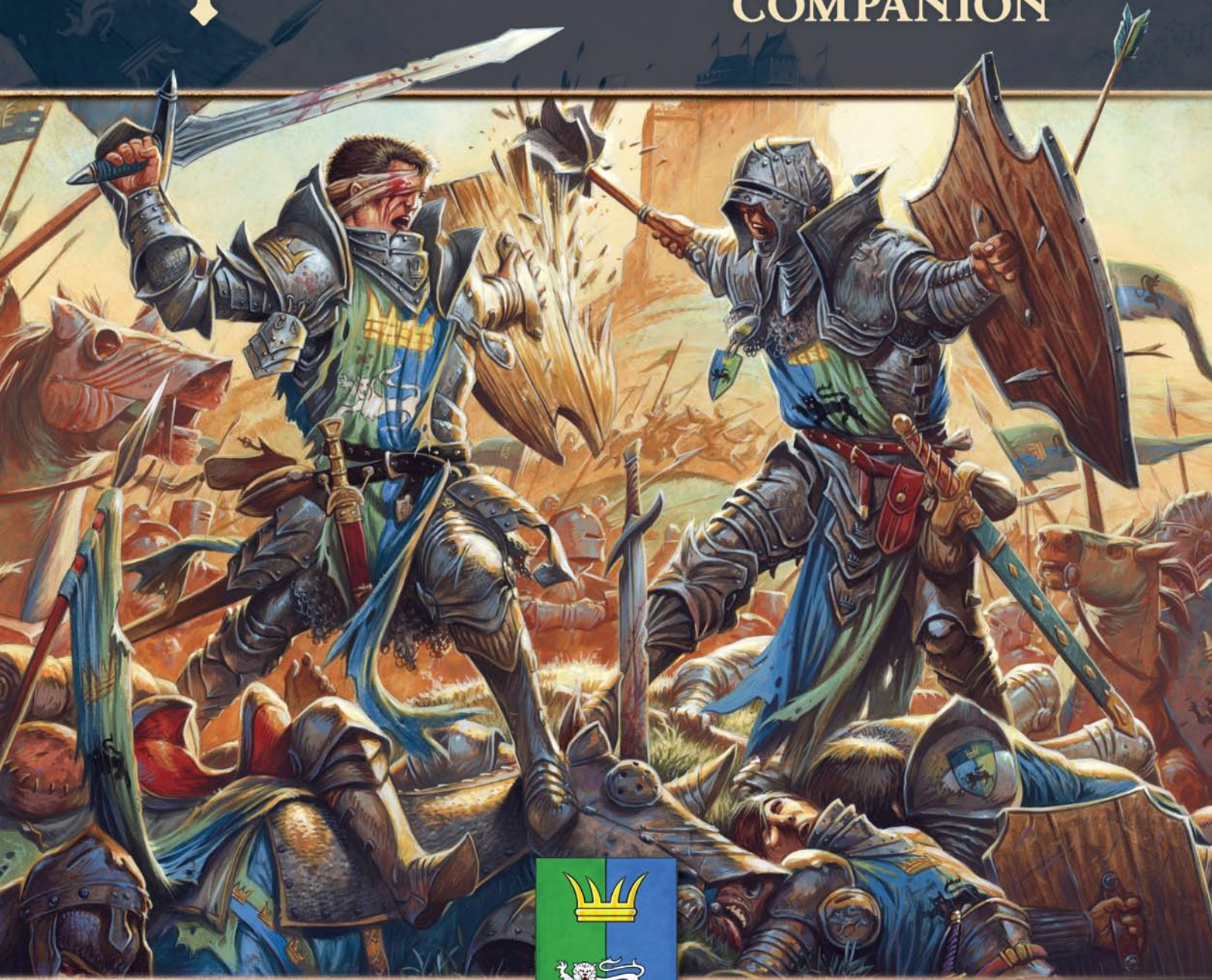


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## Caldor, Echoes of Glory







# Taldor, Echoes of Glory

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Paizo Publishing, LLC  
2700 Richards Road, Suite 201  
Bellevue, WA 98005  
paizo.com

Printed in China.





# Taldor

## EMPIRE IN DECLINE

**T**he mighty empire of Taldor once stretched from the Arcadian Ocean to the border of the Padishah Empire of Kelesh. Aroden himself was said to walk among the people of Taldor, and his religion, a shining beacon unto the world, radiated outward from Taldor's gilded capital of Oppara. Taldor's ancient Armies of Exploration established footholds for the empire throughout Golarion,

and its mighty phalanxes marched for thousands of miles during the Shining Crusade to beat back the Whispering Tyrant and imprison him in Gallowspire. Now Taldor is a stunted remnant of its old glory, having lost control of its daughter territories, and is almost ignored by the powerful countries of today, which assume it will continue its slow decline for at least another century.



## A BRIEF HISTORY

Taldor's dominance of the Inner Sea region and its absolute hold on most of southern Avistan swelled its government to an enormous size. A byzantine network of consuls, governors, and senators developed into new and ever-expanding strata of society until Taldor became a complicated maze, an empire ruled by one but governed by tens of thousands. Eventually, Taldor's government grew so large and spread itself so thin across the length and breadth of the empire that corruption and vile excess plagued its outer prefectures. The disease of corruption spread quickly, infecting every level of government. The prefectures farthest from the gilded capital of Oppara began to revolt, throwing off the chains of their degenerate and moribund governors. The Taldan Horse and Taldan Phalanx responded brutally, struggling to close an iron fist on the revolution brewing in the distant holdings.

With Taldor's military focused to the west, its old rival Qadira took advantage of the empire's plight and invaded across Taldor's southern border in 4029 AR, quickly capturing Zimar and enslaving its militaristic population in order to prevent rebellion. Qadira's armies then marched virtually unopposed to Oppara's doorstep just across the River Porthmos. Taldor's royalty and senatorial classes panicked and demanded the emperor recall the Taldan Phalanx at once to deal with the new threat. A token force was left behind in Cheliix Prefecture to maintain the peace, and the bulk of Taldor's armies returned to the homeland and settled into a 524-year war with Qadira that Taldans today call the Grand Campaign.

Two years after Taldor left Cheliix Prefecture in the hands of a scattered few companies of the Taldan Phalanx, a member of the Taldan senatorial class named Aspex led a successful revolt known as the Even-Tongued Conquest, destroying the Phalanx at the Siege of Westcrown and putting the first crack in the wall of Taldor's might. Aspex led his armies of revolution across Taldor's western frontier, annexing Andoran with diplomacy and capturing Galt and Isger by force. Unable to fight a war on two fronts, Taldor took the only choice left and signed a treaty with Aspex, creating the new empire of Cheliix and tolling the start of Taldan decline.

With the majority of Taldor's poor entrenched in combat against Qadira for generations and the decadent royalty and senatorial classes delving deeper into perversion and excess, the Church of Aroden moved its center to Cheliix, signaling the end of the empire once and for all. Generations later, in 4528 AR, Grand Prince Stavian I outlawed the Cult of the Dawnflower in the Great Purge, convincing the populace that Sarenrae's followers opened the door for the Qadiran military and guided them on their marches through southern Taldor. In a matter of months, every temple to Sarenrae was

## TALDOR AT A GLANCE

**Government:** Primogeniture empire ruled by the Grand Prince and an expansive bureaucracy

**Terrain:** Mostly temperate grasslands, with scrubland and high desert mountains to the south and temperate forests and mountains to the north. Taldor's highest point is Mount Kaltafarr, a dormant volcano east of Zimar that stands 18,657 feet above sea level. The lowest point is just west of Oppara where the River Porthmos meets the Inner Sea.

**Capital:** Oppara (109,280)

**Notable Settlements:** Cassomir (32,340), Maheto (11,790), Monastery of the Seven Forms (2,594), Ridonport (6,307), Stavian's Hold (4,311), Wispil (8,670), Yanmass (6,900), Zimar (17,540)

**Languages:** Common

**Religions:** Abadar, Aroden, Calistria, Cayden Cailean, Norgorber, Sarenrae (outlawed), Shelyn

**Imports:** Alcohol, Osirian artifacts, silk, spices

**Exports:** Iron, lumber, olives, salt, Taldan artifacts, tar, wine

either burned or torn down and the Dawnflower's clerics and followers murdered or expelled.

Seven hundred years after the Even-Tongued Conquest, Taldor still clings to life, its war with Qadira 200 years past and its military strong though underfunded. Modern Taldor is an empire in decline, with a decadent and complicated upper class ruling over an enormous and poverty-stricken lower class. Its prefectures fight border skirmishes, its noble houses joust and ruin one another, and its sparsely populated frontiers have turned lawless and chaotic. Thanks to its ancient Armies of Exploration, however, the Taldan coffers still run deep, and for 700 years now Taldor's emperors have used their last weapon to keep the Taldan Empire alive: wealth beyond imagination.

## GEOGRAPHY

When the descendants of lost Azlant settled Taldor nearly 6,000 years ago, they found lush, forested lands stretching from the Inner Sea to the World's Edge Mountains and from the Fog Peaks to the Jalrune River. After millennia of empire, Taldor's once mighty forests have been reduced to an expanse of druid-protected forests in the north, and the rest of the empire is now either rolling grasslands in the north and central regions or weed-choked scrublands in the south. Natural borders define the region: the Fog Peaks separate Taldor from Galt, the vast Sellen River flows between Taldor and Andoran, the Jalrune River and the Zimar Scrublands divide Taldor from Qadira,



and the World's Edge Mountains and the Whistling Plains stretch along the border between Taldor and the Keleshite empire to the east.

## Major Cities

Taldor was once connected by well-constructed canals and solid, well-guarded roads. As the empire declined, the Taldan Horse and Taldan Phalanx were less able to guard the routes of travel, and the villages and hamlets farthest from Oppara shrank and disappeared. Those that remain are either heavily guarded by local militia or ruled by rogue barons, gangs, or worse. To an outsider visiting Oppara, Taldor appears to be the height of modern society—travel a day south and the rapid decline of Taldor's once glorious achievements becomes clear.

**Cassomir:** The second largest city in Taldor, Cassomir is home to both Taldor's Imperial Navy and the Imperial Shipyards. Strategically located at the mouth of the Sellen River, Cassomir also serves Taldor as a trade city, connected as it is to all of the kingdoms that call the shores of the Sellen River home. Trade ships from every nation of the Inner Sea and many beyond can always be found at anchor in Star Bay off Cassomir as the Taldan Imperial Navy performs routine searches and taxation. All craft that attempt to access the Sellen River without first being boarded and searched by the Taldan Imperial Navy are hunted down and either confiscated or sunk. Cassomir also acts as Taldor's gateway to the Verduran Forest, a semi-autonomous region of Taldor that the empire controls but, thanks to the Treaty of the Wildwood in 3841 AR, largely ignores.

**Maheto:** In the northern foothills of the World's Edge Mountains rests the city of Maheto, the heart of Taldor's weapons manufacturing. This heavily fortified city is home to a sizable population of dwarves who lend their skills in metal-crafting to the empire in exchange for open-ended mining rights in the World's Edge Mountains. Many young rakes in Oppara wield Maheto-crafted rapiers—not carrying a Maheto blade is a source of embarrassment among the youth of the senatorial and noble classes. The trade roads and canals that run from Maheto to the Verduran Fork are some of the most heavily patrolled routes in Taldor. Ten full legions of the Taldan Phalanx and two legions of the Taldan Horse call Maheto home.

**Monastery of the Seven Forms:** Built into the sheer face of a mountain high in the World's Edge range east of Zimar, the Monastery of the Seven Forms is an ancient, underground town that grew around a monastery of the same name. Founded by Tian monks 2,000 years ago, the Monastery of the Seven Forms was a secluded school, established far from Tian so that students might learn patience in their 6,000 mile journey across Casmaron. The monastery sits on the outside of the cliff face with a

breathtaking view of all the lands east to the Inner Sea. Behind it, dug deep into the mountain, is an underground city of interconnecting tunnels, air holes, mine shafts, wells, and houses. The current residents of the city are a mix of Qadiran and Taldan ancestry, as the monastery and town were both seized by Qadira soon after the invasion of 4079 AR. The monastery is currently home to the Order of the Stalwart Fist, an order of monks who blend classic Tian fighting styles with dervish styles of Qadira. There's a 2-year waiting list to join the school, and the monks steadfastly refuse any bribes made to circumvent the line.

**Ridonport:** Built on the only natural harbor along the Jagged Saw, Ridonport is famous as the home of General Arnisant, Taldor's heroic leader of the Shining Crusade who sacrificed himself to imprison the Whispering Tyrant in Gallowspire. A huge monument to Arnisant, a 200-foot-tall, ornately carved marble obelisk in the city's main square, is a testament to Ridonport's pride. Ridonport is a very poor city, with most of its industry focused on supporting the Taldan Imperial Navy, which uses Ridonport as overflow for its larger ships when the harbor at Cassomir is full.

**Stavian's Hold:** When Grand Prince Stavian III took power, the title of emperor was very weak. His father, Grand Prince Stavian II, fell prey to the petty grievances of his royalty and senatorial classes and spent most of his life on the defensive, keeping his wealthy subjects happy. In order to restore power to the Primogen Crown, Stavian III launched a massive public works and military campaign to establish a foothold in the Whistling Plains. Stavian III saw an opportunity to build a large town and keep and house several legions of the Taldan Phalanx on Taldor's easternmost border to watch for signs of Qadiran aggression. His master stroke was to convince the wealthiest among the royalty, the largest thorns in his father's side, that leading, financing, and constructing this project would bring them great honor on behalf of the empire. Thus, Stavian's Hold was born and Grand Prince Stavian III rid himself of any challenge to his power. Stavian's Hold is a frontier town, but its well-patrolled road to the River Porthmos keeps it solidly connected to Oppara. Extensive earthworks surround the town and protect it from those who would invade, and a nearby keep sits on the highest hill for hundreds of miles around and commands an expansive view of the surrounding countryside.

