congratulations. It is also your doom!"



Now it's a fight to the finish. Milos has chosen a position to give him the most advantage in a fight. He has the help of two temple attendants, who are always on hand.

Milos has had a little time to prepare for this battle. After sending off the degenerate serpent people (see area 1 above), he returned here to brief the temple attendants. They put on their armor and readied their weapons.

All three cultists have cover, which gives them a +4 bonus to Defense and a +2 bonus to Reflex saves. The battle opens at range, as the attendants fire their crossbows and Milos uses his powers: particularly Heart Shaping to cause despair and fear and Move Object to disarm fighters or fling objects into the heroes. See Milos' description in the **Appendix** for full details.

~ AFTERMATH ~

When they finally defeat Milos, the heroes discover he was not human at all. His true form becomes apparent upon his death. Read the following text after the fatal blow is struck.

Milos slumps to the floor, lifeblood pumping onto the tiles of the blasphemous temple. He raises his head one last time, gasping out, "By the Yellow Sign, we will rule!" and then expires. As the cultist's eyes glaze over in death, a terrible transformation takes place. His skin and bones rearrange themselves in a most unnatural way, and soon his human visage is gone. Milos now lies revealed as a monstrous creature, a serpent man with scaly skin and forked tongue. Only the ill-fitting glasses on his ophidian head give a hint of the thing's former identity. You can only wonder how he got away with his deception for so many years, and if there are others like him in the city above.

Once the battle is over and the ramifications of Milos's true nature sink in, the adventurers can turn their attention to locating and tending to poor Lucius. Milos secreted him behind the altar, tied up and hidden from view. Torture has left him in an unconscious and disabled condition, but he can be aided with the Medicine skill or the Cure power.

LUCIUS'S STORY

Lucius sighs with relief and thanks his rescuers profusely. They saved him from certain, painful death, and for that he is

eternally grateful. If the heroes mention Brother Egil, Lucius expresses concern for his friend, wishing to leave the temple immediately and find him. He is willing to tell the party what little he knows, if they ask.

Lucius blurts out the whole tale of his possession, return, and subsequent trouble. He explains that Milos sent him on an errand to the bricked-up house, where he was overpowered and taken below. Milos spoke of the extraplanar entities, but did not name them nor say why they studied other worlds. The sinister serpent man tortured Lucius, asking question after question about his memories of the other plane. Clearly Milos believed that valuable knowledge was locked in Lucius's head, but the librarian could not tell him very much. The cultist became increasingly frustrated, and told Lucius repeatedly that he was going to kill him—he probably would have, without the party's timely intervention.

Brother Egil is very pleased and gladly pays the agreed-upon fee (although the heroes have likely gotten out of the Brotherhood's temple with a good deal more). Both he and Lucius offer their services if needed. Their ability to do research in the temple of the God of Knowledge could come in very handy in the future.

As for Lucius, his own future is dubious. Milos provided some of the answers he was looking for, but he'd like to find out more. He is uncertain whether he'll stay at the temple or leave Freeport to search for his missing past. Sadly, Lucius may never again know peace after the theft of five years of his life.

What else lurks below the surface of Freeport? Well, that's a story for another time . . .

~ ADVENTURE SEEDS ~

The adventures *Terror in Freeport* and *Madness in Freeport* deal with the continuing machinations of the Brotherhood of the Yellow Sign, the secrets of the Sea Lord, and the ultimate purpose of Milton's Folly. However, if you want to run your players through some other adventures, Freeport makes a fine base of operations for pre-published modules and stories of your own. The events in *Death in Freeport* can also lead to several developments, some of which are suggested here.

- The heroes may try deciphering or peddling volumes from the library of Milos. Many of those books contain dark secrets, though, and what begins as a simple sale may become something far more dangerous.
- The Yellow Sign is revealed only at the end of this adventure. The heroes may want to investigate this strange symbol

further to learn its connection with the Unspeakable One. The sign is a symbol of madness and destruction: Any research into its meaning is sure to lead down a dark path.

- There are more degenerate serpent people living under Freeport, and their tunnels make for a fine "dungeon crawl." The heroes could launch an expedition, and in the process, find out about the breaking of Valossa and the first coming of the Unspeakable One.
- Surviving members of Milos's cult, or cult officials from outside Freeport, may learn of the temple's destruction. Some of these cultists are sure to be from wealthy families and would have the means to make life difficult for the heroes. A string of arrests and assassination attempts should be a strong hint that someone wants revenge.

