

- CHAPTER II -
THE CITY
OF ADVENTURE

“Welcome to Freeport, friends! They say this is a city of adventure, so who am I to argue? Before you set off and sample the thousand delights of our fine city, let me give you some advice. First, stick to the main streets. The Watch does a fine job, but they can't be everywhere, you know? Those little alleys and side streets have other folks who like a bit of adventure, too. Also, the merchants here, well, they can be a bit aggressive. And the ladies, they might give you the best night of your life, but it'll cost you. Now that I think about it... you folks need a guide. Yep. A guide. Tell you what, for that fat purse on your belt, I'll make sure you stay nice and safe in this here city. Welcome to Freeport indeed.”

—Pious Pete, Guide

The best way to describe Freeport is by its moniker the City of Adventure. Now this isn't to say Freeport is a place where shining knights in full plate armor tilt at one another for the favor of inbred noblewomen. Nor is Freeport a city where you'll see great balloons drifting across the sky, magic carpets zipping hither and yon, or dragons belching flames. Freeport is the City of Adventure because danger lurks around every filthy corner. From the offices of the Sea Lord to the dank sewers worming their way beneath the city, there are hazards to be avoided, fortunes to be made, and lives to be lost.

Freeport is not often a pleasant city, but it is a place of opportunity. It is a city of delights, of vice and sin. Here, deals are made, intrigues planned, expeditions launched, conspiracies hatched, and dreams crushed. Merchants do a brisk business, employing ruthless tactics to rub out their competition, while thieves prowl the marketplaces, slipping sharp knives against the strings of dangling purses. High and mighty men and women come to the city to broker dirty deals with other lords (when they can tear themselves away from Freeport's renowned brothels, that is). The city hums with back-room bargains, the steady stream of black market goods slipping beneath the nose of the corrupt harbormaster. Here, assassins stalk the night, cults perform dreadful ceremonies to maddening gods, and pirates walk the Docks looking to spend the bloodstained coins they pried from the dead fingers of their victims. This, friends, is Freeport. It's no place for the meek, but for those with a good head, a sharp sword, and a keen wit, it offers some of the best opportunities for adventure in the entire world.

THE LAY OF THE CITY

For all the people that live here, Freeport's not a huge, sprawling metropolis. It's a modest city huddling in all its ugliness at the southern end of the largest island of the Serpent's Teeth. That the city grew haphazardly is not lost on those who venture here. In many ways, it looks like it was cobbled together from whatever materials washed up on shore, and yet, there are still fine places in the city. The walls of the Old City loom over everything, and one can't ignore the beautiful estates of the Merchant District. That said, Freeport is not pristine with whitewashed buildings and perfectly symmetrical streets. The City of Adventure has grown without regard for planning—and it shows.

THE DISTRICTS

Freeport has a character of its own, but it's one that reflects the nature of the people that live, work, and die here. It started as a small village but grew far faster than the founders ever expected. Therefore, much of the city has been added haphazardly, with new sections built to accommodate the influx of new settlers. As Freeport grew, neighborhoods formed, bound by common interests, wealth, and influence. In time, these clusters developed into the current districts.

THE DOCKS

Locals call the Docks the “door to Freeport” because it's the easiest place to moor ships. From the pre-dawn light till after sundown, this is one of the busiest parts of the city. Half of the Docks are the wharves that stretch out into the harbor to accommodate the deeper water vessels. The wooden walks connect to a boardwalk that runs across the entire district, extending from the Warehouse District to Scurvytown. You can find just about anything you'll ever need here, as clever merchants like to get the jump on their customers before letting them move deeper into the city. The rest of the district caters to Freeport's particular breed of clientele: seamen. Pubs, taverns, flophouses, gambling houses, and bordellos offer countless diversions in which to sink a sailor's pay. Crime is a constant problem, as brawls spill into the narrow streets, pick pockets and cutpurses worm through the crowds, and bravos and toughs lurk in the shadowy alleys waiting for the perfect mark to stroll by. Murders happen, not as often as some claim, but a body appears in the harbor often enough people think little of it.

SCURVYTOWN

Scurvytown squats to the east of the Docks. For years, this was easily the meanest part of town, being a large slum run by gangsters and crime lords, where even the Sea Lord's Guard only ventured en masse. While Bloodsalt has eclipsed this district in terms of violent crime and lawlessness, Scurvytown is still a place best avoided. The relatively cleaner and safer streets of the Docks give way to a place crammed with old homes, decaying shops, and watering holes no one in their right mind would frequent. The people of Scurvytown are a hardened lot, accustomed to the harsh nature of the streets and criminal rule. They put little stock into Freeport's elite, and they border on naked resentment when they encounter one of Freeport's merchants or so-called nobles.

