

ALL AROUND THE TOWN

The Speaker in Dreams Web Enhancement by James Wyatt

CITY ADVENTURING

While *The Sunless Citadel* and *Forge of Fury* led characters into dungeons, *The Speaker in Dreams* takes place entirely in the city of Brindinford. The characters still face terrible evil and horrible monsters, but the environment itself is less outright hostile—and somehow more frightening exactly because of that. In *The Speaker in Dreams*, the monsters are not tucked away in a remote dungeon. Instead, they lurk behind the everyday faces of an everyday place, hide behind the bustle of a street fair, strike when least expected, and transform the ordinary city into a place of terror.

Events and Locations

The Speaker in Dreams is an event-based adventure, and the main “map” of the adventure is actually a flow-chart of events. (See page 98 in the *Dungeon Master's Guide* for more about event-based adventures.) However, three locations within the city serve as “mini-dungeons,” with their own map keys, to tie the somewhat loose and unfamiliar structure of an event-based adventure more closely to the familiar type of dungeon, or location-based adventure. Other kinds of “mini-dungeons” that might be found in a fantasy city could include a windmill or clock tower, a ship at the docks, a prison, a wizard's tower, an inn, a sewer, or a necropolis or catacombs.

Encounter Levels

In a city adventure, player characters usually find it much easier to rest in safety, regain hit points, and even find curative magic beyond their own capabilities than they do in a typical dungeon. As a result, encounters in a city adventure can be skewed toward slightly more challenging encounters, assuming that the characters meet each one relatively fresh.

Peace-Bonding

The Speaker in Dreams begins with the characters entering the city and having their weapons bound to prevent easy access. Different cities may have different laws about such issues as carrying weapons in public and restricting spellcasters. Such laws should enhance the game, not interfere with it. While it might be quite logical for a city to confiscate weapons and material

components, such restrictions can really put a damper on player enjoyment of a city adventure. If you want to increase the challenge of city life by forcing characters to make do without weapons or spells, that's fine—but be sure that they then face challenges appropriate to their hindered state. For this adventure, it's best if the characters have relatively free access to all of their capabilities.

At the same time, it's not a bad idea to occasionally reward characters who are resourceful or clever enough to get around such restrictions—like the monk who can attack with a tent-pole or the bard with a rapier concealed in the neck of his lute (as depicted on the adventure cover).


Villains and the Law

Members of the city guard rarely complain when heroes slay alien leech-worms that appear in the middle of the street and start gobbling up townspeople. They usually don't even bat an eye when adventurers kill violent rat-men. (They are sometimes unnerved by the fact that lycanthropes revert to their humanoid forms when they're slain, so it always helps to have witnesses attest that the deceased really was a rat-man.) However, when the evil-doer in question is a citizen of the town—a human or a member of another character race—the law tends to frown on vigilante justice. At the very least, if player characters start cutting down cabalists right and left, the guards will want to ask them a few questions and give them a lecture about capturing criminals and bringing them to justice.

Like peace-bonding, this element is an opportunity to encourage creative thinking and alternative ways of problem-solving. If the players stop having fun, let the guards cut them a little slack. If the players start attacking city guards, it's probably time to send them back to the dungeon...

THE CITY OF BRINDINFORD

The Speaker in Dreams takes place in the city of Brindinford—actually a large town with a population just shy of 5,000. The adventure includes a map of the city and a sketchy outline of each neighborhood. This sec-



tion describes the neighborhoods in more detail (including interesting locations), and also describes some of the basic physical features of the city.

City Features

The Wall and Towers: Brindinford is surrounded by a fortified stone wall 5 feet thick and 25 feet high (Climb DC 30). The walls are crenellated, and there is just barely room (3 feet wide) for guards to walk along the top of the wall.

Ten “watch” towers interrupt the wall at irregular intervals. These are normally not staffed, as the city guard cannot afford to keep that many guards in stationary posts. The towers are 35 feet high and 50 feet in diameter. They have three stories, with arrow slits on the outer side of the upper two, and crenellations at the top. Simple ladders connect the three stories and the roof. Heavy wooden doors, reinforced with iron and bearing good quality locks, block entry to the towers. The captain of the guard keeps the keys secured away in the guard barracks.

Reinforced Wooden Doors: 2 in. thick; Hard 5; hp 20; AC 4; Break DC 25; Open Lock DC 30.

Three gates allow entry to the town: the Old Ford Gate, the East Gate, and the Southspur Gate. The East Gate is actually a gatehouse with two portcullises and murder holes above the space between them.

Portcullises: 1 in. thick; Hard 10; hp 30; AC 4; Break DC 30.

The other two gates are large iron double doors set into the city wall. They are closed at night and barred.

Iron Doors: 2 in. thick; Hard 10; hp 60; AC 4; Break DC 28.

