



OPPARA GAZETTEER

Life in Oppara isn't difficult to handle, once you've learned the rules: if a senator tells you that what you want to do is illegal, talk to a different one; if the district tax you pay is too high, move to the next house over; if you require a diplomat to get the upper hand in negotiations, hire your rival's out from under her; if you need an honorable noble, promote the nearest farmer; if you make a mistake, act like it never happened until people feel awkward and follow suit; if you don't like your past, pay a historian to write a new one; if your office needs more funding, buy a weapon and declare yourself a military branch; and if you need to keep something hidden forever, claim it's urgent and hand it to a government official.

—Baronet Solmon Menander, Taldan bureaucrat

Oppara is Taldor’s thriving capital—a shining monument to the grandeur and majesty once common to the entire Taldan empire.

Seated on the black cliffs of the River Porthmos in Opparos Prefecture, Oppara bears all the gravitas and extravagance that 6,000 years of history have conferred upon it. The roofs and domes of Oppara were once plated with gold, earning it the nickname “the Gilded City,” and though past rulers stripped the gold away long ago to pay for the empire’s follies, the wealth and decadence of Taldor’s capital keep the spirit of that name alive.

Oppara serves as Taldor’s primary trade center, with traffic coming both from Taldor’s interior via the River Porthmos and from the steady stream of international vessels sailing in from the Inner Sea. It is also the home of Taldor’s government, hosting both the Imperial Palace of the grand prince and the polished marble halls of the senate. As the economic and political hub of Taldor, Oppara is the beating heart of the empire and the center of Taldan culture. Twin harbors provide goods to the city’s thriving marketplaces and restaurants, and they’re often so crammed with ships that the river cannot be seen. Public fountains and marble statues can be found at many major crossroads and plazas. Columned villas and grandiose temples

from every age of Taldor’s history line the streets, and even the humbler merchant districts are holdovers from an unparalleled age of glory. Most of Oppara’s buildings are made of carved stone, and the roads are paved with either intricate mosaics or well-fitted cobblestones. Much of the city’s advanced public works have withstood the test of time, including its labyrinthine sewer system and the network of stone gutters that keep the streets clear of summer rain. The Grand Bridge of the Empire, emerging from the southeastern shore of the city’s heart to cross the massive Porthmos, remains one of the most ambitious and impressive engineering marvels in the Inner Sea. Two magically animated lion sculptures stand sentinel atop Oppara’s main gate, offering a glimpse into the greatness that currently lies dormant within the empire. At night, the city is lit with tens of thousands of lanterns, causing it to shine like a beacon in the darkness.

HISTORY

Once a city-state built atop of the ruins of a settlement established long ago by the descendants of Azlanti refugees, Oppara became the capital of a newly formed empire when its first grand prince, Taldaris, began a 12-year campaign to unite the surrounding communities under a single banner. By the time the first emperor died in -1144 AR, the combined principalities had come to see themselves as a distinct nation. Next followed a slow and methodical conquest

of the surrounding wilds and territories, with Oppara serving as both the naval headquarters and economic financier of these expeditions. In 1 AR, Oppara rose to even greater heights when Aroden pulled the *Starstone* from the Inner Sea and became a god in the process. The organized worship of Aroden sprung up almost overnight, with Oppara building the first cathedral to the god and becoming the center of Arodenite adoration within Taldor. Even today, more than a hundred years after his death, countless monuments and smaller vestiges of Taldans’ dedication to the Last of the First Humans can be seen throughout the city.