EASTERN DISTRICT

Those who have the means and ambition to rise above the slums of Scurvytown find a slightly better life in the Eastern District. The middle class citizens of the Eastern District don't have it easy, though, since they are surrounded by five other districts—two of which are Bloodsalt and Scurvytown. The area borders as many districts as the Old City but does not have enormous walls to keep out unwanted elements. The Watch does have a presence in the Eastern District, but everyone knows the crime lord Finn really rules these streets.

DRAC'S END

People here try to scrape out an honest living far from the chaos of the waterfront districts, but doing so is not always easy in a city like Freeport. Drac's End is so named because the original Drac had once envisioned carving much deeper into the surrounding jungle, but it was here his ex-pirate workers were stopped dead in their tracks—sometimes literally—by the creatures then inhabiting the jungle. Since Drac's plans for expansion ended here, it acquired this somewhat ironic moniker.

New Riots in Bloodsalt Leave Four Dead

~ *The Shipping News*



Ships from all over the world can be found in Freeport's harbor. The City of Adventure is a key port of call on many important trade routes (both legitimate and otherwise).

THE TEMPLE DISTRICT

Sailors have always been a superstitious lot, and since they founded this city, it's not surprising Freeport has a thriving religious community. No matter the year or season, the people of Freeport have plenty of reasons to pray. Having recently survived a killer hurricane, a barbarian invasion, a great fire, and a mad Sea Lord, it has never been clearer to Freeporters their fates are in the gods' hands. The city has no official religion, though the God of Pirates has far more worshippers here than in any other single place in the world. Other deities are well represented, too, corresponding with the great diversity of the city's population.

MERCHANT DISTRICT

In stark contrast to the poverty of Drac's End stands the Merchant District. This is where the wealthiest people in Freeport live and sometimes even work. The shops here cater only to the highest class of customer, and the streets are lined with well-maintained stones and trimmed with handsome lights and well-kept greenery. Wave Avenue, the top address in town, runs right through the center of the district, like the spine that holds the city's economy together. It's said more deals are done on Wave Avenue than in the entirety of the Eastern District.

WAREHOUSE DISTRICT

As the center of trade for the entire region, Freeport needs to have a place for the easy storage of goods of all kinds. Unlike the wharves down

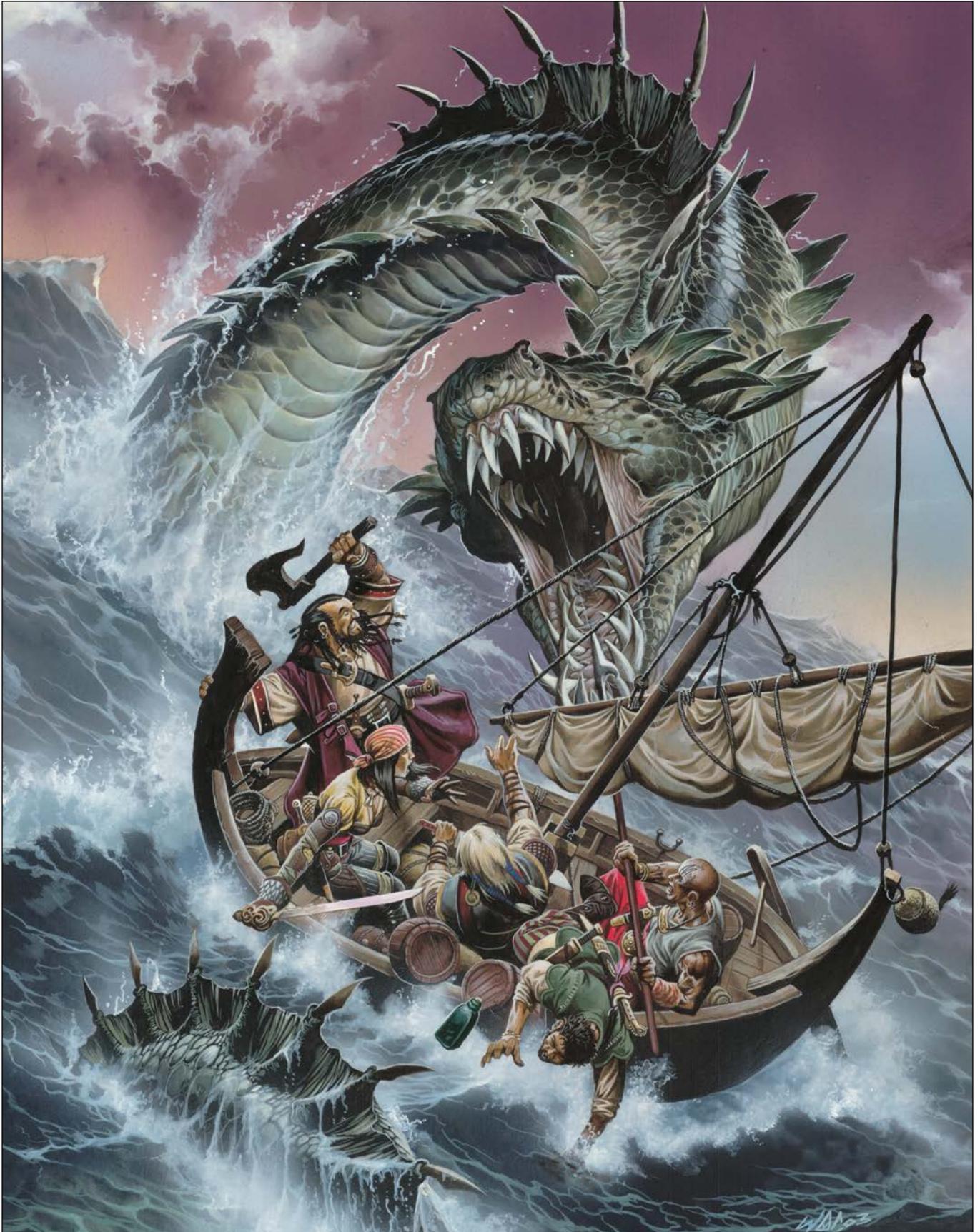
in the Docks or Scurvytown, the piers of the Warehouse District are all heavily guarded and in good shape. The business done here involves serious money, and the docking fees are commensurately higher to cover the cost of the increased security. That this area borders directly on the Merchant District is no coincidence. The powerful and wealthy prefer not to have to walk far to watch over their goods.

