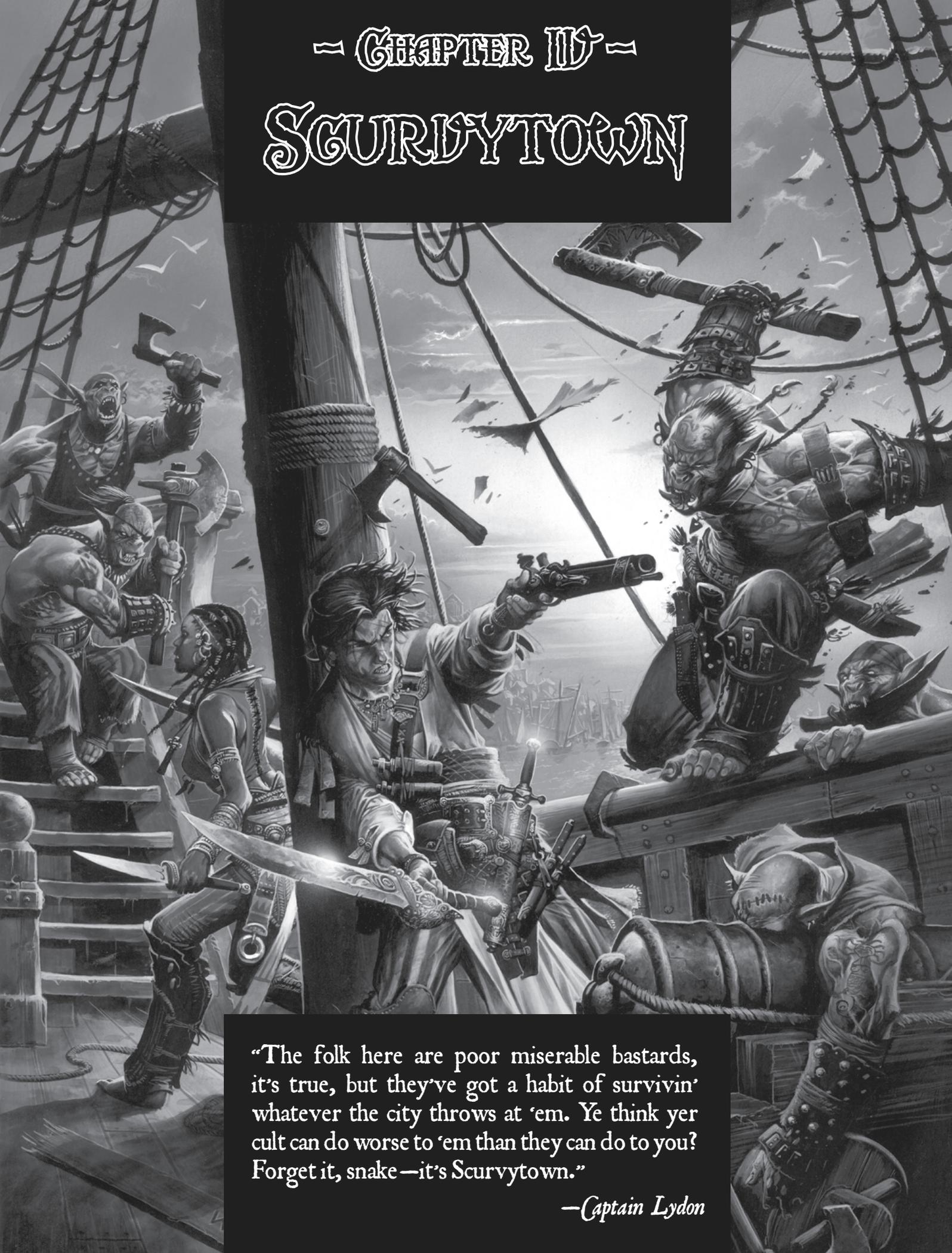


— CHAPTER III —
SCURVYTOWN



“The folk here are poor miserable bastards, it’s true, but they’ve got a habit of survivin’ whatever the city throws at ‘em. Ye think yer cult can do worse to ‘em than they can do to you? Forget it, snake—it’s Scurvytown.”

