

SHOTGUNS AND SORCERY™

THE 5E SOURCEBOOK



DRAGON CITY

IT'S A GRIM, GRITTY METROPOLIS RULED
OVER BY THE DRAGON EMPEROR, WITH
LEGIONS OF ZOMBIES SCRATCHING AT
THE CITY WALLS BY NIGHT.

Whether in the streets of Goblintown or the prestigious halls of the Academy of Arcane Apprenticeship, people try to scrape by, make a living, and survive from one day to the next. You, however, are looking for something more than simple survival. And in this city, if you don't make your own adventure, another adventure is sure to find you.

Based on the fantasy noir novels of *New York Times* bestselling author Matt Forbeck, *Shotguns & Sorcery: The 5E Sourcebook* contains everything you need to move your game straight into Dragon City.

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This sourcebook is for use with the fifth edition
of the most popular tabletop roleplaying game in the world.



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SHOTGUNS AND SORCERY™

THE 5E SOURCEBOOK PREVIEW

This is a preview of some of the material to appear in *Shotguns & Sorcery: The 5E Sourcebook*.

It's a full-chapter overview of the setting's main location,
the metropolis known as Dragon City.

For more about the book — including the Kickstarter to fund it — please visit

www.ShotgunsNSorcery.com

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Dragon City

Dragon City isn't the crown jewel in the center of a thriving empire overseen by a benevolent ruler. It's the last bastion of determined survivors thrown together onto an isolated mountain that stabs up out of an overwhelming sea of death like an island beset on all sides. The people of Dragon City didn't come here by choice but by desperation, and that fateful origin seeps into every brick and every stone.

A Little History

About five hundred years ago, a necromancer known as the Ruler of the Dead launched an all-out assault on the living peoples of this continent. Her zombie hordes ravaged the land from coast to coast, picking up the fallen and inducting them into her armies as they went. Entire nations fell before their unending onslaught.

As the forces of the Ruler of the Dead moved from west to east, some groups of people were forewarned by other survivors and were able to flee. Elves, dwarves, gnomes, halflings, and humans—even orcs, goblins, trolls, and other so-called monsters—scattered before the hungry dead, put aside their longstanding differences, and worked together for their mutual benefit. These refugees eventually gathered on a lonely mountain

near the land's eastern shore, on top of which lived the most dangerous dragon in the world.

As the zombie armies made their way toward the mountain, the terrified survivors came up with a plan to stem the tide of the undead horde. The people petitioned the dragon who lived on top of the mountain to protect them so they could build a wall around the mountain, one strong and tall enough to keep the Ruler of Death at bay. In return, they would name him the Dragon Emperor and become his loyal subjects.

This offer intrigued the dragon, who had lived in isolation for untold centuries, emerging only to feed and plunder. Now rather than battling armies and slaughtering heroes, he would rule over people who would bring his tribute straight to him.

He agreed to the deal, which became known as the Imperial Pact.

Dragon City Today

Since that fateful deal was sealed, Dragon City has grown from a battlefield settlement into a thriving metropolis that tens of thousands of people call home. The city stretches from that reinforced wall — now known as the Great Circle — all the way up to the Dragon Emperor's palatial lair at the top of the mountain, in the Dragon's Spire.

Life in Dragon City has evolved over the past five centuries. Almost every square inch of the place has been converted from mountain into city, including miles of tunnels and chambers that run beneath the surface. Most people live in apartments or small homes, although the stately manors in the Elven Reaches show little sign of compromise.

The streets are paved with cobblestones, and they wind throughout most of the city, forming a maze that only the most knowledgeable and determined citizens can hope to navigate. People who can afford magical transportation soar over this challenge atop brooms or flying carpets and even inside the occasional blimp. Most folks don't own such costly rides, but hundreds of hacks are willing to rent out their vehicles to get people from one place to another at high speed.

During the day, the streets and skies throng with people going about their business.

At night, glowglobes illuminate most of the city's streets with their magical light. In the lower parts of town, people often steal these or simply shoot them out, but in the upslope sections, they help push back the darkness around the clock.

Most people in Dragon City just want to get by. Unfortunately, it's rarely that easy.

The Neighborhoods

Dragon City splits up into several major neighborhoods. Locals also like to note that every neighborhood also has its own sub-hoods, each with its own distinct flavor.

The main neighborhoods are—in order of their altitude, from highest to lowest—as follows:

- The Dragon's Spire
- The Elven Reaches
- The Stronghold
- Wizards Way
- Gnometown
- The Big Burrow
- The Village
- Goblin town
- Great Circle

Each of these is covered in greater depth later, but here's a quick overview.

The Dragon's Spire

The home of the Dragon Emperor and his entourage of servants and counselors. It sits at the absolute top of the mountain and features a great balcony from which the Dragon can watch over his people as they scurry about their lives below him.

The Elven Reaches

Many of the elves who live here took part in the battle against the Ruler of the Dead and signed onto the Imperial Pact. As peace came to the city, they claimed this barren area above the mountain's treeline and made it their own.

Despite the hostile terrain, the elves used magic to grow trees in the nearly frozen soil. Using spells and patience, they shaped these trees to form living homes for them that are as grand as a palace in any other part of the world.

No roads lead through this part of the city—they all stop at the Stronghold Gate—although people do walk between houses on paths that lead through tended parks. Walking in this part of town without an elf escort, though, is considered suspicious and can be grounds for arrest.

The Stronghold

When the dwarves settled in Dragon City, they carved out an area beneath the surface. They formally call this place the Dwarfheim, although everyone in town refers to it as the Stronghold instead. This is where they began their mines and their quarries, but they have now transformed it into a subterranean city ruled over by the Dwarven Council. It would probably be considered a city all on its own if the Dragon Emperor hadn't forbade that to be so.

The main entrance to the Stronghold sits on the edge of a rolling plateau. The massive stone arch, known as the Stronghold Gate, towers over the area and reminds visitors of the dwarven devotion to architecture. The roads up from the rest of the city all end here, at Siegebreaker Square, where the refugees sustained a prolonged siege against the undead while they negotiated the details of the Imperial Pact.

Wizards Way

The wizards who settled Dragon City long ago argued that they needed a location in which they could concentrate on their studies. It had to be removed from the rest of the city, they claimed, to keep the wizards above the concerns of the people in the streets. The rest of the city—eager not be blown to bits in a magical experiment gone awry—agreed to this condition.

The Dragon Emperor assigned the Wizards Council a narrow plateau of land that sits atop a rocky spur that stabs out high over the Village below. The wizards reshaped the land, transforming it into Wizards Way, and there they established the Academy of Arcane Apprentices, where they could both study the nature of magic and bequeath their knowledge to later generations.

Gnometown

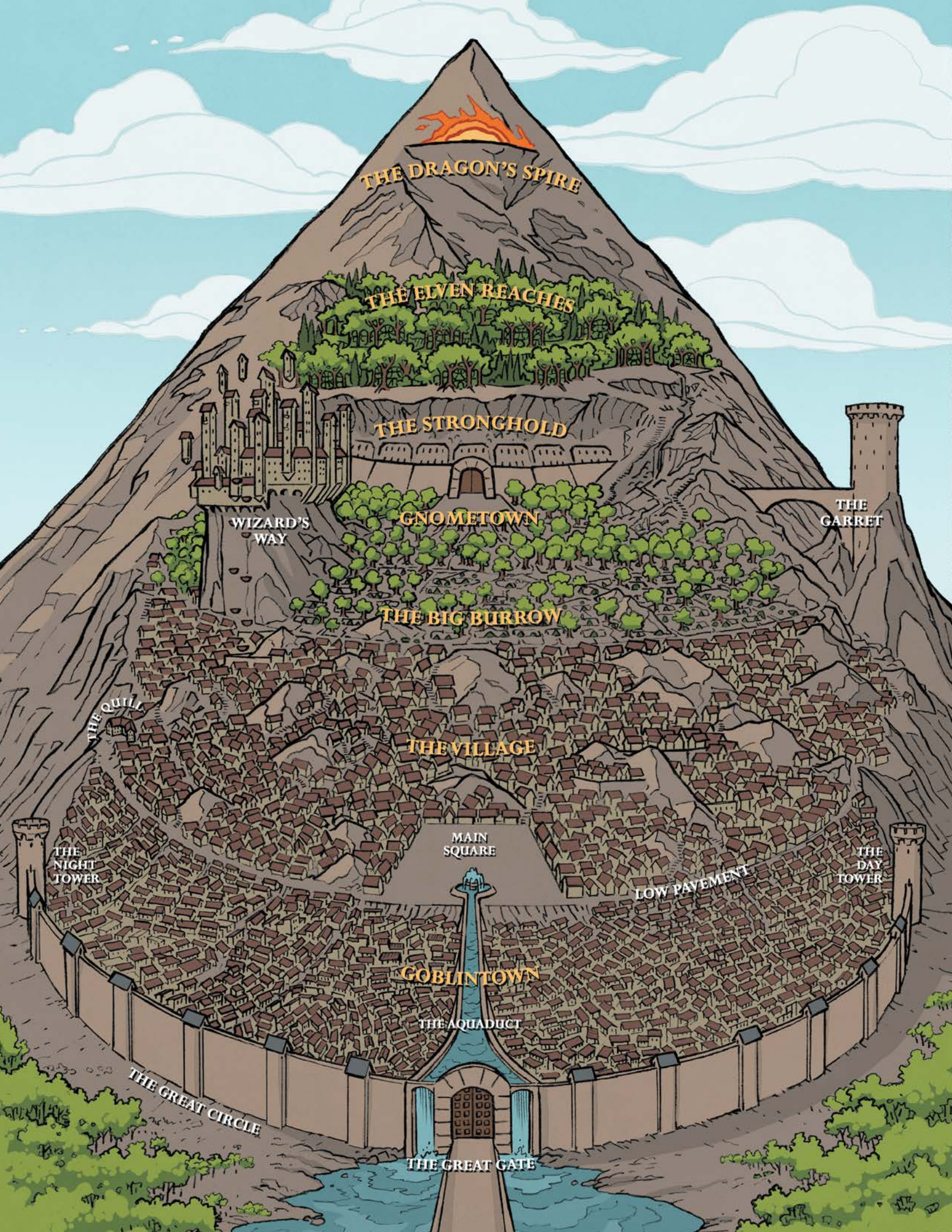
The gnomes took over a section of land in a wooded part of the mountain and turned it into a proper neighborhood, right below the Stronghold Gate. This section of town features tree-lined streets, mostly because the gnomes live in homes hidden beneath the roots and wedged among the trunks of those trees.