THE OLD CITY

This is where it all began under the original Sea Lord Drac. The massive wall that surrounded the city in its earliest days still stands, though Freeport has long since sprawled far outside their confines. While the five gates that control traffic in and out of the Old City are still in working order—ready to be slammed shut and barricaded against riot or invasion—they've only been used once in recent memory, during the barbarian invasion. In places, the old brickwork in this district is falling down, but this is still the seat of rule in the city. The Courts are here, as well as the Sea Lord's Palace.

BLOODSALT

Bloodsalt was an accident. Formed in the aftermath of the Great Green Fire and the Wizards' Guild's recruitment policy for hiring only nonhumans, this place began as an encampment and rapidly became a permanent addition to Freeport. Bloodsalt is more of a ghetto for orcs, goblins, and hobgoblins than a proper district. There's little in the way of order, and violence rules the day. People are wise to avoid this place, for there's no justice here.



Many dangerous creatures that haunt the sea lanes have passed into nautical lore. The mighty ocean myrm is one such beast and few who have encountered it have lived to tell the tale.

GETTING AROUND FREEPORT

Freeport's evolution has never had much in the way of forethought, growing in an almost higgledy-piggledy fashion. A Sea Lord might make grandiose plans, spend enormous sums of gold expanding the city, and then give up on the project months after it got underway. Neighborhoods and districts grew out of the settlement patterns of those who came here—and without the guidance of the city leaders, who were more concerned with exploiting their own status than seeing to the needs of the people under their rule. As a result, there are few quick ways to get anywhere in Freeport, and going from even one district to the next can be an adventure.

THE CITY STREETS

The most telling example of Freeport's lack of foresight is in its streets. Visitors find the labyrinthine nature of Freeport's roadways incredibly frustrating since most of the roads lack names and, in some cases, are little more than alleys or gaps between buildings built too-close together. The main streets are named, but they're not always clearly labeled. Any native knows the names, as do most longtime residents, but for those out on a stroll and unfamiliar with the lay of the city, one street may look very much like any other—making it all too easy to get lost.

The roads that do have signs, typically a fingerpost planted on the corner of an intersection, are in the wealthier areas. Wave Avenue, for example, has signs up and down its entire length as it runs through the richest parts of the Merchant District. The elite in the city can afford to maintain such landmarks to remind the other folks of Freeport where they are not welcome. In Scurvytown, Bloodsalt, and parts of Drac's End, some streets have never had formal names, acquiring local names based on the types of places one might find there. For example, a street that has two bakeries might gain the name Baker Street. Or a street famed for collecting effluvia might be known as the Crack.

Other roads take the names of famous people who lived or died there or, more often, did something important or ridiculous. Of course, there is rarely any evidence to support the stories told by the locals, and on many occasions, two or three entirely different locations claim the same event and, thus, the same name. For example, there are two short streets, an alley, and a dirt path named Milton's Whistle. Each claims Milton Drac once stopped at a nearby watering hole to relieve his thirst.

