

- SCURVYTOWN -

To believe the stories told about Freeport in far flung ports, a casual listener would think himself likely to be gutted like a fish the moment he strode down the gangplank of an arriving ship. While any visitor to the city quickly learns that Freeport is far more than a collection of bloodthirsty pirates, one part of the city fits the city's image like a glove: Scurvytown.

Scurvytown is legally named the Freebooter's Quarter, and all official documents relating to it call it that, but no one off the boat for more than a week uses that name. The decrepit condition, huge transient population and grinding poverty of the place earned it the nickname Scurvytown far enough back that not even the Harbormaster can quite remember when it started. The name has stuck like a bloodstain to fine linen.

Not surprisingly, crime is higher in Scurvytown than anywhere else in Freeport—especially violent crime. Seldom does a morning go by without at least a couple of corpses found face down in the gutter, or bobbing in the waters of the harbor. Unless the victim is particularly rich or influential, the Sea Lord's Guard usually makes a token effort to identify the body then ships it off to the Crematorium. No one in the Guard likes to brave Scurvytown, and criminals on the run regularly use the cheap flophouses and decaying apartment buildings of the district as hideouts.

Regardless of the season, there is something to hate about Scurvytown. In the rainy season, water runs down the hill from the Old City and the Eastern District, turning the unpaved streets of the district to mud. Mosquitoes breed in the pools of standing water, and grow to considerable size. In the dry season, the heat beats down like the eye of an angry god, drying and cracking the muddy streets, then crumbing them to dust that rises in choking clouds when carts and wagons go by. The stench from the fishery and the other already-aromatic industries of the place rises to positively unholy levels.

Drac's End is a poor district, but at least the people there are trying. Scurvytown is for those that have given up, or have no other place to go. Only those with a taste for crime, violence or perversion—or with little regard for their own personal safety—voluntarily make their home among the human scum that settles in Scurvytown.

THE BEGGAR'S MARKET

If any part of Freeport can rightly be called a ghetto, it's Scurvytown. Folks from other parts of town usually only go there for two reasons. The first is for the bargains to be had at the Beggars Market, a small warren of stalls and tents on the border of the Eastern District. The Beggar's Market is often a sad spectacle, as starving transients sell off their family heirlooms for coppers on the gold piece in a desperate attempt to stave off destitution. But it also a place where less-than-legal items and substances can readily be found, and no questions are asked.

DREAMING STREET

Spectacles of a different kind are on display on Dreaming Street, the second destination locale of Scurvytown. 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 other level. It is the city's sin central. You name the activity, you can probably engage in it on Dreaming Street if you can meet the price.

No criminal organization dominates Dreaming Street. Ever since the Back Alley War, all 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. The last self styled "crimelord" who tried to make a move ended up knifed to death in the middle of a crowd right in the center of the street. When questioned by the Guard, not one of the over 200 "witnesses" saw a thing.

Outcry from the more upstanding citizens of Freeport sometimes results in a token round of arrests along the Street. Brothels are raided, gambling houses closed down for a few days, just enough to show everyone that the Sea Lord's Guard



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is putting in an effort. But it's never more than a charade—in part because many members of the Sea Lord's Guard spend their off hours sampling the pleasures available in Dreaming Street. Additionally, many rich men and women from the Merchant District and the Old City travel down into Scurvytown to indulge tastes for rarefied pleasure. Money often changes hands to insure that the next raid doesn't inconvenience someone important—or to insure that a crime go uninvestigated.

The simple rule of thumb is that as long as what happens in Dreaming Street stays on Dreaming Street and out of the rest of the city, the Guard 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 exorcised, with no one really getting hurt.

That's a pipe dream, of course. The “don't ask, don't tell” policy of the Guard means that 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 and forces—all are dark secrets of this avenue of pleasure. The essential truth is that if a perversion has a name, chances are it's happening on Dreaming Street.

THE PIT

Even in a violent place like Scurvytown, one section stands out above all the others. The Pit is a square block of pure urban hell, buildings that are literally falling down around the inhabitants, a variety of the least savory and acceptable humans and humanoids in the city. There is no law within the pit except that of fist, tooth, and sword. So why would anyone

go there, you ask? Well, the Sea Lord's Guard, never very attentive to enforcing the law in Scurvytown to begin with, will have nothing to do with the Pit whatsoever. As long as the denizens keep to themselves, they are left alone. After all, it's easier to keep an eye on them if they are all in one spot.

Freeport's small population of orcs and ogres love this wretched place, of course. Misery, squalor and a constant level of deadly violence? Sounds like home sweet home!