Streets: The main thoroughfares through town (Eastgate Way, Old Ford Road, and Southspur Street) are 25 feet wide, with 5-foot wide sidewalks on either side. These are the widest streets in town, with room for wagons to pass each other. Secondary streets are about 15 feet wide, while alleys range from 10 feet to only 5 feet.

During the fair, booths line the sides of Eastgate Way, narrowing the street itself to only 15 feet wide, while wagon traffic is barred from the road in daylight.

Buildings: Most buildings in Brindinford are made of a combination of stone or clay brick (on the lower one or two stories) and timbers (for the upper stories, interior walls, and floors). Roofs are a mixture of boards, thatch, and slates, sealed with pitch.

While large temples, the Baron’s Keep, and some of the larger villas of Silver Hill form unique landmarks of

the city, most of the other buildings of Brindinford fall into three categories. Most inns, successful businesses, and large warehouses—as well as businesses that require extra space (millers, tanners, and the like)—are large, free-standing, sometimes elaborate buildings with up to five stories. The majority of buildings in the city stand two to five stories high, built side-by-side to form long rows separated by secondary or main streets. These row houses usually have businesses on the ground floor, with offices or apartments above. Finally, small residences, shops, warehouses, or storage sheds—particularly in Southspur but also in parts of Chatterstreet Market—are simple, one-story wooden buildings.

Climbing a lower-story brick or stone wall requires a Climb skill check against a DC of 25. Wooden walls have a Climb DC of 21.

Good wooden doors serve as the exterior doors on most buildings. These are usually kept locked, except on public buildings like shops and taverns.

Wooden Doors: 1.5 in. thick; Hard 5; hp 15; AC 5; Break DC 18; Open Lock DC 25.

Doors on the simplest buildings or sheds, as well as most interior doors, are flimsier:

Wooden Doors: 1 in. thick; Hard 5; hp 10; AC 5; Break DC 13; Open Lock DC 25.

Light: Lanterns, hanging from building awnings at a height of 7 feet, light most thoroughfares. These lanterns are spaced 60 feet apart, so their illumination is all but continuous. Secondary streets and alleys are not lit; citizens commonly hire lantern-bearers when business calls them out after dark.


Alleys can be dark places even in daylight, thanks to the shadows of the tall buildings that surround them. A dark alley in daylight is never dark enough to afford true concealment, but it can lend a +2 circumstance bonus to Hide checks.

City Neighborhoods

The City of Brindinford is roughly divided into six neighborhoods or wards. No walls or other clear divisions separate the wards (except around the Keep), but the quality of a neighborhood can change rapidly as one travels along a single main road through town. The neighborhoods are shown on the Brindinford Map in *The Speaker in Dreams*, and described below.

The Keep and Silver Hill

The Baron’s Keep is the only section of the city that is walled off from the rest. The 100-by-150-yard area is



built against the outer wall of the city at the top of Silver Hill, overlooking the Brinding River. The walls boast the same height and thickness as the city wall. The wealthiest and most influential people in the city—including the baron, of course—have large houses within these inner walls, while the rest of the city’s wealthy aristocracy inhabits the neighborhood called Silver Hill, extending west from the keep to Old Ford Road.

As its name suggests, Silver Hill slopes quickly upward from Old Ford Road, peaking at the Baron’s Keep. The city’s western wall crowns sheer cliffs overlooking the Brinding River. The cliffs rise 50 feet from the river to the base of the city wall. Scaling the cliffs requires a Climb check against a DC of 15 ... but climbing the wall at the top is another matter (see City Features, above).

Most of the buildings in Silver Hill are free-standing villas, with low walls encircling gardens and outbuildings on the property. The neighborhood’s wealthy residents prize the art of topiary, with an emphasis on fantastic monsters as subjects. Silver openwork adorns nearly all of the villas’ garden walls, giving the neighborhood its name. Most residents have found themselves (or their servants) not up to the task of polishing all that silver, however, and have allowed it to tarnish. The estates inside the Baron’s Keep are notable exceptions.

The few businesses found in Silver Hill are the sort that cater to wealthy residents—a silversmith, a scribe and a library, a jeweler and a glassblower, a fine clothier, a clockmaker, and a renowned locksmith. Prices are high. The gp limit for Silver Hill is 5,000 gp, but most goods (except masterwork and magic items) cost double their normal price.

Library: Just outside the Keep on Eastgate Way, the city library is literally a shrine to knowledge. The West Hill neighborhood would like to claim the library as its own, but the silver openwork that adorns the lintel above the entrance clearly marks the building as belonging in Silver Hill. Seir (male human Exp11) and Portia (female human Clr3 [Boccob]) staff the library; they shelve newly-acquired books (in order of acquisition) and maintain an index to their contents. Trying to find anything in the library without the assistance of one of these sages is a waste of time. Books may not be checked out. Patrons must read the books at tables in the library, always under the watchful eye of Seir or Portia. They charge exorbitant fines for torn pages, ink spills, and any other damage to their prized books.