Oppara has suffered many blows and setbacks over the long centuries, though it has so far risen from the ashes in the face of all adversity. In -632 AR, the spawn of Rovagug known as the Tarrasque leveled the city, and as Oppara and other prominent Taldan cities scrambled to rebuild, unscrupulous exploitation of laborers triggered rebellion, both in the city and across the empire. Despite this, Oppara eventually managed to return to its former glory, rebuilt with robust civic improvements that have lasted into the present day, and with a working class that held little contempt for their erstwhile oppressors. In 4606 AR, the death of Aroden shook the nation of Taldor to its core, but Oppara has found new faith in Iomedae, the Inheritor, along with new purpose for the abandoned churches of the Last Azlanti. War with the neighboring nation of Qadira and the blunders of several of the Armies of Exploration have cost Taldor’s capital a fortune many times, but it has remained a thriving urban center despite it all. And though the slow decay of Taldor has had no small impact on Oppara, and while internal intrigues threaten the city from within, it continues to embody the proud resilience and spirit of the ancient empire it symbolizes.

OPPARA

N metropolis

Corruption +9; **Crime** +2; **Economy** +9; **Law** +7; **Lore** +9; **Society** +5

Qualities academic, bureaucratic quagmire, heart of Avistan, prosperous, strategic location, tourist attraction

Danger +10

DEMOGRAPHICS

Government overlord

Population 109,280 (100,000 humans; 9,280 other)

NOTABLE NPCs

Baron Oltar Vinmark (N male human expert 4/barbarian 4)

Dominicus Rell (N male human bard 3/rogue 3/Lion Blade 3; *Pathfinder Player Companion: Taldor, Echoes of Glory* 22)

Grand Prince Stavian III (CN old male human aristocrat 8/wizard 4)

Princess Eutropia Stavian I (NG female human aristocrat 7/swashbuckler^{ACG} 6)

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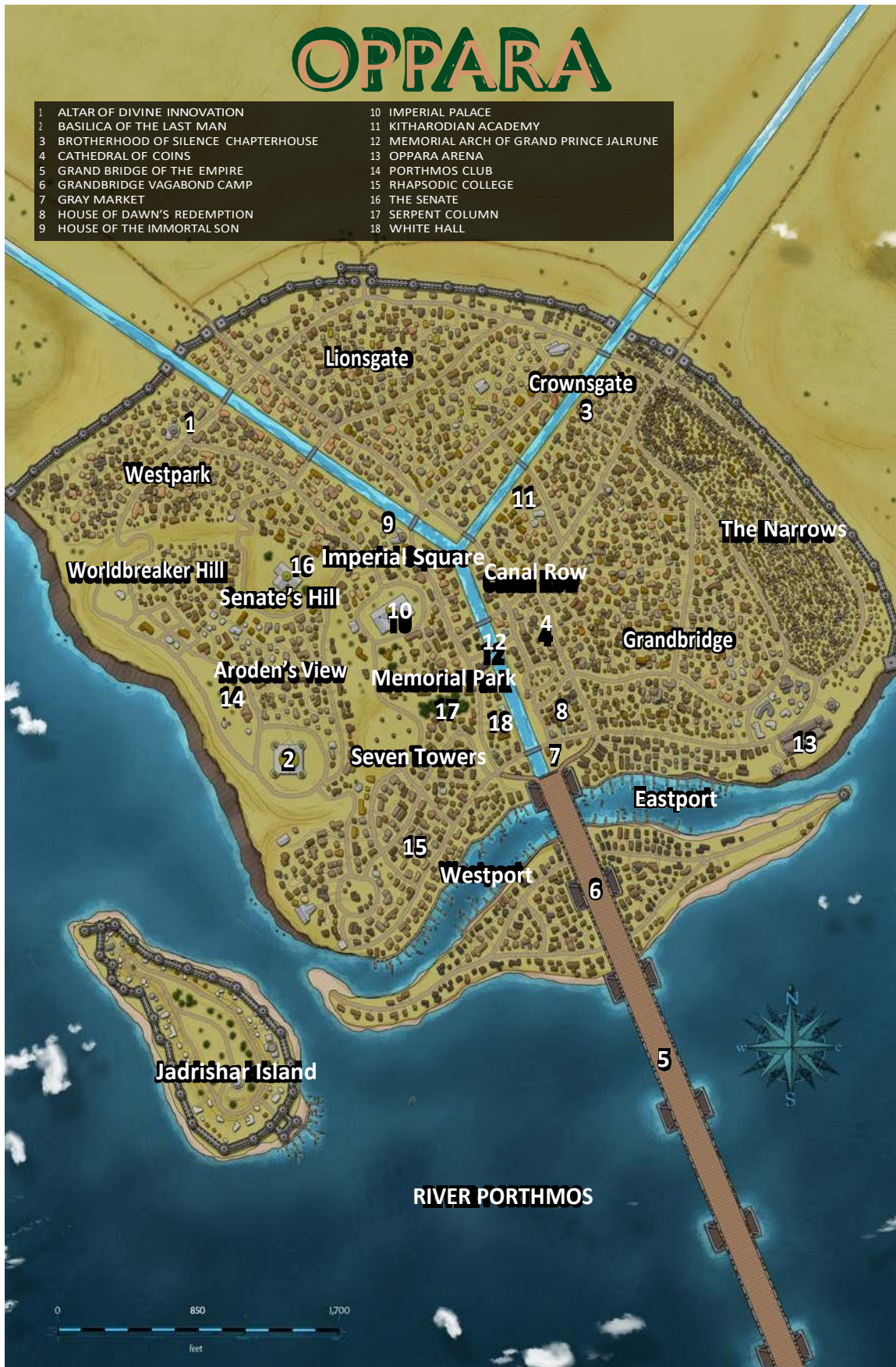
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MARKETPLACE**Base Value** 25,600 gp; **Purchase Limit** 150,000 gp;**Spellcasting** 9th**Minor Items** all available; **Medium Items** 4d4;**Major Items** 3d4**QUALITIES****Bureaucratic Quagmire** Taldor's obtuse system of governance is mitigated only by the tendency of those in power to ignore it. (*Corruption* +3, *Law* +1)**Heart of Avistan** Though decadent and deteriorating behind its glorious facades, Oppara epitomizes the Taldan pride in 6,000 years of history and unparalleled influence on Avistani civilization. (*Economy* +2, *Lore* +2, *Society* +3)**SOCIETY**