**Wispile:** At the heart of the Verduran Forest, the semi-autonomous gnomish town of Wispile is the capital of Taldor's woodcrafting and lumber industries. The gnomes work hand-in-hand with the druids of the Wildwood Lodge to carefully harvest enough trees throughout the forest so that Taldor's hunger for lumber is fed, but the forest still remains large, healthy, and vibrant. Wood cut near Wispile is hauled overland to the Verduran Fork





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and floated by gnomish steersman (called “boomrafters”) who tie the massive logs together and float them to the Cassomir shipyards. Taldor is primarily a human nation, so it’s rare to see non-humans walking the streets in major cities, but in Wispil humans are the minority and the population is largely comprised of gnomes, half-elves, fey, halflings, and a smattering of dwarves.

**Yanmass:** Originally founded as a caravanserai, Yanmass quickly grew into a small city and continues to be one of Taldor’s overland gateways to the east. Inside the walls of Yanmass, the permanent population lives in solid structures, but outside the walls sprawls a thriving population of traders from all over Casmaron. Because of the thousands of caravans that camp outside her walls, the population of Yanmass can seasonally triple, especially after the first melt and toward the end of summer. With no natural barriers along her northeastern border, Yanmass hosts several legions of the Taldan Horse, who patrol the Whistling Plains and keep constant watch for Kelish aggression.

**Zimar:** As the most heavily fortified city in Taldor, Zimar exists as a southern buffer against the threat of Qadiran invasion. Caught off-guard by the Grand Campaign, Taldor spent a century fortifying and rebuilding Zimar to ensure future invasions would meet with a well-organized force. Zimar is Taldor’s third largest city and rests on the Jalrune River, named for Grand Prince Jalrune who was assassinated in 3129 AR by Qadiran blades (or so Taldan history claims). The Taldan Imperial Navy keeps a dozen capital ships in Zimar, and the Taldan Horse and Taldan Phalanx maintain scores of legions here as well. Taldor finances corsairs to attack Qadiran shipping throughout the southeastern Inner Sea, and their home base lies in Zimar.

Zimar’s residents are raised believing service to the empire is a citizen’s highest calling, and a disproportionate number of Zimar’s poor join the Taldan military. In addition, every citizen of Zimar is expected to attend monthly training exercises to learn the use of bow and spear, and they practice phalanx strategies as well as house-to-house guerilla warfare in case Zimar should ever fall into the hands of the Qadiran military again. Zimar’s architecture is a cultural blend of east and west, as Qadira controlled the garrison city intermittently for 500 years. Marbled halls and red slate roofs rub shoulders with a few turreted temples and tented markets. Though the Cult of the Dawnflower is outlawed in Taldor, her largest group of followers still worships in underground temples throughout Zimar.

## Interior Features

Most of Taldor is flat, rolling grassland interrupted by the forests and mountains to the north and the mountains to

## THE CANALS OF TALDOR

Taldor has very few natural waterways to connect the interior with the coast. Once you leave the large rivers behind, it’s a long overland trek to the rest of the empire. Early in Taldor’s history its citizens excavated canals—wide ditches connected by occasional locks—that gave Taldor’s citizens easy routes of travel across the empire’s heartland. The canals created an entire class of water-borne trade and became the arteries of Taldor’s economy. Since the Grand Campaign, the canals have slowly slipped into disrepair. Only a few key lines near the capital city of Oppara are maintained, and the rest have dried up, turned into marshland, or fallen under the control of brigands.

the east and south. With nearly 6,000 years of history, Taldor is covered in abandoned cities, ruined castles, and buried temples. Most of modern Taldor is built on the foundations of Old Taldor, but the farther one gets from Oppara, the more often one stumbles into ruins or happens upon weed-choked ghost towns.

At the height of Old Taldor’s greatness, the modern borders were merely the glorious heartland, with the true borders of Taldor extending to what are now Andoran, Cheliox, and other neighbor states. The heartland was covered in roads and canals, with hamlets, villages, and inns that subsisted on the busy traffic moving across the empire. Today the roads disappear into wilderness, the canals are clogged with silt or debris, and the roadside inns crumble in ruin.

**Fog Peaks:** Taldor’s northernmost border, the Fog Peaks are so named for perpetual clouds that shade their mountaintops. Starting in spring, mists rising from the Verduran Forest and the Boarwood in Galt feed the mists above these peaks daily, and by winter enormous cloud formations push toward the heavens. The Fog Peaks are constantly soaked in rain or snow, and when the temperatures plummet in late fall, the higher elevations are plagued by vicious, razor-sharp ice storms.

Frost giant clans prevail here in great numbers, and the largest clan, known as the Fogstompers, claims a huge swath of the peaks north of the headwaters of the Verduran Fork. Along with frost giants, the Fog Peaks are home to large roosts of rocs that live in the northern reaches near Boarwood. Two white dragons, Icemourne and Mirrorwing, lair above the north end of the Verduran Forest and prey incessantly on the traffic traveling overland from Wispil to Woodsedge, causing Wispil’s council to frequently debate hiring adventurers to destroy the dragons. Other dangers in the Fog Peaks include ice worms, remorhazes, winter wolves, ettins, and even a few cryohydras in the colder foothills.



**The Jagged Saw:** The Jagged Saw spans a ragged coastline of rocky cliffs and shallow rock formations that stretch south from Cassomir to the mouth of the River Porthmos. Here the winds of the Inner Sea rage like vicious beasts, blowing into the region at a constant 30 to 40 miles per hour. The Jagged Saw has only one natural harbor at Ridonport, though dozens of boat-safe coves can be found along its length, giving the hamlets of Taldor's coast access to ocean traffic.

Most of the dangers here stem from the weather, though the Jagged Saw lays claim to a higher population of smugglers than the rest of Taldor due to the use of the coves to avoid traveling through the main imperial ports. Very few people travel alone here, and the hamlets either have well-organized militias or work closely with the smugglers to hide their illegal activities from the Taldan authorities while keeping a piece of the action.

With the Jagged Saw's many dangers for ship traffic, Old Taldor built thousands of towering, magically powered lighthouses along the coast. Only a few remain intact, with the rest left in ruins. Of the remaining lighthouses still powered by magical means, the best known is in Cassomir. Dubbed Treacherous Jack by local sailors, the Cassomir lighthouse has a habit of winking out intermittently.

**Jalrune River:** Named for Taldor's assassinated Grand Prince, the Jalrune River is part of Taldor's southernmost border. The river's mouth is huge, stretching 30 miles across at its widest point, and is filled with hidden coves that the Zimar corsairs know well. From there, the river shoots east for 100 miles before winding through the Border Wood southwest of Zimar. After the Border Wood, the river splits north and south. The north branch, still called the Jalrune River, grows narrow as it winds northeast, thinning to roaring and rocky rapids just after Zimar and climbing into the foothills of the World's Edge Mountains toward its headwaters. The south branch, called the River of Qadira, winds its way south deep into Qadiran territory.

The Jalrune River is dangerous for ship traffic not flying large, obvious crown-and-lion flags. The Zimar corsairs are fervently dedicated to their task, destroying and capturing anything that approaches the river flying a Qadiran or Kelish flag. Where the river passes through the Border Wood, bandits can be a problem, as can the monstrous spiders and young green dragons that call the wood home. Once the river climbs past Zimar into the rugged foothills of the World's Edge Mountains, the various ogre and hill giant clans, as well as several nests of dark nagas, are always a threat, as are marauding patrols of the Qadiran military.

**The River Porthmos:** Known as the Mighty Porthmos, the River Porthmos is Taldor's lifeblood. Nearly every

canal, trade route, or caravan in central Taldor touches the Porthmos, and its shores are constantly choked with merchant traffic. The river's mouth is 20 miles wide and heavily patrolled by the Taldan Imperial Navy. Without warning, they can board, search, and tax any ship traveling into or out of the river's mouth, though in practice they reserve these activities for ships not flying the Taldan crown-and-lion. Thirty miles from the Inner Sea, the Mighty Porthmos flows beneath the Black Cliffs of Oppara, Taldor's gilded capital and one of the largest cities in the Inner Sea region. Here the deep river is so full of shipping traffic that Opparans often joke that their glorious Grand Bridge of the Empire is unnecessary, as one can simply walk ship-to-ship to get to the southern shore. After Oppara, the Porthmos slims and winds its way through the Tandak Plains, flowing slowly and steadily toward the World's Edge Mountains. Sixty miles before its dual headwaters, the Mighty Porthmos splits into the North Fork and South Fork and both turn rocky, rapid-filled, and swift.

From the mouth of the Porthmos to Oppara, the river is so heavily patrolled that virtually no threats exist there. After Oppara, however, the pirate traffic quickly engulfs the river as these brigands travel the Porthmos in fast, flat-bottomed sailboats and quickly strike merchant vessels before speeding off upriver. Most merchants here fill their upper decks with armed men at all times to keep the Porthmos pirates at bay. At the forking of the Porthmos lives a massive colony of giant crocodiles that sometimes roam as far as Oppara, attacking unwary swimmers or dragging fishermen from their boats. The North Fork of the Porthmos is plagued by hundreds of shambling mounds. Typically solitary, here the plant creatures work together for an unknown purpose.

**The Sellen River and the Verduran Fork:** One of the longest rivers on Golarion, the Sellen River ends its 1,200-mile journey by spilling into the Inner Sea at Star Bay. Fed by dozens of tributary rivers and thousands of high mountain lakes and streams, the Sellen moves more water than all of the other rivers that touch the Inner Sea combined. Fed as it is by such a large number of sources, the Sellen doesn't experience typical flooding and dry seasons like most temperate rivers. It simply flows, as faithful as the sun rises. In Taldor, the Sellen flows south from the Galt border to Cassomir, separating Andoran from the empire and splitting at the Isle of Arenway, ancient home of the Wildwood Lodge druids and their summer solstice Moot of Ages, when Old Faith druids from all over Golarion gather to bring their discoveries before the entire druid community. The river that meets the Sellen River at the Isle of Arenway is known as the Verduran Fork and winds 240 miles through the forest, emerging into the Tandak Plains at Falling River, a rough, rapid little river that falls



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more than 15,000 feet from its headwaters in the World's Edge Mountains. From there the Verduran Fork turns north, growing thin and rough, though still passable by flat-bottomed boat traffic. Once it hits the great caravan-city of Yanmass, though, it transforms into a mountain river, with huge tumbling rocks and waterfalls before it splits again at its confluence with Fog Creek.

The Sellen River and the Verduran Fork are heavily patrolled by the Taldan Imperial Navy, using small, sleek clipper ships that make up the brunt of their River Guard fleet. Inside Taldor's borders, the River Guard is the ultimate authority on the waterways, and its sailors frequently board ships to search for illicit activities—and, it's rumored, to take their cut before the goods hit Star Bay and fall under the greater umbrella of the Taldan Imperial Navy's capital ships. The River Guard maintains a harbor on the Isle of Arenway, though by the Treaty of the Wildwood, sailors are not allowed to stray beyond the walled port. Most ships traveling the Sellen River stop here to have their vessels blessed by a druid, a blessing they believe offers them protection from the dangers of both rivers.

Hazards are few and far between along the length of the heavily trafficked Sellen, but the Verduran Fork is far more dangerous. As it travels through the most sparsely populated areas in Taldor, the Verduran Fork is home to four organized pirate brigades who split the length of the river into zones established by a verbal treaty. The largest band, comprised primarily of gnomes and fey, raids ships for sport—an annoyance for the other bands of pirates who raid ships for spoils and plunder. The River Guard Fleet stepped up patrols recently, to little effect—with so many hidden waterways and so little population, the pirates are experts at striking and melting into the forest before the River Guard can even muster a response. Ships traveling down from Yanmass are typically bristling with mercenaries to guard against the pirates, but even these tactics don't stop the Verduran Fork brigands. They've taken to filling the ranks of those mercenaries with their own people, who quietly take over and plunder a ship once it reaches the pirate band's territory. In any given year, these pirate bands plunder nearly 10% of the traffic that travels the Verduran Fork, a fact the River Guard wishes to keep secret.

**Star Bay:** Star Bay is named for a legend of the indigenous primitive humans who resided here before the descendants of lost Azlant settled the region 6,000 years ago. The legend says that during Earthfall, when the *Starstone* tumbled to Golarion and created the Inner Sea, a small fragment of the *Starstone* fell here, creating Star Bay. The indigenous humans believed the fallen

fragment, now under hundreds of feet of water, glowed a tantalizing blue to guide fishermen home. Even today, sailors who travel across Star Bay drop shiny trinkets into the depths and say a quick prayer so they can continue safely on their journey. As recently as 10 years ago, reliable reports from the Taldan Imperial Navy circulated that a vast, hot, and bright blue light emanated from beneath the entirety of Star Bay. But since no one has mounted a serious underwater expedition to explore the source of the light or, indeed, to discover if the stories of the light are even true, the gentle glow of Star Bay remains safely in the annals of sailing lore.

**Verduran Forest:** Nearly a thousand years ago, the druids of the Wildwood Lodge approached the emperor of Taldor and presented a simple request: give the Wildwood Lodge some autonomy to protect the last dominion of the blackwood trees, and in exchange the druids would ensure that Taldor had ships for the duration of the empire. Tired of losing patrols to fey raids and largely unable to control the forest anyway, the emperor agreed,







though the treaty allowed for the River Guard to create a harbor on the Isle of Arenway so that its sailors might continue patrolling the Sellen River and Verduran Fork even while the druids and their fey and gnome allies took over governance of the forest. Today, the portion of the Verduran Forest that resides within Taldor's borders is a semi-autonomous prefecture of the Taldan Empire and the monarchy still honors the Treaty of the Wildwood. The parts of the forest that fell to Andoran and Galt have not been as well maintained, as neither of those nations was interested in protecting the wood—rather, they hoped to harvest it quickly to build ships and feed the revolutions of both nations. The Wildwood Lodge allowed the gnomes to build the city of Wispil so they could establish a lumber industry around the druids' positive maintenance of the forest and keep the Imperial Shipyards at Cassomir supplied with raw timber for the fleet. The only other permanent settlement in the Verduran Forest is the unnamed River Guard harbor on the Isle of Arenway.