As challenging as it is to find your way, it doesn't take long to get your bearings here. People tend to get the hang of moving through the city, and if not, they tend to get lost—permanently—in the worst parts of town. The best way to learn the city is to pay attention. There are landmarks aplenty in this city, and Freeporters refer to them when giving directions, such as *“Yar, it's three blocks past the Temple of the Pirate God and then to the right for two blocks, until you come to Sly's Sausage Stand. Look to yer left. Ya can't miss it.”*

ALLEYS AND SHORTCUTS

Since the main avenues are packed with people throughout the day, getting anywhere quickly is just not possible unless it's the dead of night, at which time travelers are likely to have a different set of problems. People that know the city learn to take advantage of the various shortcuts that bypass the most congested areas. Piss-soaked alleys running in the gaps between buildings can shave off ten minutes for those willing to brave the shadowy corridors. Most of these dark routes hide all sorts

of unsavory things, including bloated carcasses, piles of refuse, mounds of excrement, and the misshapen beggars that make their homes in the cracks of the city. Only those of strong stomachs and unimpeachable courageousness find the time gained worth the gauntlet.

GUIDES

The easiest way to get around Freeport is to hire a guide. Enterprising urchins make good livings helping bewildered travelers find their way from place to place. These sharp-eyed youngsters watch for anyone that looks confused and then clamor for attention. Being swarmed by a horde of dirty children can be more than a little off-putting for those unacquainted with the city's youngest entrepreneurs. For the most part, these scamps are trustworthy, but a person should be advised to get a good look at the would-be guide to ensure he's not a halfling conman in disguise. Tales abound of visitors who mistakenly hire a halfling only to be led into Scurvytown, where they are robbed, beaten, abused, and sometimes murdered. Certainly, halflings take exception to the stories, declaring that most of their kind are honest folk just trying to make a living, but even they admit that some take advantage of their diminutive stature for criminal pursuits.

Urchins don't have a monopoly on the guide business. Plenty of the poor and destitute offer their services for a bite of lunch or swig of ale. Many of these folks are unreliable and may become lost if they receive their “payment” before they take their employers where they want to go.

Travelers with coin to spend seek out the professional guides. In the Docks and the Old City, bawds and valets make excellent livings teaching newcomers the ins and outs of Freeport. They are flawless in their guidance and know the best restaurants, shows, and bordellos for those who seek them. They can acquire tickets to sold out operas, finagle appointments with hard-to-reach merchants, and generally make the impossible possible. In exchange for their unmatched skill, they charge outrageous rates, but those who pony up the cash are never dissatisfied.

RICKSHAWS

For those in a hurry, they need not look much further than the rickshaws. They were introduced to Freeport nearly twenty years ago and have proven quite popular. With stations in the Seaside Market, Street of Dreams, Wave Avenue, and most other larger avenues, a person with the coin to spend can hire a strong lad or lass to pull them along while comfortably seated in a padded chair. One company used to dominate the rickshaw business, but it collapsed under mysterious circumstances. Now competition is fierce, and companies use whatever tricks they can to get the attention of their clients. Many use fanciful names to attract attention, offer cool beverages to their clients, or make impossible promises about their speed and efficiency.

HORSES

Horses are rare in the city. They are not native to the Serpent's Teeth, so they must be shipped to the city from the Continent. This is costly, and the horses don't always survive the passage, leaving merchants to sell the meat, if not too green, to the rabble to recoup their losses. In truth, horses don't serve much purpose in the city. The streets are cramped and narrow, and a horse simply takes up too much room. Most taverns and restaurants aren't equipped with stabling, and few people would know what to do with a horse if they saw one.

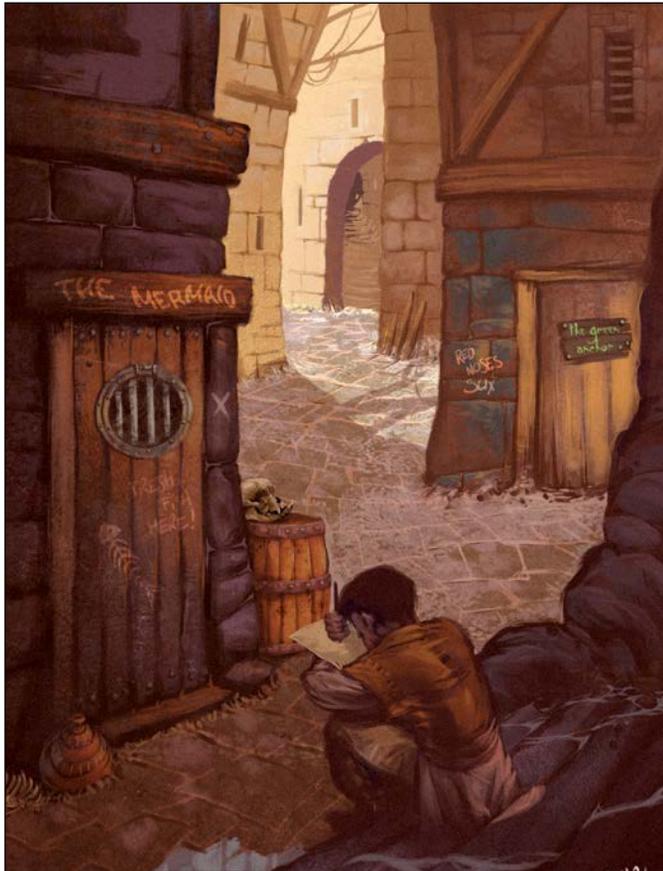
Only the wealthiest citizens can afford to own the few horses present in Freeport. Some merchants and politicians keep steeds, and they pay excessive fees to keep them healthy. Feed, grooms, and property on which to ride them all come at a high price. Still, a horse drawn coach moving along Wave Avenue is a sign of power and influence, so many bluebloods scrimp and save to buy an old nag for the chance to look every bit as important as those of the upper crust.