Oppara's current mix of glory and degradation stems from its past, as the city's triumphs and failures over thousands of years have left indelible marks that shape its present-day society. An excessive, even blind pride in one's heritage is a cornerstone of Taldan identity, and the empire's slow degeneration has only exacerbated the issue as nobles and commoners alike make desperate attempts to cling to their glorified, self-aggrandizing versions of the nation's history and its role in shaping civilizations across the continent. Though viewed as pompous folly by those from neighboring countries,

this extreme national pride grants Taldor remarkable stability, with loyalty and patriotism bridging many of the gaps caused by the nation's extreme stratification of power and wealth. Yet this pride can also prove the bane of Taldor, and by extension its capital, as nobles convince themselves they rule over an empire at the height of its power and refuse to update the country's archaic social structures. Living in Oppara—an economic, military, and political powerhouse—adds fuel to these delusions, as the privileged few allow the heights of the city's decadence to mask the depths of its decline.

The presence of so many artists, clergy, merchants, nobles, and senators makes Oppara a flourishing and hectic society that can prove exceedingly difficult to navigate, especially for the uninitiated. Taldor is a complex nation, and its people are pulled in many directions thanks to the large gulf between the impoverished and wealthy, the competing forces of progress and tradition, and the influence of corruption on a chivalrous heritage. While the common people of Oppara are pragmatic folk who go about their daily lives without giving much thought to who is in charge and what their secret motivations might be, socialites find the Gilded City to be a roiling center of politics. Nobles and other elites live insular lives of excess, eternally concerned with gaining status through ostentatious displays of wealth and power, while sycophantic hangers-on rise and fall on their coattails.