Though it's controlled and watched over by the Wildwood Lodge, the Verduran Forest still contains many

dangers. Ettercaps, bands of obnoxious fey, dragons, and river pirates are among the more obvious dangers, but sentient and flesh-eating plants, shambling mounds, treants, and other plant creatures also present a danger, as do massive colonies of giant wasps and giant ants.

**The Tandak Plains:** Stretching from the southern edge of the Fog Peaks to the Zimar Scrublands, and from the Inner Sea to the foothills of the World's Edge Mountains, the Tandak Plains comprise more than 70% of Taldor's landmass. Almost entirely rolling plains, the Tandak was once part of the great primeval forest that covered most of Avistan, but after 6,000 years of civilization, the trees are now gone and only the vast grasslands remain. The Tandak is split by two rivers, the Mighty Porthmos in the central region and the Verduran Fork across the north. Dozens of active and ruined canals crisscross the plains, which are dotted with hundreds of ruined temples, lost castles, and ghost towns. Standing tall above the south-central plains is Taldor's third-highest point, perpetually snow-covered Mount Antios, a craggy peak named after Taldor's tenth emperor who constructed an enormous burial site there, including dozens of gigantic statues representing himself,





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as well as statues of eagles, lions, and the ancient gods of Old Taldor. The winds blow steadily from west to east across the Tandak, rarely ceasing and bringing with them enormous thunderstorms in the late summer that can stretch the entire width of the empire and last for days.

Most of the dangers of the Tandak have passed as 6 millennia of empire building scrubbed the land clean of threats. Today, the Tandak's primary hazards are roving gangs, vagabond communities, and the occasional skirmish between governors of the various Tandak prefectures. The Tandak is still home to large prides of lions, especially in the Porthmos Gap near the headwaters of the North Fork of the Porthmos River, where several prides number a dozen or more adults. Ankhegs, bulettes, giant ants, and giant bees make up the larger threats throughout the rest of the Tandak.

**The Whistling Plains:** The Whistling Plains begin where civilized Taldor ends—at the World's Edge Mountains. Stretching from the borders of Galt all the way down into the deserts of Qadira and then far to the east, deep into the heart of the Padishah Empire of Kelesh, the Whistling Plains are sparsely populated. The only permanent settlement on the plains inside Taldor's borders is the recent construction of a small town and keep called Stavian's Hold. The Whistling Plains are home to wandering bands of nomads, ancestors of the indigenous humans who lived in this region when the descendants of Old Azlant colonized it. The plains are crisscrossed by dozens of ancient trade routes that sprout from Qadira, Vudra, and the heart of the Keleshite empire. Though largely uninhabited, the Whistling Plains are busy with massive caravans making for Yanmass in the north, the Sardis Township in the Porthmos Gap, and the Headwater Gap in the south. The Whistling Plains themselves are actually more than a dozen smaller regional grasslands and prairies that merge to form one of Golarion's largest grasslands. The part of the plains that lies within Taldor's borders is mostly flat prairie, making for easy travel in the spring and summer but creating whiteout conditions in the winter as blizzards blow hard across the grassy table.

The Whistling Plains can be a dangerous crossing. Though the nomads and caravans typically keep to themselves, they're well armed and afraid of approaching outsiders. When traveling the Whistling Plains it's best to steer clear of the larger tribes and caravans lest they think you a bandit and attack without question. Massive, roaming herds of bison numbering in the tens of thousands cover the Taldan portion of the plains and can be dangerous if provoked into stampeding. Other dangers here include flocks of cockatrices, solitary bulettes, swarms of locusts, packs of worgs, packs of wolves, and the rare dragon. Though nominally part

of the greater Taldan Empire, the Whistling Plains are wild, dangerous, and vast.

**The World's Edge Mountains:** The World's Edge Mountains are actually two separate ranges split by the foothills of the Porthmos Gap. The northern range is commonly called the World's Edge Mountains and stretches from the River Porthmos northeast to end in foothills in the Whistling Plains near Yanmass. Its towering, craggy peaks are perpetually snow-capped, and most of the northern range is impassable short of magical means. At the heart of the northern range lies a wide valley, some 150 square miles in size, that's crowded with ruins scholars believe to date back to Old Azlant. Called the Valley of the Azlant, the entrance is guarded by two 500-foot-tall statues of winged men with the legs of lions. They stare ever eastward as if to guard the land from the empires there. These ruins are thick with guardian spirits, vampires, and many other undead who some say are created by a vast, magical complex deep beneath the valley. Lord Toryos, an undead dragon, rules the valley and viciously protects it from outsiders.

The southern reaches of the World's Edge Mountains begin south of the Porthmos Gap and quickly rise to become some of the highest peaks in all of Golarion. Though part of the greater World's Edge range, the chain is known commonly as the Southern Range. Clouds nearly always shield its heavens-piercing mountaintops and it has but one pass—the Emperor's Pass—that climbs high and dangerous through the range. Mount Kaltafarr, the tallest peak in Taldor, can be found in the Southern Range, as can the Monastery of the Seven Forms. The mountains of the Southern Range continue south into Qadira, where they're called the Zho Mountains.

The Great White Wyrn, an ancient white dragon, is rumored to make his home on Mount Kaltafarr. Though he hasn't been seen in more than a century, he once ruled the Headwater Gap and terrorized the small settlements in this region. When Qadira controlled the region, they sent adventuring parties up the slopes to deal with the Great White Wyrn, and none were ever heard from again. The last, a group calling itself the Shining Blades of Katheer, purported to have an artifact that would end the wyrn for good—and though they also never returned, the Great White Wyrn's pillaging ceased.

Other dangers throughout both ranges of the World's Edge Mountains include rocs, ice trolls, a few small clans of frost giants, and the dreaded koscimo—blue-shelled ice scorpions that can grow to be 10 feet long.

### Natural Resources and Hazards

The towering blackwood trees of the Verduran Forest are among the strongest and most flexible hardwoods on Golarion, making them, without a doubt, the choicest lumber for shipbuilders. Blackwoods once covered the



entirety of Avistan in a thick, primeval forest, but after thousands of years of humanity, the only remaining blackwoods are now found in the Verduran Forest. With such a huge timber and sawed-lumber industry powering its shipbuilding, Taldor is also known for its blackwood-derived tar, a substance most often used to waterproof ships and wood roofs. The blackwood tar is sweet-smelling with a pleasant odor, and the tar factories of the Imperial Shipyards in Cassomir often smell eerily like candy.

With some of Avistan's tallest mountain peaks, the World's Edge Mountains are home to countless iron mines, a fact not lost on the dwarf clans who live and work in Maheto in exchange for mining rights in dozens of those mines. The southern coast of Taldor, from the River Porthmos down to the Jalrune River, has the perfect climate for olives and grapes and as such produces some of the finest olives and wine in all of the Inner Sea. Vast, heavily protected wineries and vineyards dot the Zimar Scrublands. Lastly, with Old Taldor founded by the descendants of Azlant and the empire covered in ruins, Taldor does a brisk trade in exported Azlanti artifacts—both authentic and manufactured.

Without a doubt, the greatest risk to travelers inside Taldor's borders comes from humans. River pirates stalk the Verduran Fork, brigands control most of the canals and unpatrolled roads, vagabonds (most of them ex-military) crawl throughout the foothills and rolling plains of the Tandak, and the more remote prefectures are ruled almost entirely by gangs so powerful as to make the Taldan governors but weak figureheads. Even worse, when the royalty and senatorial classes decide to go to war and send the soldiers of the Taldan Phalanx against one another, the poor of Taldor are usually caught in between and suffer greatly. Taldor's history is full of battles between rival houses, rival governors, and even between rival military commanders. Because of 6,000 years of civilization, most of Taldor is free of monstrous dangers, though the foothills, mountains, rivers, and Verduran Forest are all filled with the ancient dangers that held sway over Taldor before the descendants of Old Azlant settled here.

## Foreign Relations

Taldor is an ancient country, and its relationships with its neighbors and rivals are usually based on long-standing grudges and slights.

**Absalom:** While Absalom views Taldor as a doddering old empire to be carefully avoided, Taldor sees Absalom as the key to reinvigorating the empire. Taldor has long kept plans for the invasion of Absalom and the Isle of Kortos. Knowing that no siege of Absalom ever succeeds, the emperor instead directs Taldan agents to infiltrate

every aspect of Absalom society, intent on one day quietly merging Absalom with the empire and using it as a base of operations to reclaim the glory of Old Taldor.

**Andoran:** Andoran and Taldor share a peace right now caused both by each nation's enormous, defensive navies and the fact that the druids of the Wildwood Lodge control their mutual border, the Verduran Forest. Though Taldans still consider Andoran part of the empire, they see the nation of freedom lovers as autonomous children stretching their legs for the first time. Someday, when the time is right, the Taldan Empire will call its children home—forcefully if necessary.

**Cheliox:** Only Qadira is more hated by Taldans than Cheliox. The Taldan Empire would like nothing more than to see Cheliox—the source of the Even-Tongued Conquest that robbed Taldor of many of its ancient holdings—wiped from Golarion. Add to that the recent takeover by devil-worshiping House Thrune and most of Taldor sees Cheliox as an abomination. Once Absalom falls to the crown-and-lion, the Taldan Phalanx will burn the Chelish countryside clean and once again rule the region as Old Taldor did for thousands of years.

**Galt:** Taldor keeps a wary eye on its northern neighbor lest the seeds of revolution blow south and take hold. Though Taldor's military is largely focused south and east, Taldor keeps several encampments active along its border with Galt. Travelers from Galt are subject to search when they cross into Taldor, and recently the Taldan Phalanx and River Guard have captured ships and caravans filled with handbills demanding the people of Taldor rise up and shake off their oppressive rulers. Oppara fears such a revolution and makes sure those caught advocating such reform inside Taldor's borders are never heard from again. Many of the senatorial class are pressing Grand Prince Stavian III to end his feud with Qadira so that the Horse and Phalanx might march north and crush the petulant revolution for good.

**Lastwall:** Though angered by Lastwall's decision to remain neutral during the Even-Tongued Conquest, Taldor today sees Lastwall for what it is: a symbol of Old Taldor's glory on Golarion. Lastwall represents Taldor's greatest victory, the defeat of the Whispering Tyrant and his imprisonment at Gallowspire. The empire's most glorious officer, General Arnisant, gave his life to protect Golarion—a fact Taldor doesn't let the rest of the world forget. Taldor still sends money to Lastwall to keep up its defenses, and young blades of the empire, taken by the stories of the Shining Crusade, still travel to Lastwall to join forces with the watchful border kingdom.

**Osirion:** Many Taldans still believe Osirion to be a satrap state of the Padishah Empire of Kelesh and, as such, hold a great deal of mistrust for the ancient nation. Despite this lack of trust, Taldor has a healthy



## Taldor. Empire in Decline

merchant relationship with Osirion, buying up massive quantities of the desert kingdom's ancient artifacts to display in Taldan museums and households. Few Taldan noble houses lack a mummy or other ostentatious representation of the land of the pharaohs.

**Qadira and the Padishah Empire of Kelesh:** The Grand Campaign saw the Padishah Empire of Kelesh and its satrap state, Qadira, occupy southern Taldor off and on for 500 years. The city of Zimar was enslaved, nearly every settlement across the Zimar Scrublands was burned, and Taldor was broken into pieces by the Even-Tongued Conquest, a war that would never have succeeded had Qadira stayed inside its own borders. Needless to say, most of Taldor's people hate Qadira. Taldor sponsors privateers, known as the Zimar corsairs, who plague all Qadiran shipping from Katheer to Sedeq. Both nations still raid across their common border, especially in the foothills east of the confluence of the Jalrune River and the River of Qadira. Qadira positively strains at its leash, held tightly by the Padishah Emperor, eager to invade Taldor again and reclaim lands it sees as its own. Taldor's military is ready to defend against a new Qadiran threat, but Taldor's last grasp on imperialism would crumble if it dared invade Qadira. Today both nations stand prepared

to defend against the other, and for now the cold war along their border is the extent of their mutual diplomacy.

### Government

Taldor's government is convoluted, ensuring the need for legal scholars for generations to come.

**Grand Prince:** Taldor is ruled by a Grand Prince, the hereditary title of the emperor of Taldor. The Grand Prince wears the Primogen Crown and holds absolute authority, his power base solidified by a loyal military. Taldor's line of succession follows the rule of primogeniture, with the eldest living son granted the title of Grand Prince upon the father's death. This line has reset more than a dozen times in Taldor's history, with another powerful house of Taldor claiming the Primogen Crown when no heirs of the Grand Prince existed. As Grand Prince Stavian III (CN male human aristocrat 8/wizard 4) has only a daughter (see page 21), when he dies it is likely there will be some infighting among the royals (including the princess herself) as they press various claims to the throne, which may devolve into civil war.

**Royalty:** Taldor's upper class—comprised of dynasty-inheriting houses, most of which trace their lineages back to one emperor or another—is both the Grand Prince's boon and his bane. Throughout the empire's history, the royalty of Taldor have shared as much responsibility for the greatness of their emperors as they have for their emperors' downfalls. The Grand Prince can raise a citizen or senator of the empire up to this class by bestowing title and wealth upon the individual. Annually, the Grand Prince holds a huge celebration at the Imperial Palace where he does just that—though the current Grand Prince wisely limits his title-bestowing to those who ally with him and support his hold on the Primogen Crown.

Taldor's royalty class is full of byzantine titles—patrician, magister, proconsul, mandator, exarch, viceroy, duke, and so on—and it takes several scholars at the Primogen Library to keep it all straight, as each title has a subtle place in the hierarchy of the empire. The royalty of Taldor are eternally obsessed with the arcane arts and the acquisition of newer and greater magical knowledge—an obsession they share with the current Grand Prince.

**Senatorial Class:** The senatorial class represents the hereditary members of Taldor's senate, the governors of Taldor's prefectures, and various heads of the bureaucracy. While it is quite rare for citizens to rise to the royalty, they can easily work hard for the government and achieve a title in the senatorial class.