APPENDIX

ALLIES

BROTHER EGIL

2nd-level human adept

Abilities: Str +0, Dex +1, Con +1, Int +0, Wis +2, Cha +1

Skills: Concentration 5 (+7), Diplomacy 5 (+6), Medicine 5 (+7), Notice 4 (+6), Knowledge (theology and philosophy) 5 (+10)

Feats: Imbue Item, Skill Focus (Knowledge—theology and philosophy), Widen Power

Powers (Wisdom-based, +7 bonus, Save Difficulty 13) Cure, Second Sight, Ward

Combat: Attack +2 (Dex), Damage +0 (unarmed) or by weapon, Defense +2 (Dex), Initiative +1

Saving Throws: Toughness +1, Fortitude +1, Reflex +1, Will +5

LUCIUS

1st-level human expert

Abilities: Str -1, Dex +0, Con -1, Int +2, Wis +1, Cha +1

Skills: Craft (bookbinding) 4 (+6), Craft (calligraphy) 4 (+6), Gather Information 4 (+7), Knowledge (art) 4 (+8), Knowledge (earth sciences) 4 (+8), Knowledge (history) 4 (+8), Knowledge (supernatural) 4 (+8), Knowledge (theology and philosophy) 4 (+8), Language 4 (the common tongue and six others), Search 4 (+6)

Feats: Dedicated (learning about his past), Talented x3 (Gather Information and five Knowledge skills)

Combat: Attack +0, Damage -1 (unarmed) or by weapon, Defense +0, Initiative +0

Saving Throws: Toughness -1, Fortitude -1, Reflex +0, Will +3

MINIONS

BLOODY VENGEANCE PIRATE

1st-level orc warrior

Abilities: Str +3, Dex +0, Con +1, Int -1, Wis -2, Cha -2

Skills: Jump 4 (+7), Notice 4 (+4), Swim 4 (+7)

Feats: Attack Focus (scimitar), Armor Training (light), Talented (Notice and Sense Motive), Weapon Training

Traits: Darkvision (60 ft.), Light Sensitivity

Combat: Attack +1 (+2 with scimitar), Damage +3 (unarmed), +6 (scimitar or bow), Defense +1 (+4 parry), Initiative +0

Saving Throws: Toughness +1, Fortitude +3, Reflex +0, Will -2

PRESS GANG MEMBER

1st-level human expert

Abilities: Str +1, Dex +2, Con +0, Int -1, Wis -1, Cha +0

Skills: Climb 4 (+5), Gather Information 4 (+4), Intimidate 4 (+6), Knowledge (current events) 4 (+3), Knowledge (streetwise) 4 (+5), Pilot (ships) 4 (+6), Search 4 (+3), Swim 4 (+5)

Feats: Contacts, Dodge Focus, Talented (Intimidate and Knowledge—streetwise), Sneak Attack, Weapon Training

Combat: Attack +2 (Dex), Damage +0 (unarmed) or +3 (sap or belaying pin), Defense +3 (Dex, Dodge), Initiative +0

Saving Throws: Toughness +0, Fortitude +0, Reflex +2, Will +1

SKELETON

Type: 1st-level undead

Size: Medium

Speed: 30 ft.

Abilities: Str +1, Dex +1, Con —, Int —, Wis +0, Cha -5

Feats: Improved Initiative^B

Traits: Damage Reduction 2/Bludgeoning, Darkvision (60 ft.), Immunities

Combat: Attack +1 (Dex), Damage +1 (unarmed) or by weapon, Defense +1 (Dex), Initiative +5

Saving Throws: Toughness +0, Fortitude —, Reflex +1, Will —

Skeletons are the bones of the dead turned into supernaturally animated, mindless automatons obeying the commands of their creators. A skeleton is seldom garbed in anything more than the rotting remnants of whatever clothing or armor it wore when it died.

Damage Reduction +2/Bludgeoning: Skeletons lack flesh or internal organs, making them resistant to cutting and piercing weapons.

Immunities: Skeletons are immune to cold, poison, sleep, paralysis, stunning, disease, and mind-influencing effects (including mind-influencing powers). They are not subject to critical hits, non-lethal damage, ability damage, ability drain, or any effect requiring a Fortitude save, unless it works on inanimate objects.