This is the quietest of the lower neighborhoods. The gnomes keep mostly to themselves and like it that way. Most of the homes and shops in this area feature low ceilings, making it difficult for anyone larger than a dwarf to feel at home. Adventurous diners often make their way up here to sample their cuisine, though, which features root vegetables and fungi grown in basement gardens.

The Big Burrow

The halfling families that made it to Dragon City for its founding spotted a massive knoll high in the trees and decided that this would be their home. Together, they dug out a massive complex of half-buried homes and shops that spread down from the knoll all the way to High Pavement, the street that borders the upslope side of the Village.

The Big Burrow—also called the Big Hill—is renowned for its shops and especially its restaurants. Halflings pride themselves on providing comfort for their guests, no matter who they might be, and most of the places are built to accommodate even humans or elves.



THE VILLAGE

When the first refugees made it to the mountain, they congregated at the headwaters of the Crystal River. The settlement that coagulated here became known as the Village, and it's now the heart of the human part of the city. While this locale was once home to all the races, the longer-lived peoples moved upslope, and the green-skinned peoples were forced down closer to the Great Circle, leaving mostly humans behind.

The Village stretches across the entire city, from High Pavement on its upslope border to Low Pavement at its downslope edge. Most residents consider Old Market Square, which sits just above Low Pavement, to be the center of the city.

GOBLINTOWN

The dregs of the city wind up in Goblin town, washed up against the Great Circle. This is, by far, the worst part of town, filled with killers and thieves and their powerless victims. Most of the people who live here are greenies—orcs, goblins, trolls, and the like—people with a greenish hue to their skin, although anyone who's fallen from grace can end up here, even the rare elf.

The buildings in Goblin town are little more than shanties or shacks, supposedly temporary housing stacked against and atop each other with centuries of filth until it forms a twisty hive laced with despondency and despair. The streets are filled with beggars of all ages and conditions, and the alleys brim over with muggings and murders.

GREAT CIRCLE

The Great Circle is the unbroken wall that towers above Goblin town and surrounds the entire city in its protective circumference. It stands high above even the tallest of the ramshackle apartment buildings in Goblin town, forever dousing that part of the city in its shadow.

The main part of the wall stretches between the Day Tower to the east and the Night Tower to the west. The Imperial Dragon's Guard patrols it every hour of the day, under the guidance of Captain Maurizzio. Anyone caught on the wall or moving in or out of the city without express permission is to be shot on sight, and the Guards take their job as if the entire city depended on them—which it does.

Racism

The neighborhoods of Dragon City are segregated by racism. There are some exceptions—and heroes are notable for being such rule-breakers—but the rule is that most people live among their own kind. The farther apart they live on the mountain, the rarer it is to see them together in any situation.

The Village is the most accommodating of all the neighborhoods. Anyone from upslope is welcome within its borders, and many people make their way up to the Old Market Square from Goblin town as well. Greenies often labor under suspicions wherever they show their faces, though, and the higher they go up the mountain, the more overt this becomes.

People who work their way down the mountain are often seen as slumming it. The farther down they go, the worse this is. An elf seen voluntarily in Goblin town, for instance, would face great shame upon her return home, but the same elf might barely raise an eyebrow with a venture into the Stronghold.

This inherent racism factors into more than just social shame, of course. Orcs are barred from many places above the Village and are treated with outright hostility in the Stronghold and the Elven Reaches. Some have even been summarily executed; and their killers faced no penalties after they explained that seeing such a person in the wrong place made them fear for their life.

THE GUARD

The Imperial Dragon's Guard comprises the Dragon's teeth and claws in Dragon City. They execute his will—and anyone that cares to stand in their way.

There are three distinct branches of the Guard. The regular Guard—the one that most people see on a regular basis and, if they've ever done anything wrong in their lives, fear to their core—is the Imperial Dragon's Guard. They patrol the entirety of the city inside the walls. The elf in charge of them is Captain Yabair, who's been at the job for more years than anyone cares to remember, and he's just as harsh and jaded about his fellow citizens as you'd expect.

Most of the people in the Guard are elves, with a few dwarves tossed in for good measure. They're the only people the Dragon trusts with carrying out his will.

The second branch of the Guard patrols the Great Circle and staffs the Night and Day Towers. It's their job to protect the city from any external threats—and to keep people from escaping, although that's not nearly as much of a concern. The elf in charge of that is Captain Maurizzio, a cousin of Yabair.



THE AUXILIARY GUARD

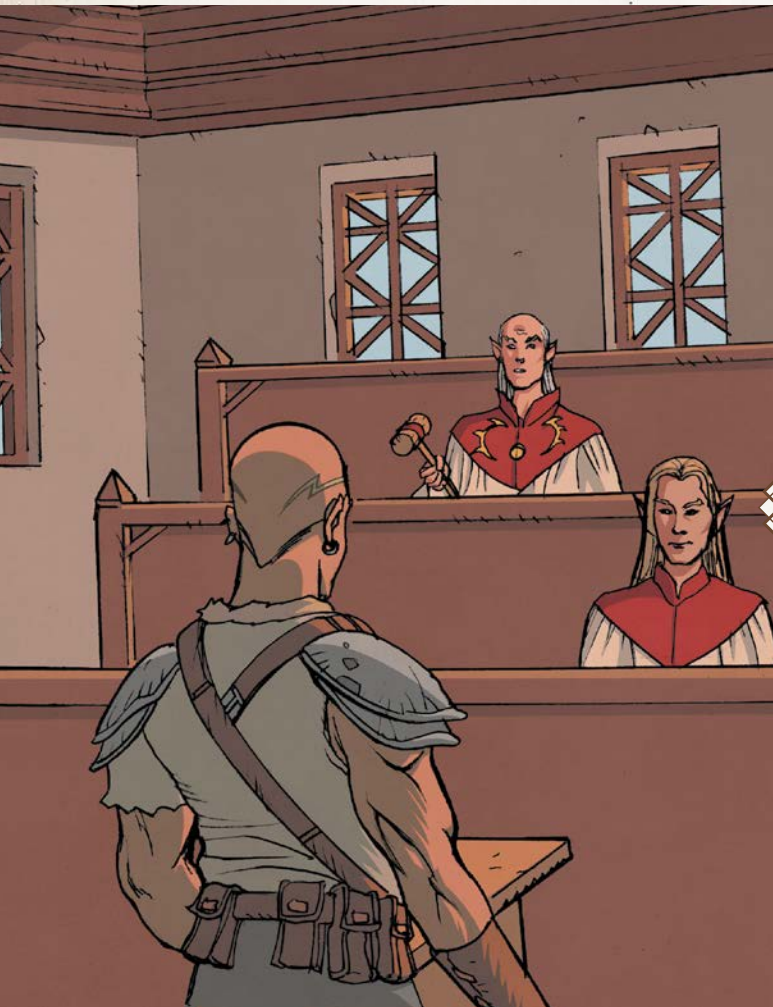
When it became clear that the Guard couldn't muster enough elves to patrol the entire city—particularly its lower reaches—Yabair instituted the Dragon's Auxiliary Guard. Its officers are charged with patrolling the city from Gnometown down to Goblin town, and they deal mostly with low-level offenses, the kinds of petty crimes Yabair can't be bothered with himself.

The Auxiliary Guard admits gnomes, halflings, and humans to its ranks. Orcs and other greenies are not officially barred, but by the same token, they are never hired.

Corruption runs rampant through the Auxiliary Guard, much to Yabair's consternation. He would prefer to keep the Auxiliary in line with an iron fist, but he has his hands full with the regular Guard. While the Auxiliaries regularly embarrass him, he sees them as the best solution to an intractable problem. Not enough elves care about what happens downslope for them to join the Guard, so unless the Dragon drafts them himself—something he's shown no sign of considering, despite repeated requests—the Auxiliary Guard must suffice.

PRECINCT HOUSES

When the Guard arrests someone, they are usually brought to the nearest precinct house. There's at least one in each of the neighborhoods inside the city, although the Village has three. They each consist of offices, a locker room for the Guards, an interrogation room, and a jail with holding cells.



