

## **Bard's Gate Background**

Bard's Gate is an independent city, allied to the nearby Grand Duchy. Established many years ago as a bard's outpost and a way station for travelers between the inner Forest Kingdoms and the port city of Reme, Bard's Gate is located on the only bridgeable location on the Stoneheart River which can handle merchant traffic. It has voluntarily come under the banner of the Grand Duchy mostly to receive the continued support of troops due to increasing activity by orcs and evil creatures in the Stoneheart Mountains to the north. A liberal and tolerant city, Bard's Gate welcomes all races.

Because of its location on a trade route, Bard's Gate has a number of guilds to which merchants can ship raw materials and sell them so that they may be crafted into items before reaching Reme and the Inner Sea. The banner of Bard's Gate is a silver lyre above a silver gatehouse on a green field. Estimated at 20,000 in winter, Bard's Gate's population may grow to 40,000 in the summer. It has an average population of 30,000. It is a transient town and at any time its ranks may be swelled by merchant trains, mercenary companies or adventurers. Possibly due to its focus on bards and arts and crafts, Bard's Gate has a larger than usual population of half-elves. The city is run by the High Burgess (or Berger, if a male) of Bard's Gate, the elected mayor of the town. She rules justly and with tolerance, but she deals harshly and aggressively with the evil creatures of the north. It is she who has ordered increased fortification and has requested an increased military commitment from the Grand Duke himself. The High Burgess was selected by the heads of the guilds in town, as are all the High Burgess. She is also heavily influenced by (and supported by) the Greycloaks—a secret organization.

The city has a general alignment of Chaotic Good, though it is to some extent undermined by its own liberality—the city is so tolerant that persons of all alignments flourish here. There is, however, no open worship of evil deities, though many cults thrive here. In all, over 200 different gods are worshiped here.

Though there is no longer a formal thieves' guild, there is a network of smugglers and spies, as is the case in any city where a large amount of merchandise is stored or transported. The network is run by Duloth who is the head of the wheelwright's guild, one of the more prominent guilds in the city. His minions facilitate transfer of black-market items and extract a "tax" to move such items through the city.

## **Bard's Gate's "Districts"**

The city is divided into a number of districts. The city itself straddles the Stoneheart river. As can be seen on the two pencil drafts of the map of the city there is a portion of the city on the western bank, a smaller portion of the city on the eastern bank as well as a central island which is connected by very large bridges. Each district has its own flavor and character. Not detailed on the maps are two districts that are outside the walls of the city: tent city (outside the west gate) and stables row (outside the east gate). You will also notice that both the western and eastern portions of the city each have rather large canals that serve as divisions between some of the districts. These canals are bridged by numerous bridges.

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**Market District:** This district is one of the “adventurer’s districts.” It is right inside the west gate and has many taverns and inns as well as small shops. Most buildings are two story with shops on the first floor, except for larger inns or taverns.

**Guild District:** This district is the heart of the mercantile quarter of the western portion of the city. It is filled with larger guild houses and craftsmen. There are a number of larger stone buildings here. This quarter is also the home of the Wheelwright’s Guild—the most influential guild in the city (and the home of Duloth and the black market).

**Old Temple District:** Named for its many now defunct large temples, this small district was once the hear of the city. But many of the older gods (such as Thyr and Muir) whose temples are here are now less worshiped, falling in favor to the more lenient gods of craft and song whose temples are elsewhere. There are many abandoned temples here and as a result new cults spring up here all the time.

**Canal District:** This district tucked between the south wall and the canal that divides it from the dock district. This district is rather run down and seedy. In fact, if the city were to have a true “thieves’ district” this would be it—moreso than the district that is named the thieves’ district. It is home to the beggars, low lifes and other riff raff. It does have a unique feature however: it is interspersed with numerous smaller canals and bridges, so despite its seedy character it has a romantic charm (beneath the dirt). It is the home to many writers and artists who—as artists are prone to do—seek out the more seedy side of town.