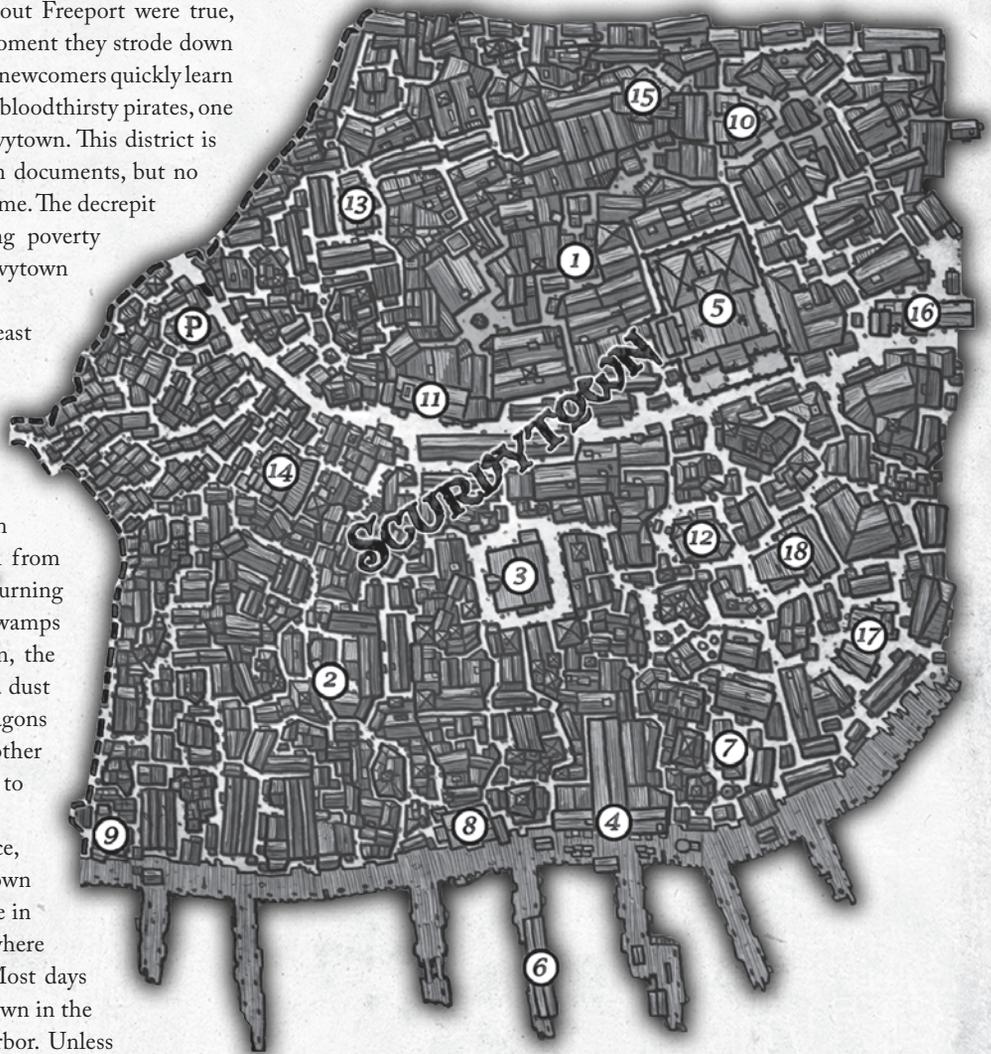
—*Captain Lydon*

If the stories told in far-flung ports about Freeport were true, visitors would be gutted like fish the moment they strode down the gangplank of an arriving ship. While newcomers quickly learn Freeport is far more than a collection of bloodthirsty pirates, one place fits the city's image like a glove: Scurvytown. This district is officially named the Freebooter's Quarter in documents, but no one off the boat less than a week uses that name. The decrepit condition, lawless population, and grinding poverty of the place earned it the nickname Scurvytown decades ago, and the name stuck.

Drac's End is a poor district, but at least the people there try to better themselves. Scurvytown is for those who've given up or have no other place to go. It's a squalid hellhole with appalling living conditions, and those marooned here suffer the worst Freeport has to offer. In the rainy season, water runs down the hill from the Old City and the Eastern District, turning Scurvytown's unpaved streets into muddy swamps where mosquitoes breed. In the dry season, the heat dries and cracks the muddy streets, and dust rises in choking clouds when carts and wagons go by. The stench from the fishery and the other aromatic industries in Scurvytown rises to unholy levels.

Only those with a taste for crime, violence, or perversion (or with little regard for their own personal safety) voluntarily make their home in Scurvytown. Crime is higher here than anywhere else in Freeport, especially violent crime. Most days begin with a couple of corpses found face down in the gutter or bobbing in the waters of the harbor. Unless the victim is rich or influential, little effort is made to find the perpetrator. Other forms of crime—thief, mugging, smuggling, drug dealing, and cult activity—are just as common. In the warren called the Beggar's Market, lowlifes from around Freeport come to buy less-than-legal items and substances. Criminals on the run use the flophouses and decaying buildings of the district as hideouts, and the neighborhood called The Pit hosts a variety of the least savory thugs in the city (not to mention occasional supernatural menaces).