Prisoners are brought into the offices and booked. Then they're tossed into one of the holding cells until they can be hauled before an arbiter. If the Guard feels like interrogating someone, they can bring in a truthsayer—a wizard who specializes in drawing the truth out of people—but they often simply do their level best to beat confessions out of prisoners with their fists instead.

Under the Imperial Pact, the citizens of Dragon City have the right to a trial—although it doesn't mention anything about it having to be fair or speedy. Some people languish in a precinct jail for weeks or months. Many of them consider themselves lucky to be there, though, rather than the Garret.

LAW AND JUSTICE

Officially, the laws in Dragon City are simple. Whatever the Dragon says goes.

As a practical matter, the law is a bit more complicated and has been built up by collecting the Dragon's dictates over the centuries. Many things are illegal, including stealing, assault, and murder—the sorts of things any civilized society frowns upon—but there are a few unique standouts.

CORPSES

Because of the influence of the Ruler of the Dead, there's a risk that any dead body within the boundaries of Dragon City could rise up and start attacking people. To prevent this from happening, citizens are required to turn over all dead bodies to the Dragon City Morgue as soon as possible.

Officially, those responsible for the deceased have a mourning period of up to seven days before they must turn over the body. Most people, however, submit the body within three days, if not sooner.

Because an undead elf can be such a dire threat to the city's security, if an elf's body is not surrendered to the morgue within those seven days, the Imperial Dragon's Guard is authorized to collect any of the deceased's living relatives in their stead. Because of this, elves tend to keep a close eye on their relations, if only to ensure that they don't find themselves dragged off to the morgue as well.

ILLEGAL SUBSTANCES

The Dragon doesn't much care if the people of his city want to get wasted. They can drink themselves sick, and they're free to smoke all the pipeweed they can get their grubby hands on. There are two things he doesn't wish for them to abuse though, and they're both related to him.

Dragonfire is a liquor infused with dragon essence. When you drink it, it gives you a boost to your mojo, although it, of course, intoxicates you at the same time. Dragonfire is strictly prohibited and, at the same time, widely available. Many people drink it recreationally, while some wizards abuse it ritually, giving themselves a short-term edge when they need it most.

The Imperial Dragon's Guard is under orders to destroy any dragonfire it finds, and it's rare for a week to go by without them executing a raid on one speakeasy or another. They prefer to break open the casks of the stuff on the front steps of such places, and then they ignite the spilled liquid. Those on the hunt for dragonfire can often identify such places by the scorches on the streets in front of them. It's not long after the Guard leaves that busted speakeasies find new supplies.

The Guard takes the scourge of dragon essence far more seriously. This is a powdered substance of reddish gold that feels warm to the touch. Users generally snort or smoke the stuff, and it gives them an intense high unrivaled by anything else.

Wizards who use dragon essence get a huge boost to their mojo, although the incredible high that comes with it often makes them useless for much of anything they haven't planned for well ahead of time. For that reason, it's often used for longish rituals that require both huge amounts of power and little in the way of movement.

There's only one potential source for dragon essence that most people in Dragon City know of: the Imperial Dragon himself. People generally assume that it comes from scales the Dragon has shed, or the trimmings of his mighty claws, but how the material then makes its way back down the mountain to the rest of the populace remains a mystery to them.

COURT

If a citizen is accused of a crime, they are hauled before an arbiter, who judges their guilt or innocence. Those of means can often put up bail—or leverage it via a bail bond—so they don't have to spend the entire time before their trial in jail. The poor or powerless languish in their cell instead.

The arbiter is a person of good repute, appointed by the Dragon himself. Each precinct house has at least one, although most have three. They work independently of each other, except for particularly thorny cases, for which they may convene a tribunal in which the arbiters involved each have a vote.

Arbiters serve in their position for as long as they like, which means that most of them are behind the bench for life. Arbiters are chosen from the race associated with each neighborhood, even in Goblin town—mostly because no one else wants the job. The life expectancy of arbiters in Goblin town can be measured in heartbeats.

THE GARRET

Punishment that arbiters hand down can vary from fines to time in the public stocks. Dangerous criminals, though, wind up in the Garret, the most impregnable prison around. The mere threat of being thrown into can make even the toughest crooks whimper.

The Garret sits on a promontory that stabs out of the eastern side of the mountain, off above Gnometown. On foot, it can only be reached by a bridge that stretches from its front gate to a small plateau on which visitors mass each morning before being let in. It's a cold, forlorn place endlessly whipped by frigid winds coursing through the thin air.

The Garret is built entirely of cut stone and steel bars. The guards there are among the hardest people in the city, mostly dwarves, including the warden himself. They brook no dissent from their prisoners.

Sentences in the Garret are rarely less than a year, and they can stretch on for decades. Many of the prisoners commit suicide rather than continue to suffer there endlessly, and the guards—understanding the impulse all too well—make no effort to curb it.

Some of the cells are enchanted to be able to handle monsters of various types. A vampire named Alcina sits in one, for instance, although she likes to tell anyone who will listen how she's the actual power behind the prison.

SUSTENANCE

While there are farms and ranches farther up the mountain on isolated plateaus outside of the city proper, they can't produce enough food to keep everyone inside the city happy and healthy. Most people supplement whatever they can grow, butcher, or buy with magical food. While you can live on such stuff indefinitely, those who do claim that it's somehow not as filling, and they often find themselves craving natural food instead.

Two rivers run through the city, accumulating from rain and snowmelt trickling down from the top of the mountain and gaining in size as they go. The first of these is the Crystal River, which runs beneath the surface for much of its journey. It eventually emerges in the Village, and from there it runs a high ridge through Goblin town until it reaches the Great Gate. At the gate, it splits in two, each branch spilling down over a shoulder of the gate in a massive cataract that tumbles into a small lake outside of the city. From there, its waters meander toward the sea.

The other main river is known as the Ash River. It's actually a flow of graying lava that emerges in the eastern part of the Village and wanders down into Goblin town before disappearing underground again. People often throw their garbage into it and watch it burn. The prevailing winds carry the ashes off to the east, although many days they become trapped inside the Great Circle and swirl above Goblin town instead of reaching the open sky.

Countless wells are also scattered throughout the city, many of which are available for public use. People with magical abilities often generate their own water, and many places have magical taps that produce water—hot or cold—upon demand.

FAMILIES

Dragon City is filled with families of all kinds. The ones that live at the top tend to be the traditional nuclear families with the males who work while the females take care of the homes and children. The farther down the mountain you go, the less true this becomes.

This is born more of necessity than anything else. As poor as the people of Goblin town are, it's hard for any families down there to be able to make any kind of living at all without both parents working. They simply don't have the luxury of the lifestyles the upslope peoples consider traditional.

Similarly, families in Goblin town and the Village often have three or more generations living under the same roof. Sometimes these families are far more complex too, with siblings, half-siblings, and step-siblings rotating in and out of places as ages and circumstances dictate.

CHILDREN

The population of Dragon City is already stretching the city's resources to its limits. There's no law against adding to the city's numbers but doing so can be expensive. Having one or two children is within most people's means, but more than that is frowned upon, especially the higher up the mountain you go.

Wizards have perfected magical birth control, so there are relatively few unplanned pregnancies in the city. Most of these happen down in Goblin town, where people have less access to such magical tools.



Most children are home-schooled, although there are private schools scattered throughout the city. These are not cheap, but despite this, most people in the city are literate—upslope of Gobintown, at least. In Goblintown, families often pool together to share childcare responsibilities, freeing more of the adults up to work.

THE DRAGON'S SPIRE

The Imperial Dragon has made his home in this mountain for time immemorial. He lives in a massive cave he hollowed out at the top of the mountain, carved into its snow-capped peak. Since the founding of Dragon City and his installment as emperor, his cavern has only become more posh and perfect—at least by his standards.

Visitors enter the Imperial Palace by means of a gigantic balcony that overlooks the city. Most fly their way there, as the climb is long and treacherous. If they are not expected when they arrive, the crack platoon of the Imperial Dragon's Guard that stands watch in the Spire day and night greets them—often with bullets. Although they carry ceremonial spears tipped with red steel, they do not take chances when it comes to protecting the Dragon.

The Grand Balcony itself is chilly and regularly covered with snow the Guard sweeps or shovels aside. The area is wide enough for the Dragon himself to sprawl out in comfort alongside his entire entourage. A single massive archway one hundred feet high yawns at the north end of the balcony and leads straight into the Dragon's lair.

INSIDE THE PALACE

The Dragon's body gives off a tremendous amount of heat, enough to keep the interior of the spire warm and dry. The Guards stationed there all seem immune to it, as does anyone else who works there. This particularly includes the Voice of the Dragon, an ancient elf who wears a burning cloak and whose every bit of hair has long since been singed away.

The entire chamber is decorated with priceless gems and precious metals. In the back of the chamber sits a golden dais, on top of which spills a mound of treasure that serves as the Dragon Emperor's bed. The coins in that trove often glow red from the heat. Most of them are bent or warped in some way and over the years many of them have actually melted together.

The Voice of the Dragon perches in a golden throne that sits next to the Dragon Emperor's bed. He is immune to fire, and he has the power to discern if those who speak to him are telling the truth.

Beyond the Dragon's bed, a stairway leads down to another level several yards below. This is where the staff lives, eats, and sleeps while on duty. While the hallways here are wide enough for the Dragon to pass through—although just barely—he rarely bothers to do so. His servants bring everything he needs straight to him, and he has no desire to go rummaging through their quarters.