Ford North


A large temple dedicated to Pelor defines the character of the Ford North district. The neighborhood that surrounds the temple has become Brindinford’s “holy quarter,” as some citizens call it. Religions make their homes on Old Ford Road, even if they are too small to support a permanent temple. These godly locations range from quiet wagon-shrines where citizens can retreat inside curtains for a moment of silent prayer, to haranguing fanatics berating passers-by for their many failings. Long-faced prophets predict the end of the world, while joyful proselytizers exhort passers-by to join their faiths. A small number of fortune-tellers and similar “mystical” entertainers find their way here as well.

Other businesses in the neighborhood include fine crafts, though not as elegant as one finds in Silver Hill. The district holds many makers of religious icons, altar trappings, and good-luck charms. Most of the buildings are large row houses, and prices are generally similar to those in West Hill—not as extravagant as Silver Hill, but beyond the means of most commoners. Most items cost 150% of their normal price, reflecting a mixture of fine workmanship and artificial inflation. The gp limit for Ford North is 3,000 gp.

Shrine to Fharlanghn: This cart-shrine, fairly well-established in a side street just off Old Ford Road, could literally roll away at a moment’s notice—the cart itself is permanently animated. (It is a Huge animated object, as described in the *Monster Manual*.) It responds to commands given by any cleric of Fharlanghn. While clerics come and go at the temple—stopping for a week or so to staff the shrine, then continuing their perpetual travel—the animated cart is a constant, and Fharlanghn’s faithful treat it as if it had an intelligence and personality all its own. Most of the clerics who stop at the shrine have achieved no higher than 3rd level.

Chatterstreet Market

The Chatterstreet Market neighborhood—and the market at its heart that gives the area its name—is the center of Brindinford’s economic life. Artisans of nearly every kind, from cobblers and carpenters to weavers and weaponsmiths, keep their shops in this quarter. Traders of goods from the surrounding region make their way to the open-air market, which is usually full of carts, booths, tents, and wagons. A vast array of services are available as well; here one may hire common laborers and architects, valets and mercenaries. With the exception of truly elite goods or services, which are



generally located in Silver Hill (or possibly West Hill or Ford North) if the townsfolk can afford them at all, anything listed for sale in the *Player's Handbook* or *Dungeon Master's Guide* can be found in Chatterstreet Market at the listed price. The gp limit for Chatterstreet Market is 2,000 gp.

Most of the buildings in Chatterstreet Market are ordinary row houses, with shops on the ground floor and apartments above.

Owlbear Arms: A gigantic stuffed owlbear stands outside the door of this weapons merchant. The owner of the shop, a half-elf named Dairin, makes no claim to having killed the beast, but he proudly displays the sword that supposedly did the job: a +2 *bastard sword of speed*. This item is far more expensive than anything else for sale in all of Brindinford, and no one has yet met Dairin's price for it (75,000 gp, a slight increase from its list value of 72,335 gp). He keeps it under excellent security, including both magical and mundane protection.

Eastgate

Eastgate is a rough-and-tumble neighborhood that includes the city's largest concentration of inns and taverns. Though not as frightening as Southspur can be, the city guard has its hands full in this area dealing with intoxicated tavern patrons, rowdy out-of-towners, and frequent robberies. A significant portion of the businesses in Eastgate concentrate on entertaining travelers and merchants, as well as providing goods of use to such folk (cartwrights, provisioners, and similar merchants). A number of merchant guilds maintain offices and warehouses in Eastgate.

Most of the buildings in Eastgate are ordinary row houses, very similar to those found in Chatterstreet Market. Eastgate holds more free-standing warehouses and outdoor businesses (millers, tanners) than does the Market area, and many inns are free-standing buildings with yards. The gp limit for Eastgate is 1,000 gp.

For details of the Gold Tabard Merchant Company, see "Honor Among Thieves" in the "Additional Encounters" section, below.

West Hill

West Hill is an eccentric neighborhood, not as pretentious as Silver Hill and characterized by intellectual interest. West Hill houses Brindinford's two booksellers, an alchemist, an astrologer, a healer, two interpreters, a scribe, and other specialists. As in Silver Hill, many of the buildings in West Hill are free-standing

homes with small walled yards, though residents of West Hill are more likely to grow bushes to prevent anyone from peering in their windows than to sculpt them into topiary. The neighborhood has a dark and mysterious feel to it, due partly to the old, dark stone used in many of the buildings, and partly to a mysterious force of evil that lurks therein...

The gp limit for West Hill is 3,000 gp.

Guard Barracks: Jutting out from the watch tower at the southeastern corner of the Baron's Keep, this low stone building houses the full-time city guards who are off-duty at any given time. In addition to the guard statistics presented in *The Speaker in Dreams*, Brindinford has guards who are 1st-level fighters. Sergeant Brox, the second-in-command, works the night shift.