**The Bearded:** Taldor's royalty and senatorial classes are known as "the bearded," a term reflective of their protected legal status as the only males in Taldor who can legally grow beards (though this becomes less of an issue



GRAND PRINCE STAVIAN III



the farther you travel from Oppara). Wearing a beard is a symbol of status, and the level of extravagance poured into a man's beard is representative of his personal wealth and power. It's not uncommon for Taldans to portray Abadar, Aroden, or Cayden Cailean with beards, as it is hard for them to imagine male gods not possessing enough power to earn the right to wear one.

This is not to say that any man with a day's worth of scruff is thrown in jail or onto a slave galley—intent is the key, and long cheek whiskers or a scraggly beard are clearly not attempts to rise above one's station. It is only when a man of lower class starts to groom and oil his beard (particularly a goatee or chin-beard) in the manner of nobles that others start to take notice and guards are inclined to take action. Furthermore, foreign dignitaries, dwarves, and gnomes are all but exempt from this scrutiny, as Taldor is a human nation and the intent of the law is to keep the Taldan peasant class from putting on airs, not to alienate beard-wearing merchants and diplomats of other races or countries.

**The Unbearded:** Taldor's massive underclass, called the unbearded, make up 99% of Taldor's population. They are merchants, craftsmen, day laborers, dock workers, vagabonds, soldiers, sailors, and so on. Taldor's crushing tax rate and import tariffs ensure that the poor of Taldor remain poor—as do the policies of the ruling class regarding the rights of citizens (the unbearded have none). Amazingly, the heart of the empire has never rebelled against this stratified and oppressive establishment. The Grand Princes have been careful to raise key citizens from the ranks of the unbearded in order to keep their compatriots ever hopeful that after hard work and long loyalty to the empire they might one day join the ranks of the bearded. Taldor's military offers such an avenue to advancement, and because of that the Taldan Horse, Taldan Phalanx, and Imperial Navy are loyal and strong, and fight hard for the empire—if only to gain the notice of their commanders and receive a promotion to the ranks of the bearded.

## Military

Taldor's extensive military allows it to guard against threats from all sides, despite the great drain on the country's finances.

**Taldan Horse:** Taldor's cavalry is comprised of both horse and elephant units. Huge horse farms in southern Taldor raise fierce destriers that are trained their entire lives to work and fight in the midst of chaos and carnage. Taldan elephants are descendants of breeding stock brought back from the Garundi interior thousands of years ago during one of the expeditions of the Armies of Exploration, and they are among the largest breeds of elephants on Golarion. The Taldan military uses its horse

legions to break the lines of enemy advancement and to outflank their foes while they use the elephant legions to move supplies and, rarely, to crush the heart of the enemy's lines. The horse legions are comprised entirely of heavily armed and armored knights, led by a knight-captain. While the elephant legions are led by knights, they are largely populated with citizen soldiers.

**Taldan Imperial Navy and the River Guard:** Based in the mighty shipyards of Cassomir, the Taldan Imperial Navy is all that stands between Taldor and the end of the empire. Andoran's fleets are strong, and the ships of Cheliaz and the mighty merchant fleets of Qadira could easily be converted for use as a massive invasion force. With these threats on all sides, it falls to the sailors and officers of the Taldan Navy to keep the shores of Taldor safe. A small wing of the navy is called the River Guard, an honorable (but small) fleet of ships that protects the many rivers inside Taldor's borders from piracy.

**Taldan Phalanx:** The majority of the military is comprised of the Taldan Phalanx. For thousands of years they've used the same potent strategic combination of archers and spearmen to conquer their enemies. The spearmen wield long pikes, wear light armor, and carry a short sword at their sides. They march as one unit and are trained to quickly form either lines of battle or defensive formations to protect against cavalry charges. Each spear unit is led by a knight-captain who sits atop his charger in heavy armor and directs his men into battle. Archers wield fine longbows, wear light or no armor, and carry a variety of weapons (usually axes) for hand-to-hand combat. One unit of archers is assigned to each unit of spearmen, and they follow closely behind their pike-wielding brothers and sisters. On command, the two units function together as the spears form a protective square around the archers, who fire hails of arrows from inside their living fortification. This strategy broke hundreds of Qadiran horse and camel charges, and the Phalanx proudly believes it's because of their perseverance that Taldor eventually won the Grand Campaign.

**Ulfen Guard:** After the assassination of Emperor Jalrune, the next Grand Prince built a personal bodyguard to protect him from any threat. He sent emissaries to the Ulfen Jarls in the north and promised vast wealth for any who came to serve the empire. Thus the Ulfen Guard was born. Heavily-armed barbarian warriors all, they protect the bearer of the Primogen Crown from any threats, real or imagined. At any one time, more than a dozen Ulfen warriors can be found guarding the Grand Prince, and they each serve for at least a year, though some stay on their entire lives, entranced by Oppara's wealth and enamored with the number of would-be assassins they get to slaughter every year. Once an Ulfen's service is up, he can take as much loot from the imperial treasure vaults as he can carry.



# Taldor. Empire in Decline

**Zimar Corsairs:** The pirates of the Jalrune River serve Taldor as a quasi-legal part of the Imperial Navy. Each captain of a corsair galley is given a Letter of Mark that both identifies him as a full captain of the navy and grants him some legal protections should his ship be taken by the enemy. The Zimar corsairs patrol the Jalrune River and the southeastern Inner Sea region, seeking to sink Qadiran merchant traffic, though they're also known for enslaving merchants ships and adding both ship and crew to their numbers.

## Regional Traits (Taldor)

These regional traits are available to all Taldan natives.

**Chivalrous:** You were raised on stories of heroic knights and benevolent wizards, and wish to emulate their great deeds. You gain a +1 trait bonus to Diplomacy and Knowledge (history) checks.

**Militia Veteran:** Your first job was serving in a civilian militia in your home town. Skills learned while daily drilling and protecting your fellow townsfolk gave you special insight into military life. Select one of the following skills: Profession (soldier), Ride, or Survival. You gain a +2 trait bonus on that skill, and it is always a class skill for you.

**Narrows Survivor:** You spent your childhood in the infamous Narrows district of Oppara. Years of living in violent squalor have sharpened your senses and given you an ardent distrust of humanity. You gain a +1 trait bonus to Initiative and Sense Motive checks. Sense Motive is always a class skill for you.

**Precocious Spellcaster:** Before you even began your training as a spellcaster, you spent a great deal of time studying cantrips and simple spells on your own. Because of this, you developed some innate magical abilities without any outside guidance. Select one cantrip and one 1st-level spell; when you cast these spells, they function at one caster level higher than your actual caster level.

**River Rat:** You learned to swim right after you learned to walk. As a youth, a gang of river pirates put you to work swimming in nighttime rivers and canals with a dagger in your teeth so you could sever the anchor ropes of merchant vessels. You gain a +1 trait bonus to damage dealt with a dagger and a +1 trait bonus to Swim checks. Swim is always a class skill for you.

**Vagabond Child:** You grew up among the outcasts and outlaws of your society, learning to forage and survive in an urban environment. Select one of the following skills: Disable Device, Open Lock, or Sleight of Hand. You gain a +1 trait bonus on that skill, and it is always a class skill for you.

**Wealthy Dabbler:** You study magic at a social club, wowing your friends with your recent discoveries and showing off your expertise in the simplest of magical

exploits. Select two non-harmful arcane cantrips. You can cast these two cantrips once per day each (caster level 1st). If you have levels in a class that can cast these cantrips, your caster level for these cantrips is equal to that class level.

## Religion Traits

These religion traits are available to all characters of the listed religion.

**Ambassador (Sarenrae):** Your natural abilities at mediation and compromise manifested at a young age. For as long as you can remember, you were always more





able to solve disputes and carefully settle violent disagreements than others. You gain a +2 trait bonus to Diplomacy checks.

**Devotee of a Dead God (Aroden):** You simply cannot and will not accept that Aroden is dead. Your faith in his teachings and religion are stronger than ever. You gain a +1 trait bonus on Diplomacy checks and Knowledge (religion) checks. One of these skills (your choice) is always a class skill for you.

**Divine Warrior (Iomedae):** From an early age, you were trained by militaristic order of clerics. You are devoted both to the teachings of Iomedae and to spreading those teachings by force. Your divine spells gain a +1 trait bonus to melee weapon damage.

**Under Siege (Sarenrae):** In order to maintain your devotion to Sarenrae in Taldor and stay alive, you and your fellow worshipers developed a complex system of hand signs and facial gestures to identify yourselves as faithful in the Cult of the Dawnflower. You gain a +1 trait bonus on Bluff and Sense Motive checks. One of these skills (your choice) is always a class skill for you.



## Race Traits

These race traits are available to all characters of the appropriate race.

**Aspiring Bard (Human—Taldan):** You spent countless hours of your youth wandering the open campuses of the Kitharodian Academy and the Rhapsodic College, listening to wonderful musicians and singers and daydreaming of your life as a bard. You gain a +1 trait bonus to one category of Perform checks and a +2 trait bonus to any Knowledge (local) checks that deal with the Oppara music scene.

**Azlant Fanatic (Human—Azlanti):** Your years spent in libraries reading every musty tome you could find about the ancient lost civilization of Azlant have given you insight into the subjects of history and the arcane. You gain a +1 trait bonus to Knowledge (arcana) and Knowledge (history) checks. One of these skills (your choice) is always a class skill for you.

**Brute (Half-Orc):** You have spent long hours working for a crime lord, either as a low-level enforcer or as a guard or bouncer. You're adept at frightening away people and gain a +2 trait bonus on Intimidate checks.

**Carefully Hidden (Human—Keleshite):** Modern Taldor is not kind to Keleshites. Your life as a member of an unpopular ethnic group has given you an uncanny knack

for avoiding detection. You gain a +1 trait bonus to Will saves and a +2 trait bonus to saving throws versus divination effects.

**Dilettante Artist (Elf):** Art for you is a social gateway and you use it to influence and penetrate high society. You gain a +1 trait bonus to one category of Perform checks and a +1 trait bonus to Diplomacy checks. One of these skills (your choice) is always a class skill for you.

**Failed Apprentice (Half-Elf):** As a child, your parents sent you to a distant wizard's tower as an apprentice so that you might learn the arcane arts. Unfortunately, you had no arcane talent whatsoever, though you did learn a great deal about the workings of magic and how to resist them. You gain a +1 trait bonus to saves against arcane spells.

**Militant Merchant (Dwarf):** You know what it takes to get your goods to market and will stop at nothing to protect your products. Years of fending off thieves, cutthroats, and brigands have given you a sixth sense when it comes to danger. You gain a +1 trait bonus to Spot and Listen checks made to determine surprise, and Spot is always a class skill for you.

**Rapsallion (Gnome):** You've spent your entire life thumbing your nose at the establishment and take pride in your run-ins with the law. Somehow, despite all the mischievous behavior in your life, you've never been caught. You gain a +1 trait bonus to Escape Artist checks and a +1 trait bonus to Initiative checks.

**Scholar of Ruins (Human—Taldan):** From the moment you could walk and talk, the ruins of Taldor fascinated you. You joined every expedition you could find, volunteered as a porter for the Pathfinder Society, and sometimes just set out on your own to explore as many of the Taldan ruins as you could. Because of this, you have special insight into the geography of Taldor as well as expertise at exploring lost places. You gain a +1 trait bonus to Knowledge (geography) and Knowledge (dungeoneering) checks. One of these skills (your choice) is always a class skill for you.

**Well-Informed (Halfling):** You make it a point to know everyone and to be connected to everything around you. You frequent the best taverns, attend all of the right events, and graciously help anyone who needs it. Because of this, you are one of the more knowledgeable people in your home town and you gain a +1 trait bonus to Gather Information and Knowledge (local) checks. One of these skills (your choice) is always a class skill for you.









# Oppara

## The Gilded City

Oppara, Taldor's shining capital atop the Black Cliffs of the Mighty Porthmos, is an ancient and thriving city. Its majestic villas and glittering towers stand watch over a sprawling settlement once plated in gold. At Oppara's height, it earned the nickname the Gilded City because of the many roofs, spires, and

domes that glittered with austere gold plating in the high afternoon sun. The metal was long ago stripped away to pay for the empire's blunders, but it left behind a bustling, beautiful city beneath. Though the rest of Taldor fades into ruin, Oppara is the example of what the empire once was and what it could be again.



# Oppara. The Gilded City

## Oppara at a Glance

Most of Oppara's buildings are made of stone. Whether it's the marbled halls of the Senate, the brick row houses in Canal Row, or the granite facades in Seven Towers, the capital of Taldor is a solid example of what extravagance and 6,000 years of history can do to a city's design. The massive Grand Bridge of the Empire emerges from the heart of Oppara to punch across the sky over the River Porthmos, connecting Oppara with the river's distant southern shore. Its two harbors are always crammed with ships and the Mighty Porthmos is so filled with river traffic that it's sometimes difficult to spot patches of water between the towering sailing ships and the flat-bottom trading vessels from upriver. Every street in Oppara is paved in either grandiose mosaic tile (in the districts surrounding the Imperial Palace) or well-laid cobblestones. The streets are lined with stone gutters that quickly siphon off the frequent summer rains into Oppara's expansive sewer system, and public fountains dot many of the larger crossroads and squares throughout the capital. At night, the city is lit by tens of thousands of lanterns, a task that keeps the enormous Lighters' Guild always on the lookout for new employees.

## City Districts

Oppara is separated into 15 distinct districts, each with its own unique flavor and atmosphere. A sixteenth district, called the Grandbridge Vagabond Camp, falls under the jurisdiction of greater Oppara, but due to both its location on the south shore of the River Porthmos across the Grand Bridge of the Empire and its history of viciously beating back attempts to raid or destroy it, most Opparans don't consider it part of the city.

**Aroden's View:** One of the oldest districts in Oppara, Aroden's View stands highest above the capital. Its gardens, tree-lined avenues, and massive villas command breathtaking views of the city as well as the river valley that stretches far to the west.