For decades, Scurvytown was home to the few orcs, hobgoblins, and other savage races that dwelt in Freeport. This changed in the wake of the Great Green Fire, when the council established the new district now known as Bloodsalt (see **Chapter Five: Bloodsalt**) to house the hobgoblin and orc workers of the Reclamation Project. Many orcs vacated Scurvytown for Bloodsalt, lured by the prospect of work and the company of their own kind. This exodus drained much of Scurvytown's labor force and economy, leaving the remaining inhabitants resentful. Some of that resentment turned into active persecution of nonhumans, and the few orcs remaining in Scurvytown were driven off by racist violence. The modern incarnation of Scurvytown is dominated by humans who have a weird kind of pride in their district; it's not much, but they need to believe it's better than Bloodsalt and need to believe they are better than the nonhuman newcomers to the city.



LOCATIONS OF INTEREST

The following locations can be found in Scurvytown.

I. DREAMING STREET

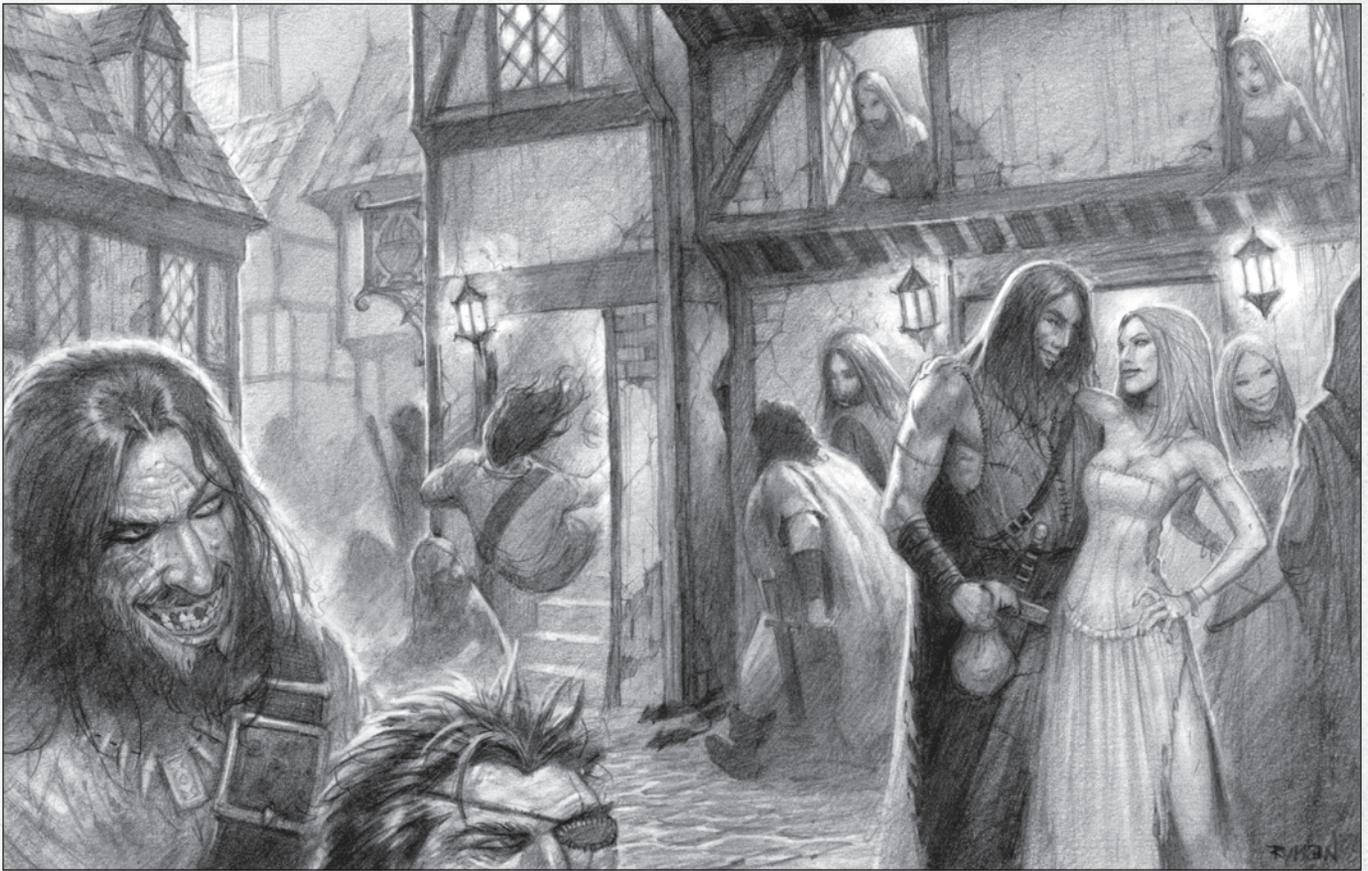
"My students are not just here to entertain you, gentlemen. They're here to learn. And for the right price, they'll take any lessons you care to teach them."