LIFE IN FREEPORT

Freeport has a savage reputation, but life here is much like any other city. Many people live by honest means, taking jobs wherever they can find them. Crime is a fact, but that's to be expected in a city founded by pirates and with so much trade running through it. It bears mentioning that in many districts, Freeport is rather safe, and ordinary people who are smart about their behavior can get along without fear of mugging or assault. This fact is not readily apparent to the scores of travelers who disembark from ships every day. Even they can see that Freeport, despite its myriad dangers, is a city of great opportunity.

SIGHTS AND SOUNDS

At heart, Freeport is a maritime city, so most of the sights, sounds, and smells—for good or ill—come from the sea. Much of Freeport's



It's easy to get lost in the back alleys of Freeport, especially in areas like Drac's End.

industry and service go toward catering to the needs of sailors, ships, and their passengers. Therefore, most things have a nautical theme, from street and business names to restaurant menus. This seaside atmosphere is most prominent in districts that have a shore, such as the Docks, Scurvytown, and the Warehouse District. The further inland one moves, the less pronounced these affectations become, giving way to the sorts of enterprises and structures one would expect to find in any large city.

Along the coast, the air is full of scents and sounds of the sea, from the squawks of the seagulls to the smell of seaweed. Travelers may delight in the delicious smell of cooking fish seasoned with exotic spices, but the rank stench of the ocean, rotting fish, rubbish, and offal is far more common. Permeating it all is the ripe stink one can only find in large areas of human population—a mixture of sweat, excrement, and rot, mixed sickeningly with the noxious perfumes used to mask body odors.

Freeport is also loud. There's never quiet in the city. There's always a hum: the din of arguments, the clash of swords, the sound of rickshaws rolling over cobbled streets, the cries of animals at the butchery, and squawks of the colorful birds that roost on the roofs looking down at passers-by. Growls and screeches from dogs and cats blend with the creaks of taugth rope, the rustling of hoisted sails, and the constant snap of the flags and signals that decorate the vessels in the harbor. And then, there's the wind and waves. There's always a breeze in the city, helping to reduce some of the smells wafting from the more unclean quarters, but it whistles incessantly as it navigates the streets and buildings. All of this noise, plus the crash of the surf, makes the city seem positively cacophonous to those accustomed to the quiet of the Continent.

PEOPLE OF FREEPORT

Freeport's virtues and vices draw people from all over the world. It is the destination of the hopeful and the hopeless—a city bursting at its seams. So full are its districts, not even the best accounting by the Captains' Council can adequately assess Freeport's population.

The city swallows visitors, their faces adding to the throng that pulses through the streets like blood through the veins of some sleeping giant. They find life here is many things. It's challenging, frustrating, and above all dangerous, but it's never boring. There's no such thing as a dull day in this city.

RACES

Freeport is a tolerant city and accepts just about anyone, partly because the earliest settlers came here to be free from the stifling governments of the Continent. Most Freeporters recognize the same spirit in any who would leave behind their homelands to start all over again.

HUMANS

Humans founded Freeport, and they remain the dominant race in the city. So numerous are humans that if all the other races were combined, they would still not make up more than a quarter of the people living in the city. For this reason, Freeport is known as a human city, even though nearly every race and culture is represented amongst the population. Humanity in Freeport takes many shapes and sizes. Humans from all over the world come to this city, and every imaginable skin color, hair color, and language can be found here.

HALFLINGS

Freeport is also home to a number of other peoples, some similar to humanity, others strange and even monstrous. The most common of these other races are halflings. They come from the Continent and are willing to work hard alongside other Freeporters to make a new life. While most people get along fine with halflings, the fact that Finn, the crime lord that rules the Eastern District, is a halfling is not lost on them. That and the natural roguish tendencies of many young halflings breed suspicion when dealing with these diminutive folk. Due to the influence of Finn, halflings are most common in the Eastern District.

ELVES

Elves also have a presence in Freeport. Also drawn from the Continent, they often struggle to find a place in the city. They have some advantages over other newcomers because Freeporters tend to afford elves a bit more respect and tolerance. Despite the smattering of elves that live here, few elves can tolerate the city's excess. Freeport's noisome odors, dense population, filthiness, and violent atmosphere offend the delicate nature of these people.

