

The Eldritch Earl

player's guide

William Beacham

Foreword

THE NORTHERN BORDERLANDS.

A STRUGGLING RULER BESET BY STRIFE ON ALL SIDES.

A CASTLE BREACHED, AN HEIRLOOM STOLEN.

A FAVOURED HEIR LAID LOW BY FEY SORCERY.

AN ANCIENT CURSE CAUSING THE DROWNED DEAD TO RISE.

A PEOPLE BESET BY OUTLAWS, INHUMAN TRIBES, AND MONSTROUS BEASTS.

A CHANCE FOR HEROES TO DO THE RIGHT THING, FOR CRIMINALS TO REDEEM THEMSELVES, FOR MERCENARIES TO MAKE COIN, OR FOR THE UNSCRUPULOUS TO ENGINEER THE DOWNFALL OF A WEAKENED MAN.

AND BEHIND IT ALL, THE MACHINATIONS OF THE **ELDRITCH EARL**...

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE ADVENTURE:

- ‘The Eldrich Earl’ is a campaign in the custom setting of a gritty and superstitious feudal borderland region where rival rulers – the Baron of Cawthorne and the Earl of Nancarrow – vie for power.
- It is written for 5e but with an old-school sensibility about freedom of choice and the need to be smart about tackling dangerous situations: not every encounter is ‘fair’ or balanced you immediately resort to violence every time. Negotiation, stealth, trickery and misdirection are all valuable survival techniques.
- It offers freedom of choice about not only how to approach individual problems, but also about basic character motivations and what the you will consider to be victory conditions. You can choose to be – among other things - righteous crusaders for justice, convicts desperate to avoid imprisonment (or worse), or self-serving opportunists looking to seize the Barony from the man who is fool enough to think they are here to save him, for example.
- The tone and setting of the Northern Borderlands is inspired by classic British roleplaying games from the 1980’s (such as first edition *Warhammer FRP* and *Dragon Warriors*), and as a result is less overtly fantastical than some others. This will have an effect on the kind of player characters that will be a natural fit here: non-Humans are uncommon, and magic users (apart from those of the divine) tend to be treated with suspicion or hostility.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE:

- This guide gives you an **introduction to the setting** and the **background to the plot** of the adventure, as well as **map** of the commonly known locations in the region (there are plenty of other places to discover and explore as you play).
- It also gives guidelines on how to create **new characters** that easily fit into the tone and setting of the adventure, or how to incorporate **pre-existing characters**.
- There are also details on **starting equipment**, along with tables of new **minor magical items** (and a shopping guide for the local **Black Market**) with which your character may begin the adventure.



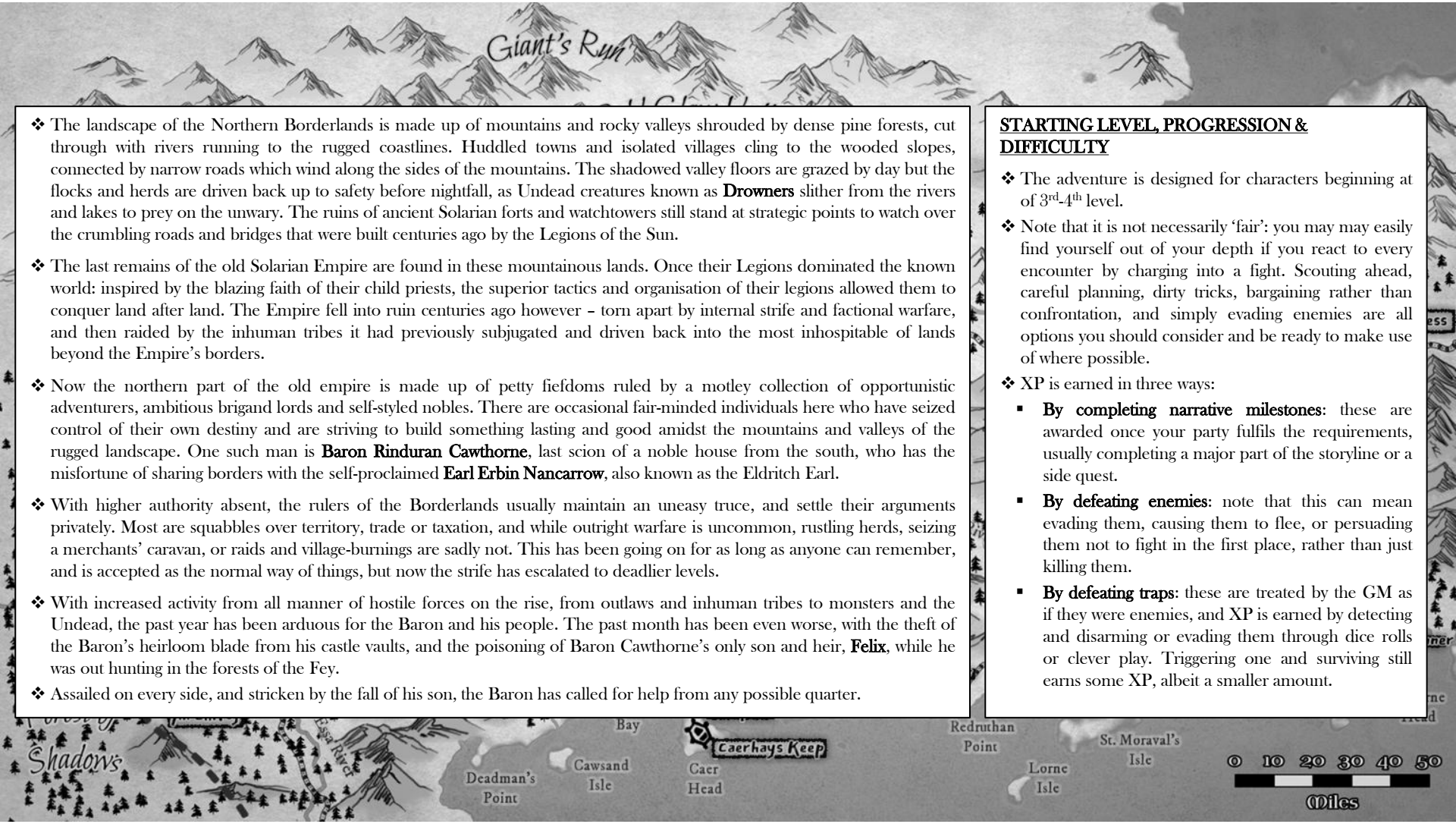
Credits

- Written by William Beacham
- Region maps made by the author using Wonderdraft (https://wonderdraft.net/)
- Cover and interior art: Public Domain (by W. T. Horton)

