



Bits of the Boulevard

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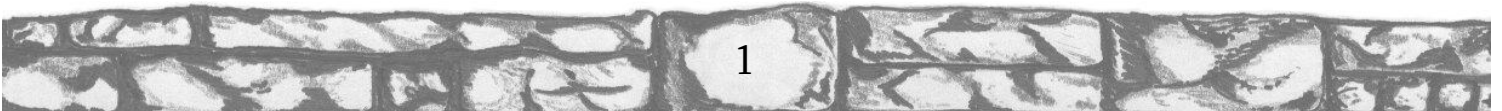




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Bits of the Boulevard

01. A dozen merchants call out prices and wares in practiced, sing-song chants. Some exuberant businessmen juggle their wares as they call out, and over the heads of the crowd you catch sight of tumbling fruits, baguettes, even hunks of smoked meat.

02. A weary peddler walks his heavily-laden donkey through the narrow streets. With each step the ragged beast of burden takes, you hear the clink of metal on metal, as copper mugs and pans clink together. As he walks, the donkey contentedly munches grain from an ornately stitched leather feedbag.

03. The dusky smell of good coffee [spicy tea] drifts out of an otherwise non-descript market stall. Looking inside, you see a plump old woman brewing herself a cup, while dozens of colorful finches hop across rows of carrots and melons, squawking. [Note: The publishers know that coffee was not available in medieval Europe, however it is something many players are familiar with, and it or its equivalent might be available in a fantasy world.]

04. In the shade of a push cart, a young girl is busily scraping the seeds out of a fat, pinkish-yellow pumpkin. She dumps the entrails into the dirt beside her, and occasionally a spectacularly bold grey squirrel will dart in to snatch a seed or three. The pudgy pushcart owner busies herself selling similar gourds, while the child dutifully prepares one for dinner.

05. There is a jolly red-faced man with a white hat and tunic and a huge smile offering his pastries to the crowd. "Sweet pastries! Fruit and honey!" His smile is sincere and he seems genuinely enthused about his fruit pies. "Tickle your taste and tease your tummy! Get your sweet treats here!" In his left arm he carries a large basket lined with a red and white woven fabric and many pastries. He smiles at [pick one of the characters]. "You look

like someone who could use a special treat today! How abouts a pie of fruit and honey as you go on your way?" [He is named Rocco but his friends call him "Sweets." He loves the pies which he and his wife make at their home and then sell on the street each day. The little pies cost as much as a loaf of bread.]



06. A wagon load of fired clay pots clatters down the narrow street, pulled by a drab grey donkey. The cart's driver is an equally drab grandmother; the only spark of color on the wagon is the brightly colored scarf the old woman has wrapped around her mouth to keep out the road's dirt. Even the pots are drab; simple unadorned grey clay splotched with brown. The woman lowers her scarf and spits a glob of inky black tobacco into the road.



Shards of the Street

General Descriptions

1. LEAVING THE GATE – It is wider here just inside the gate, yet the crowding is worse. Gaffers trying to get to market curse those new to the city, who stop in the middle of the road to get their bearings. A few gentle-born in rich capes do their best, while holding scented cloths to their faces, to nimbly dodge the unwashed children darting through the mass of people. It seems only the presence of a few of the gate guard moving through the crowd keeps things from getting out of hand. “Move along now, move along.”

Trickles of people head off from the bottleneck in a number of directions, more or less guided by the layout of the streets and close buildings. As the pressure of the traffic begins to lessen, it becomes noticeably easier to breathe. The muttering masses begin to give way to the measured clip-clop of horses being lead on stone-paved streets. A townsman heading for the gate passes you; he seems to have come from the market, as his cloth-wrapped bundle releases the smell of hot bread, which washes over you.