DWARVES

Few dwarves have cause to leave their homelands for a port city of any sort, never mind one situated on a small island. Those that do wind up here are mad, exiled, or lost, yet once they set foot here, they find they don't want to leave. Some suspect dwarves stay because they can't bear the thought of another ocean voyage. Luckily, they often have unique talents that give them an edge in commerce in this dynamic city.

GNOMES

Of the racial groups that live in Freeport, gnomes are the least numerous. They are uncommon enough that they are often confused with halflings or dwarves. What they lack in numbers, they make up for in exuberance. Many find work as entertainers, performing in small productions in the playhouses of the Eastern District or thrilling the crowds of the Docks. A few make their living as jewelers, putting their talents at gem cutting to good use. The gnome community is lucky to have one of its own in the Captains' Council, ensuring the Sea Lord treats them well.

ORCS

Freeport also has a large orc population. Used as cheap labor during the construction of Milton's Folly (the city's lighthouse), the orcs never left once the work was finished. Brutish, crude, and violent, orcs largely live in Bloodsalt these days. Freeporters aren't exceptionally warm to these folk but tolerate them all the same. The orcs defended Freeport during the recent barbarian invasion, earning them some goodwill from the rest of the populace.

GOBLINOIDS

Freeport experienced a great population boom a few years ago when the Wizards' Guild began recruiting nonhumans to use as labor. This led to an influx of savage humanoids that were largely unfamiliar with living in human communities. Since they caused a great deal of upheaval throughout the city, they were relegated to

10 THINGS EVERYONE SHOULD KNOW

If you're thinking about visiting Freeport, there are a few things you should know if you value your coins, your life, and maybe even your soul. Leave it to ol' Pious Pete; I'll get you around safely.

Put your purse near your jewels. Freeport is notorious for thievery, and many people lose their fortunes within three steps of the boat that carried them here. Stick your valuables in places no thief would go.

Mind your manners. Don't like half-orcs? Keep it to yourself. Say the wrong thing, and you're bound to lose a few teeth. Say it twice, and you'll be lucky to escape with your life.

Use small coins. You might have a lot of money, but you won't for long if you're not careful. Pay for everything in the smallest coins possible, within reason. Don't pay for a sword in pennies: haul out a thousand copper bits, and you'll get kicked into the gutter.

Keep your eyes on your shoes. Gaping about is a sure way to get robbed, stabbed, raped, or all three.

If you're lost, look for the walls. Freeport doesn't have any conveniences like signs—most folks can't read anyway. The best landmark is the Old City Walls. You can't miss them. If they're in front of you, you're in the Docks; behind you, you're in Drac's End; to the east, you're in the Merchant District; to the west, you're either in the Eastern District or about to enter a world of pain (that's Scurvytown or Bloodsalt if yer not paying attention).

The Watch doesn't give a damn. The Freeport Watch is a sorry excuse for law enforcement. You feel you've been wronged? Get over it. The Watch doesn't care one whit for your troubles.

The Sea Lord's in charge. The current Sea Lord is a woman, but you don't want to mess with her. Her word is law, and that's all you need to know.

Stay out of Bloodsalt. Unless you're an orc or goblin, don't go here. You're going to ignore this advice, but consider yourself warned.

Avoid the Scurvytown Prostitutes. The Docks aren't much better, but odds are that except for the few coins you spent there, you'll come away with everything you brought with you.

Don't trust anyone. Not even me.

—Pious Pete

Bloodsalt, a newer district created just for them. Although largely contained to the edge of the city, goblins and hobgoblins, along with their larger kin, can be found mingling with other folks in the city, and goblin peddlers and hobgoblin mercenaries are fast becoming common sights.



Some travelers are shocked to find out that orcs too have taken to the seas. Although they don't have the best ships, orc pirates make up for it with ferocity and a true love of hand-to-hand combat.

ADAPTING FREEPORT

At heart, Freeport is a fantasy city, and it assumes that the normal sorts of fantasy peoples populate it. In this city, you'll find humans alongside dwarves, elves, halflings, orcs, and others. While this is the default for this book, other settings and game systems may not have all or any of these races. If not, just substitute races found in your game for those described here or, if your game has no other races than human, you can substitute different ethnicities and cultures. For example, rather than using sea elves, you could easily substitute a seafaring people from an island nation. With just a few adjustments, you'll find Freeport can work for almost any game you play.

OTHER RACES

There are many other people found in Freeport hailing from strange and distant lands. Hidden among the populace are disguised serpent people, followers of Yig working to reclaim their lost kin from beneath the city. There are also a growing number of azhar, a human-like race that claims the blood of the efreet runs through their veins (see **Chapter Fifteen: Beyond Freeport**). These races and many more call Freeport home.