Map of Cawthorne and western Nancarrow



Welcome to the Borderlands



- The landscape of the Northern Borderlands is made up of mountains and rocky valleys shrouded by dense pine forests, cut through with rivers running to the rugged coastlines. Huddled towns and isolated villages cling to the wooded slopes, connected by narrow roads which wind along the sides of the mountains. The shadowed valley floors are grazed by day but the flocks and herds are driven back up to safety before nightfall, as Undead creatures known as **Drowners** slither from the rivers and lakes to prey on the unwary. The ruins of ancient Solarian forts and watchtowers still stand at strategic points to watch over the crumbling roads and bridges that were built centuries ago by the Legions of the Sun.
- The last remains of the old Solarian Empire are found in these mountainous lands. Once their Legions dominated the known world: inspired by the blazing faith of their child priests, the superior tactics and organisation of their legions allowed them to conquer land after land. The Empire fell into ruin centuries ago however – torn apart by internal strife and factional warfare, and then raided by the inhuman tribes it had previously subjugated and driven back into the most inhospitable of lands beyond the Empire's borders.
- Now the northern part of the old empire is made up of petty fiefdoms ruled by a motley collection of opportunistic adventurers, ambitious brigand lords and self-styled nobles. There are occasional fair-minded individuals here who have seized control of their own destiny and are striving to build something lasting and good amidst the mountains and valleys of the rugged landscape. One such man is **Baron Rinduran Cawthorne**, last scion of a noble house from the south, who has the misfortune of sharing borders with the self-proclaimed **Earl Erbin Nancarrow**, also known as the Eldritch Earl.
- With higher authority absent, the rulers of the Borderlands usually maintain an uneasy truce, and settle their arguments privately. Most are squabbles over territory, trade or taxation, and while outright warfare is uncommon, rustling herds, seizing a merchants' caravan, or raids and village-burnings are sadly not. This has been going on for as long as anyone can remember, and is accepted as the normal way of things, but now the strife has escalated to deadlier levels.
- With increased activity from all manner of hostile forces on the rise, from outlaws and inhuman tribes to monsters and the Undead, the past year has been arduous for the Baron and his people. The past month has been even worse, with the theft of the Baron's heirloom blade from his castle vaults, and the poisoning of Baron Cawthorne's only son and heir, **Felix**, while he was out hunting in the forests of the Fey.
- Assailed on every side, and stricken by the fall of his son, the Baron has called for help from any possible quarter.

STARTING LEVEL, PROGRESSION & DIFFICULTY

- The adventure is designed for characters beginning at of 3rd-4th level.
- Note that it is not necessarily 'fair': you may may easily find yourself out of your depth if you react to every encounter by charging into a fight. Scouting ahead, careful planning, dirty tricks, bargaining rather than confrontation, and simply evading enemies are all options you should consider and be ready to make use of where possible.
- XP is earned in three ways:
  - **By completing narrative milestones**: these are awarded once your party fulfils the requirements, usually completing a major part of the storyline or a side quest.
  - **By defeating enemies**: note that this can mean evading them, causing them to flee, or persuading them not to fight in the first place, rather than just killing them.
  - **By defeating traps**: these are treated by the GM as if they were enemies, and XP is earned by detecting and disarming or evading them through dice rolls or clever play. Triggering one and surviving still earns some XP, albeit a smaller amount.

Player Characters

CHARACTER HERITAGES & MAGIC-USING CLASSES

The setting of the Northern Borderlands is less overtly fantastical than some others. This will have an effect on the kind of player characters that will be a natural fit here:

- The vast majority of the people here are **Humans**, with some **Half-Elves** present (see below). While the Baron and his household are from the south and are more cosmopolitan, the local population outside the trading hubs of Caerport and Porthlanner have little experience with other Humanoid heritages apart from the hostile Hobgoblins and Bugbears that dwell to the north and east. Humans here are usually religious (see the next page), superstitious, and used to lives of toil, hardship and peril.
- **Elves** are generally distrusted, due to the presence of the mysterious and dangerous Forest of Shadows to the west. The Twilight Elves who live here, along with other Fey, are commonly believed to be at best unhelpful and at worst soulless and actively wicked. Elf and Half-Elf characters will therefore be subject to suspicion and at times open hostility, even if you do not share the same physical characteristics of the Twilight Elves.
- There is no local population of **Halflings**, and visitors will be viewed with curiosity and treated much like overgrown children. The same applies to **Dwarves**, with less condescension.
- Similarly, other **more exotic heritages** are not usually to be found here. If you wish to play one, then be aware your character will be a constant source of attention, from mere curiosity to outright fear and aggression, especially for anyone who looks in any way demonic or inhuman. It would make sense for you to not be a local, but this is possible with some inventiveness.
- Magic is not widespread, with magic items and spellcasters being rare and exotic. The exception to this are divine spellcasters: Clerics of the local religions are a common sight in most towns, while Druidic followers of the old ways are treated with suspicion. Rangers and Paladins are tolerated due to the source of their powers being similarly 'safe' and understood. Other types of magic-users (Wizards, Sorcerers, and Warlocks) are likely to be all treated the same: with fear and respect (if you look suitably powerful or important), and to be run out of town or even burnt at the stake (if you look like an itinerant wanderer up to no good).