Although the Dragon hardly needs defending, he hates to be bothered. A full platoon of Guards are stationed here at all times. They rotate out with units downslope on a weekly basis. The Voice himself, though, never leaves the Dragon's side. He is, by all accounts, the Dragon's sole means of communication.



THE ELVEN REACHES

The elves who signed the Imperial Pact claimed the highest reaches of the mountain—besides the Spire itself—as their home. The dwarves conceded this to them, as they had no desire to live above ground, much less near the top of a mountain, and the rest of the peoples didn't care to argue the point. The Elven Reaches are a chilly and windswept land, and while the elves didn't mind such weather, everyone else preferred more temperate conditions.

This gave the elves the space they wanted and the quiet they preferred. They took advantage of their relative isolation to create a utopian neighborhood free from the kinds of wants and diseases that plagued the city's lower levels. Or so it seems, at least from the outside.

In truth, the Elven Reaches are thoroughly corrupted, not by money but by influence, accumulated favors, and coagulated offenses built up over centuries. The ever-shifting matrix of alliances and enmities may seem unreadable to outsiders, but to those who live in the Reaches, it binds them as tightly as a straightjacket.

THE ELVES

There are fewer elves in Dragon City than there are of any of the other races. They lost a great deal of their numbers staving off the Ruler of the Dead's forces at the time of the founding of Dragon City, and elves produce children more slowly than any other race. Because of this, they prize their offspring above all else.

Partly because of their upbringing, elves come across to others as spoiled and haughty. Combine that with their long lives, which offer them the chance to consider long-term ventures in a way that most of the other races—except perhaps the dwarves—can't begin to contemplate, and you can see how they manage to accumulate power and wealth.

Elves plan their lives out on the scale not of days and months but decades and centuries. They are patient and prefer to take their time to make any important decisions. This also makes them slow to sense the need for change.

An elf's reputation means everything to them. Their accomplishments follow them around for their entire lives—as do their errors. They often go to great lengths to erase reports of such errors before they can spread, but they can't always control their families' actions as much as they would prefer. They often experience shame by association, and it taints them for decades.

THE ELVEN SENATE

The Elven Reaches are ruled by a direct democracy known as the Elven Senate. Once per year—or more often, if necessary—the elves of Dragon City convene a senate in which to discuss current issues. They debate them back and forth and then vote on them. Each adult elf casts their own vote, and the majority rules on each issue.

The issues the Elven Senate debates, of course, only apply to the Elven Reaches. They can offer proclamations and even advisory statements to the Dragon, or to any of the other neighborhood governments, but these hold no more weight than the people who receive them give them. The Dragon often ignores them entirely.



PLACES

Most of the Elven Reaches is residential. There are few shops of any kind. Some of the elves have their own places to create things—meals, weapons, magical items, and so on—but these are integrated into their estates.

If you want something from someone, you visit their home and commission it from them. Those items are then handmade to your requirements and instructions. You may have to wait weeks if not months or years for your order to be filled, but when it is, you know that it will be the best quality item of its kind.

Of course, elves aren't the only ones who live in the Elven Reaches. There's also a substantial population of humans and halflings who work at various estates as servants. Such servants always wear formal uniforms when on duty. When off-duty, they either travel downslope or—as is more common—stay in their private chambers hidden deep within (sometimes even under) their employers' estate.

The homes in the Elven Reaches are uniformly magnificent estates perched on particular parts of the mountain. It's difficult to move between them without being able to fly, although the elves manage it. A single trip next door can require hours to manage, though, so the elves always try to make sure that such ventures are worthwhile.

The only public building in the entire neighborhood is the open amphitheater in which the Elven Senate meets. It consists of a stage in the center of a narrow plateau, with seats fanning upward along the side of the mountain, carved into its living stone. This venue can be rented for other events, although only elves of good standing are permitted to do so.

ENNUI

After living for several centuries, some elves have a hard time coming up with any more reasons to get up in the morning. They simply quit doing it and instead lie about their homes, smoking pipeweed—or even dragon essence—and contemplating the mysteries of nature, time, and fate.

Given how reclusive most elves can be, it can take months if not years before their neighbors notice that they've disappeared from public view. Even then, most such elves are quietly cared for by their servants while the younger members of the family take on the job of overseeing their households.

THE STRONGHOLD

While the Elven Reaches were a place to which the elves could flee when the zombie hordes approached, the Stronghold is where the dwarves laid in to prepare to survive the Ruler of the Dead's long siege. It's not a haven but a fortress.

While it's hard to wander into the Elven Reaches, it's almost impossible to stumble over the Stronghold. It has one well-known entrance—the Stronghold Gate—which the Imperial Dragon's Guard watches over every minute of the day. The other entrances are both secret and, when feasible, locked. No outsider would be likely to find them, even if hunting for them.

No flying is permitted inside the Stronghold, whether by device or direct magic. Those who approach the Stronghold Gate by air must set down in Siegbreaker Square or be shot from the sky.

THE DWARVES

The Stronghold is occupied almost exclusively by dwarves. They carved the place out of the mountain themselves, and they consider it their hard-earned home. Dwarves of any kind are always welcome here. Those who are not dwarves, though, are often viewed with suspicion and treated with caution.

While the dwarves may not be as snooty as the elves, outsiders often consider them hidebound by familial roots and traditions. It's hard to get dwarves to make an important decision without first consulting the other members of their clan. These conversations are often held over ales and stiffer drinks and can take the better part of an evening. They often don't come to any sort of conclusions at all.

Dwarves know that anything they do reflects on the rest of their clan. However, dwarves prize cleverness over intellect and directness over subterfuge. They prefer to be funny and blunt rather than cool and deceitful.

This is, perhaps, one reason they value alcohol so much. Drinking is a huge part of their culture, and they do not trust those who refuse to drink with them.

While dwarves can spend weeks and months underground, never seeing the sun or feeling a fresh breeze, they have come to appreciate the open air as well. The wealthiest dwarves have balconies that look out over Dragon City from above. All of these, however, are under the Imperial Guard's constant watch, to prevent any intruders from slipping into the Stronghold unseen.

Dwarves like to wear their hair and their beards long and to fashion them in elaborate braids. A common dwarf saying is to “bet your beard or braids,” since to lose such things would mark a dwarf with shame.

THE DWARVEN CORE

The dwarves govern their neighborhood by means of the Core, a council comprised of the most powerful dwarves in Dragon City. This includes the leaders of each of the great dwarf clans, plus a number of others who have either commanded or weaseled their way into the Core.

The Core meets as often as necessary—usually once per week—to debate the issues of the day and decide which path the people of the Stronghold shall take. The meetings are often contentious, and it's not unheard of for members of the Core to come to blows over matters vital to their own interests.

Each of the dwarf clans automatically places its own leader in the Core, and the Core itself approves any at-large additions. Less than half of the members of the Core were alive when Dragon City was founded. One of those includes the dwarf who's been the chair of the Core the entire time: Benno Bricht.

THE DWARVEN WAY

The Stronghold is notoriously and openly corrupt. If you want to get anything done in the Stronghold, you need to fill empty palms with gold. Otherwise, you can be sure to stumble into roadblocks thrown into your path.

The Bricht clan has a stranglehold over all mining operations in the entire mountain, for instance. Those who want to set up any kind of a dig—especially in the Stronghold part of the city—face strict regulations. These are overseen by the Core and enforced by the Imperial Dragon's Guard, but they were dictated by the Brichts. Because of this, few organizations and almost no people



could possibly afford to set up a competitive mine or quarry. Some people attempt this in secret, but if they're discovered, they're shut down, hard, which can include collapsing the entire illegal dig onto itself.

Despite this, the Stronghold runs like a smoothly oiled machine. If you have the cash or the influence, you can make things happen. You can also make any problems you have—up to and including murder charges—go away. The only thing that you can't buy your way out of is trouble with the Dragon himself. If you're one of the working stiffs, though, you're usually out of luck either way.

SIEGBREAKER SQUARE

Most of the roads from the lower part of the mountain lead up to the only part of Dwarfheim that sits above ground: Siegbreaker Square. It was here that the army of what would become Dragon City held off the forces of the Ruler of the Dead—and here that, with the help of the Dragon, they eventually broke the siege. The great stone arch at the end of the square commemorates that.

Today Siegbreaker Square is lined with shops and stalls that sell goods and services in demand inside the Stronghold, and further downslope as well. The shops, which are permanent buildings, are all owned and operated by dwarves. Their patrons are usually people from other parts of the city who would rather deal with the dwarves in the open air rather than venture into the subterranean Stronghold.

The Core allows for a number of temporary stalls that line the outside edge of the square as well. These are mostly run by non-dwarves who wish to do business with the dwarves and would rather come to the dwarves than force their patrons to travel to them. Dwarves are usually willing to pay a premium for high-quality goods, so the prices are higher here than they would be in other parts of the city, like the Old Market Square.

Those with the means come from all over the city to shop here. There are few shops in the Elven Reaches, so most of the elves come here to purchase whatever they need—or, more likely, send their servants to do so on their behalves. Wealthier people from downslope, especially Wizards Way, often make the pilgrimage to shop here as well.

THE CLAN HALL

The Core meets in a vast underground chamber with high vaulted ceilings, known as the Clan Hall. This is generally not open to the public, although any dwarf can visit the Clan Hall on days when the Core is not meeting. Dwarves can also request to speak with the Core, and these inquiries are considered on an individual basis. Most are granted automatically, although a few cranks are barred for all but the most vital matters.