DElite Guard, human Ftr1: CR 1; Medium Humanoid; HD 1d10+2; hp 7 (average); Init +5 (+1 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft.; AC 17 (+1 Dex, +4 chain shirt, +2 large steel shield); Atk +4 melee (1d8+2/19-20/x2, longsword), +2 ranged (1d8, light crossbow); AL LN; SV Fort +4, Ref +1, Will +0; Str 15, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 11, Cha 9.

Skills and Feats: Jump +2, Listen +4, Spot +4; Alertness, Improved Initiative, Weapon Focus (longsword).

DSergeant Brox, male dwarf Ftr2: CR 2; Medium Humanoid; HD 2d10+6; hp 18; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 20 ft.; AC 17; Atk +6 melee (1d10+3/x3, dwarven waraxe), +3 ranged (1d8, light crossbow); SQ +2 to saves vs. poison, spells, and spell-like effects; AL LN; SV Fort +5, Ref +1, Will +1; Str 17, Dex 12, Con 17, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 6.

Skills and Feats: Listen +4, Search +2, Spot +5; Alertness, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (dwarven waraxe), Weapon Focus (dwarven waraxe).

Southspur

Southspur is Brindinford's poor quarter, where undesirable businesses (dyers, perfumeries, tanners) and people collect. If Eastgate is rough-and-tumble, Southspur is just rough, and residents of other quarters believe it is dangerous to walk down the street in Southspur. That is not necessarily true, but walking down the wrong street (or, more likely, leaving the street and winding through one of Southspur's many twisting alleys) can be deadly. The city guard patrols rarely leave Southspur Street.

In other neighborhoods, the thieves' guild keeps close tabs on criminal activities. They don't touch Southspur—primarily because there's little worth stealing, but also because many of the guild's members grew up in Southspur and either have no desire to go back or

hold to a sense of honor that forbids them to steal from their “own kind.” As a result, though little organized crime exists, disorganized thugs, robbers, and killers have relatively free rein.

The gp limit for Southspur is 500 gp.

Foora: Southspur’s one prominent citizen is a figure of mystery, held in a mixture of awe and fear by her neighbors. Foora (female half-orc Adp9) sells spells and potions at low cost in the city’s poorest area, and desperate individuals from every neighborhood make their way to Foora for her unusual wares.

STARTING THE ADVENTURE

Besides the adventure hooks described in The Speaker in Dreams, consider this alternate method of drawing the characters into the adventure.

The characters could be passing through town during the fair, on their way to what they believe is the real adventure. Getting caught up in the events in Brindinford might at first seem a diversion from the task at hand. If you already know what adventure your group will play after you finish *The Speaker in Dreams*, you might start by planting seeds that will lead the characters on to that adventure—then place Brindinford in their path as they head in that direction. The danger of this hook is that the characters may get through the first encounter in the city, shrug their shoulders, and move on to the “real adventure.” Use this approach only if you are reasonably confident that your players will want to investigate further after encounter 4, *The Fair Gets Foul*.

ADDITIONAL ENCOUNTERS

Brindinford is a busy place during the fair, and the heroes may experience a number of secondary encounters less closely related to Ghaerleth Axom’s plot to usurp control of the city. Use these encounters at the indicated times, or adjust them somewhat for use during later adventures in Brindinford or another city.

Outside the Gates (EL 6)

*Use this encounter when the characters first arrive in Brindinford, before they reach the gates in encounter 1, *A Trip to the Fair*.*

At the outskirts of the sprawling fair, an old woman hunches on the ground, clutching a wooden bowl and looking up at passers-by with a pleading look in her eyes.

The beggar is actually Jaeril, a young silver dragon polymorphed into human form. If any character puts money in her bowl, she offers them a blessing in her rough country accent: “Pelor light your path and Heironeous guard your way!” If the party shows any further kindness to her, she looks solemnly in the eyes of one PC (the one she discerns to be the leader) and says, “Beware those who hear whispers in their dreams! They sleep fitfully now, awaiting the Speaker’s plans!” With that, she holds her bowl out to another group of travelers arriving in the city, and stubbornly ignores the party for the rest of the encounter.

Creature: Jaeril appears as nothing more than a slightly mad old woman, dressed in dirty tatters and begging for alms. She is, in fact, slightly mad, but aware enough to know that the sorcerers who call themselves Those Who Hear are a major threat to the city—and aware enough to recognize a group of heroes who may be able to foil their plans.

DJaeril, young female silver dragon: CR 6; Medium-size dragon; HD 13d12+26; hp 110; Init +0; Spd 40 ft., fly 150 ft. (poor); AC 22 (+12 natural); Atk +16/+11/+11/+11/+11 melee (1d8+3, bite; 1d6+1 [x2], claws; 1d4+1 [x2], wings); SA breath weapon 6d8, spells; SQ cold and acid immunity, cloudwalking, polymorph self, blindsight, keen senses; AL LG; SV Fort +10, Ref +8, Will +11; Str 17, Dex 10, Con 15, Int 16, Wis 17, Cha 16.