—Lady Jane

While there are a wide variety of bars and taverns in the rest of the city, as well as a number of brothels, drug dens, and gambling establishments discreetly scattered across the various districts, Dreaming Street takes things to a whole different level. Name the activity, and you can probably engage in it on Dreaming Street—if you can meet the price.

HISTORY

Freeport has always had a Dreaming Street; the pirates who founded the city were not about to deny their vices in their own home. It wasn't until Captain Drac made Freeport "respectable" that Dreaming Street



was considered disreputable—and even that had little effect on its popularity. There’s always been a Dreaming Street and there always will be. True, outcry from the more upstanding citizens sometimes results in a token round of arrests, brothel raids, and gambling house closures. But it’s never more than a charade—no one in power really wants Dreaming Street to change or vanish. Many rich men and women from the Merchant District and the Old City (not to mention members of the Sea Lord’s Guard) travel to Scurvytown to indulge their tastes for pleasure. Money often changes hands to avoid inconveniencing someone important with a raid or to ensure a crime goes uninvestigated.

As long as what happens in Dreaming Street stays on Dreaming Street, the Watch is willing to look the other way. The Captains’ Council sees the street as a sort of safety valve, a place where the darker urges of the city’s inhabitants can be safely exercised, with no one really getting hurt. Unfortunately, that thinking is completely unrealistic. There are some truly disturbing and sick activities taking place in the back rooms and basements of the ramshackle buildings of Dreaming Street. Ritual torture, forced prostitution, drug addiction, ritual murder, the veneration of forbidden gods—if a perversion has a name, chances are it’s happening on Dreaming Street.

No criminal organization dominates Dreaming Street. Ever since the Back Alley War, most of the folks there have been independent operators. Over the years, the “businessmen” of Dreaming Street have become quite proud of their independent status, only pulling together for one thing: keeping any outside organization from taking over the street. Which is not to say that Finn, Mister Wednesday, or any of the other lesser criminal figures of the city don’t have interests and followers on Dreaming Street—just that none of them can claim control of the Street (or the rest of Scurvytown for that matter). This

situation makes Dreaming Street a great place to enter the world of professional vice—and the site for constant low-level hostility between the warring criminal powers of Freeport.

DESCRIPTION

Dreaming Street runs several blocks—in truth, it’s a neighborhood now, not a single street, but the name has stuck. Ramshackle old buildings slump against each other in all directions, lining dirt roads that teem at night with customers and victims. Some venues display their wares for all to see: prostitutes lean from balconies cajoling passersby, while doormen shout out the virtues of gambling halls and floor shows. Other operations are more circumspect and less friendly to strangers, and it takes the right knock on a locked door to allow access.

Some of Dreaming Street’s venues attempt to provide the illusion of luxury inside, draping red velvet over rotting floorboards and dressing whores in second-hand ball gowns. But the beauty is only skin-deep and purposely so; anyone who truly wants luxury goes elsewhere for it. In other corners of the street, even a pretense of beauty (or cleanliness) is too much effort; the patrons of a drug den don’t care that their refuge from the world is a filthy hovel crawling with vermin. Dreaming Street is a place of masks, and the faces behind those masks can be ugly.

KEY FIGURES

The following characters can be found on Dreaming Street.

LADY JANE

Lady Jane (*female human journeyman*) is the madam of the Torchlight Academy, one of the most popular brothels on Dreaming

SCURVYTOWN OVERVIEW

The poorest, dirtiest, and most dangerous district in Freeport, Scurvytown is a ghetto for those without hope, money, or morals.

BUILDINGS

Decaying wooden buildings that haven't been repaired or maintained in decades.

PEOPLE

Dirty, poverty-stricken, and desperate, turning to crime or begging to make ends meet.