LOCAL, NON-LOCAL & PRE-EXISTING CHARACTERS

While new characters can easily be embedded into the setting as detailed on the following page, it is entirely possible to use a pre-existing character, or decide that you are a new arrival to the Borderlands. The following assumptions about the setting may help:

- The Borderlands are a remote northern part of the world, several week's travel from civilisation and several months from Lea Monde, the so-called Heart of the World. While the locals will not necessarily be familiar with the wider world, there are plenty of other places your character may come from.
- As detailed to the left, characters who are not just Human are a lot less common in this part of the Borderlands, for various historical reasons. Provided you don't mind drawing attention from the locals, your character can easily be of any heritage you desire.
- While the Borderlands has its own faiths, these are far from the only religions in existence, and while some locals will view followers of them as heretics, others will simply feel you are misguided and can be redeemed.
- If you want to play a **Barbarian**, **Bard**, **Fighter**, or **Rogue**, you should have no problem easily fitting in by taking on roles such as knights, mercenaries, sell-swords, treasure hunters, scouts, tomb robbers, minstrels, entertainers, spies or assassins.
- **Clerics**, **Rangers** and **Paladins** can also work well – see the panel to the left – as priests, inquisitors, knights, templars, bounty hunters or scouts, among other possibilities.
- Playing as a **Druid**, **Sorcerer**, **Warlock** or **Wizards** will come with some additional challenges and, but hopefully the roleplaying opportunities will make it worthwhile.

CHARACTER MOTIVATION

You may be involved in this adventure for a number of reasons:

- You may be a **loyal retainer** of Baron Cawthorne, kept in reserve while his regular knights and rangers are dispatched across his realm to protect his people and their homes. (If local, pick a settlement from 'Character Background Details').
- You may be a **mercenary**, a hired specialist of any kind who can deal with those threats that are beyond the capabilities of the Baron's regular knights and rangers.
- You may be a **loyal worshipper** of a good-aligned faith (such as the New Church of the Sun detailed in 'Faith in the Borderlands') which is allied with Baron Cawthorne, and seek to preserve his rule against the evil influence of Undead, monsters, and the wicked Fey. Earl Nancarrow's embrace of prohibited Mystery Cults also identifies him as a clear wrong-doer to be challenged.
- You may be a **convicted criminal** given a chance to avoid punishment or redeem yourself by taking on a dangerous quest. (Pick a criminal organisation from 'Character Background Details', and a crime you were convicted for).
- You may be a **secret plotter** seeking to take advantage of the chaos, overthrow Baron Cawthorne and replace him as ruler of his fief, either on behalf of Earl Nancarrow or for your own purposes.



STARTING THE ADVENTURE

- Your characters will begin at the castle of Baron Cawthorne, although the precise manner of your arrival will depend on your background and status.
- **Resources**: as well as normal starting equipment, and a writ authorising you to act in the Baron's name, you will each have the following (either from your previous adventures or as payment in advance):
  - 400gp worth of equipment (non-magical except for Uncommon consumable items such as potions); a mount worth up to 75gp with associated tack and – if desired – a cart.
  - One random Magical Treasure or Necromantic Treasure (rolled with Advantage).

Character Background Details

SETTLEMENTS

If your character is from the Borderlands, you should pick one of the following locations as your place of birth/residence:

- **Caerhays Keep** – home to the Baron's close family, retainers, and advisors; plus barracks for the guards and knights.
- **Caerport –** the Barony's largest town, a port busy with managing local affairs both secular and religious, trade from the south, and local criminal activity. Home to the most important church of the New Sun.
- **Tolcarn** – a relatively peaceful crossroads village in a forested valley, with a church of the New Sun present.
- **Haveock** – strict and militarized river-side village known for resisting raiders from the inhuman tribes to the north as well as local Drowners.
- **An Harlek** – heavily defended town built around the latest silver mine, full of hard-working and god-fearing folk.
- **An Kamrys -** former mining site still occupied by a score of families who now live by hunting and farming.
- **An Chifog -** former mining site fallen into ruin but still occupied by survivors superstitious about the neighbouring Twilight Elves.
- **Sancreed –** home of the most important church of the Old Sun, and famous for locally-produced ice wine, this settlement is little troubled by the Drowners outside its walls.
- **An Krowlys** – remote village of vineyards owned by the dominant family in Sancreed; everyone here works for them.
- **Porthlanner** – this was Nancarrow's busiest port before the Eldritch Earl allowed open worship of demonic Mystery Cults, prompting some citizens to flee across the border into the Barony of Cawthorne.

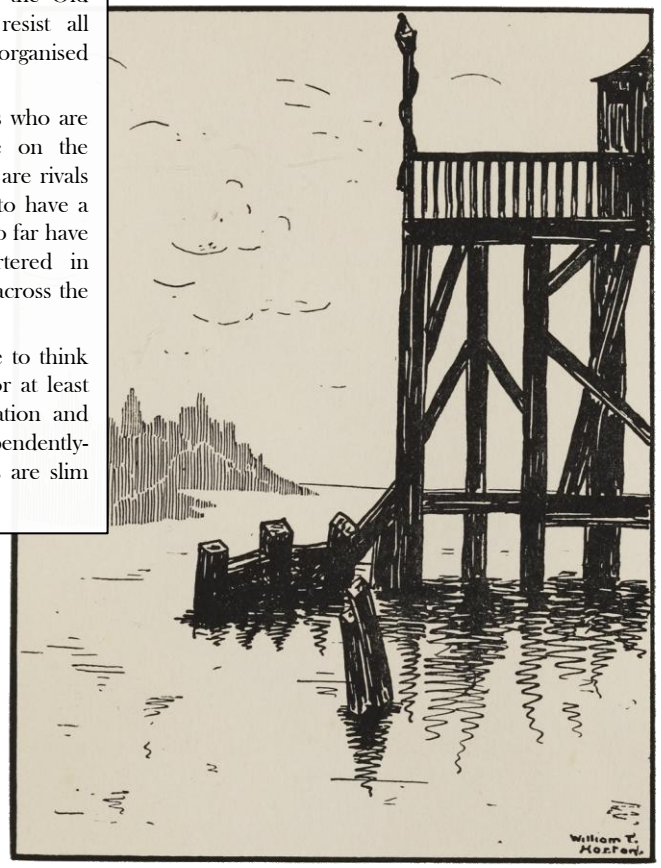
The other choice is to come from a lesser-known place not marked on the map:

- **Farm –** farms in the wilds are fortified compounds where farmers and livestock retreat at night to avoid predators.
- **Outsider Camp –** various people choose to dwell separately from others: outlaws, criminals, foresters, hunters, charcoal burners, hermits, druids, religious outcasts, cultists, and other such outsiders.