Skills and Feats: Bluff +16, Concentration +15, Diplomacy +16, Jump +16, Knowledge (arcana) +16, Knowledge (history) +16, Listen +18, Scry +16, Search +16, Spellcraft +16, Spot +18; Alertness, Cleave, Flyby Attack, Power Attack.

Special Attacks: Breath weapon—30¢ cone of cold deals 6d8 (DC 18 Reflex save), 30¢ cone of paralyzing gas paralyzes for 1d6+3 rounds (Fort save at DC 18).

Special Qualities: Cloudwalking—Can tread on clouds or fog as though on solid ground. *Polymorph Self*—Three times per day; each use allows only one change, which lasts until the dragon assumes another form or reverts to its own (reversion does not count as a use of this ability). *Blindsight*—Always active; detect creatures by nonvisual means within 300 ft. *Keen Senses*—Sees four times as well a human in low-light conditions and twice as well in normal light; dark-vision to 90 ft.

Spells (cast 5/4, know 4/2): 0—*daze, detect magic, daze, read magic*, 1st—*magic missile, true strike*.

Possessions: +1 dagger. Hidden in lair among the clouds over Brindinford: 1500 gp, gems: 400-gp topaz, 400-gp black pearl, 80-gp silver pearl, 60-gp citrine, 40-gp quartz, 20-gp moonstone.

Recalcitrant (EL 5)

Use this encounter in the middle of encounter 1, if the characters seem reluctant to have their weapons peace-bonded.

If the PCs choose to linger back away from the city gate and watch the guards more carefully, they get to witness what happens when an adventurer refuses the peace-bond:

The next visitor to reach the gate is a tall, burly man, his clothes clearly marking him as a barbarian. As the guards gently ask him to peace-bond his greatsword, he angrily pulls it from its sheath on his back, shouting with his thick accent, "You may tie down my father's blade if you can wrestle it back into its sheath." He assumes a defensive posture while the guards hesitate, taken aback.

If the PCs do nothing, the guards try to calm the barbarian down while his face simply grows increasingly red. After four rounds, he loses control of his mounting rage and attacks the guards, clearly outclassing them. One of the guards tries to blow a horn to summon aid, while the barbarian tries to prevent the alarm. If the barbarian defeats the guards and the PCs still do not hinder him, he wipes his sword on their bodies, slides it into its sheath, and strides into the city. If the guards succeeded in raising an alarm, the guard contingent from Eastgate arrives in 1d4+2 rounds.

Should the PCs attack the barbarian with lethal force, the guards (while they appreciate the help) shout at them to subdue or grapple him instead. If they manage to bring the barbarian under control, the guards bind his hands, take his weapons, and two of them escort him into the city for detainment. The guards are pleased with the party, expressing their gratitude profusely. One of the guards says, "My brother owns an inn right here in Eastgate. Go to the Shield & Shingle just up the way and tell him Joster sent you. He'll give you a room for the length of the fair, no charge."

Creatures: The barbarian is violent and stubborn, and as he enters his rage, completely unreasonable. No amount of talk (unaided by magic) will calm him down or convince him to submit to peace-bonding.

DUnruly Barbarian, male human Bar5: CR 5;

Medium Humanoid; HD 5d12+10; hp 59; Init +3; Spd 40 ft.; AC 18; Atk +8 melee (2d6+4/19-20/x2, +1 greatsword); SA rage 2/day; SQ uncanny dodge; AL CN; SV Fort +6, Ref +3, Will +2; Str 14, Dex 15, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 8.

Skills and Feats: Intimidate +7, Intuit Direction +9, Jump +5, Listen +9, Wilderness Lore +9; Cleave, Dodge, Power Attack.

Special Attacks: Rage—Gain +4 Str, +4 Con, +2 Will saves, -2 AC for 7 rounds.

Special Qualities: Uncanny Dodge—Retains his Dexterity bonus to AC when flat-footed, and cannot be flanked.

Possessions: +1 greatsword, +1 chainmail, potion of bull's strength, potion of cure moderate wounds.

Scene of the Crime

Use this encounter as part of encounter 8, *To Market*.

In the wake of the wererats' attack in encounter 4, a number of city guards are now combing the length of Eastgate Road looking for clues about the crime. The head of this investigation is Lieutenant Shella, pulled from her duty in the keep to look into the disturbances at the fair. If the adventurers try to talk to any of the guards, the guards refer them to the lieutenant.

Lieutenant Shella is a strong, stocky woman with a square face, a hooked nose, and a big bastard sword. She's a fine leader, but keenly suspicious of adventurers in particular—she views them as forces of instability who make her job harder, rather than easier.