The Core gathers around a table that's built to resemble the arch in Siegebreaker Square. The leader of the Core, Benno Bricht, sits at the top of the arch, with the rest of the Core arrayed around him in order of importance. Those who appear before the Core walk into the open end of the arch and speak while surrounded by the members of the core. The speaking area is recessed so that even a human standing there has their head lower than the dwarves assembled around them.

Armed guards line the walls of the Clan Hall. These are loyal to the Stronghold rather than the Dragon, but to avoid incurring the Emperor's wrath, they are rarely seen outside of the Clan Hall. While the Core is in session, they protect its members. At other times, they stand guard over the Great Vault.

THE GREAT VAULT

The Great Vault is a gigantic room in which the Core stores the greatest treasures in all of Dwarfheim. The door that leads into the Great Vault is twenty feet wide and forty feet high, and it's made of a single stone slab a yard thick. The Stronghold arch is carved into its exterior face, framing a crossed pickaxe and hammer.

The entire symbol sparkles with gold, platinum, rubies, and diamonds inlaid throughout. The rubies and diamonds actually move, flowing like water, so that it seems that the symbol is on fire.

The Great Vault contains ancient weapons, powerful artifacts, and a variety of enchanted items beyond compare. However, the most valuable item in the Great Vault is the set of stone tablets on which are carved the text of the Imperial Pact, sometimes known as the Dragon City Compact. These are permanently set into the walls of the Great Vault, and they display not only the original agreement that founded the city but also the signatures of all those who agreed to it five hundred years ago.

The exact text of the Imperial Pact is a tightly held secret. Those born and raised in Dragon City are aware the gist of it, but few know the particulars it contains. The elves who were around to sign the Imperial Pact and who still live to this day know what it says, though, even if it's been five centuries since they've read it.

WIZARDS WAY

Below Siegebreaker Square, off to the west, a spur of the mountain stabs out high over the lands below. The very tip of it towers over the Village at an angle that would defy any attempts to climb it. The top of the spur is relatively flat, sloping upward as it moves away from the bulk of the mountain to form an impressive outcropping, at the end of which sits the Academy of Arcane Apprenticeship.

A road winds up to this area from the heights of Gnometown, snaking back and forth until it reaches the beginning of the spur. The road then veers straight for the gates of the Academy. Over the years, several wizards have built towers of their own alongside that road, which is why it's now known as Wizards Way. The entirety of the neighborhood takes its name from this road.

The architecture in this part of town differs from everywhere else. The ledge on which the Academy sits has been magically reinforced and extended so that it looms farther out over the Village than any natural outcropping could. Many of the towers that line Wizards Way have been similarly enhanced. In fact, some parts of them float high in the air without any sort of visible support at all.

Each of the towers and the Academy itself are sequestered from the general public by high fences and large gates, not to mention various sorts of magical defenses. Anyone can walk along Wizards Way freely but getting inside any of the buildings along its path requires either clout, an invitation, or both.

It's a challenge to reach Wizards Way by foot. Those in a hurry—or with enough cash—take a taxi. Everyone else rides up from the Village in a massive basket that carries them up to the Academy via a levitation column. There have been a few spectacular accidents with these over the years, but it's been a long while since anyone died in such an incident.

THE WIZARDS

Wizards make for a strange and mixed lot of souls. They hail from all walks of life—rich, poor, and of every race. The one thing they all have in common is a talent for magic and a determination to build the skills they need to use it.

While the Academy is officially open to anyone, in reality, the vast majority of its students are humans. That's partially because there are more humans than any other sort of race in Dragon City, but several other factors come into play.

Most elves are powerful enough without wanting to worry about becoming a wizard, and they don't care to come down the mountain to slum it with the rest of the Academy. Dwarves and gnomes tend to keep to themselves. Halflings don't thrive in such a rigid environment as the Academy, so most who have some talent don't bother to apply—or wash out soon after they arrive.

People from Goblin town often cannot afford the tuition, although the Academy makes a big show of offering scholarships to those who cannot pay. They also face bigotry from many of the instructors and even their fellow students. It's far easier to find a shaman of some sort in Goblin town and serve as an apprentice to them instead.

THE ACADEMY OF ARCANE APPRENTICESHIP

The Academy of Arcane Apprenticeship was founded soon after the Great Circle went up around Dragon City. The greatest wizards of the time realized that they needed to foster magical



talent in as much of the city's population as they could manage—as a hedge against the failure of the Imperial Pact, if nothing else—so they banded together to become the instructors at the Academy.

Previously, most wizards in the land took on their own apprentices at will and served as their masters until the students were ready to stand on their own. While some wizards still prefer that sort of arrangement, they are the exception. The vast majority of fully qualified wizards work with the Academy, and most of those also graduated from the Academy themselves.

Studying at the Academy is a process that can take years. Children are admitted to the Academy as young as 13 years of age (for humans), and they tend to graduate from their apprenticeship at the age of 21. Full wizards are not yet qualified to teach, though, and being certified for that can take another decade or more. Only at that point can a wizard receive an invitation to join the Academy's staff. Exceptions can be made for incredibly powerful or gifted wizards, but these exceptions are rarer even than kobolds in the halls of the Academy.

Wizards associated with the Academy live, eat, and sleep there year-round. It becomes their new home, with their fellow wizards as their new family. This cloistered life gives them the chance to concentrate on their studies, but it also insulates them from the concerns of the rest of the city—which can be both good and bad.

THE WIZARDS COUNCIL

The governing body of the Academy of Arcane Apprenticeship is a group of the most powerful magic-users in Dragon City, known as the Wizards Council. By the Academy's charter, the Council consists of at least five wizards, but the roster currently sits at

eleven. These wise people oversee the Academy and Wizards Way and advise the Dragon Emperor on all magical issues.

The Council works by simple majority rule. In case of a split, the vote of the Council's chair breaks all ties.

These days, the chair of the Council is Bill Whitman, a skilled wizard who worked his way up to the position by means of his pleasant nature and steely resolve. He's been in charge of the council for over two decades, and he shows no sign of slowing down. Rumor has it he's using his magic to keep himself young and, if so, he might not ever step down from his post. At least not willingly.

Richard Gibson is also on the Council, although he's given up any hope of ever becoming the chair. He's an excellent wizard who's dedicated his life to the Academy, but he doesn't have the political chops—or the overriding ambition—to unseat Whitman, whose influence spreads far beyond his simple tie-breaking vote.

Celia Parsons works as the Council's secretary. She keeps the organization running smoothly and does most of the actual labor for it, while the rest of the Council concentrates on the bigger picture. Many see her as next in line for a seat on the Council. The only roadblock at this point is somehow finding someone to replace her as secretary.

THE TOWERS

Many of the wizards on the Council have homes of their own outside of the Academy's grounds. The Academy takes up most of the acreage along Wizards Way, leaving only small plots for the rest of those who live there. Because of this, the residents were



Officially, the Dragon City Hospital is outside of Wizards Way, which makes it easier for people from the lower parts of the city to reach it without incident. The only thing that stands between any citizen and being cured of whatever ails them, then, is the ability to pay. The triage nurses at the hospital work in concert with the hospital's administration to make sure they don't stretch their resources too thin helping poor patients who have no means of payment. Those who have plenty of cash are admitted without question, while folks who can't cough up enough gold are put on waiting lists or outright refused admission.

Most of the healers who work in the hospital studied at the Academy of Arcane Apprenticeship. They spend far less time in the ivory towers of that institution, preferring to get blood on their hands instead. Most of them are there to help people rather than make money, though, and it's not unheard of for a healer to storm past the triage nurses to help someone in need whether their pockets are full or not.

GNOMETOWN

Gnometown sits on the highest end of Dragon City that's easy to reach on foot. It's a quiet little community with few shops and almost zero in the way of restaurants and entertainment. The gnomes value their privacy and long ago decided not to develop any ventures that might draw other people to their communal home.

Most gnomes live in their own little houses with ceilings low enough to make a halfling feel claustrophobic. They have small but tight families that are extremely loyal to each other. They spend most of their time either with those families or with whatever sort of work to which they've dedicated themselves.

Many older gnomes don't work for pay at all. They saved up enough throughout their lives—or inherited it from their ancestors—that they can afford to retire and live simply on that amount. Still, a good number of them then return to their hobbies, making them into at least part-time occupations. A great deal of the art and inventions created in Dragon City springs from Gnometown, and much of it is sold to upslope patrons who wish to impress their friends. The gnomes are only too happy to exploit this.

THE GNOMES

The gnomes of Dragon City would much rather have been left alone to live in their subterranean homes in forest around the land. Unfortunately, the Ruler of the Dead's army proved tenacious—or at least hungry enough—to start digging the gnomes out, and they were forced to flee. They took up with the rest of the people begging the Dragon for a chance to live, and they soon after became part of Dragon City.

Gnomes are a reclusive lot, quiet and competent. They openly fear going to Goblintown or dealing with anyone who hails from it. Truth be told, they're not too sure about anyone who lives below Gnometown at all.

forced to build upward, and they used their magical abilities to construct beautiful towers employing impossible architecture.