The current mayor of Oppara, Baron Oltar Vinmark, was appointed by the grand prince himself, and he has been a source of consternation for much of the nobility; as a former member of the Ulfen Guard, he lacks Taldan cultural mores, but as a favored friend of Stavian III, he is essentially untouchable—at least politically. As is common whenever public allegiances clash with private interests, spies and intrigue abound in Oppara. Taldor's secret police, the Lion Blades, seek out dissidents and other serious threats to the empire, while nobles clandestinely plot reform, often to further their own self-serving interests.

Despite the abundant political strife, many of Oppara's commoners are relatively safe and well off, especially in comparison to those of neighboring cities and countries. Art and refinement remain rich traditions within Oppara despite Taldor's financial foibles, and Opparan citizens, no matter their socioeconomic class, are surrounded on all sides by brilliant music, magnificent architecture, public sculptures, and skillful paintings. This only further reinforces Taldor's national pride, engendering a sense of sophistication within even the most destitute dockworker. Most commoners have at least a few imported luxuries purchased from Oppara's legendary marketplaces, as well as treasured heirlooms from

Taldor's prestigious past. Though some districts hold dangers in the form of thieves and cutthroats, most of Oppara is clean, well maintained, and patrolled by the city constables. Whatever the many flaws of the capital, citizens have little fear of major upheaval, trusting the might and traditions of Taldor to protect them no matter how chaotic the political situation becomes.

DISTRICTS OF OPPARA

Oppara is divided into 15 distinct districts, each of which is described in greater detail below. A de facto sixteenth district known as Grandbridge Vagabond Camp (see page 69) lies within Oppara's jurisdiction, but most Opparans do not consider the unsavory locale part of the city proper.

Aroden's View: Standing atop the highest hill in the city, Aroden's View is a small district, but one with great cultural importance—even taking into account that it is surrounded by a city full of Taldan touchstones. It holds some of the oldest buildings in Taldor, some of which even survived the destruction wrought by the Tarrasque (or so their current owners claim), granting the area immense historical significance. It is also one of the most beautiful sites in Oppara, with extravagant gardens filled with rare flowers and other flora, tree-lined avenues perfect for promenading in the latest fashions, and massive villas carefully arranged to take advantage of the breathtaking views the district provides its privileged residents.

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Canal Row: Packed with canal houses running alongside the central canal before transitioning into a more spacious residential district as it progresses further north, Canal Row is home to Oppara's wealthier commoners—merchants, professors, ship captains, and plyers of many other profitable trades. Though not as lavish as the noble districts in other parts of Oppara, Canal Row is brightly colored, clean, and safe, making it an attractive place to visit, as well as a spot that many of the city's more modest social climbers aspire to someday live.

Crownsate: Named for Oppara's smaller secondary gate at the northeast edge of the city, Crownsate is a poor district choked with old industrial buildings and warehouses. The district was long ago pilfered for anything desirable by the rest of the city—even the cobblestones in the streets have been pulled up and used elsewhere. Cutthroats, petty thieves, and desperate beggars lurk in the narrow, dirty alleyways at

night, and the constabulary rarely bothers to patrol the area, leaving any chance for justice in the hands of the district's residents.

Eastport: The smaller of Oppara's two ports, Eastport occupies the area on the east side of the Grand Bridge of the Empire, and it receives most of the traffic coming from the inland portion of the River Porthmos. The district's buildings are primarily made of wood and have proven something of a fire hazard; twice in just the last century, large portions of Eastport burned to the ground under mysterious circumstances. Even more suspiciously, both of these most recent fires took place exactly 3 days after a Grand Day of Exaltation.

Grandbridge: Grandbridge is the largest district in the capital, spanning the central canal. A mercantile district of worldwide renown, it hosts the infrastructure needed to take advantage of Oppara's international trade, including currency exchanges, factories, import-export firms, open-air markets, shopping squares, and warehouses. The city's infamous Gray Market stands between the split rises of the Grand Bridge of the Empire, offering goods of questionable provenance straight from the docks.