**Dock District:** This district is actually enclosed by its own wall. The district has its own patrol (hired by the larger merchants) and has many large warehouses. This section was the original docking area for ships since before the founding of the city. There is little here for the adventurer, unless they need to visit a warehouse or hire a large ship. This district is run entirely by shipping merchants who wish for more autonomy from the guilds and the general government of the city. There is some tension between Dock guards and the town guards.

**“The Hill”:** This is the rich district of the west side of the city. It includes several estates as well as some larger homes. There are few shops here, though there are several rather notable inns.

**North Wall District:** This long, large district is wedged between the interior canal that wraps around the Guild and Hill districts. It joins to the Market district. It is slightly seedier than the Market district and contains more residences then Market does. The buildings are slightly smaller and closer together. This is a good place for PCs or NPCs to purchase a residence.

**Bridge District:** This is the hear of Bard’s Gate. It encompasses both of the huge bridges that span the river to the central island as well as the central portion of the island itself. The bridges are so large that they are lined on either side with shops along their entire length. It is a great location to have a shop on either of the bridges. Several of the more current temples are found here as well. The central plaza on the island between the two bridges is where many festivals and bard competitions are held. The temple of Oghma, the god of song, is here. This district is home to the most skilled artisans and craftsmen.

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**Thieves' Quarter:** This district was once the home of the thieves' guild. That guild has long since vanished (for reasons we won't go into here). The residents have continued to call this the "thieves' quarter" owing to their romantic nature. The quarter has kept its more seedy traits and is famous for its darker pursuits. Cramped shadowy bars and shops selling drugs, poisons and darker pleasures can be found here, though all are sold discreetly. A number of famous inns and bars can be found here. But if you want real seediness and crime, you need to go to the Canal district.

**The Bard's College:** On a small island north of the main island are the buildings of the College of Bards as well as the home of several notable NPCs. There are few shops here other than instrument repair shops and a few playhouses.

**The Keep:** This southern section of the main island houses the governmental buildings—the keep, the brig, stockade and jail, the main guild hall where all the guild representatives gather, the Burgess' hall where business of state is done, the halls of the solicitors, barracks for the town guard, a number of storehouses, etc. This section started as one of the first portions of the city—a keep to watch over the boat traffic up the river.

**Turlin's Well:** This inner portion of the eastern section of the city is surrounded by a canal. This section grew up around a very large fresh water well (thus the name). This district is full of small shops and bars. It is a bit more cramped and a bit lower rent than the Market district. It is the "other" district that could be considered an "adventurer's district" due to its proximity to the east gate and the large number of shops, inns and taverns.

**East Docks:** This dock district is newer than the original Dock district. It contains the city military's docks. Unlike the Dock district which is more of a warehousing and bulk shipping section, this district contains a number of shops which sprang up to sell the items shipped here in addition to the warehouses. This is the place to find smaller fisherman or ships to rent.

**Outer District:** This district is east of Turlin's well between the inner canal and the outer wall. It, too, is an "adventurer's district" in that it contains many inns and taverns, though they cater mostly to housing merchants passing through the city. There are fewer shops here than in Market or in Turlin's Well. There are many residences here as well as a number of unique locations.

**Tent City:** Fort Rendezvous—a large tent city—dominates the outside of the west gate along with a number of buildings such as inns and stables. This transient village was founded by the nearby people of the wilds who travel to Bard's Gate to trade. It is a bit more lawless, as it is outside the wall of the city proper.

**Stables Row:** Known for its many stables to house the wagons and horses of merchants passing east to west—from the Forest Kingdoms to Reme—this area outside the east gate also has a number of inns and taverns as well as small farms. In addition, horse breeders can be found here as well as a horse and animal racing track and a small amphitheater.