The first towers along Wizards Way were modest things of timber and stone, but that didn't last long. Wizards of the Academy tend to be a competitive bunch, and they soon took to trying to outdo each other by means of the opulent and obvious splendor of their homes. The towers spiraled high and higher until they began to crowd out the sky.

When simple height wasn't enough, the wizards added dazzling lights, booming sounds, and other magical effects to call more attention to themselves. This reached a point at which illusions of full-on battles involving hordes of dragons raged in the skies above the towers. That crossed the line of what the Dragon Emperor was willing to tolerate, though, and illusory decorations that included loud sounds or images of dangerous creatures were banned.

The wizards returned to wildly imaginative architecture instead, and the competition between them on that front continues on to this day. Most of the towers have been established for centuries at this point, and there's no open land left in Wizards Wary. However, there's nothing stopping new owners from tearing down old places and starting over from scratch to create their own outlandish towers.

The most recent example of this is the opulent tower of Danto Wu, which he started building a decade back, with profits made from his illegal adventuring career. He's since started a smaller academy of his own that functions outside of the purview of the Academy of Arcane Apprenticeships.

THE DRAGON CITY HOSPITAL

There are scores of healers practicing their trade throughout Dragon City, from the swankiest herbalist in the Elven Reaches all the way down to the scummiest bleeders in Goblintown. When it's a matter of life or death, though, the best place in town to get medical help is the Dragon City Hospital, which sits at the end of Wizards Way closest to the mountain.

When someone who's not a gnome wanders into Gnometown, they're watched every instant. The Imperial Dragon's Guard is usually called and shows up within minutes. They accost any strangers and demand to know their business. Those without decent answers are escorted out of the area—or to a precinct house jail cell if they resist.

THE LITTLE MOOT

Gnometown is already set up just the way the gnomes like it, and they're so reclusive it's rare for them to interact much with their neighbors, much less have conflicts with them. Because of this, Gnometown has no official governing authority. The gnomes simply concede all such decisions to the wisdom of the Dragon and leave it at that.

When the rare issue arises that requires input from the entirety of Gnometown, they call together a Little Moot. During this, every citizen of Gnometown who has the ability and inclination to join the event gather in Moot Park, a beautiful, wooded area right in the heart of the neighborhood.

At the meeting, the gnomes all have a chance to speak their mind, and they keep at it until no one feels like they have anything more to say. This can take hours, even days. By the time it's over, many of the participants have left, some abandoning the effort in disgust. Those who stick it out generally resolve to not force another Little Moot to happen for as long as they can possibly manage it.

THE BIG BURROW

The Big Burrow is actually a series of grassy knolls that sprawl along under the wooded neighborhood of Gnometown. They stretch from one side of the Great Circle to the other and reach down to the upper end of the Village. While there are many human-style buildings throughout the area, most of the neighborhood consists of grass-roofed homes and businesses dug out of the side of the area's rolling hills.

Where Gnometown is quiet and residential, the Big Burrow throbs with activity. The halflings who joined the flight to the mountain that would become Dragon City were the ones ready and willing to leave their hometowns rather than be slaughtered in their homes, and it's the descendants of those daring souls who now run the most vibrant part of the city. Cozy shops and delightful restaurants line the streets, with lines forming outside of the most popular ones every night. The elves and dwarves who don't mind leaving their own neighborhoods often shop here, drawing the line before they reach the Village. The halflings cater to them, as upslope clientele stands ready to pay the highest prices they can demand.

Most of the streets of the Big Burrow feel like little more than winding paths. They follow the curves of the hills there, so there's not a single straight line that crosses the entire city up there. This gives the neighborhood a homey feel, but it also makes it a challenge to navigate. Even halflings who have lived here their entire lives can find it hard to locate new places, and when it comes to giving someone directions, forget about it.

THE HALFLINGS

While most of the people of Dragon City seem like they're trapped there, the halflings have embraced the big-city life. They don't see

Dragon City as the last outpost of a doomed civilization but instead as an unparalleled opportunity to not only do some amazing business but also have some incredible fun. To that end, the Big Burrow can often feel like a party that never ends.

It's not that the halflings don't understand that they're caught between Death and the Dragon, as the Dragon City saying goes. Rather than deny that fact, they embrace it. They feel that if they're going to die, though, they should have themselves the best possible time they can before the inevitable end.

Because of this, halflings tend to ignore the laws of Dragon City—right up to the point at which they figure they might attract the attention of the Guard. In their minds, it's not a question of right or wrong but whether or not the risk of punishment is worth the potential reward from the supposed crime. The biggest crime in the Big Burrow comes from misjudging the situation and having the Dragon's claws—a.k.a. the Guard—come down on you for it.

Because of this the Big Burrow pulses with life. If you're looking for action of any kind, this is the place to find it.

THE MAYOR

Just because the Big Burrow thrives on chaos doesn't mean that it doesn't need some order. From the beginning, the halflings of the neighborhood have banded together to elect themselves a mayor to oversee any disputes they may have. Elections are theoretically free and open, although they really devolve down into who can swing the most influence to buy themselves the most votes.

The current mayor, Fergus O'Malley, rode into the job on the coattails of the previous mayor—his mother, Maggie—after she retired. He's continued her easy-going policy of "anything goes," and so far, his constituents have rewarded him handsomely. Like Maggie, Fergus peddles his influence to anyone that will pay him for it.

Despite this, Fergus really does have the best interests of the Big Burrow and even Dragon City at heart. He knows that if either of these things falls apart, he's not only out of a job. He and everyone he's ever cared about will likely be slaughtered as well. Because of this—and despite his ever-present smile—he takes his job seriously and tries to be circumspect about any potential abuse of his limited powers.

THE BARRELRIDER

One of the best-known restaurants in the Big Burrow is the Barrelrider, a traditional halfling-style restaurant situated on the west central side of the neighborhood, right near the border with the Village. It serves a diverse clientele, even allowing Goblintown residents to patronize the place upon occasion. As the owner, Nit Erdini, likes to say, "I don't care about the color of anyone's skin. Their gold all spends the same."

Nit runs the restaurant with his wife Nora. Their grown children—including the ex-adventurer Moira Erdini—often stop in to help out or mooch a meal. In addition to large portions of excellent food, they also serve dragonfire to their trusted guests.

Moira's pal Max Gibson rents the apartment upstairs from the Barrelrider, which is accessed by way of a separate stairway that runs up the east side of the building. He uses the front room as his office and sleeps in the back. Although Max sometimes draws in the wrong kind of visitors, he keeps the restaurant from being robbed often enough to help balance things out.



THE VILLAGE

In many ways, the Village is where Dragon City began, and it remains the largest and most populated part of the city. While the majority of people who live here are humans, people of all types rub shoulders here, even if only for a few moments at a time. Because of this, the most commerce happens here as well.

The Village tends to spill over its boundaries, but it officially extends from High Pavement—which runs east-west along the Big Burrow on the upslope side—to Low Pavement, which borders Goblin town on the downslope side. This gives it the largest stretch of land of any of the neighborhoods, as well as the highest population, something that appalls many upslope citizens, who see the Village as noisy and messy—although tolerably less so than Goblin town, of course.

The streets of the Village may not shine like they do in Gnometown, but that's because they're filled with traffic during the day and even deep into the night. The people here interact with each other in a way that makes the rest of the city seem shy and reserved—or maybe just scared. Residents of the Village are not always peaceful with each other, but they're rarely shy about expressing their opinions or showing how they feel. They live their lives in the open, for all to see.

THE HUMANS

The humans of Dragon City know that most of the people who live upslope consider them just a scant few steps above scum. If it wasn't for the green-skinned folk who live in Goblin town, they'd be at the bottom of the barrel rather than floating in the filthy layer just above it.

Despite that, humans have a tenacity of will and a flair for business and organization that the folks upslope seem to lack. Perhaps the fact that humans have some of the shortest lifespans in the city only adds to their sense that they have to work hard to get anything of value done in the little time nature allots to them.

Outside of the Wizards Council, humans aren't trusted with much responsibility inside the city. They produce the bulk of the city's goods and labor, and without them, the city's economy—both legal and illegal—would collapse. From the point of view of the elves and dwarves, though, humans are unpredictable and rarely plan for the long term, so true power is withheld from them.

THE BOARD

The Village was founded on the gentlest part of the mountain's slopes, and soon afterward, a Village Board was gathered to oversee it. At the time, this consisted of trustees of all kinds drawn from each of the peoples who had assembled in the shadow of the Dragon to plead for his help. Once the other neighborhoods were founded, though, the members of the longer-lived races moved upslope, though, while the green-skinned folks got shoved down to dwell in the shadow of the Great Circle.

Each of the upslope sections of the city has its own form of local government. When there were only humans left on the Village Board, though, the trustees began putting forward ideas meant to advance their rights under the Dragon City Compact. While each individual human didn't have much power, the trustees realized that together they could influence both the Dragon Emperor and the fate of his city.

That lasted until the Board came to an impasse with the Dragon over the fact that no humans had been made a part of the Imperial Dragon's Guard, despite the fact that the Guard was charged with overseeing the entirety of the city. After prominent humans suffered abuse at the hands of the Guard—up to and including being killed—the Board voted for the people of the Village to go on strike.

This did not end well.

When informed of the Board's decision, the Dragon personally flew down to their next meeting and slaughtered every one of the trustees. He declared the Village Board null and void and that he would oversee the neighborhood directly, just as stated in the Dragon City Compact. To show that he wasn't entirely deaf to the pleas of the Villagers, though, he ordered the foundation of the Dragon's Auxiliary Guard to watch over the Village and Goblin town below.