BROTHERHOOD TEMPLE ATTENDANT

1st-level human warrior

Abilities: Str +1, Dex +0, Con +1, Int +1, Wis +2, Cha +0

Skills: Concentration 4 (+6), Craft (calligraphy) 4 (+5), Medicine 4 (+6), Knowledge (supernatural) 4 (+5), Knowledge (theology and philosophy) 4 (+6)

Feats: Armor Training (light and heavy), Iron Will, Rage, Weapon Training

Traits: Power (Harm +6)

Combat: Attack +1, Damage +1 (unarmed), +2 (serpent dagger), +3 (light mace), or +3 (crossbow), Defense +1 (+2 parry), Initiative +0

Saving Throws: Toughness +1 (+3 with scale armor), Fortitude +3, Reflex +0, Will +4

YELLOW SHIELD MERCENARY

1st-level human warrior

Abilities: Str +1, Dex +0, Con +1, Int -1, Wis -1, Cha +0

Skills: Climb 4 (+5), Notice 4 (+3), Ride 4 (+4), Stealth 4 (+4)

Feats: Armor Training (light and heavy), Precise Shot, Weapon Training

Combat: Attack +1, Damage +1 (unarmed), +3 (short sword), or +3 (crossbow), Defense +1 (+2 with small shield), Initiative +0

Saving Throws: Toughness +1 (+3 with studded armor), Fortitude +3, Reflex +0, Will -1

ANTAGONISTS

AGGRO, FIRST MATE OF THE BLOODY VENGEANCE

2nd-level orc warrior

Abilities: Str +3, Dex +1, Con +1, Int -1, Wis -1, Cha -1

Skills: Intimidate 4 (+6), Notice 4 (+3), Pilot (ships) 4 (+5), Swim 4 (+7)

Feats: Armor Training (light and heavy), Power Attack, Skill Focus (Intimidate), Weapon Training

Traits: Darkvision (60 ft.), Light Sensitivity

Combat: Attack +2 (Dex), Damage +3 (unarmed) or +6 (scimitar), Defense +2 (Dex, +4 parry), Initiative +1

Saving Throws: Toughness +1 (+4 with chainmail), Fortitude +3, Reflex +1, Will -1

BELKO, YELLOW SHIELD ADEPT

1st-level human adept

Abilities: Str +0, Dex +2, Con +0, Int +0, Wis -1, Cha +2

Skills: Concentration 4 (+3), Knowledge (supernatural) 4 (+4), Notice 4 (+3), Stealth 4 (+6)

Feats: Dodge Focus

Powers (Charisma-based, +6 bonus, Save Difficulty 12): Light Shaping, Fire Shaping, Move Object, Second Sight

Combat: Attack +2 (Dex), Damage +0 (unarmed), +2 (quarterstaff), or by power, Defense +3 (Dex, Dodge), Initiative +2

Saving Throws: Toughness +0, Fortitude +0, Reflex +2, Will +1

MÍLOS

4th-level serpent person adept

Abilities: Str +1, Dex +1, Con +0, Int +1, Wis +3, Cha +2

Skills: Concentration 5 (+8), Diplomacy 5 (+7), Disguise 5 (+7, +17 with change shape), Escape Artist 5 (+6), Knowledge (art) 5 (+6), Knowledge (history) 5 (+6), Knowledge (supernatural) 5 (+6), Knowledge (theology and philosophy) 5 (+6)

Feats: Improved Initiative^B, Improved Strike^B, Talented (Escape Artist, Stealth)^B, Toughness

Powers (Wisdom-based, +10 bonus, Save Difficulty 15) Cure, Heart Shaping, Move Object, Pain, Suggestion

Traits: Change Shape (humanoid form, 3/day), Power (Harm +10)

Combat: Attack +3 (Dex), Damage +1 (unarmed), +2 (dagger), or +3 (short spear), Defense +3 (Dex), Initiative +5

Saving Throws: Toughness +1, Fortitude +1, Reflex +2, Will +7

RITTORO

2nd-level human warrior

Abilities: Str +2, Dex +0, Con +0, Int -1, Wis +0, Cha +2

Skills: Climb 5 (+7), Intimidate 5 (+7), Knowledge (streetwise) 5 (+4), Notice 5 (+7), Survival 0 (+2)

Feats: Armor Training (light), Power Attack, Talented (Notice and Survival), Track, Weapon Focus (battleaxe), Weapon Training