CRIMINAL ORGANISATIONS

If your character has a background or ties to the local underworld, you should pick one of the following and decide on the nature of your relationship with them:

- **Guild of Water Thieves** – made up of smugglers, hijackers, and wreckers who lack the resources for seaborne piracy. They get their name from their willingness to travel the perilous waterways of the Barony. Headquartered in Caerport, they have representatives in Sancreed and Haveock, but avoid An Harlek as being too risky. Affiliation gives access to the Black Market.
- **Scathlock's Outlaws** – while there are a handful of small groups and even lone bandits scattered throughout the forests of Cawthorne, the only one with significant numbers is a gang of robbers led by the notorious outlaw Scathlock the Silver Blade . Headquartered somewhere in the Old Forest on the border with Nancarrow, they resist all attempts to be integrated into one of the more organised criminal organisations.
- **Guild of the Road –** thieves and highway robbers who are based in neighbouring Nancarrow but operate on the roadways of the Barony of Cawthorne too. They are rivals of the Guild of Water Thieves, and would love to have a monopoly on crime throughout Cawthorne, but so far have failed in their attempts to do so. Headquartered in Porthlanner, they regularly send spies and agents across the border.
- **Freelance** – while the Guilds would like everyone to think they control all criminal activity in the Barony, or at least take a cut from it, the remote and rugged location and difficulties in travel make it possible for independently-minded individuals to go their own way. Pickings are slim however.



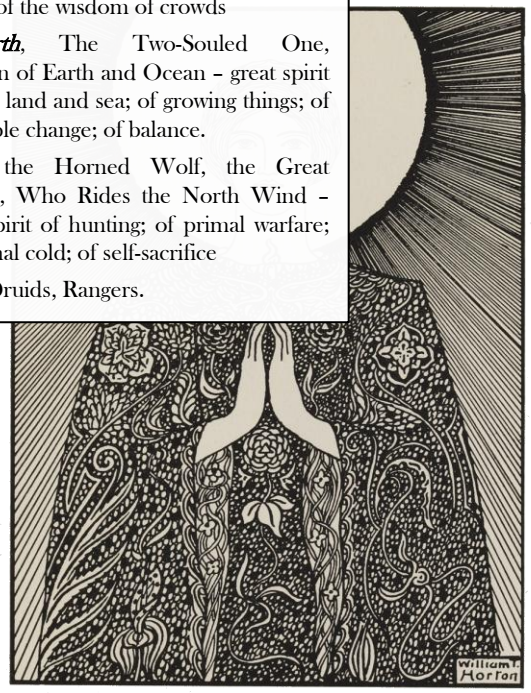
Faith in the Borderlands

As in many remote regions, the people of the Borderlands follow or pay lip service to a range of religious beliefs. If your character is a local, consider being a follower of one of these:

- **The Church of the Old Sun**: inherited from the old Solarian Empire, followers of this creed no longer insist on ritually blinding their all-male child priests by forcing them to stare at the sun nor burning them alive when they reach adulthood. They now let their acolytes age to manhood and simply blindfold them during services instead. They still worship *Sol the Resplendent Sun* in his original elemental form as the one true god and make burnt offerings in his name. The bodies of dead worshippers are cremated, in part to protect from the predations of the Undead, and will live as eternal blazing spirits in the Fields of the Sun. Old Mystery Cults (see opposite) are still active and viewed as heretical. The predominant faith of the local Human population. ***Domains:*** *Light, Grave.*
- **The Church of the New Sun**: the official faith of Lea Monde and the Heart Land, this is derived from the teachings of the Old Church but glosses over the excesses of the past and worships *Sol the Resplendent Sun* in its mortal incarnations as the dozens of Radiant Saints. Priests can be of any age and gender. Bodies of the deceased are buried to be reborn whole in the afterlife. Old Mystery Cults are treated in the same way as faiths from other lands: misguided but potentially capable of redemption. The faith of the Baron and others from the south. ***Domains:*** *Life, Light.*
  - ***Saint Eowynd,*** Radiant Saint of lost things, the hopeless, the unfairly imprisoned, and the repentant.
  - ***Saint Moraval,*** Radiant Saint of prophecy, haruspicy, and scribes.
  - ***Saint Sennara,*** Radiant Saint of travellers, sailors, marines, and those who make a living on the sea.
- **Ideal for:** any character class.

- **Mystery Cults**: originating in the Old Solarian Empire where they purported to offer initiates secret insights into the truth about the official Imperial religion. Initiates carried out regular religious practices but these were a mask for other private rituals and sacrifices. Over time, the child priests of Sol declared the mystery cults anathema, being "demonic imitations of the one true faith", and to be caught as a practitioner meant being burnt alive. Now, centuries later, worship of these cults still persists in out-of-the-way areas such as the Borderlands despite being proscribed by the Churches of both the New and Old Sun. More recently, Earl Nancarrow has declared worship of them to be no longer outlawed in his domain. ***Domains:*** *varies but includes Arcana, Knowledge, Trickery, Tempest, & Death.*
  - ***Hekarta***, The Three-Faced Watcher at the Crossroads, Mother of Nightmares – lady of magic, mastery, mystery and monsters
  - ***Nyxis***, She Who Whispers Upon The Midnight Waters – lady of secrets, trickery, thievery, and silent death
  - ***Pelagus***, Bull of the Sea and Lord of Storms – lord of storms, fury, strength, and glorious warfare
  - ***Teuthis***, The Hunger Who Swims Deep, He Whose Arms Cradle the Dead – lord of oceans and the underworld.
- **Ideal for:** Clerics, Rogues, Warlocks.