## Short Sample Locations

### **Mar's Magical Poultices (Apothecary)**

**Mar**, an aged but vibrant half-elf woman (female half-elf, Sor2; Craft [poultice] +4, Profession [medicine woman] +7, Spellcraft +3; AL CG) creates rather elaborate and magical-seeming remedies which she sells from the cramped bottom floor store of her home. This shop is a local favorite, and many swear by the curative powers of Mar's creations though they are in reality nothing more than common salves. For 10—100 gp (decided by Mar at her whim) Mar produces a cream or poultice to address any ailment or condition. Mar's apprentice, an orphan named Anala (female half-elf, Exp1; Craft [poultice] +2), lives in the shop and sleeps on the floor of the shop at night. Mar uses Anala to deliver her salves and concoctions to various patrons in the city. The one product Mar makes that does in fact have an effect (and quite an effect at that) is her hang-over cure: a green paste that is applied to the eyelids, temple and tongue. It is known as Mar's Wondrous Recovery Medicine. The salve costs 3 gp and cures a hang-over immediately. Several rivals seek the recipe, though Mar guards it closely.

### **Simple's Locks (Locksmith)**

A large iron lock bearing the name of the shop is suspended from the locked and reinforced door to this small building. The shop's name is misleading, as the locks made by **Yolik the Simple** (female gnome Exp2; AL N; Craft [Locksmith] +10, Disable Device +8, Open Lock +8, Profession [Locksmith] +8; masterwork thieves tools) are actually quite complicated in manufacture and expensive in price. Yolik crafts locks with precision and skill, charging 20 to 50% over standard price for her wares. All her locks have a bonus of +2 to +5 (depending on additional price) on their Open Lock DCs.

### **The Iron Standard (Shield Maker)**

A beautifully crafted steel kite shield hangs from the door of this large shop, which sells fine quality large shields. A maker of finely crafted large, kite, tower and jousting shields, **Wareth Drumstrike** (male dwarf Exp2/Ftr2; AL LN; Appraise +4, Craft [Shield] +10, Profession [Shield Smith] +5; Skill Focus [Craft]; masterwork chainmail, masterwork heavy crossbow, +3 *tower shield*) has impeccable skill and taste in design, choosing only the finest metals from which to create his shields. Wareth tests each shield with a bolt from his heavy crossbow (which he normally does right in front of the customer) to insure that their quality is to his satisfaction before sending the customer to Leanne the Limner to have the crest and motto of the purchaser placed upon them. Wareth charges 25% over standard price for his steel and iron shields (wooden shields are at normal price). He can create masterwork items (at the same 25% additional price) in about one weeks time.

### **Lady Garga, Reader of Entrails (Fortune Teller)**

In this decrepit back-wall one-story hovel with a sign above the door depicting a cauldron and an eye, the **Lady Garga** (female half-elf Ade6; AL NE; Str 6, Dex 12, Con 8, Int 13, Wis 16, Cha 15; Concentration +4, Spellcraft +8, Scry +10) reads fortunes. Unexpectedly, Lady Garga is not a twisted crone but is rather a startlingly beautiful half-elf maiden. Her beauty stands in stark contrast to her home and to her practice—telling fortunes by disemboweling a goat on a large table, pulling out their entrails and reading the future of those who pay her 200 gp. This method of fortune telling is a strange ritual that Garga learned from her mother. Not a spell, per se, the

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ritual acts as a *divination* spell. She cannot use the ritual more than once per week. The person wishing the reading must provide the goat.

### **The Paasha's Pillow (Tavern)**

An exotic bronze sign hangs above the strange archway to this large building and its ornately studded wooden door. Owned by a man known only as “the Paasha” (Wiz6; AL NE; Str 11, Dex 10, Con 10, Int 15, Wis 12, Cha 14), this exotic tavern has spices and furnishings from the lands of the southern deserts. The Paasha dresses in garb reminiscent of the southern lands. Specialty foods include curried and spiced meats, pungent flatbreads and brilliantly colored vegetables in exotic sauces or chutney. The food is excellent but expensive (detail). Seating in the tavern is on numerous large silk pillows that cover the floor and surround low tables. The tavern is thick with incense and the Paasha has several foreign slave girls who dance for the patrons dressed in veils of multiple colors. In reality, the Paasha has never been to the southern deserts. As part of a rogue band he and his comrades ambushed a merchant caravan sent by a southern prince as a bride price for a daughter of a noble of the forest kingdoms. His greedy compatriots claimed all the gold and jewelry from the caravan and left the Paasha (whose real name is Fervin) with the leftovers from the caravan—jars of spices and silk scarves and pillows. Of course, the large jars of rare spices were in fact the greatest of the caravan's treasures. Fervin took the spices and his passing interest in cooking to Bard's Gate and parlayed his take into an incredibly profitable tavern—his cutthroat pals having long since squandered their take of the gold from the caravan.