Combat: Attack +2 (+3 battleaxe), Damage +2 (unarmed) or +5 (battleaxe), Defense +2 (Dex, +3 with shield, +4 parry), Initiative +0

Saving Throws: Toughness +0 (+2 with studded leather armor), Fortitude +3, Reflex +0, Will +0

CAPTAIN SCARBELLY OF THE BLOODY VENGEANCE

3rd-level orc warrior

Abilities: Str +4, Dex +1, Con +1, Int +1, Wis -1, Cha +0

Skills: Intimidate 6 (+6), Jump 6 (+10), Knowledge (streetwise) 6 (+7), Pilot (ships) 6 (+7), Swim 6 (+10)

Feats: Armor Training (light and heavy), Cleave, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Power Attack, Weapon Training

Traits: Darkvision (60 ft.), Light Sensitivity

Combat: Attack +4 (Dex), Damage +4 (unarmed) or +7 (supernatural battleaxe), Defense +4 (Dex, +5 with shield, +7 parry), Initiative +5

Saving Throws: Toughness +1 (+4 with chain mail), Fortitude +4, Reflex +2, Will +2

NEW CREATURE

SERPENT PERSON, DEGENERATE

Type: 1st-level monstrous humanoid (reptilian) (1st-level warrior)

Size: Medium

Speed: 30 ft.

Abilities: Str +1, Dex +0, Con +1, Int -2, Wis -2, Cha -1

Skills: Escape Artist 0 (+2), Notice 4 (+2), Stealth 0 (+2), Survival 4 (+2)

Feats: Improved Initiative^B, Improved Strike^B, Light Sleeper, Shield Training, Talented (Escape Artist and Stealth)^B, Toughness, Weapon Training

Traits: Darkvision (60 ft.), Poison

Combat: Attack +1, Damage +1 (unarmed, plus poison) or +4 (spear), Defense +1 (+4 with heavy shield), Initiative +4
Saving Throws: Toughness +2, Fortitude +3, Reflex +0, Will –1

SERPENT PERSON, CIVILIZED

Type: 1st-level monstrous humanoid (reptilian, shapechanger) (1st-level warrior)

Size: Medium

Speed: 30 ft.

Abilities: Str +0, Dex +0, Con –1, Int +1, Wis +0, Cha +1

Skills: Disguise 4 (+5, +15 with change shape), Escape Artist 0 (+2), Knowledge (supernatural) 4 (+5), Notice 4 (+4), Stealth 4 (+6), Survival 4 (+4)

Feats: Armor Training (light and heavy), Improved Initiative^B, Improved Strike^B, Talented (Escape Artist and Stealth)^B, Toughness, Weapon Training

Traits: Change Shape, Darkvision (60 ft.)

Combat: Attack +1, Damage +0 (unarmed) or +3 (scimitar), Defense +1, Initiative +4

Saving Throws: Toughness +0 (+3 with chain mail), Fortitude +1, Reflex +0, Will +0

The serpent people once ruled a vast empire. Their knowledge of sorcery and other planes of existence could not help them, though, when the Unspeakable One was summoned to the heart of Valossa. The Valossan Empire was destroyed, most of it falling beneath the waves, and millions died in the cataclysm. Some, though, survived and continue to inhabit the islands of their former realm.

The remaining serpent people can be divided into two groups. Degenerates are wretched offspring of those maddened by the dread god's coming. They have no memory of their ancestors' former achievements and act on instinct, tainted by madness. Most of the degenerate serpent people live deep underground, rarely coming to the surface. A very few serpent people are descended from those who survived with their sanity intact. This civilized breed has thrived over the centuries by remaining out of sight. They either live in seclusion or adopt the forms of humans or elves, living among their successors.

Serpent people are bipedal, but they retain the sinuous necks and long tails of snakes. Coloration varies widely, though black is the dominant color among degenerates.

Hardly anything remains of the empire that dominated the world in ancient times. The degenerates multiply and fester underground, breaking free every few decades to cause murder and mayhem. These attacks are usually blamed on lizardfolk, since few now can recognize the serpent people as different creatures.

Civilized serpent people are very long-lived: Some of their adepts are over a thousand years old. They are, however, usually

solitary and pursue individual goals. Even among the serpent people, few know that the Brotherhood of the Yellow Sign survived the cataclysm, and none guess that they would trifle with the Unspeakable One a second time. Perhaps this is the best cover for the Brotherhood, and the reason that powerful members of their own line have not yet obliterated them.