Imperial Square: This exquisite plaza stretches out from the Imperial Palace for several blocks in all directions. Due to the plaza's proximity to the home of the Grand Prince and the constant stream of other high-status clientele, the surrounding apartments, restaurants, and shops are some of the best in all of Oppara—and by extension all of Taldor. Here, local nobles seek out lavish dwellings to impress their peers, and local businesses source the finest products to impress the nobles.

Jadrishar Island: This island southwest of the city is dominated by the headquarters of the Taldan Imperial Navy, including the navy's prestigious college. The naval base is a literal fortress, surrounded by thick walls of blackened stone and guarded day and night by an elite force of dedicated naval personnel. The shore establishment also contains the heavily protected source of Taldor's naval might: a shipyard that can mass-produce vessels, allowing a full-scale warship to be built in as little as a week. Dozens of Taldor's most formidable warships can be found docked here at any given point in time, swarming with maintenance crews working to clean and refit them with new equipment while students from the navy's college perform training exercises.

Lionsgate: Two spectacular, 50-foot-tall, magically animated marble statues of lions top Oppara's main gate. Until recently, a powerful spellcaster was charged with controlling and preserving the massive stone beasts, but—unbeknownst to all but a few bureaucrats—she quit her post and left the city under a shroud of secrecy. Fortunately, the



LIONSGATE

statues seem content for now to lounge most of the day, occasionally rising to let out a mighty roar. A sprawling market occupies the area just inside the gate, taking advantage of the proximity to the city's primary entrance. Small, ornately carved stone buildings are tightly packed together along narrow streets. These originally served as houses, but many have since been converted to shops that cater to the many visitors who arrive by land routes.

Memorial Park: This park serves as a memorial to Taldor's heroes, both real and imagined. Monuments from every era of Taldor's 6,000-year history can be found here, from a brass-plated obelisk in honor of General Arnisant to commemorations of each of the Armies of Exploration. While Taldans are usually quick to loudly and insistently celebrate their country's legacy and its famous figures at any opportunity, this district is a perhaps surprising exception, as its visitors often spend their time in silent reflection—a tradition so ingrained that anyone who makes excessive noise in Memorial Park risks sharp censure from the district's watchful guards.

The Narrows: Oppara's poorest district, the Narrows is more a health hazard than a city neighborhood. The constabulary refuses to patrol the area except rarely and in force, and residents of the neighboring Canal Row district have even gone so far as to request that a wall be built between the two areas. Basic public services do

not exist in the Narrows—bodies and refuse lie openly for days in the muddy pits that serve as streets, and the ramshackle wooden buildings collapse into each other with scarcely a warning.

Senate's Hill: Home to the columned marble halls of the senate, Senate's Hill also contains the lavish villas of many senators, especially those who represent distant prefectures and require an official permanent residence for their tenure in Oppara—a much squabbled-over perk. The wealthy district is filled with shops that provide high-end goods and services to this exclusive clientele, with coffee houses, ftnery shops, luxurious inns (with discreet staff), and bespoke tailors providing anything the local senators might require.

Seven Towers: This district is named for a group of six crumbling towers arranged in a circular pattern around one central column. Dozens of ancient, interconnected dungeon complexes and vaults—remnants of the layered ruins atop of which Oppara is built—have likewise been discovered beneath the district at regular intervals during the city's long history. The government sealed the known entrances to these ruins long ago, without publicly stating a reason, though rumors abound of undead walking the streets of Seven Towers at night and of the namesake towers humming discordant low notes while the ground beneath seems to undulate.

Westpark: Oppara's wealthiest district, Westpark is home to much of Oppara's upper class. The constabulary

maintains several stations here and patrols day and night, while the enormous villas that grace the area are walled in to keep out any undesirables, though such barriers are more often a way for nobles to push the boundaries of their ever-increasing property lines and compete in ostentatious displays than they are a necessary security measure.