Initial Reaction: *Unfriendly*, party gains +5 bonus to checks because of their previous accomplishments

Indifferent (DC 15): Nothing.

Friendly (DC 25): Information . . .

- The wererats apparently gathered in human form and all transformed into their "rat-man" forms at the same time, while the dire rats scurried out from their hiding places. There are no reliable descriptions of the wererats in human form, since no one paid any attention to them until they started changing shape.
- She thinks the wererats may be connected to the grisly deaths in Southspur. (Shella is wrong: the Southspur killings are the grimlocks' doing.) If you plan to use "The Medusa" (see below), Shella also thinks the wererats are connected to a recent series of disappearances in Eastgate. Individuals, mostly wealthy merchants from out of town, have vanished at the rate of about one per week for the last month or so.

- She guesses that the wererats are a transient gang of thugs who came from out of town and decided to live it up in Brindinford until things got too hot. She is convinced, she says, “Now that we’re on to them, they’ll leave town.”

In addition, Lieutenant Shella can tell the party about the missing Captain of the Guard, Merdick Forren. He was last seen in Chatterstreet Market investigating some reports of extortion in that neighborhood. This could lead the characters to Shoomma in encounter 8, To Market.

Baying in Eastgate (EL 7)

This encounter is irrelevant to the main plot of The Speaker in Dreams, so it can be used at any point during the adventure, or during a subsequent adventure in Brindinford. Since the Encounter Level is high, it is probably best to use it later rather than sooner.

The bustling noise of the fair seems to mute for a moment, as a sound like the howling of dogs rises over the din. Something evil echoes in that baying, and a surge of panic runs through the crowd.

The howling comes from a pair of shadow mastiffs located near the center of the Eastgate neighborhood, lurking in two dark alleys. The PCs must make two Will saves (DC 13) or be panicked for 2d4 rounds. If there is a bard in the party who makes both his saving throws, he may use his countersong ability to counter the effects of the baying, producing (with a good Perform check result) a circle of calm in a rising tide of fear, allowing easy passage through the crowd to the source of the howling. Without a bard in the party, the party must make its way through a panicked tide of citizens moving the opposite direction. See the rules in encounter 5b, Rats in the Market. Assume that the PCs are between 50 ft. and 300 ft. (5d6 x 10 ft.) away when the shadow mastiffs start baying.

Creatures: Two shadow mastiffs skulk in the shadows of two dark side streets on opposite sides of Eastgate Way. They stop baying when the adventurers enter the side streets.

DShadow Mastiffs (2): hp 30, 36.

A contingent of city guards arrives at the scene 1d4 rounds after the mastiffs stop baying. These five guards are the regulars assigned to the Eastgate neighborhood during the fair. Unless they can follow the sounds of combat, they may not find the shadow mastiffs immediately.

DCity Guards (3): hp 2, 4, 8.

DElite Guard (see above): hp 10.

Tactics: The side streets are sufficiently dark in the last light of day to allow the shadow mastiffs to use their shadow blend ability, giving them nine-tenths concealment (40% miss chance). They avoid moving out into the better-lit main street, preferring to draw opponents into the shadows with them. If all the PCs pursue one shadow mastiff down one of the streets, however, the other mastiff runs across Eastgate Way and down the street behind them, hoping to flank the characters.

Honor Among Thieves (EL 7)

Use this encounter as part of encounter 23, On Their Own. Player character rogues might be able to win the support of Brindinford’s tiny thieves’ guild, as described below.

Brindinford supports only a small thieves’ guild, which operates under the front of a legitimate merchant company in Eastgate. These rogues and scoundrels may be criminals, but they are no happier with the imposition of martial law enforced by devils than any other citizen, and they could prove unlikely allies to the adventuring party.

If a player character rogue decides to seek out the help of the thieves’ guild in Brindinford, the character should make a Gather Information skill check (DC 25), representing several hours spent asking discreet questions, following vague leads, and carefully making contacts. A character with 5 or more ranks in Innuendo can add a +2 synergy bonus to this check. Success means that the character finds her way to the Gold Tabard Merchant Company.

This warehouse and company office seems like any other in the busy Eastgate mercantile world, but it is actually the front for the thieves’ guild. The guildmaster, Thos (male human Rog4/Clr3 [Olidammara]), lives in an apartment above the offices, while also operating as a legitimate agent for a legitimate trading company. He makes the building and its attached warehouse available for thieves on the run, hot goods, and illicit activities of every sort.

Thos’s little gang includes Thelva (female halfling Rog2), an expert burglar, Gordin (male human Mnk5), an assassin and blackmailer par excellence, and six more rogues (male and female human Rog1) who serve various roles in the organization.

Initial Reaction: Friendly

Friendly: Information (the same as Gell or Nankiy in the Stony Gaze Tavern—see “The Medusa,” below).