Poison: Degenerates have a venomous bite that induces madness. Fortitude save (Difficulty 11); initial damage 2 points of temporary Wisdom, secondary damage 1 point of temporary Wisdom. The save Difficulty is Constitution-based.

Change Shape: A civilized serpent person may assume the form of any small or medium humanoid as a full round action. A serpent person can remain in its humanoid form until it chooses to assume a new shape, but may only assume a new shape up to three times per day. A serpent person reverts to its natural form when killed. When using change shape, a serpent person gains a +10 bonus to Disguise checks.

SERPENT PEOPLE CHARACTERS

Nearly all degenerate serpent people are warriors. Civilized serpent people have their choice of role but favor adept. The information in the statistics block reflects a 1st-level warrior, although most civilized serpent people are likely to be of higher level.

Degenerate serpent people characters possess the following traits.

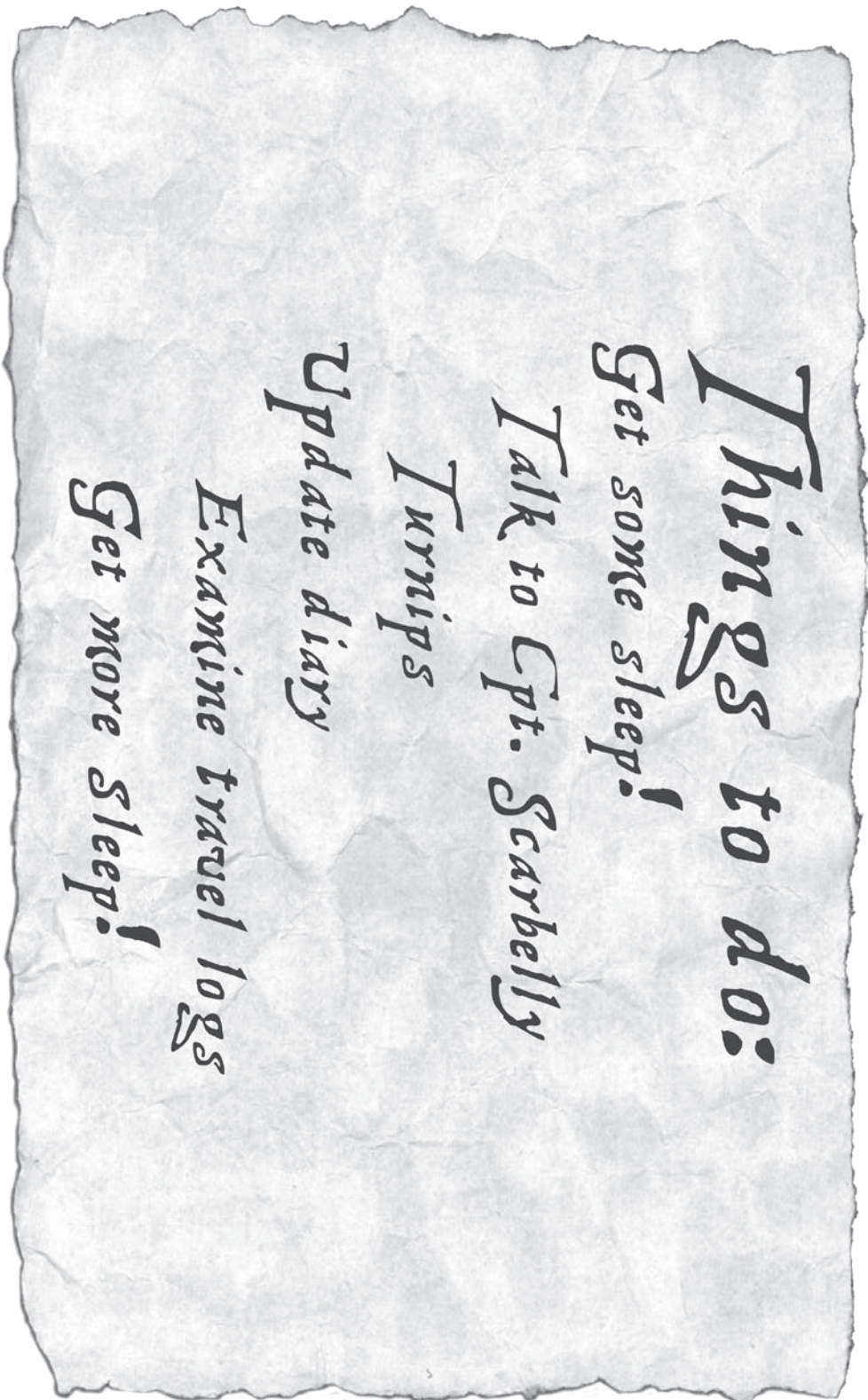
- +1 Strength, +1 Constitution, –2 Intelligence, –2 Wisdom, –1 Charisma.
- Medium size.
- A serpent person's base land speed is 30 feet.
- A serpent person has a swim speed of 15 feet.
- Darkvision out to 60 feet.
- Bonus Feats: Improved Initiative, Improved Strike, and Talented (Escape Artist and Stealth).
- Favored Feats: Toughness.
- Poison (see description).
- Automatic Languages: Valossan. Bonus Languages: Any. Degenerates are illiterate, regardless of role.