CULTURE

Freeport is a varied and diverse society. Although certainly no metropolis, the city has a population that tops ten thousand in the busiest months, featuring people of all major humanoid races and cultures, as well as quite a few of the others.

In the City of Adventure, gold is king, and it is wealth that determines a citizen's address and respectability, rather than blood. Those with money—particularly old money—are at the top and chart the destiny of Freeport. Traditionally, these were wealthy ship's captains, but these days, well-heeled people of any calling can fall into this class. These are the people nominated to serve on the Captains' Council and who may even aspire to one day become the Sea Lord, especially now that the old adherence to the Drac bloodline is at an end.

Directly below the wealthy are the servants of the gods. The priests and acolytes who tend to the temples may not hold much political sway in the city, but they are highly respected. Some of these holy folk have taken vows of poverty, severely curtailing their individual means, but as a whole, the orders are wealthy and have plenty of influence over the city's happenings.

Next in line is the struggling middle class. This class comprises the people who have fought their way out of the gutter but haven't quite made it onto Wave Avenue. Many ship captains are included in this class, as are most of the minor merchants and shopkeepers in town. These ambitious people dream of more for their families and are willing to work hard to get it. Some may have fallen from greater heights, and they are often looking to return to their former status.

Below all of these classes are the working poor. This includes most of the sailors who live in Scurvytown or even just below deck on their ships. These people never seem to be able to get ahead no matter what they do.

Many have actually given up hope of such a thing ever happening, short of being struck by sudden fortune.

The classic example is the sailor who works like a dog at sea for weeks or even months on end. Then when he finally makes shore and collects his earnings, he spends every last copper on ale and whores. By the time the ship is ready to pull out again, he's flat broke. This is a longstanding tradition among sailors, many of whom don't expect to survive their next voyage. The mortality rate among sailors is almost as high as it is among adventurers, and so the entire culture of Freeport has been infused with a "live for today" attitude that pervades all levels.

With the creation of the new district of Bloodsalt, a class even more reviled than the poor coalesced: the savage humanoid laborers. Primarily consisting of orcs, goblins, and hobgoblins, the denizens of Bloodsalt have become an underclass that everyone in Freeport can despise.

LANGUAGES

No matter what language a person speaks, he's bound to find someone that speaks it too. Freeport's cultural diversity means just about every tongue and dialect has a place. Luckily, most people also speak the common tongue, an ugly mishmash of several human languages with borrowed words and phrases from the dwarven language, elven expressions, and halfling curses, all drenched in the sailor's slang and jargon. It may be unsettling to first-time visitors, but most find they pick up the language quickly and can get along just fine.

CURRENCY

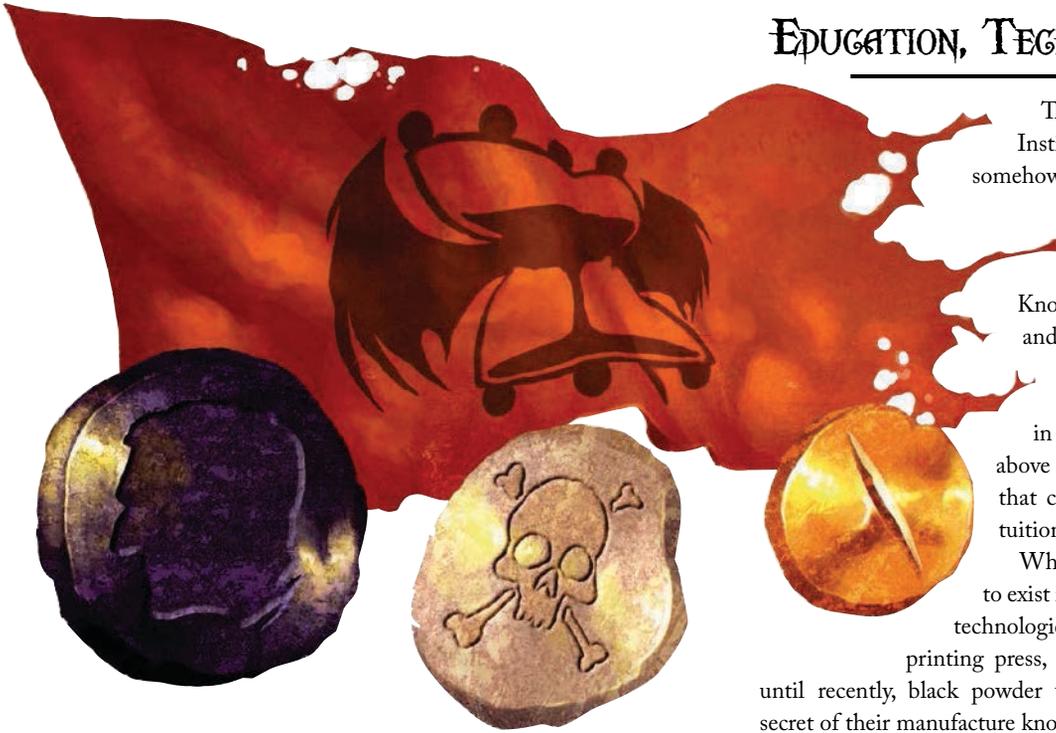
In Freeport, gold is gold no matter where it's minted, so long as it has a reasonable weight and purity. Merchants accept coins regardless of their origin, but they always weigh the coins to ensure their value. Freeport does mint its own coins called "lords," but lacking any gold mines, they reclaim gold coins from taxes, melt it down, and re-mint the coins to bear the winged hourglass of the city and a likeness of the ruling Sea Lord. Since the tax collectors aren't choosy about the coins they collect, coins minted in the city are often worth less than foreign coins, since the smelters do little to sift out impurities.