Helpful (DC 20): Thos can be persuaded to undertake a special task to help the party. He will not do their job for them—that is, he refuses to attack devils or capture the Baron. Some tasks he might perform include:

- Scouting the Temple of Pelor for the characters. This takes one night. He returns from the Temple badly frightened, having narrowly escaped discovery, but describes areas 24a through 24d of the Temple for the party (see encounter 24, The Temple of Pelor”).
- Scouting the Baron’s Keep. This also takes one night. He returns from the Keep with a full description of the building (see the map on the inside back cover of the adventure). He reports that a figure shrouded in a hooded robe is the Baron’s constant companion, but he could not get a look at the figure’s face. He has never seen this figure before. He did not see the Baron’s two familiar bodyguards.
- Investigating the story that Eastgate merchants are being recruited somehow. This takes fourteen hours. He returns with the information that a mysterious man is offering merchants large sums in exchange for them helping to extend the diabolical cult’s influence beyond Brindinford. He explains that, just as the wererats and the sorcerous cabal seem to have been minions of the diabolists here, the cult is now seeking to recruit similar minions in other cities nearby.

Thos may agree to perform other tasks for the characters. Use your judgment to determine whether the task requested is reasonable, but anything that steals the spotlight from the player characters’ actions in the story is too much to ask. The characters must remain the heroes of the story, though they can have the help of some NPCs.

The Medusa (EL 7)

A medusa named Ahal can be added to the adventure as another minion of Ghaerleth Axom. In a supreme twist of irony, Ahal works as a waiter in the Stony Gaze Tavern, concealing its true nature with a *hat of disguise* while using its position to scope out potential victims to rob and kill.

During the celebration feast (encounter 14, Closure), Ahal keeps a close eye on the heroes, but takes no action that would draw the characters’ attention to it. If the characters return to the Stony Gaze Tavern during Part Two of the adventure (such as during encounter 22, On Their Own), use the following information

The Stony Gaze

One tavern that struggles to keep up the appearance, at least, of normalcy under martial law is the Stony Gaze Tavern, where the feast was held at the end of Part One. Both Gell and Nankiy are responsive to any questions the characters may ask, and they are not afraid to speak their mind about the changes in the city.

Initial Reaction: Friendly

Helpful (DC 20): Neither Gell nor Nankiy can do very much to help the characters; their primary usefulness as allies is the information they can provide. For example, they both have the following bits of useful knowledge:

- The Baron’s proclamation took the entire town by surprise. Baron Euphemes was never a particularly popular leader, but he also never displayed such a streak of cruelty before. He is generally regarded as wise, benevolent, and authoritarian. He has taxed trade heavily, preventing the merchants from gaining as much wealth and power as they would like, and ruled consistently in favor of keeping the aristocracy in its favored place. However, no one ever would have guessed that he would institute such heavy-handed measures. Of course, no one ever would have guessed that he was in league with devils, either ... it just goes to show how wrong you can be about a person.
- The night before the Baron’s proclamation, the dome of the temple of Pelor collapsed and the priests of the temple fled. Folks say that an unextinguishable fire burns inside, and that devils leap about in that flame.
- Despite the Baron’s call for their arrest, neither High Priest Forgrim nor Sun’s Champion Marith has been captured yet. The paladins of Heironeous have not been seen recently, however. Perhaps they are just in hiding.
- A few merchants with warehouses and offices in Eastgate have reported being approached by a mysterious man recently. This person asks questions about the merchant companies’ operations in nearby cities. At least one of these merchants accepted a large sum of money to leave Brindinford tonight and travel to the next town down the river. He did not reveal what he was asked to do there.

Creature: During their conversation, Ahal the medusa is a constant presence, eavesdropping at every opportunity. If the characters make a plan to intercept

the merchant who is supposed to leave town tonight, Ahal is there to intercept them, while the merchant never appears. In any other way possible, Ahal uses information gathered from the characters in the tavern against them. The medusa believes itself more than a match for the party, and does not hesitate to attack them in any situation where it can catch them alone.

Into the Keep

If Ahal survives until the characters enter the Baron's Keep (encounter 25, Into the Keep), it lurks by the gate in the guise of a beggar (created with its *hat of disguise*).

The gate into the Baron's Keep stands open and unguarded. Beyond the gate, the luxurious estates of the city's wealthiest residents spread out before you, the silver openwork that adorns their low garden walls brightly polished and gleaming in the light. A beggar clutching a wooden bowl looks pleadingly up at you from the shadows of the wall as you pass.

If the characters pay any attention to the medusa, it uses its gaze attack on the nearest character as its attack action in the surprise round. In the rest of the combat, Ahal uses its dagger (disguised to look like a wooden bowl) and snake-bite attacks. Characters who do not take special precautions must make Fortitude saves (DC 15) every round on their action to avoid the medusa's active gaze. (See "Gaze Attacks" in the *Dungeon Master's Guide* for more details.)