Civilized serpent people characters possess the following additional traits.

- –1 Constitution, +1 Intelligence, +1 Charisma. These adjustments replace the degenerate's ability score adjustments.
- A civilized serpent person has the shapechanger subtype.
- Change Shape (see description), this replaces the degenerate's Poison trait.
- Automatic Languages: Common, Valossan. Bonus Languages: Any. This trait replaces the degenerate's automatic and bonus languages.

- HANDOUTS -

HANDOUT A



Things to do:
Get some sleep!
Talk to Cpt. Scarbally
Turnips
Update diary
Examine travel logs
Get more sleep!

HANDOUT B

FROM SIX YEARS AGO:

I awoke this morning frightfully fatigued. I feel like the I spent the night in combat, not sleeping. My head hurts, and I feel weak. I can't miss work at the temple, but I think I'll confine myself to light tasks today.

THE NEXT ENTRY, DATED FIVE YEARS LATER:

The god help me! What happened? I awoke from some strange dream to find that five years have passed! Egil told me I was kicked out of the temple four years ago for violating the sanctum. Surely this is madness!

FROM SIX MONTHS AGO:

Life has resumed a kind of normalcy. I have won admittance back into the temple. My reception was strange, but everyone seems relieved that I am "back to my old self." I have so many questions about these missing years but it seems best to simply move on with my life now. If the god wills it, knowledge will come to me.

FROM FOUR MONTHS AGO:

Egil says that Milos was asking after me again, that he was worried about another "episode." Maybe he's simply concerned for the temple, but surely I have sufficiently proven myself by now. My life is mine again, and I'm not giving it up!

FROM TWO MONTHS AGO:

The dreams came again last night. I don't know that I'll ever get a good night's sleep! I dreamt of cities as tall as the clouds and creatures so alien in form that I can't describe them. Does this have something to do with my lost years or is this some fresh torment?

FROM ONE MONTH AGO:

It's clear to me now that I must find some answer if I'm ever to make the dreams stop. Thuron and Milos tried to discourage me—I think they fear what might happen to their temple. A pity their compassion does not extend to a living being.

FROM ONE WEEK AGO:

I have begun to feel like I'm being watched. I pray this is not a further milestone on the road to madness. I think I'll take my dagger with me in the morning. In a city like Freeport, I suppose one can't be too careful. Especially with pirates in port.

- PREGENERATED CHARACTERS -

ROLLO

Race: Gnome

Role: 1st-level warrior

Size: Small

Speed: 20 ft.

Abilities: Str +2, Dex +1, Con +2, Int +0, Wis +1, Cha +0

Skills: Climb 4 (+6), Jump 4 (+6), Notice 4 (+7), Stealth 4 (+5)

Feats: Armor Training (light), Iron Will^B, Night Vision^B, Talented (Craft—chemical, Notice)^B, Weapon Focus (hammer), Weapon Training, Two-Weapon Fighting

Combat: Attack +2 (Dex, +3 with hammer), Damage +2 (unarmed), +5 (hammer), +4 (short bow), Defense +2 (Dex, Parry +3), Initiative +1

Saving Throws: Toughness +2 (+4 with studded armor), Fortitude +4, Reflex +1, Will +3

Languages: Common, Gnome

Height: 3'8"

Weight: 47 lbs.