- **The Green Path**: worship of a group of nature deities, the Green Path is followed by those who live closest to nature: folk of the deep woods, hunters in the wilds, charcoal burners living in their own secretive communities. Their priests are druids and their churches are uninhabited places open to the sky. The dead are given sky burials, laid out to be fed on by scavenging birds and beasts. Viewed as backwards primitives or heretical savages by the New and Old Churches of the Sun respectively. The Green Path is walked by outcasts and loners. ***Domains:*** *Grave, Nature & Knowledge.*
  - ***Aroun***, the Final Breath, the Shroud of Mist, Keeper of the Great Circle – great spirit of life and death; of rebirth; of secret knowledge
  - ***Branmor***, Voice of the Swarm, Soul with a Thousand Bodies – great spirit of the natural world; of flocks, swarms and packs; of the wisdom of crowds
  - ***Gornerth***, The Two-Souled One, Warden of Earth and Ocean – great spirit of both land and sea; of growing things; of inevitable change; of balance.
  - ***Kern***, the Horned Wolf, the Great Hunter, Who Rides the North Wind – great spirit of hunting; of primal warfare; of eternal cold; of self-sacrifice
- **Ideal for:** Druids, Rangers.



The Drowner Curse

- Locals are all too familiar with the Undead known as Drowners, and newcomers to the Borderlands learn swiftly. An ancient curse afflicts the Borderlands, dating back centuries to when the Witch Queen Bersarba vowed to turn the very land and water against the invading Solarian Legions, whereby anyone who dies by drowning arises 3 nights later as a Drowner. With dead black eyes and bloated pallid flesh, these Undead appear hunched and shambling but can move with an equal turn of speed on land or in water. They dwell in deep lakes and underwater holts by day, avoiding the hateful sun. By night, or when the sun is lost behind heavy clouds, they crawl out looking for fresh victims. They delight in dragging screaming prey down into the cold waters, where there will be time for hungry scavengers and rot to start work before they too are reborn as one of the Drowners. Now they are sufficient in number to influence settlement patterns and travel routes through the Borderlands.

Living with the Curse

- The Drowner Curse affects day-to-day life in Cawthorne in various ways. Settlements still need fresh water, and are built on or near rivers, but are heavily fortified with sluice gates and thick underwater netting to block access alongside the usual sturdy walls, towers and land gates. Livestock is driven to meadows in the valleys during the day but not allowed to wander far and by nightfall will be back within the walls of a settlement, or safely corralled in fortified stone-built barns or cowsheds in steep pastures further from rivers or lakes. During winter when the hours of sunlight are few, or when rainclouds cover the sun, many animals will be kept inside, and many settlements have areas of common grazing land within their confines, as well as healthy stocks of animal feed.
- After dark, the walls and potential points of entry of any settlement are watched over by sentries armed with 10' pikes and **Man-catchers** (see below for stats). While mundane weapons will do little against the Undead, and they are immune to fire, they can sometimes be held off by the combined effort of many strong arms. Priests are of some use, since while the Drowners have proven resilient even in the face of the most devout of prayers and rebukes, blessed water burns their flesh like acid. Each gatehouse and watch tower has flasks of Holy Water (available from any church) stored within easy reach, and when Drowners gather outside the walls, chanting priests with steaming thuribles can be found on the inner side, wreathed in sanctified vapours. Normal citizens have grown up hearing the Undead scratching and moaning through the night, and for the most part have learned to sleep through all but the thankfully rare actual incursions.
- While children may be scared of approaching any source of freshwater during the day, and indeed there are horror stories of unwary victims being snatched from shady banks even under the midday sun, over time people grow accustomed to their situation and for the most part go about their daily lives without being overly worried. There is nothing that can be done about the Curse after all, so why waste time fretting about it? That said, actually getting on a raft or boat to travel by water is tempting fate, and will only be done in the most extreme of circumstances – although the **Guild of Water Thieves** regularly do so in the name of profit.
- The various religions of the region have over time each tried many times to lift Bersarba's Curse, but with no success. While every generation or so some zealous newcomer thinks they will be the one to finally do so, each has met with failure: and in the case of those who chose to directly confront the Drowners to prove their faith, that failure has included their own demise. More than one water-logged and dead-eyed corpse hauling itself onto land is clad in the rotting remains of priestly robes and regalia.

Travel And Camping

- Travel is carefully planned around the available hours of daylight, with bad weather or seasonal shorter days curtailing many journeys which would require being out in the wild overnight. For those who cannot afford not to take this risk – hunters, woodcutters, merchants in need of quick profits, agents of justice or the church on urgent missions, or the truly desperate – there are survival strategies.
  - **Know your enemy:** Drowners are cunning in the way of bestial predators, but not clever, and can be evaded or avoided if you keep your wits about you. Fighting them is possible but difficulty: their rubbery deathless flesh absorbs all but the heaviest of blows without apparent effect. Magic works well, if you are lucky enough to be able to make use of it, as does Holy Water. Drowners can sniff out living creatures, especially fearful ones, and will track them down over short distances – if they lose sight or scent for longer than ten minutes however they will usually give up. As well as their physical resistances and strength, they have another weapon at their disposal: if you get within a few paces of them, you feel the crushing drag of sinking into deep water, slowing your movements and making you lethargic and clumsy. Keeping your distance is vital – hence the use of long pikes and Man-catchers by sentries. These are cumbersome devices but useful ones (see below).
  - **Know the territory**: Drowners live in freshwater rivers and lakes, travelling as swiftly underwater as they do on land.. They have nests and lairs in secluded locations along river banks, on islands, and burrowed into lakebeds, which they return to during the day. They may even lurk in areas of deep water or cling to the underside of bridges to avoid the sun. They will not venture more than 1/2 mile or so from freshwater even during the hours of darkness, unless they are on the trail of potential victims. Saltwater doesn't seem to have any ill effect on Drowners: they only live inland for reasons presumably linked to the Curse.
  - **Know the safe locations**: defensible camp sites, fortified buildings, towers with elevated access, and sturdy cowsheds can all prove relatively safe spaces to spend the night. Local travellers know where each of these can be found, and plan their journeys accordingly.
  - **Be prepared**: for those who cannot make it to such a safe space, or find it already fully occupied, it is possible to construct impromptu defences. Experienced travellers carry **Portable Defence Kits** on their pack horses or wagons, each consisting of a bundle of 'archer's stakes', sturdy 6' wooden stakes sharpened at each end to be embedded facing outwards (as if to withstand a cavalry charge) and with lengths of rope strung between them. These are supplemented by an outer perimeter of twin tripwires and small bells designed to provide advance warning of Drowner approach. The Undead are too dim-witted to avoid triggering the alarm bells, get entangled in the ropes, or even sometimes to not simply impale themselves on the stakes, their own implacable strength driving the points clean through their own bodies. In the morning the defences are taken down and rolled up again to be transported to the next such site. Each such kit can secure an area of 15' diameter, consists of 30 stakes and 100' of rope, weighs 110lbs, costs 10gp, and can be purchased at any settlement.
- It is possible for the well-connected to make use of **Drowner Lures,** alchemical flasks that mimic the scent of a terrified human, used as a decoy by travellers or to lead Drowners into a trap. The secrets to brewing these are known to the and usually only available from the Black Market.
- The Water Thieves are one of the few groups who do not fear to travel by water, and their keel boats and river barges make use of the many rivers that run inland from the sea. Travel on them can be arranged if you have money or the right connections.