**Canal Row:** Home to merchants, ship captains, professors, Abadar's Cathedral of Coins (area 18), and more, Canal Row is Oppara's trendy residential district for the wealthier unbearded. So named because of its tightly packed canal houses along the Central Canal, this district is clean, brightly painted, and always busy.

**Crownsate:** Named after Oppara's secondary gate (area 15), Crownsate is a poor district, largely filled with canal warehouses and factories. The side streets in this district are largely of hard-packed earth, as many of the cobblestones that once paved the district have long since been torn up and used elsewhere. Crownsate is a dangerous place at night, with cutthroats, purse-snatchers, prostitutes, and hangers-on of the Brotherhood of Silence filling the back alleys with illicit activities.

The Brotherhood's main chapterhouse is located here, and it's rumored that the large and influential thieves' guild owns most of the district.

**Eastport:** The smaller of Oppara's two ports, Eastport is split from larger Westport by the massive spans and structures of the Grand Bridge of the Empire. Primarily used to receive river traffic coming in from as far away as Sardis Township in the Porthmos Gap, this dock district is the poorer of the two. Most of Eastport's structures are made of wood, a fact that makes it stand out in Oppara almost immediately, and the district has burned to the ground twice in the last hundred years—both times under mysterious circumstances.

**Grandbridge:** The largest and most central district of the capital stretches the entire width of Oppara just outside the two dock districts. Grandbridge is a mercantile district of worldwide renown and is filled with warehouses, factories, shopping squares, open-air markets, currency exchanges, and import/export firms. Where the district touches the River Porthmos at the split span of the Grand Bridge of the Empire is a large open square that on most days is filled with makeshift stalls, tables, and tents—Oppara's famed Gray Market.

**Imperial Square:** Home to Grand Princes of the empire since Oppara's founding, Imperial Square is named after the exquisitely tiled, open-air square that surrounds the Imperial Palace on all sides for several blocks in all directions. Many members of the royalty keep apartments here to stay close to the Grand Prince, and this wealthy district is largely comprised of a cottage industry built around supplying the palace with everything it needs. As such, some of the best places to shop for food, clothing, arms, and equipment can be found here.

**Jadrishar Island:** The headquarters of the Taldan Imperial Navy occupies the entirety of this island district. Located just off the west coast of Oppara with full views of all river traffic, Jadrishar Island is surrounded by thick, blackened stone walls. Its one gate on the south side of the island is a fortress unto itself, and anyone traveling through it passes beneath dozens of murder holes, traverses well-marked pits and traps, and notices the arrow slits that line the inside. Taldor's Imperial Naval College is also located on the island, and the empire's finest ship captains train here for 4 years before earning a commission as a lieutenant on one of Taldor's capital ships. The River Guard also maintains an academy here, but it's small, not well regarded, and significantly underfunded compared to the rest of the navy. Large, well-guarded docks line the southern shore of the island, and dozens of Taldor's largest warships can always be found at anchor there.

**Lionsgate:** As the main gate of the city, Lionsgate (area 14) itself is a breathtaking structure, comprised of two



enormous stone towers topped by 50-foot-tall animated statues of roaring lions. Though they spend most of the day roaring silently, at noon on Oathday both lions let loose a bone-jarring roar that echoes across the capital. The district that grew around the dramatic gate is hedged in by the two branches of Central Canal (areas 16 and 17) and is largely a market district. Home to traders, importers, and manufacturers, Lionsgate is a noisy district during the day, ringing with the calls of barkers and the clang of smithies, and smelling of boiled leather and butchers' blocks. Most of the traders here live in small apartments above their workspace, and though the district is comprised largely of ornately carved stone houses, they are all tightly packed together and line narrow paved streets.

**Memorial Park:** Almost no one lives here, as over the years the empire turned this canal-front district into a memorial to every hero of Taldor, real or imagined. The Statue Garden of Porthmos can be found here along the canal, as can the Monument to the Armies of Exploration, the Memorial Arch of Grand Prince Jalrune, the Shining Obelisk, the Serpent Column, and many smaller shrines to long-forgotten warriors of Old Taldor.

**The Narrows:** The poorest district of Oppara is also the most dangerous. Even Oppara's constabulary avoids this district unless marching on it in force. Constructed entirely of rickety wood houses with makeshift shingles

and poor planning, the Narrows is a tightly packed den of disease and squalor. The permanent structures here lean and bow into one another and entire houses are frequently known to simply give out and crash into a narrow alley. When walking down one of the Narrows' tiny streets, it's not uncommon to be cast in perpetual shadow as the rooftops of opposite buildings lean dangerously across the way, in many cases touching those on the opposite side of the street. The Narrows' rooftops are cluttered with makeshift tent houses, trash piles, and bodies, and only the bravest of climbers (or most desperate) even attempt to traverse the Narrows this way. The streets are muddy, filth-ridden pits, and the stench of the place is often unbearable. The entire district is controlled by a variety of gangs and rogue guilds, and the Brotherhood of Silence is said to maintain a small chapterhouse here. The nearby district of Canal Row has repeatedly asked Oppara Prefecture's governor to build a wall between the two districts, but the funds to do so have yet to manifest.

**Senate's Hill:** Immediately adjacent to Imperial Square, Senate's Hill is home to the lavish marbled and columned halls of the Senate. Astride the same street as the Imperial Palace, the Senators like to believe that this serves as a reminder to the Grand Prince that while he rules the country, they manage the bureaucracy. This district is a wealthy one, surrounding the majestic Senate building with coffee houses, inns, shops, tailors—anything a member of Taldor's senatorial class could possibly want. Many of the Senators, especially those who represent more distant prefectures of the empire, keep small villas and apartments here.

**Seven Towers:** Named for five crumbling towers arrayed in a star shape around two central pillars, this district is built on top of the ruins of the original Azlanti town (area 4) that once looked over this region. While most of the ruins themselves are gone, there are dozens of interconnected vaults and dungeon complexes beneath Seven Towers, most of which the government long ago sealed—for what purpose, they didn't say. The residents of the district, most of whom hail from Taldor's senatorial class, spread rumors that the dead walk the evening streets of Seven Towers and that the towers themselves sometimes hum with a strange and vertigo-inducing energy.





# Oppara. The Gilded City

**Westpark:** The wealthiest district of Oppara is also its best guarded. The royalty that call Westpark home long ago constructed enormous walled villas and sprawling fenced-in estates to keep the riff-raff out. The constabulary maintains several stations here and can be found patrolling the district at all times of the day or night. When the Lighters' Guild begins its evening ritual of lighting the streets of the capital, its members always start in Westpark and do so before the sun has set.

**Westport:** The larder of Oppara's two ports, Westport services all international traffic, as well as Taldan Imperial Navy supply traffic. Westport's waterfront is crammed full of inns, bars, pubs, brothels, gambling houses, drug dens, moneylenders—anything a sailor coming in to port might need. The docks themselves are well guarded and lit at night, a duty the Westport Harbormaster takes very seriously. Long ago the constabulary made it clear they couldn't keep the rest of the city safe at night and watch over Westport, so the Harbormaster formed the Porthmos Militia, a ragtag band of cutthroats, former privateers, ex-soldiers, and thugs, and set them to the task of keeping watch on the capital's largest port at night. Suffice to say, crime is almost nonexistent in the evening hours, though folks traveling this district under the cover of darkness do best to avoid any entanglements with the militia.

**Worldbreaker Hill:** So named for the famed bombard of the 5th Army of Exploration, the Worldbreaker used to rest atop this district's highest point and guard the western river approach into Oppara with its far-reaching cannonballs. In 2089 AR, the Worldbreaker was pulled up out of its foundations and hauled across Golarion for the 6th Army of Exploration, where it was lost forever in the Mwangi Expanse. All that remains of the once mighty cannon is its enormous, empty foundation. Worldbreaker Hill today is home to many of Taldor's military commanders and sergeants who hold a place of honor beside the denizens of Senate's Hill.

## Important Sites

Several of the more important locations in Oppara are detailed below.

**Basilica of the Last Man:** Golarion's oldest temple to Aroden, the Basilica of the Last Man (area 3) is a constant reminder of Aroden's death and the decline of Taldor. Aroden's clergy still maintain a presence here, though they are but a shadow of what they once were. The basilica is an enormous domed building built on a hill in Aroden's View. Its blue-painted dome is a familiar landmark for returning Opparans, as are the four 250-foot-tall fluted pillars that frame the four corners of the basilica's grounds.

**Brotherhood of Silence Chapterhouse:** One of the largest and most influential thieves' guilds throughout the Inner Sea region, the Brotherhood of Silence is

based in Oppara's Crownsgate district. Their main chapterhouse is a nondescript black marble building with darkened windows and two armed and armored men guarding the front door. The Brotherhood of Silence has chapterhouses in every major city in the region—though none are as obvious as their home in Oppara.

**Grand Bridge of the Empire:** Built 3,000 years ago to more efficiently cross the wide River Porthmos, the Grand Bridge of the Empire (area 12) is an impressive architectural achievement. The Grand Bridge is a cantilever bridge set atop enormous stone piles sunk deep into the Porthmos. The rest of the span is made of magically strengthened mithral steel forged in the dwarven fires of Maheto and hauled over the Tandak Plains to Oppara. The span's surface is delicately crafted mosaic tile laid across a foundation of thin granite sheets. The bridge stretches 8,314 feet across the Porthmos, with 150 feet of clearance for ships of all kinds to pass beneath. It took more than 200 years to complete the project, at enormous cost to the empire—a cost that many Taldan scholars believe was the impetus for Taldor's invasion and establishment of Andoran as a vassal state the year before the project was completed. On the Opparan side of the river, the bridge begins as a split causeway that abuts both shores of the Central Canal before climbing to the bridge's full height and shooting out across the river. The opposite bank washes against steep cliffs, so the bridge runs straight to its terminus in the Grandbridge Vagabond Camp.

**House of the Immortal Son:** Once the second-oldest temple to Aroden (the first being the Basilica of the Last Man, also in Oppara), the House of the Immortal Son has, since the death of Aroden, been Taldor's most opulent and expensive opera house. It is a large, windowless, cylindrical building made of polished marble and granite and surrounded by thick, finely carved pillars. Built in the earliest traditional styles of the Azlanti, the opera house lacks windows (visitors are meant to look up, not out) and its roof is a complicated piece of stone statuary that replicates the holy symbol of Aroden, a winged eye gazing forever toward the heavens.

**Imperial Palace:** The home of Taldor's Grand Prince since the empire's founding, the Imperial Palace (area 2) is a magnificent and ancient structure. Taldor's first Grand Prince didn't believe the palace should be cut off from the people, so rather than surround it in heavy walls he ordered heavy walls be built for the city itself, and stipulated that the blocks surrounding the palace be kept clear in city planning. Today, the palace is a simple granite building, rectangular in shape, four stories high and surrounded on all sides by a large open square. The Taldan Phalanx and Taldan Horse maintain a strong presence here, marching across the square daily and constantly guarding the entrances to the palace.



**Kitharodian Academy:** Of Taldor's two famed bardic colleges, the Kith (area 13) is the larger of the two. Located in Canal Row, it sits astride the northern cliffs of Oppara and has an impressive view of the Porthmos river valley as it winds its way north. Its spires, towers, domes, and pillars are nearly as breathtaking as its melodic symphonies. The Kith allows anyone to attend their performances, and it's not uncommon for the Grand Prince to rub shoulders with the unbearded on campus.

**Memorial Arch of Prince Jalrune:** The memorial to Taldor's assassinated Grand Prince, this arch (area 7) spans Central Canal in Memorial Park. The arch bears an engraved pictorial history of Emperor Jalrune, starting with his fabled birth in the Dragonscar on the Memorial Park side and stretching throughout his life to his crowning at the top of the arch and his assassination at the end of the arch on the Canal Row side. Interestingly, his assassins are portrayed plain and faceless, which goes against the common view of the people that he was murdered by Qadiran agents.

**Oppara Arena:** The roar of the crowd and the stench of blood coat the oldest arena (area 10) in the Inner Sea. Located in Grandbridge, the arena can fit 20,000 citizens and runs daily gladiatorial battles and slave fights, and can even be flooded to simulate naval engagements. One copper piece gets you access, and it's not uncommon for the royalty and senatorial classes to feed those in attendance.

**Rhapsodic College:** The smaller of the two bardic colleges in Oppara, Rhapsodic College (area 11) is tucked away in the clutter of Westport. A few small buildings surrounding a performance and practice hall are all this school is comprised of, but despite its size it's well regarded as Oppara's best-kept secret. The Kith might produce more trained bards every year, but the Rhapsodic College produces the best. The courts of Cheliox, Osirion, Katapesh, and many countries beyond the Inner Sea employ graduates of Rhapsodic College as their primary musicians and storytellers.

**The Senate:** Much larger than even the Imperial Palace, the Senate (area 1) is built of white-marbled halls and surrounded on all sides by columns. At night, huge lanterns are lit around its foundation so that the entire hall glows white. One hundred steps lead to the Senate's main entrance, and the prevailing wisdom among the Senators is that each step reminds them that they live only to serve the empire. Most members of the Senate use the rear entrance.

**The Serpent Column:** Originating in the ancient Azlanti settlement that pre-dated Oppara, the Serpent Column (area 8) is the heart of Memorial Park. The column is actually two columns, built side by side and then twisted together as if by the hands of a giant. It rests on a green-hued stone foundation and is harder than steel. It shows no sign of its age, and its smooth surface is unmarred by carvings or design.

**The Shining Obelisk:** The memorial to General Arnisant (area 6) stands nearly 100 feet tall and is coated in a thin sheen of brass. The name ARNISANT is carved in big block letters across its base, and it shines brightly in the mid-day sun.

**Statue Garden of Porthmos:** Taldor's famed General of the 1st Army of Exploration is celebrated in this one-block-diameter statuary garden (area 5). Every statue represents one of Porthmos's famed victories in the Verduran Forest and along the length of the Sellen River to Sevenarches. Since the garden was constructed nearly 1,500 years after General Porthmos's death, there are many scholars who question the accuracy of some of the depictions.