Age: 56

Weapons: Gnome Hooked Hammer (damage +3/20, +4), Short Bow (damage +2/20, +4)

Armor: Studded leather (+2 Toughness, -2 armor check penalty)

Equipment: Backpack, bedroll, crowbar, explorer's outfit, flint and steel, quiver with 20 arrows, 3 torches.

Money: 14 gold pieces, 8 silver pieces



MALEDIR

Race: Half-Elf

Role: 1st-level adept

Size: Medium

Speed: 30 ft.

Abilities: Str -1, Dex +2, Con +1, Int +1, Wis +0, Cha +3

Skills: Concentration 4 (+4), Diplomacy 4 (+9), Gather Information 4 (+9), Knowledge (supernatural) 4 (+5), Notice 4 (+6), Search 0 (+3)

Feats: Dodge Focus, Night Vision^B, Talented (Diplomacy, Gather Information)^B, Talented (Notice, Search)^B,

Powers (Charisma-based, +7 bonus, Save Difficulty 13): Light Shaping, Move Object, Second Sight

Combat: Attack +2 (Dex), Damage -1 (unarmed), +1 (light mace), +3 (cross-bow), Defense +2 (Dex), Initiative +2

Saving Throws: Toughness +1, Fortitude +1, Reflex +2, Will +2

Languages: Common, Dwarven, Elven

Height: 5'3"

Weight: 142 lbs.

Age: 25

Weapons: Light Crossbow (damage +3/19-20, +4), Light Mace (damage +2/20, +3)

Equipment: Backpack, bedroll, ink (vial), inkpen, parchment (sheaf), quiver with 20 bolts, sealing wax, signet ring, traveler's outfit.

Money: 4 gold pieces, 8 silver pieces.



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~ PREGENERATED CHARACTERS ~

ALAINA

Race: Human

Role: 1st-level expert

Size: Medium

Speed: 30 ft.

Abilities: Str +0, Dex +3, Con +1, Int +1, Wis +0, Cha +1

Skills: Acrobatics 4 (+7), Bluff 4 (+5), Climb 4 (+4), Diplomacy 4 (+5), Disable Device 4 (+5), Escape Artist 4 (+7), Gather Information 4 (+5), Notice 4 (+6), Search 4 (+6), Stealth 4 (+7)

Feats: Armor Training (light), Dodge Focus, Talented (Notice, Search), Two-Weapon Fighting, Weapon Training

Combat: Attack +3 (Dex), Damage +0 (unarmed), +2 (short sword), +3 (crossbow), Defense +4 (Dex, Dodge), Initiative +3

Saving Throws: Toughness +1 (+2 with leather armor), Fortitude +1, Reflex +5, Will +0

Languages: Common, Elven, Orc

Height: 5'8"

Weight: 160 lbs.

Age: 19

Weapons: two short swords (damage +2/19-20, +3), Light Crossbow (damage +3/19-20, +3)

Armor: Leather (+1 Toughness, -1 armor check penalty)

Equipment: Backpack, bedroll, caltrops, explorer's outfit, flint and steel, hemp rope (50'), pouch, quiver with 20 bolts, signal whistle, thieves' tools.

Money: 1 gold piece, 5 silver pieces.



THORGRIM

Race: Dwarf

Role: 1st-level warrior

Size: Medium

Abilities: Str +2, Dex +0, Con +2, Int +0, Wis +2, Cha +0

Skills: Concentration 4 (+6), Diplomacy 4 (+4), Knowledge (theology and philosophy) 4 (+4), Search 0 (+2 with stonework), Sense Motive 4 (+6)

Feats: Armor Training (light and heavy), Great Fortitude^B, Night Vision^B, Power (Cure, favored feat), Talented (Craft, Search, only involving stonework)^B, Weapon Training

Powers (Wisdom-based, +6 bonus, Save Difficulty 12): Cure

Combat: Attack +1, Damage +2 (unarmed), +5 (sword), +3 (crossbow), Defense +1 (Parry +3) Initiative +0

Saving Throws: Toughness +2 (+5 with chain mail), Fortitude +4, Reflex +0, Will +2

Height: 4'4"

Weight: 155 lbs.

Age: 71

Weapons: Sword (damage +3/19-20, +3), dagger (damage +1/19-20, +3)

Armor: Chainmail (+3 Toughness, -3 armor check penalty)

Equipment: Backpack, bedroll, explorer's outfit, holy symbol, scroll case, 3 torches, whetstone.

Money: 18 gold pieces, 8 silver pieces



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