Item	Cost	Weight	Damage	Description	Properties
Man-catcher	20 gp	5 lb.	1d6 P	A polearm with a 10' shaft and a flexible metal crescent for a head, hooked on the inside to hold fast anyone caught in its grip. Usually used to snare target around the neck.	*Martial, Heavy, Reach, Two-handed.* If hit, target is Restrained while you hold the weapon and do nothing else with your hands. Intelligent creatures can make DC8+(damage taken) STR check to get free (with Advantage if they have both hands free themselves); any creature can make opposed Athletics check to pull away: will take weapon with them if successful, automatically succeeds if 2+ sizes larger than you.

Timeline of the past

- **1000 years ago (approx.) –** The Kingdom of the Two Crowns, which has ruled the northlands for centuries, falls after its ruling Ettin sorcerer-kings go insane. Human tribes from the south invade their territory and establish their own rule.
- **600 years ago (approx.) -** The Solarian Empire expands northwards into the area, facing fierce opposition from the local tribes. Military superiority and organized religion combine to deliver victory to the Imperial forces. As a last act of defiance, Bersarba the Witch Queen curses the very land and water to turn against the invaders, and the first of the Undead known as Drowners are born. They plague the area to this day.
- **500 years ago (approx.) –** The Solarian Empire falls, riven by internal factionalism and plagued by attacks from formerly subjugated external enemies. The area splits into rival fiefdoms ruled by a succession of warlords, ambitious adventurers, retired mercenaries, exiled nobles, magical outlaws, religious outcasts, and other opportunists.
- **70 years ago** - Baron Freoc Cawthorne (the current Baron's grandfather), formerly a hero of the crusades against the Blood Elves of Il Shansir, voluntarily exiles himself from the Heart of the World, settling his family in their remote northern holding of Caerhays. He introduces worship of the Church of the New Sun to the region, alongside the traditional Church of the Old Sun.
- **62 years ago** - Freoc Cawthorne dies and is buried with his heirloom blade in the family vault under Caerhays Keep. His son Maeloc becomes the new Baron of Cawthorne.
- **60 years ago** - Twilight Elves from the Forest of Shadows demand a tribute of Moonsilver from the mines of Cawthorne. Rejected, they cause the collapse of the mine of An Chifog, and ever since the tribute has been paid every five years.
- **30 years ago** - Maeloc Cawthorne dies, passing on the title of Baron to his only son Rinduran.
- **25 years ago** - The half-Human sorcerer Erbin kills the then-ruler of Nancarrow and proclaims himself Earl. For the next 20 years, Earl Nancarrow and Baron Cawthorne engage in the usual disputes over territory, trade, and taxation, but avoid overt warfare
- **18 years ago** - Rinduran and Eldoran Cawthorne have a son, Felix, but Eldoran dies in childbirth.
- **1 year ago –** The situation in the Barony worsens, with more frequent monster attacks, outlaw raids, incursions from beyond the borders, and increased sightings of the Undead.
- **4 months ago –** severe storms begin to lash the southern coast.
- **3 months ago –** Undead soldiers march south to raid the northern parts of the Barony.
- **1 month ago -** Baron Cawthorne's heirloom blade is stolen from their family vault beneath Caerhays Keep.
- **3 weeks ago** - Felix Cawthorne, hunting in the Forest of Shadows, is struck down by elf shot and still remains in an unbreakable sleep.
- **1 week ago –** Baron Cawthorne sends out a request for aid.