**White Hall:** The headquarters of Oppara's constabulary, White Hall (area 9) is a four-story marble structure in Grandbridge. Oppara's constables have a long and proud tradition and prowl most of Oppara day and night.





## Oppara. The Gilded City

Several smaller stations are scattered throughout the city so a citizen, in most cases, won't have to travel far to get help. White Hall houses two schools to train constables: the Lion Academy for mundane students and the Crown Circle for those bent toward arcane pursuits. The locals call White Hall the Screaming Pillars for what happens to an unbearded when he's dragged in there, on charges real or imagined.

### Citizens of Oppara

Some of Oppara's more famous, infamous, and important denizens are detailed below.

**Dominicus Rell:** This man is the head of the secretive Shadow Schools of the mysterious Lion Blades. An imposing man of Azlanti ancestry, his multi-colored eyes stare blankly at any who speak to him, causing most people to feel incredibly uncomfortable in his presence. He is said to have the ear of the Grand Prince himself, and many believe that it is Rell who trains the Ulfen Guard to protect their sovereign.

**Father Basri:** Maybe the last Archbishop of Aroden left on Golarion, the incredibly old half-elf Father Basri can still remember a time when Aroden personally spoke to him through prayer. The sadness of his patron's death and the years since have weighed heavily on his shoulders, and he walks with a stooped back, leaning heavily on a cane. Father Basri is responsible for maintaining the Basilica of the Last Man and its Arodenite artifacts and holy relics, and it was his ingenious idea to transform the holy site into a tourist destination that kept the Basilica from being turned into something more reserved, such as the House of the Immortal Son. Lately, Father Basri has told his small flock that he believes Aroden will return in their lifetimes, but many see this as the ramblings of a very old and broken man.

**Harbormaster Hallador:** The Boss of Westport, as he's known, may be an unbearded, but he holds almost as much power as any member of the senatorial class. He controls arguably one of the busiest ports on the Inner Sea, and his impatience with the government is legendary. When the constabulary said they couldn't do enough to stop the crime waves in nighttime Westport, Boss Hallador formed his own militia. When the Imperial Palace ruled that all ships from Qadira be turned away, Boss Hallador gave them crown-and-lion flags to fly as they approached the River Porthmos. He walks a thin line, and there are grumblings that he may soon be replaced—a choice that could send Westport into strikes, riots, or worse (for more information on the harbormaster, see page 30).

**Senator Karthis:** The leader of the opposition party in Oppara, Karthis hails from Zimar Prefecture and is the Senate's largest supporter of heating up the cold

war with Qadira. Many times he's stood on the steps of the Senate and described the horrors visited upon his ancestors during the Grand Campaign, rallying the people to demand that the Phalanx march south and burn Katheer to the ground.

**The Masked Marquis:** The head of the Brotherhood of Silence is one of Golarion's best-kept secrets. Though he is seen frequently in and around the chapterhouse in Crownsgate, many believe he is in fact several different people, and cite the fact that he's sometimes fat, other times tall, and occasionally female.

**Princess Eutropia:** The daughter and only living child of Grand Prince Stavian III calls Seven Towers her home. Taldor has long been ruled under the tradition of the primogeniture, but the princess opposes its continuation and is currently building support among the Senate for her usurpation of the throne upon her father's death. Many believe this will send Taldor into a long civil war it can ill afford, but the Princess believes otherwise and sees her ascension as just the sort of change Taldor needs to be great again.



FATHER BASRI



## THE LION BLADE

Trained in hidden Shadow Schools beneath the streets of Cassomir and Oppara, the Lion Blades of Taldor come from the empire's most secretive school of fighting arts. They scoff at the assassins of Qadira, laughing at their poisons and blow guns—and they're equally derisive of the knights of Taldor, stomping about the battlefield in burdensome armor and wielding huge, slow weapons. Lion Blades prefer crowded urban areas and are masters of motion, controlling both their own movement and those around them. With the flick of a blade, they can slow their enemy to a crawl and then step into a crowd and disappear from sight. They are quick, agile, knowledgeable, and masters of disguise. A Lion Blade could easily infiltrate a Taldan Phalanx, disguise herself as a spearman, gain access

to the Phalanx's corrupt commander, strike quickly, and then blend quietly back into the ranks, her appearance completely different than just moments before.

Lion Blades are typically recruited out of the famous bardic colleges of Oppara, as the Shadow Schools want intelligent, flexible trainees to whom they can pass their arts. A Lion Blade usually spends at least a year in training before taking on missions for the Taldan Empire and other non-governmental organizations. Lion Blade PCs are often on extended loan for a specific purpose or are given permission to adventure in order to perfect their art in real world settings. A rare few Lion Blades shirk their responsibilities and work independently or even serve the enemies of Taldor, with Cheliox especially eager for these turncoats.

### Requirements

To qualify to become a Lion Blade, a character must fulfill the following criteria:

**Alignment:** Any neutral

**Feats:** Deceitful, Improved Initiative, Skill Focus (Perform)

**Skills:** Bluff 6 ranks, Disguise 8 ranks, Gather Information 6 ranks, Hide 8 ranks, Move Silently 6 ranks, either Perform (singing) or Perform (acting) 6 ranks

**Special:** Inspire competence, Taldor affinity, sneak attack +2d6

### Class Features

The following are class features of the Lion Blade prestige class.

**Weapon and Armor Proficiency:** Lion Blades gain no additional proficiency in weapons or armor.

**Master of Disguise (Ex):** The first skill a Lion Blade learns is to perfectly alter her appearance in order to blend in to any crowd and any environment. A Lion Blade no longer suffers penalties to Disguise checks made to change her gender, race, or age.

**Move with Crowd (Ex):** Lion Blades are masters of moving in crowds. When moving through groups of humanoids that would normally count as rough terrain, the Lion Blade instead moves normally.

**Inspire Self (Su):** A Lion Blade learns a quiet, throaty chanting that puts her in a light trance, increasing her focus on the task at hand. The Lion Blade gains a +2 competence bonus on skill checks with a particular skill as long as she is able to continue her chant. The bonus increases to +4 at 5th level and +6 at 9th level. The GM may rule that certain uses of this ability are infeasible—chanting to make the Lion Blade move more quietly, for example, is self-defeating. The effect lasts as long as the Lion Blade concentrates, up to a maximum of 2 minutes. Inspire self is a mind-affecting ability.





## LION BLADE

HIT DIE: D6

Level	BAB	Fort	Ref	Will	Special
1	+0	+0	+2	+2	Master of disguise, move with crowd, inspire self +2
2	+1	+0	+3	+3	Slowing strike, sneak attack +1d6
3	+2	+1	+3	+3	Hide in plain sight, unexpected suggestion
4	+3	+1	+4	+4	Expeditious advance
5	+3	+1	+4	+4	Inspire self +4, glean information
6	+4	+2	+5	+5	Sneak attack +2d6
7	+5	+2	+5	+5	Cloud the mind, secret step
8	+6	+2	+6	+6	Narrow miss
9	+6	+3	+6	+6	Grandmaster of disguise, inspire self +6
10	+7	+3	+7	+7	Silent soul, sneak attack +3d6

**Class Skills (6 + Int bonus per level):** Balance, Bluff, Climb, Disguise, Gather Information, Hide, Intimidate, Jump, Listen, Move Silently, Open Lock, Perform, Search, Sense Motive, Spot, Tumble

**Slowing Strike (Su):** Once per round on a successful sneak attack, a Lion Blade may choose to deal 1 less die of sneak attack damage and instead reduce the target's ground speed by 5 feet. Once an opponent's speed has been reduced to 0 feet, he is immobilized (but not helpless). If the target uses wings to fly, the Lion Blade can choose to reduce the creature's flying speed instead of its ground speed. The movement penalties imposed by slow strike are removed once the creature fully heals or it receives a *lesser restoration* spell.

**Sneak Attack (Ex):** This is exactly like the rogue ability of the same name. Sneak attack bonuses from other classes stack.

**Unexpected Suggestion (Su):** At 3rd level, once per day a Lion Blade can use *suggestion* on a target she catches flat-footed. Her caster level is equal to her class level.

**Hide in Plain Sight (Su):** At 3rd level, a Lion Blade can use the Hide skill even while being observed. As long as she is within 10 feet of some sort of shadow, a Lion Blade can hide herself from view in the open without having anything to actually hide behind. She cannot, however, hide in her own shadow.

**Expeditious Advance (Ex):** At 4th level, a Lion Blade's land speed is faster than the norm for her race by +10 feet. This benefit applies only when she is wearing no armor or light armor and not carrying a heavy load. Apply this bonus before modifying the Lion Blade's speed because of any load carried or armor worn.

**Glean Information (Ex):** At 5th level, a Lion Blade's study of body language gives her an advantage when observing or manipulating others. A Lion Blade gains a +2 bonus to Bluff, Intimidate, Gather Information, and Sense Motive checks. Once per day per character level, a Lion Blade can add a +2 circumstance bonus to any Knowledge skill check (including bardic knowledge) relating to humanoids in her presence.

**Secret Step (Su):** A Lion Blade can slip through crowds with supernatural ease. Once per day per two class levels, a Lion Blade can take a move action to move up to double her speed through a crowd without provoking attacks of opportunity for this movement. For example, if a Lion Blade has a movement speed of 40, she can use secret step to move 80 feet as a move action. She can only use this ability to move through humanoid crowds that would otherwise count as difficult terrain. This is fast, agile movement, not teleportation, so she must physically traverse the intervening space (for example, she cannot use this ability to bypass a trapped floor or *wall of fire*, even if surrounded by crowds).

**Cloud the Mind (Su):** At 7th level, a Lion Blade becomes incredibly difficult to find. Whenever a Lion Blade is using Hide or Move Silently, observers suffer a -5 on their Listen or Spot checks. The Lion Blade gains SR equal to 10 + her class level against divination spells.

**Narrow Miss (Su):** At 8th level, a Lion Blade can dodge swiftly and erratically as a swift action, gaining 20% concealment until her next turn. She may use this ability once per day per two class levels.

**Grandmaster of Disguise (Ex):** At 9th level, a Lion Blade is able to improvise materials for a disguise that are as effective as an actual disguise kit. She gains a +2 circumstance bonus to disguise checks (this overlaps with the bonus from an actual disguise kit). Once per day per class level she can make a Disguise check at a -20 penalty to create a disguise as a full-round action.

**Silent Soul (Ex):** At 10th level, a Lion Blade has mastered the ability to still her thoughts, her movement, and her sounds to such a point that she becomes harder to dominate, harder to see, and harder to hear. All Hide or Move Silently checks made by the Lion Blade gain a +10 circumstance bonus (this is in addition to the -5 penalty imposed by cloud the mind) and the Lion Blade gains SR 20 against mind-affecting effects.



## SARENRAE UNDER SIEGE

As retribution for the Qadiran occupation of Taldor during the Grand Campaign, Grand Prince Stavian I targeted one aspect of Qadiran society for retribution: the Cult of the Dawnflower. With Sarenrae's traditional ethnicity recognized as Keleshite and her faith strongly rooted in Qadira, she became an easy target for an emperor struggling to unite a nation. Stavian I made worshipping Sarenrae illegal in Taldor, destroying all of her temples and places of worship in the Great Purge of 4528 AR and uniting most of Taldan society against Sarenrae's followers by propagandizing them as treasonous spies.

Never ones to back away from the challenge of evil, the Cult of the Dawnflower pushed slowly back into Taldor, setting up underground temples and rural places of worship to help heal the rift between the two countries.

In practice, modern Taldor can barely keep control of its expansive frontier, and the worship of Sarenrae is far more public outside the larger cities of Cassomir, Oppara, or Zimar. In those three cities (especially militaristic, Qadira-hating Zimar), the Cult of the Dawnflower is still reviled, and her clerics and followers are beaten, expelled, or even killed. As such, the clerics of Sarenrae in Taldor have created new spells of their faith in order to deal with the unique challenges presented by the Taldan Empire.

### ADMONISHING RAY

School evocation [force]; Level cleric 2, sorcerer/wizard 2

#### CASTING

Casting Time 1 standard action

Components V, S

#### EFFECT

Range close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)

Effect one or more rays

Duration instantaneous

Saving Throw none; Spell Resistance yes

#### DESCRIPTION

You blast your enemies with rays of nonlethal force. You may fire one ray, plus one additional ray for every four levels you possess beyond 3rd (to a maximum of three rays at 11th level). Each ray requires a ranged touch attack to hit and deals 4d6 points of nonlethal damage. This is a force effect. The rays may be fired at the same or different targets, but all rays must be fired simultaneously and aimed at targets within 30 feet of each other. The rays hit about as hard as a punch from a strong adult human, and can knock away unattended objects weighing up to 10 pounds if that amount of force could normally do so.

### ENHANCED DIPLOMACY

School divination; Level cleric 0, druid 0

#### CASTING

Casting Time 1 standard action

Components V, S

#### EFFECT

Range touch

Target creature touched

Duration 1 minute or until discharged

Saving Throw Will negates (harmless); Spell Resistance yes (harmless)

#### DESCRIPTION

You imbue the subject with divine diplomacy skills. The creature gets a +2 competence bonus on a single Diplomacy or Intimidate check. It must choose to use the bonus before making the roll to which it applies.





## DETECT THE FAITHFUL

**School** divination; **Level** cleric 1, druid 1, paladin 1, ranger 1

### CASTING

**Casting Time** 1 standard action

**Components** V, S, DF

### EFFECT

**Range** 60 ft.

**Area** cone-shaped emanation

**Duration** concentration, up to 1 minute/level (D)

**Saving Throw** none; **Spell Resistance** no

### DESCRIPTION

You can detect other worshipers of your deity (mortal worshipers, outsider servants, and so on). The amount of information revealed depends on how long you focus on a particular area or subject.

*1st Round:* Presence or absence of the faithful.

*2nd Round:* Number of individual faithful in the area.