Westport: The larger of Oppara's two ports, Westport services all international traffic and all vessels providing supplies to the Taldan navy. The waterfront is crammed with businesses—official or otherwise—that vie for sailors' coin, with flashy brothels, hazy drug dens, chaotic gambling houses, jam-packed inns, unscrupulous moneylenders, ramshackle pawnshops, and rowdy pubs all clamoring for attention.

Worldbreaker Hill: Named for the famed magical siege weapon that once held a prominent place here (before it was removed for use by the Fifth Army of Exploration and subsequently lost in a disastrous battle by the Sixth Army of Exploration), this district now serves as home to many of Taldor's high-ranking military commanders and heroes.

NOTABLE LOCATIONS

Some of Oppara's most iconic sites are described below.

Altar of Divine Innovation: While the Imperial

Palace and the senate building get all the glory of rulership, the civic center in the nearby Westpark district is where most day-to-day business of the state actually gets done. Formerly a temple to Aroden, the building was converted into government offices after the god's death, and it now contains a byzantine mess of overworked actors within the Taldan government, including bureaucrats, diplomats, military officers, agents lobbying for the pet projects of influential people, and even representatives from popular clothiers and jewelers.

Attempting to accomplish anything via strictly legal avenues is a source of extreme frustration for everyone involved; requests are redirected to departments that don't exist, while myriad redundant agencies work at cross-purposes in pursuit of their own notions of the country's aims. The once-orderly system has effectively devolved into a frustrating and chaotic melee in which independent political entities grab as much power as possible from one another in an attempt to accomplish their goals.

Even the seemingly simplest processes have become so opaque that one bitterly jaded noble, Baronet **Solmon Menander** (CN male human investigator^{ACG} 5), has gone so far as to set up a bureaucratic back channel in which he regularly employs means of blackmail, bribery, and forgery. While unquestionably corrupt, Solmon uses his misbegotten influence mostly to provide a means of recourse to nonnobles who get caught up

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in the dysfunctional and uncaring system. Solmon sometimes even goes out of his way to offer assistance to those in need—especially if helping them fulfill their requests is likely to make one of Solmon's fellow nobles suffer.

Basilica of the Last Man: An enormous domed building situated on a hill in Aroden's View, this basilica remains a magnificent structure despite its deteriorating state. The Basilica of the Last Man is the oldest known temple to Aroden on Golarion, and it is one of the very few that remain. The cathedral's archbishop, Father **Basri** (LN male venerable half-elf ex-cleric of Aroden 13), prevented the temple from being torn down by repurposing it as a tourist attraction. Most now see the once-proud basilica as a curiosity at best, though a few less secure Taldans see it as a constant reminder of Aroden's death and Taldor's decline, and therefore as an unbearable embarrassment to the glory of the empire. Those few faithful who remain in unanswered service to Aroden are usually pitied or held in contempt by the rest of Taldor; the aging and ever-dwindling devotees watch over their lifeless relics, displaying their sacraments to occasionally derisive sightseers in order to keep the basilica intact.

Unknown to the temple's keepers, one of the basilica's artifacts still has a spark of power within it—a holy longsword infused with an infinitesimal bit of the power of the *Starstone*. The sword is warded against detection, leaving its minders ignorant of the truth. Though the longsword has remained dormant since Aroden's death, some fluctuation in the weave of fate has awakened it again, causing it to reach out psychically to humans who spend a great deal of time in its vicinity. The museum's current apprentice caretaker, a young Taldan woman of Keleshite ancestry named **Cyr Amestrin** (LN female human expert 2), has fallen under the sword's influence due to repeated contact, and she finds herself increasingly moved to take up the blade.