Magical Treasures

1. **Adamantine Bracers** (A) - A set of greenish black bracers, inlayed with silver. While wearing these bracers you may use your Reaction to nullify a critical hit against your, instead making it a normal hit.
2. **Alchemist's Ring** – A cheap-looking brass ring set with a small 'stone' of red glass; when you drink any healing potion while wearing this ring you recover an additional 1d6 lost Hit Points.
3. **Asp Bow** - The dark wood of this shortbow is etched with a delicate pattern of scales, and the grip is of smooth snakeskin. Any arrow launched from this bow glistens with acidic venom. You have a +1 bonus to attack rolls made with this magic weapon, and it does an extra point of Poison damage on a hit.
4. **Blade of the Bitter Winter** - Targets wounded by this icicle-like dagger take an extra 1d4 Cold damage, and have their movement speed halved until the end of their next round.
5. **Bone Coin** – A large coin carved from the bone of a lycanthrope, and with a small hole in the centre: looking through this hole allows you to see a shapeshifter's true form.
6. **Bone Raven Ring** (A) - A bone ring, carved into the shape of a raven's skull. You gain a +1 bonus to AC and Saving Throws while wearing this ring. In addition, once per Long Rest you can use the ring to cast *animal messenger* although it will only work on birds of the Corvid family (primarily crows, ravens, rooks & jackdaws).
7. **Caustic Band** – While wearing this verdigris-marked ring, your weapon attacks deal an additional 2 points of Acid damage, and any spell which already does Acid damage does an additional 1d4 points.
8. **Cloak of Feathers (A) -** A cloak made of jet-black feathers, which allow the wearer to almost instantly fade into the dark. Once per 24 hours (resetting at dawn), while in darkness you can use your action to cast *invisibility,* which lasts without requiring concentration until you use a bonus action to end it or exit darkness.
9. **Dagger of Blessed Silver** - This silvered dagger has runes of restoration inscribed along the runnel of the blade. The bearer may use an action to release the divine magic within in wave of healing energy the equivalent of a 2nd level *cure wounds* spell to all creatures (friend or foe) within 5 feet of the bearer. The dagger then loses all magical properties and functions as a regular silvered weapon.
10. **Favoured Ring** (A) – A plain band of electrum. Once per day, you may automatically pass a single Saving Throw of your choice. You can make this decision before or after rolling for the Saving Throw.
11. **Grim Mask** (A) - A grim-looking mask of beaten copper that resembles a half-lizard / half-human creature with scaled skin and a fang-filled smile. While wearing it, you gain Advantage on Charisma (Intimidation) checks if the target can see you.
12. **Marshal's Fist** – A warhammer with the head shaped like a clenched fist. You have a +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with this magic weapon when it is used against creatures of any Chaotic alignment.
13. **Outlaw's Blade –** A narrow curved blade with its hilt bound in red silk. You have a +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with this magic scimitar when it is used against creatures of any Lawful alignment.
14. **Pendant of Alacrity** (A) – While attuned to this gold-and-malachite cat's head pendant you gain a +1 bonus to Initiative rolls and Dexterity Saving Throws.
15. **Ring of Firey Ruin** (A) - This gold ring is engraved with a flame pattern and is set with a cluster of 4 small rubies. While wearing it, you can use an action to cause a barrage of fiery darts to leap from the rubies toward your enemies. Each hostile creature within 5 feet of you must make a DC15 Dexterity Saving Throw. A target takes 3d8 fire damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. Once you have used the ring in this way, you can't use it again until the following dawn, and each use causes one ruby to crack and dull: once all 4 are damaged the ring loses all magical properties forever.
16. **Stone of the Brave Soul** (A) – This small engraved sapphire has the power to make you fearless, giving Advantage on Saving Throws against being Frightened.
17. **Tracker's Medallion** – When worn, this simple horn medallion gives you Advantage on Wisdom (Survival) checks.
18. **Veteran's Gauntlets (A) –** While attuned to these battered-looking plate gauntlets, your unarmed attacks do an extra point of Bludgeoning damage, and in addition you can cast *True Strike* once per Short Rest.
19. **Wand of Hours (A) –** This wand is inlaid with ebony on one side and ivory on the other. While attuned to it, you have +1 bonus to spell attack rolls and to the Saving Throw DCs during the day, and a +2 damage bonus on spells at night.
20. **Wayfarer's Boots** (A) – While attuned to these tall leather boots you can cast *Longstrider* once per Short Rest.

Necromantic Treasures

1. **Bone Charm** (A) – Small bones strung from a cord of sinew give this gruesome necklace its distinctive aroma as well as clicking together like a wind chime as you move. It can be used once per Long Rest to cast *Animate Dead*; each time this is done however there is a cumulative 1-in-6 chance that the Undead so created will be out of your control immediately instead of after 24 hours, and if this happens the charm instantly crumbles to dust.
2. **Consecrated Chain Shirt** – This shirt of finely woven mail gives you a +1 bonus to Armor Class against attacks by any Undead creature.
3. **Corpse-hunter's Medallion** (A) - This amulet is made from the skulls of grave rats and the scrimshawed bones of the ignoble dead. While wearing it, you have Resistance to Necrotic damage.
4. **Dark Staff –** The wielder of this magical ebony-shod quarterstaff may choose to deal Necrotic rather than Bludgeoning damage with this weapon, and gains a +1 bonus to damage.
5. **Death Mask** (A) – Wearing this malleable wax mask as you study the corpse of a creature which has been dead for less than 24 hours allows you to take on its appearance as if you had cast *disguise self*. After an hour the effect ends, and the mask takes on the appearance of your face but otherwise loses any magical properties.
6. **Deathly Spear** (A) **–** The shaft of this spear is hung with fetishes of bone. While Attuned to it, this is treated as a magical +2 weapon if you have below ¼ of your maximum hit points.
7. **Draining Sickle** (A) **–** This bone-handled sickle allows you to siphon the life force from those you harm. While Attuned to this weapon, when you score a critical hit with it you gain temporary hit points equal to the damage done.
8. **Final Blow –** This mace is bound with the souls of countless vengeful dead. Once per Long Rest, you may call on the spirits to unleash their wrath on the living: for the next minute the first attack you successfully make with this weapon will be a critical hit regardless of your actual roll, and automatically do maximum base damage. This has no effect on Undead or Constructs.
9. **Ghoul Leathers** – This set of dark studded leather armour is reinforced with bone studs and hides flayed from Ghouls, serving to ward off the restless dead. You have a +1 bonus to AC while wearing this armour, and in addition have Advantage on Saving Throws against Paralysis.
10. **Ghoul Touch Gloves** (A) – These gloves are made from unsavoury leather, and while Attuned to them you can make unarmed attacks that mimic the immobilising touch of a Ghoul. 3 times per long rest, your hands are for one round transformed into the cracked and blackened claws of a ghoul as you lash out at your target. On a hit, the target takes 2d4 necrotic damage, and must make a Constitution Saving Throw or be Paralysed for the next 2 rounds. At the end of each of its turns, the creature may make another Saving Throw to shrug off the paralysis. Note that Elves and the Undead may take damage from this spell but are immune to the paralysing effects.
11. **Hand of Glory** (A) – This withered and brittle human hand tightly clutches a greasy tallow candle. When lit, the candle burns for an hour, during which it acts as the focus for a *silence* spell. You can end the effect early by blowing out the candle, but this has the same effect as letting the candle burn out naturally: in either case the Hand of Glory is rendered useless.
12. **Kiss of Death –** This gritty paste can be smeared onto your lips, and for the next hour any spell you cast with a Verbal component and which does Necrotic damage will do an extra 1d8 points of damage. A pot of this paste contains enough for 1d4+2 uses before it is exhausted.
13. **Mortal Coil** (A) – This graven silver torc reduces your need for regular sustenance: while Attuned to it, you rarely feel hungry or thirsty, and only need to consume one-fifth the usual amount of food and water to stay alive.
14. **Mortuary Vestments –** The drab and stained robes of those who handle the dead are not glamorous, but while wearing them the sounds of your movement are muted, giving you a +1 bonus on Dexterity (Stealth) checks, while your vital signs – such as pulse and breathing – are undetectable by non-magical inspection.
15. **Necklace of Splinters** (A) - A string woven from corpse hair strung with splinters of bone and beads of ivory. While Attuned to this necklace you have Advantage on Saving Throws against Necromancy spells of 3rd level or lower.
16. **Token of the Grave** (A) – A charm carved from a human vertebra. While Attuned to this token, Undead creatures cannot gain Advantage on attack rolls against you for any reason.
17. **Reaper's Clasp** (A) **–** A silver broach in the shape of a bony hand. While Attuned to this item you have Advantage on death Saving Throws.
18. **Saint's Hand Amulet** (A) – An amulet made from five long finger bones affixed in the shape of a pentagram and attached to a thin silver chain. While wearing the amulet, you can use an action to speak its command word, and for the following minute Undead creatures have disadvantage on attack rolls against you, and they cannot charm, frighten, or possess you. Once used, this property of the brooch can't be used again until the next dawn.
19. **Staff of Screaming Skulls** (A) - This white ash staff has an ivory headpiece carved into the shape of a hideous skull. On a hit, you can choose to deal an extra 1d10 necrotic damage to the target. The target must also succeed on a DC15 Wisdom Saving Throw or become frightened of you for 1 minute (repeating the Saving Throw at the end of each of its turns). You then cannot use this property again until the following dawn.
20. **Unholy Water** - As an action, you can splash the contents of this flask onto a creature within 5 feet of you or throw it up to 20 feet, shattering it on impact. In the latter case, make a ranged attack against a target creature, treating the unholy water as an improvised weapon. If the target is Undead, it recovers 2d6 lost Hit Points.