*3rd Round:* The exact location of each worshiper. If a fellow worshiper is outside your line of sight, then you discern his direction but not his exact location.

Each round you can rotate to detect worshipers in a new area. The spell can penetrate barriers, but a sheet of lead, 1 foot of stone, 1 inch of common metal, or 3 feet of wood or dirt blocks it.

The GM decides if worshipers are present. A creature's personal interpretation of its beliefs determines whether or not it is of the same faith as you—hence heretics and splinter cultists of your deity still count as worshipers of that deity. The Green Faith counts as a deity for the purpose of this spell.

## SAND WHIRLWIND

**School** conjuration (creation); **Level** cleric 3

### CASTING

**Casting Time** 1 standard action

**Components** V, S, M (a handful of sand, dust, or fine powder)

### EFFECT

**Range** medium (100 ft. + 10 ft./level)

**Target** one creature

**Duration** 1 round/level

**Saving Throw** Will negates (blinding only); **Spell Resistance** no

### DESCRIPTION

A whirling cloud of sand strikes the target, blinding it and hampering its ability to speak. To speak while affected by the spell, the target must make a Concentration check (DC equal to the DC of this spell). If the target tries to cast a spell, the Concentration DC increases by the level of the spell being cast. A successful Will save negates the blindness but not the speech-hampering effect.

## SAND WHIRLWIND, GREATER

**School** conjuration (creation); **Level** cleric 5

### EFFECT

**Area** 10-ft.-radius spread

### DESCRIPTION

This spell functions as *sand whirlwind* except as noted above.

## SHIELD SPEECH

**School** abjuration; **Level** bard 1, cleric 1, druid 1, sorcerer/wizard 1

### CASTING

**Casting Time** 1 standard action

**Components** V, S

### EFFECT

**Range** 10 ft.

**Target** you and one other creature

**Duration** 1 minute/level (D)

**Saving Throw** Will negates (harmless); **Spell Resistance** yes (harmless)

### DESCRIPTION

You can securely communicate with one creature within range. So long as your target remains within 10 feet of you, you and it can speak freely to each other without fear of being overheard. Communications that involve shield speech cannot be spied on, such as with a *divination* spell, and observers of the conversation can tell you are communicating but cannot read lips or hear the conversation unless they are the target of the spell. If you or the target speak to any other creatures, they can hear you normally (only communication between you and the target is protected). The spell does not shield writing, sign language, or any form of communication other than speaking.

## SHIELD SPEECH, GREATER

**School** abjuration; **Level** cleric 4, druid 4, sorcerer/wizard 4

### EFFECT

**Range** 30 ft.

**Area** 30-ft. emanation centered on you

**Duration** 10 minute/level

### DESCRIPTION

This spell functions as *shield speech*, except all creatures within the dome may communicate with each other as if linked by *shield speech*. If they speak with anyone outside the area, those outside the area hear them normally.

## SIGN OF THE DAWNFLOWER

**School** transmutation; **Level** cleric 0, druid 0, paladin 1, ranger 1 (Sarenrae)

### CASTING

**Casting Time** 1 standard action

**Components** S, F (your holy symbol, or a depiction of either Sarenrae's holy symbol or the goddess herself)

### EFFECT

**Range** medium (100 ft. + 10 ft./level)

**Target** one creature/level

**Duration** 1 hour/level

**Saving Throw** none; **Spell Resistance** no

### DESCRIPTION

As *message*, except the only information you can transmit is that you are a worshiper of Sarenrae. Once notified, the target can reply that he understands your sign. The spell transmits meaning, not sound, and transcends language barriers.



## ARCANE WONDERS OF TALDOR'S ELITE

The vast wealth of Taldor's royalty and senatorial classes, as well as their excessive dedication to opulence, style, and the display of personal fortunes, has led to a number of innovations in magical comforts. It is not uncommon, especially in Taldor's larger cities of Oppara, Cassomir, and Zimar, to see a noble pass by in a magically powered sedan chair, a lady of the nobility carrying a magic compact with which to do her makeup, or a young blade in the latest fashionable finery being followed around Oppara by his floating sword scabbard. No idea is too small for the wealthy of the empire, and no cost is too great—after all, who worries about the use of an item when everyone is talking about its style?

### COSTUME BUREAU

**Aura** moderate conjuration and transmutation; **CL** 9th  
**Slot** none; **Price** 7,000 gp; **Weight** 500 lb.

#### DESCRIPTION

This large oaken bureau has a double-door cabinet that sits atop three horizontal drawers. Once per day, you can concentrate on a set of clothing you would like to wear, then open the cabinet or one of the drawers to retrieve a set of magically fabricated clothing matching what you imagined. While worn, the clothing gives you a +2 enhancement bonus to Charisma.

The clothes fade to worthless scraps after 24 hours, as do any pieces separated from the whole (such as buttons, gem adornments, or strips torn off as bandages).



#### CONSTRUCTION

**Requirements** Craft Wondrous Item, *eagle's splendor*, *fabricate*, *minor creation*, creator must have at least 5 ranks in Craft (tailoring) or Profession (tailor); **Cost** 3,500 gp, 280 XP

### GOSSIP GLASS

**Aura** faint divination; **CL** 1st  
**Slot** eyes; **Price** 3,600 gp; **Weight** 1 lb.

#### DESCRIPTION

This silver, bejeweled set of opera glasses is indistinguishable from a regular set, save that when you look through the lenses you gain a +4 competence bonus to Spot checks. When reading lips, you can understand any spoken language as the *comprehend languages* spell. You can only use a gossip glass to spy on conversations within line of sight and must be able to see people speak in order to read their lips.

#### CONSTRUCTION

**Requirements** Craft Wondrous Item, *comprehend languages*; **Cost** 1,800 gp, 144 XP

### MISSIVE STONE

**Aura** faint transmutation; **CL** 3rd  
**Slot** neck; **Price** 10,000 gp; **Weight** —

#### DESCRIPTION

These two small, polished pieces of black rock dangle from simple silver chains and are covered in dozens of tiny arcane symbols etched in red paint. Missive stones are always created in pairs. When you and another person each wear one of the stones, you can send whispered messages to each other as long as you are no more than 3 miles apart.

#### CONSTRUCTION

**Requirements** Craft Wondrous Item, *whispering wind*; **Cost** 5,000 gp, 400 XP

### THE PENDULATE DIVAN OF EMPEROR FORTIGRÉ

**Aura** moderate conjuration and transmutation; **CL** 11th  
**Slot** none; **Price** 66,000 gp; **Weight** 100 lb.

#### DESCRIPTION

This luxurious, red felt divan is edged in gold latticework and made from highly polished, glossy black wood. If you lie upon it, you automatically understand how to activate it. Created for the mad Emperor Fortigré of Taldor thousands of years ago, the *pendulate divan* includes many special abilities. When you sit, stand, or lie upon it, it can walk like a four-legged animal with a movement speed



of 30 feet, create up to 2 gallons of water per day, protect you with *endure elements*, and *fly* or *teleport* as per the spells (once each per day). The original *pendulate divan* is stored in the Imperial Palace in Taldor, though a few copies of it were created over the centuries, and many wealthy nobles own lesser versions which can only walk and have no other powers.

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#### CONSTRUCTION

**Requirements** Craft Wondrous Item, *animate object*, *create water*, *endure elements*, *fly*, *teleport*, creator must have at least 5 ranks in Craft (woodworking); **Cost** 33,000 gp, 2,640 XP (original version), 20,000 gp, 800 XP (lesser version)

#### PHILANDEROUS COMPACT

**Aura** faint illusion; **CL** 1st

**Slot** none; **Price** 1,500 gp; **Weight** —

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#### DESCRIPTION

This small, polished leather case opens to reveal a mirror, face powder, rouge, and a puff. Using the puff and uttering a command word allows you to change your appearance once per day as per *disguise self*. Additionally, you get a +2 competence bonus to Gather Information checks.

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#### CONSTRUCTION

**Requirements** Craft Wondrous Item, *disguise self*, creator must have at least 5 ranks in Gather Information; **Cost** 750 gp, 60 XP

#### PITFALL (WEAPON QUALITY)

**Aura** moderate transmutation; **CL** 5th

**Price** +1 bonus

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#### DESCRIPTION

This ability can only be placed on a melee weapon. A weapon with the *pitfall* quality gives you a heightened danger sense. When holding a *pitfall* weapon, apply the weapon's enhancement bonus to your initiative checks, Reflex saves made to avoid traps, and AC against attacks made by traps. For example, a +5 *pitfall* longsword gives you a +5 bonus to initiative, +5 to Reflex saves made to avoid traps, and a +5 bonus to AC against attacks made by traps. Wielding two weapons with the *pitfall* weapon quality only grants the bonuses from the better weapon.

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#### CONSTRUCTION

**Requirements** Craft Magic Arms and Armor, Improved Initiative, *cat's grace*

#### RAUCOUS CANARD

**Aura** moderate transmutation; **CL** 1st

**Slot** none; **Price** 100 gp; **Weight** —

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#### DESCRIPTION

The raucous canard appears to be a small, nondescript piece of rolled-up parchment. Unrolling the parchment, however, allows you to record up to a 25-word message. Once you record a message, you may throw it into the air, causing it to animate, sprout small feathery wings, and circle overhead for 10 minutes while loudly repeating the message over and over in a bland, genderless voice. Alternatively, you may close the scroll, and the next person to

open it triggers this animation. After 10 minutes, the *raucous canard* disappears in a small shower of sparks. Scheming Taldan nobles like to use these to spread gossip about their enemies.

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#### CONSTRUCTION

**Requirements** Craft Wondrous Item, *animate objects*, *magic mouth*; **Cost** 50 gp, 4 XP

#### RING OF THE SUBLIME

**Aura** faint abjuration; **CL** 1st

**Slot** ring; **Price** 2,000 gp; **Weight** —

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#### DESCRIPTION

This ornate gold ring is set with a single round sapphire and platinum stems. When worn, the ring of the sublime protects its wearer from fear effects as if constantly under the effects of *remove fear*. Wearers of rings of the sublime in Taldor often believe the ring's ability to combat fear also removes social anxiety, making the wearer a more confident and self-assured member of high society.

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#### CONSTRUCTION

**Requirements** Forge Ring, *remove fear*; **Cost** 1,000 gp, 80 XP

#### SOARING CATHEDRA

**Aura** faint transmutation; **CL** 3rd

**Slot** none; **Price** 5,000 gp; **Weight** 250 lb.

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#### DESCRIPTION

This large sedan chair is made of light but sturdy blackwood and is draped with white silk coverings. Inside, there is room for two medium-sized occupants on a bed of silken pillows and thick padding. Its movement is controlled by one of the occupants. It always floats a few feet above the ground and moves horizontally with a speed of 10 feet, though the occupants can make it land or float again as a free action.

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#### CONSTRUCTION

**Requirements** Craft Wondrous Item, *levitate*, creator must have at least 5 ranks in Craft (woodworking); **Cost** 2,500 gp, 200 XP

#### TALISMAN OF THE SUMMONED STEED

**Aura** faint conjuration; **CL** 1st

**Slot** none; **Price** 3,600 gp; **Weight** —

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#### DESCRIPTION

This onyx talisman resembles a majestic black stallion covered in carved wavy lines and bearing a tiny twine bridle. When the command word is spoken, it transforms into a saddled and thoroughbred light horse that serves you willingly. The command word also returns it to talisman form. If slain, the horse reverts to talisman form and cannot be activated again for 24 hours.

Each talisman's horse form has a specific color (black, brown, gray, pinto, and so on) and markings (blazes, stars, stockings, etc.), chosen by the creator when the item is crafted.

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#### CONSTRUCTION

**Requirements** Craft Wondrous Item, *mount*, creator must have at least 5 ranks in Ride; **Cost** 1,800 gp, 144 XP



## SKILLS OF THE UNBEARDED

Taldor's vast underclass (known as the unbarred) has long learned to survive on what little means it possesses. Those members who don't join the military to escape poverty spend their days toiling in sweaty factories, stomping through the Verduran Forest behind druids who tell them which trees to cut, or hammering away in the Imperial Shipyards in Cassomir. Even successful merchants with thriving businesses often find themselves bowled under by Taldor's crushing tax rate and import tariffs, with little money in their pouches after the week's transactions are tallied.

Turning to a life of crime in order to survive carries the risk of being tossed into a border prison in the eastern prefectures, institutions that are nothing more than ruined castles and secure dungeons where criminals are put to be forgotten. Even being unemployed is a challenge, as vagabonds (as those without jobs are called in Taldor) are often press-ganged into day labor by the nobility, and sometimes even rounded up and sold as galley slaves to the Zimar corsairs. It's not uncommon to see a crowd of filthy peasants chained together at the neck, standing on a dock in Oppara waiting for the next Zimar ship to arrive and put them to work.

Rather than face this fate, many of Taldor's vagabonds gather together in the wilds of the empire and form into gangs and pirate bands to make

their living preying upon anyone who strays into their territory. There are even vagabond camps beneath the streets of Oppara and Cassomir, as citizens tired of being press-ganged build homes far from the prying eyes of the rich. The one exception to the mistreatment of Taldor's vagabonds is a massive camp on the south shore of the River Porthmos, across the Grand Bridge from Oppara. Home to more than a thousand unemployed peasants, wanted criminals, escaped convicts, and runaway soldiers and sailors, the Grand Bridge vagabond camp is largely ignored by the Taldan authorities—mainly because the few times they've tried to clear it they've met with stiff, armed resistance. With most of Taldor's military focused on border security, the camp is now rarely given even a cursory inspection by officers of the law.

In the countryside, things are little better for Taldor's poor. Most of them live as serfs, farmers, or craftsmen who are nothing more than slaves to their lords or prefecture governors. The most these serfs can hope for is that their skills with blade, spear, or bow might be noticed by their lords, allowing them to one day rise to the status of knight and serve Taldor in shining armor. Because of this, able-bodied men and boys spend most of their free time training for combat, for they never know when their lord might call on them to attack a rival or invade the next prefecture, and their heroism and skill in that skirmish might elevate them above the rank of a common peasant.