2. BUILDINGS OF THE CITY – The buildings rise up on either side of you and for anyone who is used to open spaces, you feel like they are closing in upon you. In many buildings, the upper stories actually overhang the street and cast grey shadows beneath them as the owners tried to maximize their space. Stucco and half-timbered buildings are more prevalent than wood or stone but there is a variety of buildings and nearly every possibility seems to be represented. The facades of the buildings are often painted bright colors, with red, blue, green, and white being common. Some of the richer-looking buildings actually have tiled facings or tiled decoration around the doors and windows. Signs hang above the shops and show their wares in bold detail. Sometimes the name of the shop is written and sometimes it is just the picture and the

color of the sign that let you know what may lie within.

[An example of this would be the "Golden Lion;" it may or may not have words on the sign but it would have a gold lion on it.]



3. NARROW ALLEY – [As you turn the corner] You find yourself in an alley so narrow, you imagine one person could lean out a window and shake the hand of her neighbor across the way. Weak sunlight filters down from above, illuminating the gray puddles and black mud of the alley. There is no sound except the wind howling quietly through the eaves of the buildings on either



A Bit About Cities

by Randon Eliason

Overview: Cities are a great place to add color and depth to your fantasy campaign. They can be the home base of your adventurers, a place for dramatic ends to long, hard-won campaigns, a place to buy supplies and have a couple of ‘just passing through’ adventures, or the dark and evil place the heroes must sneak into to ferret out who is behind the dastardly plan that has been evolving around them.

Regardless of how you plan to use a city, there are a couple of basic questions you need to answer to give the city a life of its own, beyond its name.

Why does it exist?

Why is this city here? That is the first thing to ponder. Often in roleplaying games, a city is present because some person put a dot on a map and gave it a name. That’s not how most living cities came into being.

Cities don’t happen without rhyme or reason. They usually fall into three general categories.

- A. A trading center with a large economic ‘reach’.
- B. A center of government or religion.
- C. A ‘jumping off point’.

A. Trading centers

Cities grow from towns and villages. Rarely are cities ‘created’ by some great design, although government and religious centers may fall into this category. However, the truly great cities are those that support long distance trade. Examples of these cities in history are Rome, Constantinople/ Byzantium, Genoa, Venice, London, Hong Kong, Naples, Amsterdam, Hamburg, Singapore, New Orleans, etc. Each of these cities was famous for housing caravans, companies, trading houses and trade guilds that wielded powers greater than the kings of the kingdoms that housed them.

With large-scale commerce comes great wealth, and commerce takes laborers, artisans,

money changers, physicians, alchemists, cooks, brewers, tanners, weavers, tinkers, tailors, soldiers, sailors, rich men, poor men, beggar men, prostitutes, holy men, clerks and thieves. The wealth of a city is not measured in the wealth of its rich, but in the size and success of its trading endeavors. Trade cities are often rowdy, dirty, and dangerous, but they are alive day and night. The law levels in trade cities varies, but in general, they tend toward the ‘golden rule’ – them that’s got the gold, make the rules.

B. Centers of Religion and Government

Cities that grow up around seats of government, holy places or sites of religious authority are fairly common in our history. Often these cities grow into trading cities; sometimes they are successful trading cities that become the seat of government. Examples of historical government or religious centers are Rome, Constantinople/Istanbul, London, Paris, Washington DC, Mecca, Alexandria, Bangkok, Beijing, Delphi, Moscow, etc.

These centers of government usually employ hundreds of clerks, priests, masons, artists, archivists, politicians, courtiers, law experts, etc., in addition to the people they would employ as a simple trade city. These places are seats of power, temporal and spiritual. Cities of these types tend to be of a higher law level than their rowdy trade siblings.

C. Jumping-Off Points

These cities can be thriving trade cities that are the trail’s end for overland caravans, the final port of call at the end of civilization, a ‘gold rush’ city that has sprung up virtually over night to exploit some new resource, or a fortified border keep that has grown fat on the taxes of traders and the coin of soldiers. Cities in this category would be San Francisco, New York, Sutter’s Mill in California, Vancouver, Mumbai (Bombay), Calcutta, Perth, Adelaide, Flanders, Rio, Tana, Tyre, Constantinople (once again), Tobago, Sao Tomé, and the Gold Coast, along with such ‘wild west’ jumping-off

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