Black Market Items

[available in Caerport from the Guild of Water Thieves]

ITEM	COST*	WEIGHT	DESCRIPTION	PROPERTIES
Beast Lure	5 gp	05.lb	Flask of alchemically-enhanced animal mask used to distract guard dogs or tag a target for tracking.	Attracts canines from upto 1 mile around, lasts 1 hour.
Burglar's Pack	16 gp	47.5lb	Equipment for breaking-and-entering.	Includes a backpack, a bag of 1,000 ball bearings, 10 feet of string, a bell, 5 candles, a crowbar, a hammer, 10 pitons, a hooded lantern, 2 flasks of oil, 5 days rations, a tinderbox, a waterskin, plus 50 feet of hempen rope strapped to the side.
Concealed Sheath	4 gp	0.5 lb	Conceals a small bladed weapon under your clothes	Gives Advantage on Sleight of Hand checks to conceal a dagger.
Drowner Lure	50 gp	0. 5 lb	Alchemical flask that mimics the scent of a terrified human, used as a decoy by travellers or to lead Drowners into a trap.	Attracts Drowners from upto 1 mile around, lasts 1 hour.
Flash Pellet	25 gp	0.1lb	Small ceramic pellet that shatters on impact, releasing a brief blinding flash of light.	Range 10ft., all creatures within 5' of impact *blinded* for 1 round unless succeed on DC15 CON save.
Forged Trading Permit	200 gp	N/A	Fake trading permit for within Barony of Cawthorne or between Cawthorne and Nancarrow, with blank spaces for names to be filled in as desired.	Requires DC18 Investigation check to spot as forgery.
Holy Water	30 gp	1 lb	Flask of blessed water, useful against Drowners and other Undead, and to cleanse desecrated objects or sites. (The Guild will sell to those the Churches will not).	As an action, you can splash the contents of this flask onto a creature within 5 feet of you or throw it up to 20 feet, shattering it on impact. In either case, make a ranged attack against a target creature, treating the Holy Water as an improvised weapon. If the target is a Fiend or Undead, it takes 2d6 radiant damage.
Poisoner's Leathers	175 gp	10lb	Leather padded with absorbent fibres to give protection from weapons coated with poison.	AC 11+DEX Resistance to poison damage from blade venom
Potion of Bear's Endurance	180 gp	0.5lb	The potion is deep brown in colour, with silver streaks constantly swirling through it.	Gain 2d6 temporary hit points and Advantage on Constitution checks for one hour.
Potion of Cat's Grace	180 gp	0.5lb	The potion is pitch-black and stored in a delicate-looking crystal vial.in colour	Gain Advantage on Dexterity checks and take no fall damage below 20' for one hour
Potion of Climbing	180 gp	0.5lb	The potion is separated into brown, silver, and grey layers resembling bands of stone. Shaking the bottle fails to mix the colours.	Gives Climbing speed equal to Walking speed for 1 hour, Advantage on Athletics checks.
Smuggler's Pack	24 gp	20lb	Equipment for covert mercantile operations.	Includes a backpack, chalk, a concealed sheath, a crowbar, 2 hooded lanterns, 4 flasks of oil, a set of merchant's scales, a signal whistle, and a tinderbox.
Thieves' Silks	100 gp	4lb	Multiple layers of silk form an extremely lightweight protective weave, and has the extra advantage of not actually looking like armour at all.	AC 11+DEX
Thieves' Tools	25 gp	1lb	This set of tools includes a small file, a set of lock picks, a small mirror mounted on a metal handle, a set of narrow-bladed scissors, and a pair of pliers.	Proficiency with these tools lets you add your proficiency bonus to any ability checks you make to disarm traps or open locks.
Water Thief's Brew	180 gp	0.5lb	The potion is murky green and smells like stagnant pond water.	Gives Advantage on Athletics checks for swimming, and allows breathing underwater for one hour.

* **NOTE**: listed prices are for members or close allies: others charged 150% markup