ROADS

Unpaved, muddy, and littered with garbage, narrow alleys wind through the shadows.

DESCRIPTIVE ELEMENTS

The whole district stinks of human waste and rotting fish, and the foul air teems with mosquitoes. Beggars plead for funds or sell their pathetic belongings from broken stalls. Gangs of thugs demand protection money from shopkeepers, and citizens prowl Dreaming Street looking for chances to wreck havoc.

Street. No one takes her claim of being a member of an aristocratic family very seriously—but if she wants to call herself a “lady,” no one’s going to argue with her. Aristocrat or not, Lady Jane is one of the most influential vice mongers of Dreaming Street; she has clients in high places, several well-armed thugs as retainers, and is rumored to have some skill in witchcraft. And she bears a grudge.

LARGO DORN

Largo Dorn (*male dwarf apprentice*) spends most days leaning against a wall in the mouth of an alley, scrutinizing passersby and saying nothing. But if someone walks up to him and says the right phrase, gives him the right amount of money, and has the right amount of desperation on their face, he leads them back into the shadows, to the door of a drug den and a wide array of illegal narcotics. A veteran of Dreaming Street, Dorn sold his morals and conscience years ago; he’s allied with Finn, who supplies the dwarf with drugs and occasionally pays him to harass or kill off a rival entrepreneur.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

Dreaming Street is home to all vices, including the least offensive and unpleasant ones. Characters who enjoy a drink, a game of cards, or a pleasant evening with a willing (if mercenary) companion can find much to like on Dreaming Street. But shadows bleed from the street’s darker corners, and they contaminate all they touch; nothing stays pure here for long. As characters indulge their desires and make connections on Dreaming Street, they may have to fight to save their friends—and themselves—from the temptations of sin.

No one person controls the vice of Dreaming Street, but many people want to—and some of those people are tired of sharing. Finn

and Mister Wednesday are going to war, and the Street is both their battleground and their prize. As thugs and thieves employed by the crime lords battle in the street, independent operators like Lady Jane play games with their allegiances, hoping to wrest more power for themselves. And things only get messier when the Watch tries to clamp down on the violence. Can anything stop Dreaming Street from destruction—and does anyone want to bother trying?

2. THE DEAD PELICAN

“Rats? What about the rats? Yer a big tough pirate, ain’t ye? Forget the rats and drink yer rum. How about a pie to go with it? I’ll give ya one fer free if’n ye just shut up about the rats.”

—*Shingle*

The Dead Pelican is a seedy little pub, seemingly little different from dozens of other such joints in Scurvytown. But it has a colorful (mostly blood-red) history, no small amount of infamy, a clientele oddly shy about eating the food, and some very nasty secrets below the surface.

HISTORY

A sailor named Jamison opened the Dead Pelican about ten years ago. A Freeport native and ex-marine, Jamison came back to Scurvytown after years of adventures and voyages. He settled down and opened the tavern, offering cheap rum, cheap food, and tall tales for the patrons, who found him far friendlier than most of the grog merchants in the district. But Jamison had a terrible secret; on one of his voyages, he had been marooned on an island with a score of other men. When supplies ran out, he made a pact with a cannibal spirit haunting the island; Jamison murdered his compatriots one by one and lived off their flesh until rescued.

Jamison tried to resume a normal life in Freeport, but the spirit would not release him. To appease it, he founded a small, secretive cult, operating out of the Dead Pelican. The cultists would abduct and sacrifice people to the cannibal spirit, eating the organs of their victims to gain a small measure of supernatural power. As for the rest of the body, well, that was the reason Jamison’s pies were so cheap (and so tasty). The cult did their best to keep a low profile—Jamison only recruited a handful of followers and preyed only on transients and sailors. But Jamison’s caution was his undoing; the cannibal spirit wanted more and pushed the other cultists further into madness. In the confusion of the Succession Riots, the cultists went on a killing (and eating) spree, only to be discovered by the horrified patrons of the tavern, who turned against them and tore them to pieces.

The Dead Pelican sat empty for some time, unclaimed by any new owner. Squatters and transients would move in, but they never stayed long; they complained of bad dreams, horrible smells, and rats—always rats. Eventually, though, a washed-up sailor named Shingle scraped together enough money to buy the tavern and reopened it about a year ago. Business was not so great for a long time, what with the Dead Pelican’s reputation, but Shingle paid three different priests to bless the site and guarantee it free of evil spirits. In the end, the lure of cheap booze got the patrons back on the bar stools, and the Dead Pelican is a growing business. The only problem is the rats; Shingle just can’t seem to get rid of them.