While many humans whisper that the Dragon destroyed the Board because he feared the Village's collective power, those who live upslope read the situation differently. They saw the Dragon's actions as a warning to them and their own local governments to never become too ambitious. They now had little doubt that if they ever sought to overstep their bounds the Dragon would take swift and terrible action against them.

The Village has never had any local government since. The residents there simply tolerate each other and the patrols of the Auxiliary Guard as best they can. If they have problems, they can petition the Dragon for direct help, but few are so ambitious or brave to attempt it.

THE OLD MARKET SQUARE

The center of the Village used to be the Old Market Square. It was here that the people who founded Dragon City first met to trade goods and services, and that tradition continues on to this day.

The square is bounded by Low Pavement on its downslope side, and shops of all kinds surround the square on each of its four sides. There's a massive fountain in the middle of the cobblestones that line the square, with a well to the east and west of it. People shop here all throughout the daylight hours, and they stumble among the many restaurants, cafes, and taverns scattered throughout the place at night.

A circle of stalls surrounds the square's fountain. These are temporary places, thrown up each morning and dismantled every evening. Some of them stay up overnight on many days, but the Auxiliary Guard comes through about once a week to clear the square from one end to the other. If they encounter any challenges, they call in the regular Guard to back them up, and it's rare for any merchant to challenge their authority. None ever succeed.

THE IMPERIAL DRAGON'S MUSEUM

A few blocks north of the Old Market Square sits the Imperial Dragon's Museum. The Dragon himself ordered the place built here near where his shortest-lived citizens resided, to ensure that they would never forget how the city came to be.

Most of the displays focus upon the glory of the Dragon himself and the debt the people of the city owe to him for deigning to save their lives. One small room contains a few special objects that are less than one or two hundred years old, but the vast majority of the items on display here date back to the founding of the city or beyond.

One particular section explains the Dragon City Compact and the benefits and responsibilities it places upon the city's residents. It does not, however, feature the full text of the Compact. That resides only in the Vault deep inside the Stronghold, and copies of it are not permitted to be made.

THE QUILL

The Quill is one of the best-known dives in the Village. It squats on the upslope side of the far western end of Low Pavement. The entrance is on the southeast corner, under a sign of a quill dipped in ink. The door is thick and banded in iron, with speakeasy slots at both human and halfling levels.

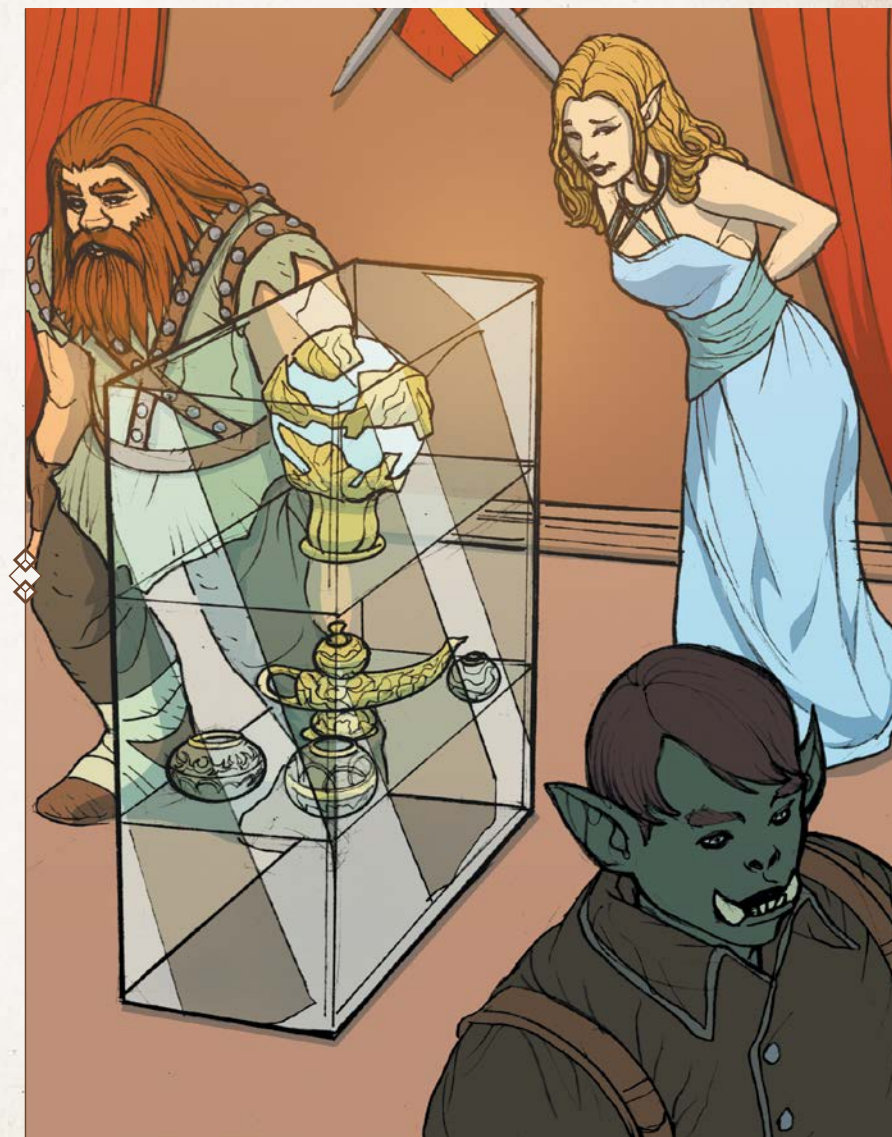
Despite the security, anyone is allowed in during the day. At night, the door is staffed by a bouncer, especially if dragonfire is being served in the main room. The door won't do much more than slow down the Guard if they barge in, but that often gives the rest of the staff the precious few moments they need to hide anything incriminating.

The Quill's main room can hold over fifty people, although most nights the crowd is a bit lighter than that. The bartender is a human named Thumper, who has an eidetic memory for his patrons and their drinks. There are rooms upstairs in which friends can crash, although they often stand empty.

There's also a stairwell to the attic, which features a hatchway that opens onto the tavern's roof. There's another hatchway in the floor behind the bar. This leads to a secret tunnel that spills out through the cliff face below the bar's western windows, which overlook the Great Circle and the undead-riddled lands beyond. The canopy of a massive oak hides the tunnel's exit.

In the northern end of the building, there's a cellar dug out of the mountain's rock. Thumper keeps the bar's supplies stocked here. This features a locked cage in which the most expensive items are stored, including several small casks of dragonfire.

The Quill has long been a hangout for adventurers looking for their next mission. Max Gibson met many of his friends here, and their sorties outside the Great Circle paid off so well that Max eventually bought the bar. He doesn't like to advertise the fact, though, so most of the place's patrons only know him as one of the Quill's longtime regulars.



GOBLINTOWN

The hovels, shacks, and shanties that surge up against the inside of the Great Circle like a rising tide form Dragon City's worst neighborhood, bar none: Goblin town. This is where the green-skinned people of the city live, work, and starve. Squashed right up against the Great Circle, they can hear the undead clawing and scratching on the other side of the wall at any time, day or night. From that noise, at least, there is no escape.

Goblintown wasn't founded so much as it grew. No one who signed the Dragon City Compact gave much thought to the fate of the greenies that wound up inside the city's walls. They just knew they didn't want them roaming about their neighborhoods.

When the construction of the Great Circle was laid out, it curved well south of the Village, giving the city ample room to breathe both then and in the future. As the green-skinned people were forced out of the Village—and barred from most other locales upslope—they found themselves pressed up against the newly built wall. Having nowhere else to go, they set themselves down in the Great Circle's lengthening shadow and shot roots.

The architecture of Goblintown is completely unplanned. The poverty of its residents means that quality materials are rare or nonexistent. The buildings are clapped together out of scrap wood, rocky rubble, ill-cut sheets of rusty metal, and all sorts of other odds and ends castoff by people upslope or the workers who built the Great Circle. They weren't built by artisans but instead by trial and error.

It's not uncommon for a Goblintown building to spontaneously collapse, especially the ones in the center of the neighborhood, which are low and shaky. The edifices improve in quality the nearer they get to the Village, enough so that some humans—either open-minded or desperate—are willing to live in these places.

The buildings grow in height as they get closer to the Great Circle. Many of these are ramshackle apartment buildings several stories tall that lean up against the cut-stone wall for support. The rooftops form a rough-made canopy of open balconies and crude kitchens that stretch the entire length of the Great Circle, between the Night and Day Towers, and at night the cook-fires glow atop them like fireflies in a filthy forest.

The people of Goblintown navigate the neighborhood by memory and landmarks rather than standard directions. The streets of Goblintown are mostly alleys that connect various small squares that appear at irregular intervals in the cityscape. They form no recognizable grid of any kind.

Most of these alleys have no names, and few of the buildings have numbers to identify them. Some of the bigger squares still have glowglobes posted about their perimeters, but the majority of places in Goblintown stand dark, the public lighting long ago stolen or destroyed.

THE GREENIES

Greenie is a slur some of the upslope residents of Dragon City use to refer to the green-skinned people who live in Goblintown. This includes goblins, kobolds, orcs, hobgoblins, and trolls,

among other kinds of creatures. In the time before the founding of Dragon City, these sorts of people often fought against the upslope peoples in sporadic wars.