LOCATIONS OF INTEREST

38. KROM'S THROAT

As a harbor town, Freeport by necessity is a melting pot. The streets teem with every strain of nationality, personality and race that sets out on the ocean. Most of the people who make the voyage aren't diplomats, so there's a tacit understanding on the streets and the docks: leave your beefs at home. If everybody at home acted on their deep-seated hatreds, fears and prejudices—or, indeed, their whims—the island would be knee-deep in a dozen colors of blood before you could say “Full fathom five.”

So, rubbing shoulders and hauling ropes, the transients and residents of this city-state keep their bad feelings to a low grumble. But when they retreat to their own haunts, they let fly. The humans and their close kin have their dockyard haunts, their bawdy houses and gin joints, where no one challenges their nasty jokes or breaks up a fight. And the orcs have Krom's Throat.

Founded by a half-caste orc, Torco, nearly a century ago, Krom's Throat is a stern-looking structure on the edge of the city; made of cinder blocks, it's been clobbered and replastered so many times it looks something like the skull of a sacrifice: ritually clobbered, cracked and seamed, but still grinning and malicious. There are no windows—who'd want to replace them every morning?—and just one door: five inches of oak with brass hinges. No need for a bouncer or secret knock; anybody who walks in there without being an orc won't last long anyhow.

Inside, Krom's Throat is an offense to human sensibilities. There are no tables, there's no barstool—there's not even a bar. Four cisterns the size of cathedral bells range along the wall opposite the door; at the bottom of these titanic vats are scores of iron nipples. A handful of silver gets you the right to fight for a spot at those teats all night. It doesn't matter much which tank you end up squeezed underneath, either—the only drink on the menu is bloodgrog, the orc fave. As for eats, the current owner, Cragwipe (see sidebar), usually sets up a trough of pig's feet, squid arms and live eels. The same handful of silver gets you a chance to nose into that line, too!

As you'd expect, Krom's Throat sees much, much more than its share of violence. It wouldn't be a night without at least a half-dozen brainings, clan wars, mutilations and general bloody mayhem. The locals, not to mention the watch, have learned to give Krom's Throat a pretty wide berth. Even around daybreak, when the party breaks up, the blubbery snores of orc sailors bedding down in the ankle-deep excrescence is enough to chill even the hardest seaman. (Lodging at Krom's Throat, by the way, is also included in the handful of silver.) And heavens forbid you're around at

KROM'S THROAT

CRAGWIPE, BAR OWNER

Male Orc Ftr4: CR 4; Medium-sized humanoid (6'1"); HD 4d10+8; hp 32; Init +6 (+2 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft.; AC 16 (+2 Dex, +4 +1 studded leather); Atk +8 melee (1d8+5, heavy mace); SV Fort +6, Ref +3, Will +1; AL CN; Str 17, Dex 14, Con 14, Int 11, Wis 9, Cha 10.

Skills and Feats: Climb +5, Intimidate +3, Jump +6, Swim +6; Dodge, Improved Initiative, Improved Unarmed Strike, Weapon Focus (heavy mace), Weapon Specialization (heavy mace).

Possessions: Heavy mace, +1 studded leather, spiked gauntlets, family bloodgrog recipe.

first call, when Cragwipe turns on the pumps and hoses down the joint for the next night. Let's just say if you thought a dirty orc was worth avoiding, you'd probably want to leave town to steer clear of a grudgingly clean orc.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

Yes, Krom's Throat is quite the hotspot. Sane people have no reason to go there; but then again, who ever said adventurers were playing with a full kit? The bar would be an excellent spot for any party to prove their mettle. Perhaps one of the gangs that frequent the place has decided to go on a rampage in the Merchant's District, and the city wants them stopped. Perhaps a particularly malicious orc has beaten a courier to death and taken his package, intended for one of the city's sorcerers. Or maybe the neighbors are just tired of the stink, and hire the party to go in there and make Cragwipe clean the joint up.

39. THE DEAD PELICAN

The Dead Pelican is a seedy little pub, seemingly little different than dozens of other such joints in Scurvytown. A copper will get you a watered down beer, and two more some pub fare (sausages, meat pies, etc.) to go with it. The menu is limited, the décor is dreary and run down, and the locals are surly. But the price is right and the owner, Jamison (see sidebar on page 85), is friendlier than you'd expect. Jamison worked as a marine on several merchant ships over the years and he has some entertaining, if tall, tales to tell of his time at sea, roving the world wide. He even claims the gold he used to buy the Dead Pelican was given to him by a beautiful mermaid (is there any other kind?).

Jamison, however, has a terrible secret. He brought something more than gold back with him from the south seas. On one of his voyages, Jamison was marooned on a small island with a score of other men. When supplies ran out and all hope seemed lost, Jamison made a pact with a cannibal spirit named Oona. Jamison murdered his compatriots one by one in the name of Oona and lived off their flesh until a rescue ship appeared. The crew was amazed that Jamison had survived for so long on that island all by himself.