Aside from the lords and other gold coins, Freeport also circulates silver, brass, and copper coins—also minted in the city and again using

Gunpowder: Scourge, Threat, or Menace?

~ *The Shipping News*

EDUCATION, TECHNOLOGY, AND MAGIC



Freeport's Symbols of Power: its flag and currency.

coins reclaimed during tax collections. Silver coins, called “skulls” bear a crude skull and crossed bones and are almost always tarnished black. One lord is worth about ten skulls.

The brass and copper coins are called pennies. Ten pennies make up a skull, or one hundred pennies make up a lord. Brass pennies are slightly more valuable than copper ones, since they are often black with frequent handling, and this makes some indistinguishable from older silver coins. Freeporters use the expression “scratch a penny” as a wish for good luck because some folks find, to their delight, that the black bit of metal is actually silver beneath all the muck. Copper pennies are weak and turn greenish white with corrosion, though they are accepted all the same.

Aside from metal coins, Freeporters often use barter for trade, exchanging trade goods or selling services in exchange for commodities. Letters of credit drafted by the Bank of Freeport are also as good as gold, and some locals have even begun to exchange wooden tokens as IOUs, which can be exchanged for one skull or rarely, one lord.

INDUSTRY

Freeport's attractiveness to merchants means the streets are flooded year round with foreigners peddling goods acquired from ports all over the world. Furthermore, the city's distinct lack of raw materials—iron, wood, and stone are hard to come by—means that many goods requiring these materials are actually cheaper to import than to fashion in the city. Therefore, the city lacks industry; most people work in service, tending shops, or working the docks. Those craftsmen and artisans who produce goods for a living have marginal success in the Seaside Market and along the Street of Dreams, and even then, they must compete with goods brought from other lands.

The city is home to the Freeport Institute, a large university that has somehow managed to gain recognition and even respect from Continental schools. The Institute owes much of its success to the Temple of the Knowledge God, which funds the school and provides additional training and materials for scholars and students alike. Ironically, the Institute stands in the heart of Drac's End, towering above impoverished and uneducated masses that could never afford the Institute's high tuition.

While Freeport may have wonders rumored to exist in far-flung lands, it has achieved many technological advances, including firearms, the printing press, clockwork pieces, and telescopes. Up until recently, black powder weapons were decidedly scarce—the secret of their manufacture known only to the gnome inventor Kolter. Eventually, however, others were able to reverse engineer the weapons, and now they're more common. Dwarf engineers on the Continent have pioneered cannons that can now be found on some ships.

The Shipping News, which perfected the process of movable type and can now print flyers and newspapers with incredible speed and in great quantities, popularized the innovation of the printing press. While other publishers make use of this device, they lack the movable type and must print in far smaller numbers.

Every year it seems some new device emerges from the city out of the ruins of countless failures. Freeport is coming to be known as a source of innovation and as a haven for tinkers and scientists. What new invention will arise in the city, none can say. There are whispers of all sorts of strange things from submersibles, flying machines, fireball projectors, and scores of other impossible devices.

Freeport is also home to a rich and influential magical society. Though Freeport's liberal views on magical practice encourages innovators to study here, there is by no means an abundance of magic users. The Wizards' Guild, sanctioned by the Sea Lord almost forty years ago, invites anyone with the talent and discipline to study magic. And each year, the guild receives a new batch of students not only from Freeport but also from the Continent.

Although the Wizards' Guild is the only approved institution of magic in the city, there are a number of wizards and sorcerers who take on apprentices to pass on what they have learned. Such methods of study are frowned upon by the Captains' Council and vigorously opposed by the guild, but the council realizes their own limitations about controlling and monitoring these arrangements and ignores these activities. Naturally, should a spellcaster violate the laws of the city, such as by working destructive magic within its walls, summoning demons and otherworldly creatures, or causing general mayhem and distress to the populace, the offender is brought down and viciously punished. Word has it that such individuals have their fingers and tongues cut off and out before being dumped in one of the Hulks.