When the armies of the Ruler of the Dead began their long march across the continent, the question was no longer about the color of your skin but whether or not you still drew breath. The living united against the inexorable waves of the walking dead, and orcs and elves fought alongside each other for the first time in any memory.

After the Great Circle was built and the immediate threat ended, however, the green-skinned people were pushed as far away from those in power—and as low down the mountainside as they could go. Those who live above the Village rarely interact with the greenies, and the Imperial Dragon's Guard does its best to make sure they never have to.

THE GANGS

The various peoples who reside in Goblintown have their own cultures, of course, but they've been forced to live so close together for so long that these have melded together into a communal culture unique to Dragon City. The Dragon has never permitted them any form of self-government, perhaps fearing the kind of damage they could do if they managed to unite in any form. They have no board, no council, and no elections of any kind.

Instead, the people of Goblintown tend to organize themselves into gangs centered around the neighborhood's most powerful personalities. The trouble is that as soon as one gang threatens to become ascendant, the others team up to tear it down. For this reason, few gangs have more than a couple dozen members, and most of them can never muster more than a handful at any given time.

The few times in the past that a Goblintown gang has risen to prominence, the Imperial Dragon's Guard has crushed it fast. Even the rumor that such a group is growing in power can be enough to bring down the Dragon's wrath.

Despite this, most Goblintown residents strong enough to lift a bat or fire a pistol belong to one sort of gang or another, if only for mutual protection. These gangs often wage war on each other, which the Guard does nothing to discourage. From the Guard's point of view, it's better to have the people of Goblintown squabbling among themselves over the scraps they have rather than turning their attention upslope, since only the Dragon knows where that might end.

THE TUNNELS

The land under Goblintown is riddled with tunnels of all kinds. Many of these were carved out of the mountain when the Great Circle was built, but others have been constructed since. Most of them stand unlit and uninhabited.

Only the most desperate people of Goblintown would dare take up residence here. While the tunnels are supposed to terminate long before they reach the Great Circle, legends say that some of these twisting passages lead under the wall, emerging into hidden areas outside of the city. Only the fact that they are so well hidden keeps the roaming armies of the dead from finding them and worming their way inside the city.

No one wants to be the first people to discover that these legends are true. It would be bad enough if the undead crept up into the city and snatched people from their homes, but it would

be horrifying for it to happen deep beneath the surface, where no one could even hear your screams.

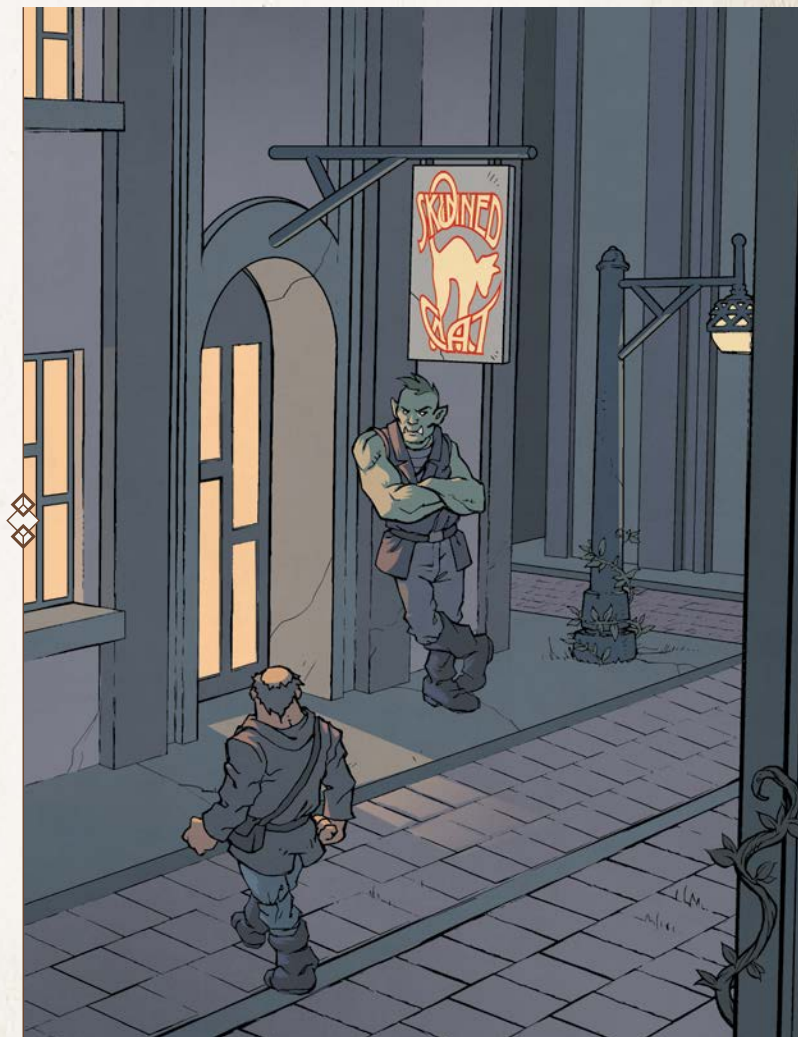
THE SKINNED CAT

The Skinned Cat is a notable tavern squatting somewhere in the heart of Goblintown. It's been located in several places during Dragon City's long history, and it's often had to move, usually after one sort of disaster or another.

Sometimes the entire place burned down. More often than not, it was leveled by a massive brawl. Once, it collapsed into a subterranean tunnel that everyone involved claimed they didn't know was there.

Each time the Skinned Cat is remade, it winds up in a new place—and often with a new owner—but with the same clientele. The only thing that persists through every version of the place is the tavern's sign: a wooden carving that depicts a hairless cat howling at the sky.

If the Skinned Cat has more than one room in its current version, one of those rooms is usually set aside for gambling. It would be wrong to call these friendly games, as a number of people have been killed during them over the years. The regulars generally find the games a pleasant way to pass the time, even if their disagreements sometimes mean the destruction of the Skinned Cat once again. They have plenty of time to cool off before the next version of their favorite tavern opens its doors for them.



GREAT CIRCLE

The Great Circle is the massive wall that protects Dragon City from the Ruler of the Dead's undead armies that roam the lands beyond. It stretches roughly fifty feet tall, although this varies along the length of the wall. It's often farther to the ground on the inside of the wall than it is on the outside.

In most sections, the top of the wall stands about thirty feet wide and is lined by crenellations on both sides. The top of the wall is usually reached by stone stairs carved into its interior. These are usually watched by the Imperial Dragon's Guard, and in some places, they are blocked off entirely—or have even been dismantled to keep people from using them.

The wall is uninterrupted along its entire length, with one exception: the Great Gate. This structure looks like a set of double doors, but they are made entirely of solid stone. They were built by the Bricht clan and imbued with magic by the Wizards Council. While they can theoretically be swung open by means of that magic, this has never been done since the completion of the wall. The risk is simply too great.

The Crystal River flows along an aqueduct that carries it from the Village to the Great Circle, bypassing much of Goblintown. The aqueduct forks when it reaches the Great Gate, splitting the river in two, and each branch flows over the shoulders of the Great Gate, spilling into a wide basin beyond.

THE TOWERS

There are two major towers along the Great Circle: the Day Tower and the Night Tower. They both stand over a hundred feet tall, and the Imperial Dragon's Guard staffs them every hour of the day, watching over the Great Circle and the distant lands beyond. They keep a lookout for movement from the Ruler of the Dead's vast armies of zombies, which roam free about the surrounding lands.

The Ruler of the Dead isn't one to squander her resources on fruitless attacks. She hasn't amassed her forces to launch a full-on

attack against Dragon City in over a century. However, she does like to send in smaller teams to test the Guard's readiness from time to time, probing for a weakness she can exploit to their doom.

The Day Tower stands on the east side of the Great Circle. If you're standing in the Old Market Square at dawn on Midsummer's Day, the sun comes up directly in line with the Day Tower. At dusk on that same day, the sun goes down straight through the Night Tower in the west.

Beyond the towers, the Great Circle curves up more treacherous angles of the mountain. The natural formations of the terrain make these parts of the wall far easier to defend. The Guard's patrols may be thin here compared to those that stride between the two towers, but that doesn't mean that the rest of the wall goes unwatched.

The Ruler of the Dead has never mounted a serious attack against the rest of the wall. The lands nearby them are simply too treacherous for an army to traverse, even one composed of the dead. When the attack comes—no matter when it happens—she plans to throw her forces straight against the Great Gate until it comes crumbling down.

NO CIRCLE

The Great Circle isn't really a circle at all. While it has a circular bend in the stretch between the Night and Day Towers, the rest of the wall follows the dictates of the mountain's terrain.

On top of that, the Great Circle doesn't actually surround the entire mountain. Instead, it covers the mountain's southern slope, from the Great Gate all the way up to the Dragon's Spire. It spreads out like a fan from the Dragon's lair, and its arms curl around to embrace the city at its base.

The wall does a fine job of making the city inaccessible from the mountain's other slopes. The lands fall away drastically from the stretches of the Great Circle that wind upslope from the Night and Day Towers. While a determined mountaineer might be able to scale such heights, no army of the dead would be able to manage it, and so the city has remained impervious to such attacks since the Great Circle was completed five hundred years before.