If Ahal is already dead, there is no encounter at the gate.

Creature: The medusa is disguised to look like an elderly male beggar draped in tatters and rags. Some of these rags form a loose hood (the *hat of disguise*), while others seem to move out of the beggar's head of their own volition (the snakes) when Ahal attacks. The medusa's dagger looks like a smooth wooden begging bowl, while its bow and arrows form a cloak on its back.

DAhal, medusa: CR 7; Medium-Size Monstrous Humanoid; HD 6d8+6; hp 34; Init +2 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 15; Atk +2/+2 melee (1d4, dagger; 1d4 and poison, snakes), +8 ranged (1d6, shortbow); SA petrifying gaze, poison; AL LE; SV Fort +3, Ref +7, Will +6; Str 10, Dex 15, Con 12, Int 12, Wis 13, Cha 15.

Skills and Feats: Bluff +11, Disguise +11, Move Silently +9, Spot +10; Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot.

Special Attacks: Petrifying gaze—Turn to stone permanently, 30 feet, Fort save (DC 15). Poison—Snakes, Fort save (DC 15), initial damage 1d6 temporary Str, secondary damage 2d4 temporary Str.

Possessions: Dagger, shortbow, 20 arrows, 3000 sp, *hat of disguise*, *wand of shatter* (can't use).

RECURRING VILLAINS

If any of the villains survive the adventure (and any subsequent time the party spends in town), consider turning them into recurring villains. The party could return to Brindinford in a year or so and discover Squim on the Baron's throne! Felga could also make a reappearance, perhaps at the head of an assassins' guild in a larger city.

Daros Hellseeker could return to the campaign when the characters have reached a higher level, having himself advanced a few levels as a blackguard. At the time of this adventure, he has just attained the minimum qualifications for that prestige class, and his traffic with the devils in this adventure certainly fulfils the requirement of peaceful contact with an evil outsider. He would be likely to establish a stronghold in the wilderness far from Brindinford, then extend his influence outward from there.

DDaros Hellseeker, male tiefling Clr8 (Hextor)/Blk 3: CR 11; Medium-size Humanoid (6 ft., 2 in. tall); HD 8d8+16 (cleric) plus 3d10+6 (blackguard); hp 80; Init +0; Spd 20 ft.; AC 18; Atk +12/+7 melee (1d10+2/crit 19-20/x2 plus 2d6 vs. good, +1 *unholy heavy flail*), +9 ranged (1d8, light crossbow); SA rebuke undead, smite, smite good, darkness, enhance evil spells, poison use, command undead, aura of despair; SQ fire, cold, and electricity resistance 5, detect good; AL LE; SV Fort +11, Ref +3, Will +10; Str 13, Dex 10, Con 14, Int 12, Wis 17, Cha 10.


Skills and Feats: Concentration +13, Hide +5, Intimidate +9, Knowledge (the planes) +7, Spellcraft +7; Cleave, Combat Casting, Martial Weapon Proficiency (heavy flail), Power Attack, Sunder, Weapon Focus (heavy flail).

Special Attacks: Smite—Once per day, make single melee attack with +4 attack bonus and +8 damage bonus. Darkness—Once per day, cast *darkness* as an 8th-level sorcerer. Enhance evil spells—Cast evil spells at caster level 9. Aura of Despair—Enemies within 10 feet suffer -2 to all saves.

Special Qualities: Detect Good—At will.

Possessions: +1 *unholy heavy flail*, +1 *half plate armor*, large steel shield, *potion of levitate*, *potion of spider climb*, 2 *potions of cure light wounds*, *potion of cure moderate wounds*.

Cleric Spells (6/5/4/4/3 plus 1/1/1): 0—*cure minor wounds*, *detect magic*, *guidance*, *inflict minor wounds*, *light*, *resistance*; 1st—*cause fear*, *command*, *divine*



favor, entropic shield, obscuring mist, +protection from good; 2nd—aid, bull's strength, death knell, hold person, +shatter; 3rd— +contagion, cure serious wounds, dispel magic, invisibility purge, meld into stone; 4th—air walk, cure critical wounds, +unholy blight.
Domains: Destruction, Evil.

Blackguard Spells (1/0 plus 1/1): 1st—doom, summon monster I; 2nd—cure moderate wounds.

Ghaerleth Axom, if he survives, will undoubtedly try once more to establish his new empire—perhaps this time with even more powerful infernal support. He could return from the outer planes as a high-level sor-

cerer, diabolical servants in tow. If he learns the whereabouts of the adventurers who foiled his plans in Brindiford, revenge may become a higher priority than dominion.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

James Wyatt wrote dozens of articles for Dragon Magazine and five Dungeon adventures before joining the Wizards staff in January 2000.

Game design is career number five, after stints as a childcare worker, ordained minister, technical writer, and web designer. He and his wife Amy have a three-year-old son, Carter.