Below are additional feats available for characters with a vagabond background; at the GM's discretion, lower-class characters from different countries may select these feats as well.

### Experienced Vagabond

You spent significant time as a vagabond and know your way around their society.

**Prerequisites:** Bluff 2 ranks, Knowledge (local) 2 ranks, member of an underclass

**Benefit:** When dealing with criminals, vagabonds, unsavory characters, or other members of a country's underclass, you gain a +1 bonus on Bluff, Gather Information, Knowledge (local), and Sense Motive checks. When traveling with at least one other person who has this feat, you gain a +2 circumstance bonus on Listen and Spot checks to avoid being surprised at the start of combat.

### Galley Slave

Your experience as a galley slave has given you some unique insight into the world of sailing and piracy.

**Prerequisites:** Profession (sailor) 2 ranks, current or former galley slave





**Benefit:** You get a +2 circumstance bonus on Profession (sailor) and Use Rope checks made while aboard a ship with oars and rowers. When fighting on a ship, your first hit each battle gets a +2 damage bonus.

### Master of the Ledger

Your long experience balancing the books of a heavily taxed merchant has given you insight into the world of Taldan business.

**Prerequisites:** Appraise 6 ranks, Profession (any one) 6 ranks

**Benefit:** You get a +2 bonus on Appraise checks, a +2 bonus on any one Profession skill, and when dealing with anyone of your profession, you get a +4 bonus on Sense Motive checks when using the hunch task (see the Sense Motive skill). Your ability to accurately and carefully invest money gives you insight into the movements of coin through the marketplace. If you have access to a marketplace in a settlement of village size or larger, you may invest up to 100 gp in that market; the exact nature of your investments isn't important but is usually divided among several businesses. Once invested, you do not have access to this money for at least 1 month.

As often as once per month you can visit the marketplace to see if your investments were successful. Flip a coin. If heads, that marketplace earns you 25% of your investment there; if tails, your investments made no significant profit for that period. Your skill with business means you never actually lose money from these investments unless disaster strikes the settlement (such as a plague or dragon attack), in which case your investment is lost. If more than a month passes between your visits to the marketplace, you only make one check to see if you make a 25% profit. If you send an agent to collect profits on your behalf, you keep half the profits and the agent keeps half. You may close out your investments during any visit, which ends your relationship with that market and returns you the full amount of your investment.

You gain a +1 bonus on all Diplomacy, Gather Information, and Intimidate checks when dealing with someone associated with your invested marketplace (shopkeepers, local guards, and so on). Very large or trade-oriented cities may have multiple marketplaces, allowing you to invest in each, though local laws (particularly relating to guilds) may restrict what you can do.

### Sneaky Vagabond

You have a well-practiced ability at going unnoticed.

**Benefit:** You get a +2 bonus on Hide checks when others are actively trying to find you. In crowds, this bonus increases to +4. Additionally, you gain a +2 circumstance bonus on Gather Information and Knowledge (local) checks when trying to find a place to hide.

### URBAN SURVIVAL

DC	Task
10	Get along in an urban setting, and easily find enough food and supplies to survive for 24 hours. You can provide food and water for one other person for every 2 points by which your check result exceeds 10.
15	Gain a +2 bonus on all Constitution checks made to resist starvation or thirst. You may grant the same bonus to one other character for every 1 point by which your Survival check exceeds 15.
15	Gain a +2 bonus on all Survival checks made to track on firm or hard ground.

### Taldan Conscript

Your constant training in service to your lord has improved your martial prowess with some weapons.

**Prerequisites:** Taldan serf in service to a lord

**Benefit:** When wielding a farm implement (such as a hand axe, pick, pitchfork, or scythe) as a weapon, you get a +1 bonus on damage rolls. When fighting alongside other conscripts you get a +1 bonus on initiative checks.

### Taldan Knight

A Taldan noble has knighted you, giving you the rights and privileges of a knight of the realm.

**Prerequisites:** Base attack bonus +6, heavy armor proficiency, proficient in a martial weapon

**Benefit:** You gain a cohort as if you had selected the Leadership feat; this cohort is a human or halfling commoner, expert, or warrior with the Taldan Squire feat. When within 10 feet of your squire, you get a +2 bonus on initiative checks and a +1 dodge bonus to AC.

### Taldan Squire

You spent time as a squire to a Taldan knight and understand how to fight alongside him.

**Prerequisites:** Base attack bonus +1, proficient in a martial weapon

**Benefit:** When within 50 feet of a mounted ally with the Mounted Combat feat, you get a +2 bonus on initiative. If this ally is injured, you gain a +1 dodge bonus on AC as long as you are within 10 feet of him.

### Urban Forager

You are skilled at keeping yourself and others safe in the alleys, sewers, and underbellies of cities.

**Prerequisites:** Knowledge (local) 4 ranks, Survival 4 ranks, Track

**Benefit:** You may use the Survival skill to forage and track in urban locations using the table above.



**HARBORMASTER HALLADOR,  
BOSS OF WESTPORT**

The man who would one day become the Boss of Westport, one of the busiest ports in all of the Inner Sea, began his life in meager surroundings. He was born to a half-Keleshite, half-Taldan prostitute in the Grandbridge Vagabond Camp and spent his early years entertaining his mother's clients while they waited for their turn with her. When he was 8 years old, his mother was slain during a Taldan Phalanx raid on the camp and young Hallador turned to a life of thievery to stay alive. He worked for numerous different vagabond pickpocket



bosses and learned the streets of Oppara like a man knows his own reflection. He held a hatred for Taldan authority in his heart and when he was strong enough he joined a roving gang that preyed on merchant traffic throughout southern Taldor, relishing the opportunity to strike at anyone wearing a Taldan military uniform. His ferocity in combat and quick skill with the handaxe gave his fellow gang members pause and they began to whisper in secret that his reckless assaults on Taldan officers were going to undo the gang. One night, when Hallador was 20 years old, the gang set upon him in his sleep, threw a black sack over his head, and beat him unconscious.

When he awoke, he heard only the sounds of the ocean and smelled a salty breeze. A whip crack cut his reverie short and he yanked off the sack to find himself chained to a bench in the belly of a Zimar corsair galley, the men to either side of him nudging him to grab the oar and row. For the next 5 years, Hallador learned everything there was to learn about sailing, ship-to-ship combat, and the arts of naval warfare. His hatred of Taldan authority eventually turned into a fanatic loyalty as his years spent fighting Qadiran shipping traffic united him with the common Taldan viewpoint: that Qadira was a sore upon the land and it was up to Taldor to destroy it.

Over time, Hallador's loyalty to his crew and his ship's captain, as well as his skills fighting with his handaxes on the high seas, saw him raised from the oar bench and the opportunity to captain his own Zimar corsair galley bestowed upon him. He received a Letter of Mark, officially making him an officer in the Taldan Imperial Navy, and his ship, *Vagabond Queen*, became one of the most feared privateer vessels on the Obari Ocean. He was responsible for no less than 100 merchant vessel sinkings and he frequently tangled with Qadiran naval warships. When he was 32 years old, the *Vagabond Queen* was sunk by a coordinated attack off the Isle of Jalmeray and only Hallador and a handful of his crew were plucked alive from the waters by the Qadiran sailors. His crew was immediately put to the sword, but since he carried the Letter of Mark, it afforded him some protections and he was sent to a prison in Katheer.

Within months, Hallador escaped and quickly fled north, making for the familiar territory of the Grandbridge Vagabond Camp on the River Porthmos's southern shore. He soon found that the camp no longer possessed anything of interest for him, and as he no longer wished to live his life as a dishonest rascal, he took what little money he had stored away and moved into Oppara. He found work as a longshoreman on the



docks of Westport, and his easy demeanor, fierce loyalty to friends and coworkers, and his willingness to resort to violence to get the job done escalated him quickly through the ranks. When the previous Harbormaster was strung up by a gang for refusing to pay protection money, Hallador hunted them down and slew every last one of them. It was this initiative, this dedication to order, this love of the docks and the seaman's life, that made a few politicians in Oppara sit up and take notice. Almost immediately, they selected Hallador to be the new Harbormaster.

Without delay, he petitioned the Oppara Constabulary to provide more men to protect Westport from the gangs that controlled it by night. The Constabulary refused, claiming to lack the manpower to help, but Boss Hallador suspected they were being paid to keep the patrols light and so set out to build his own militia. He gathered men he knew from his youth out of the Grandbridge Vagabond Camp, off the decks of Zimar corsair ships, and hired lowlifes, thugs, and strong-arms to build a small army to guard Westport. Within weeks of forming the self-styled Westport Guard, Boss Hallador extinguished or took over every gang that had ever caused trouble in his district. Once the rest of the city's thieves got the message, Boss Hallador set about increasing trade across the docks. He contacted the Qadiran ship captain who had captured him and established a partnership so that Qadiran vessels could dock in Westport flying the crown-and-lion and unload their goods. Boss Hallador took a cut of their profits, of course, but they made good money selling their goods to their enemies and soon dozens of Qadiran vessels passed through Westport weekly. Though the Taldan Imperial Navy suspects some of what Boss Hallador is up to, they've never caught a single Qadiran vessel in Opparan waters thanks to the Harbormaster's network of paid informants within the naval leadership.

Today Boss Hallador is one of the most powerful men in Oppara—perhaps in all of Taldor. His control of Westport is total as he employs thousands of Oppara's poorest men and women, whose thanks for their weekly pay is repaid with fanatic loyalty. He manages an army of militiamen, runs a crowded system of docks, and outright thumbs his nose at Taldan authority. He makes money for the empire, though, and the politicians can't deny his ability to keep Westport running like a tight ship.

Harbormaster Hallador is a large man, nearly 6 feet tall and about 280 pounds. His receding hair is hidden beneath a brown wool stocking cap; he wears a pair of thin, wire-framed spectacles when reading, but otherwise his eyes are keen with a steely glare. He wears a pair of thick leather pants, like a fisherman's, that stretch up to above his waist and holds them up with a broad leather belt.

Two well-oiled, supremely sharp handaxes stick through his belt, one on either side, and he carries them with the ease of a man who has fought with them a great deal. He moves lightly for his size, careful where he steps, and walks like a man who spent most of his life at sea. A huge, wooden board, a single nail punched into it, acts as his clipboard and is always full, overflowing with bills of lading, receipts, and summons.

## HARBORMASTER HALLADOR, BOSS OF WESTPORT

CR 7

Male human expert 4/rogue 4

CN Medium humanoid

**Init** +2; **Senses** Listen +11, Spot +11

### DEFENSE

**AC** 18, touch 14, flat-footed 15

(+4 armor, +1 deflection, +3 Dex)

**hp** 47 (8d6+16)

**Fort** +4, **Ref** +7, **Will** +5

**Defensive Abilities** evasion, uncanny dodge

### OFFENSE

**Spd** 30 ft.

**Melee** +1 *keen handaxe* +9/+9/+6 (1d6+1/19–20/x3)

**Ranged** +1 *keen handaxe* +11/+6 (1d6+1/19–20, x3)

**Special Attacks** sneak attack +2d6

### TACTICS

**Before Combat** Hallador relies on his four ever-present bodyguards (N male human warrior 3, masterwork mace, studded leather armor) to protect him from trouble. If it looks like they're out-classed or that he may be in danger, he doesn't hesitate to draw his twin handaxes and wade into battle. If he expects a fight, he can call on his paid militia to back him up, either using numbers to intimidate his opponents or actually joining the fight.

**During Combat** Hallador is a skilled melee fighter and uses the terrain and his allies to his advantage. He always looks for flanking opportunities to make good use of his sneak attack, and directs his guards to flank with him.

**Morale** Hallador is far too old to idealistically fight to the death—if brought to less than 10 hit points, he surrenders and offers his foe favors and money to spare his life.

### STATISTICS

**Str** 10, **Dex** 16, **Con** 15, **Int** 13, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 12

**Base Atk** +6; **Grp** +6

**Feats** Martial Weapon Proficiency (handaxe), Two-Weapon

Fighting, Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus (handaxe)

**Skills** Appraise +12, Balance +8, Climb +5, Bluff +6, Diplomacy

+12, Gather Information +12, Knowledge (local) +12, Listen

+11, Profession (sailor) +5, Sense Motive +5, Spot +11, Swim +5

**Languages** Common, Kelish

**SQ** trapfinding, trap sense +1

**Gear** *feather token (anchor)*, *gloves of dexterity* +2, +1 *keen*

*handaxe* (2), +2 *leather armor*, *ring of protection* +1, 174 gp



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Kyonin

ladara

Litran

Highhelm

The Five Kings Mountains

Woodsedge

Fog Peaks

Fog Creek

Yanmass

Pillars of Rovagug

Belliso

Wispil

Verduran Forest

Isle of Arenway

Verduran Fork

Tandak Plains

Falling River

Thousand Relics Pass

Aroden's Eye

Carpenden

Salten River

Faldamont

Maheto

Valley of the Azlant

The Dragonscar

Dalaston

Pergamon Pass

The World's Edge Mountains

The Wistling Plains

Ruins of Nazilli

Bafra's Face

Mount Antios

Temple Canyon

Eagle's Head

Forthmos Gap

Stavian's Hold

Cassomir

Tandak Plains

Taldor

Star Bay

Ridonport

Jagged Saw

Almas

Old Schir

Karakuru

Sardis Township

Mut

Oppara

River Forthmos

Eisekulp

Elbistan

Emperor's Pass

Tribulation

Southern Range

Isle of Kortos

Escadar

Kozan

Ortalaca

Merciful Bay

Zimar

Border Wood

Lionsguard

Monastery of the Seven Forms

Golsifar

Jalrune River

Demgazi

White Pass

Diebel

Absalom

Sary Coast

Katheer

River of Qadira

0 120

miles

- - - - - Prefecture Border
- - - - - Canal



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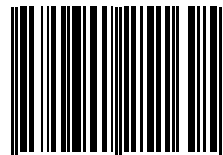


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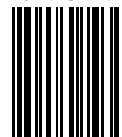
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