**Plot Idea:** One of the Paasha's now penniless ex-comrades has learned of his success and has come to Bard's Gate to “settle the score,” threatening to reveal the Fervin as a fraud unless given a cut of the profits of the tavern.

### **The Spear and Helm (Spear and Helm Smith)**

This boutique weapon shop is run by **Kilish Good spear** (male dwarf, Exp4, Craft [spear and helm] +3, Profession [armorer and weaponsmith] +9; AL N; +2 *keen shortspear* he purchased in Reme though he claims to have made it), a tallish dwarf, who is famous for his skill making spears and shields of all types. He has run this shop for years. Unfortunately for his customers, his fame is based more on seniority than quality. In fact, his spears and helms (for which he charges masterwork prices though they are of shoddy craftsmanship) are poorly constructed. His spears break on any fumble and his helms are ruined on any critical hit. He takes 1d4+2 days to complete any item made. His lack of skill has gone undiscovered mostly because those who use his products die before they can complain. The shop is orderly, and has only a few display models (which he purchased), Kilish explains that he does not keep stock of his items, insisting that he must specially make any spear or helm that is ordered. He has four apprentices who work for him (Exp1; Craft [weaponsmith] +1), all of whom are the sons of local nobles whom he charges an exorbitant fee to take their sons as apprentices. The apprentices do most of the work (explaining the poor quality) while Kilish “supervises.” Of course, there is little for them to learn since Kilish is a poor craftsman. His apprentices do go on to become successful spearmakers, since they can say they were his apprentice.

### **Phidian's Workshop (Sculptor)**

**Phidian The Master** (Exp 5; Appraise +8, Craft [Sculptor] +14, Knowledge +6, Knowledge Religion +6, Profession [Sculptor] +7; AL N), is an aged Master sculptor of great renown. Many of the temples and sculptures within the city of Bards Gate are graced with his work. Many of his apprentices have gone on to fame, such as Utello, the gargoye sculptor. Phidian shows a little

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professional jealousy from the works coming out of the Stone Idol of late, but he keeps his true feelings stoically to himself. He can be hired to craft masterful sculptures at 5 times the normal price. He refuses simple or mundane jobs, though he is at such an age that he seeks the perfect patron for whom he can create his life's masterpiece.

### **The Beast and Bow (Professional Hunter)**

A wooden sign painted with the image of a displacer beast and a bow hangs outside this smallish two story wooden house. **Brendus** (male human Rgr5; hp 34; AL CG; Str 14, Dex 15, Con 12, Int 12, Wis 12, Cha 10; Knowledge [Magical Beasts] +5, Knowledge [Nature] +6, Knowledge [Area] +7, Wilderness Lore +9, Precise Shot; mighty composite longbow, 10 +1 arrows, +1 shortsword, dagger), a short and solidly built human, offers his services as a professional hunter. For 25 gp (more for larger or more dangerous game) he leads expeditions to the hills to the north and west of the city or to the vale to the north of the city. He has the heads of an owlbear, a dire wolf, a dire bear and a hell hound on his wall. In the main room of the bottom floor he has a fully stuffed displacer beast upon which he has placed a large wooden plank he uses as a desk—its tentacles spread wide to support the desktop. He is a hunter not a killer and does not hunt humanoids. He specializes in hunting magical beasts, since it was a displacer beast that killed his elven wife. Brendus' son, **Flint** (male half-elf War1; hp 6; AL CN; Wilderness Lore +2, Track; composite longbow, shorspear, leather armor, dagger), accompanies any expedition.