Brotherhood of Silence Chapterhouse: Based in Crownsgate, this unassuming building is the main chapter house of the Brotherhood of Silence, a large and influential thieves' guild that is active throughout the Inner Sea region. The organization owns a great

deal of property and has chapter houses in most major cities. Their Opparan headquarters is made of black marble and has darkened windows, with two armed and armored guards stationed at the front door at all times. The Brotherhood operates with the tacit sanction of Taldor's government, as it is an open secret that nobles—and even the grand prince—occasionally commission the guild's services. Targets are usually other nobles, though guild members are believed to have stolen from elemental lords, distant dragons' hoards, and even divine servants. The full breadth of any secret agreements between the state and the Brotherhood is not known, but most nobles consider it common knowledge that the guild is not to be retaliated against unless the thief involved is caught in the act or causes physical harm; the crime is otherwise recognized as the responsibility of whoever commissioned the theft, rather than the particular thief or thieves who carried it out.

The presumed leader of the Brotherhood is popularly known as the Masked Marquis, a mysterious figure whose reported appearance, race, and gender seem to change with every sighting. The little information on the Masked Marquis that has been gleaned from defecting members is steeped in ritualism; the person such deserters describe is more akin to an ideal than an individual being—a mythic persona who lesser thieves aspire to become through the act of stealing. The well-kept secret of the Masked Marquis's identity and disparate or vague descriptions cause many to assert that the Masked Marquis is actually several people. Any goals the Masked Marquis has beyond profit are unknown outside the organization and, if the defectors are to be believed, perhaps even within the Brotherhood itself.

Cathedral of Coins: Part temple and part bank, Abadar's church in Oppara is a cathedral in Canal Row topped with a dome of silver and gold, with marble fountains decorating either side of the church steps. Inside, the clergy's sermons border on state propaganda, citing the wealth of the nobility and the stability of the countryside as signs of Abadar's favor. A growing faction of the church's worshipers has become discontent with this viewpoint, however, finding the absurdity of Taldan law to be an affront to their god's teachings. These separatists call themselves the Tare



SEFERI

and have begun to encourage victims of bad governance to carve their grievances into lead scale weights and place them within the collection boxes. The weights are then taken to the knight **Veneranda Cain** (LG female human paladin of Abadar 6), who attempts to determine whether legal measures can address the etched complaints. Despite this unsanctioned break from the church's public message, the cathedral's clergy has yet to either condemn or condone Veneranda's actions, turning a blind eye to the matter for the time being. In recognition of this, members of the Tare have taken to wearing a symbol of a two-headed eagle, as a representation of the two different outlooks within the church.

Grand Bridge of the Empire: Oppara's massive cantilever bridge is set atop enormous stone piles sunk deep into the Porthmos. Built 3,000 years ago to greatly increase the ease with which goods and people could be transported across the river, the Grand Bridge of the Empire remains an impressive architectural achievement even in the present day. The span's surface is paved with delicate mosaic tiles laid across a foundation of thin granite sheets. Two causeways, one on either side of the central canal, offer Opparans easy access to the bridge. The bridge has long been rumored to be a recruiting spot for subversives—especially those

who wish to see an end to the Primogen Crown—with those wanting to declare their loyalty to the cause performing a series of subtle steps on a specific pattern of mosaic tiles.

Grandbridge Vagabond Camp: Oppara's unofficial sixteenth district sprawls under the northern span of the Grand Bridge of the Empire, though most citizens do not consider it a part of the city. This massive tent town is populated with criminals, refugees, runaway soldiers, and vagabonds. Oppara has made concerted efforts to clear these undesirables several times in the past, but each attempt has met with vicious resistance from the residents, and the Taldan government now chooses to ignore the camp's existence. While neither the safest nor most appealing place to visit, the vagabond camp can provide an effective place to disappear, one way or another. A few traitors to Taldor have used the camp as a hideout before escaping to Cheliox or elsewhere; it is also the covert refuge of **Samarag Nazres** (LG female human cavalier^{ARG} 10), who was an up-and-coming military hero until she mysteriously abandoned her post and vanished 5 years ago.

Gray Market: An open-air square near the River Porthmos in the Grandbridge district, the Gray Market is filled with makeshift stalls hawking wares fresh from the docks. Though the name is supposedly in reference to the morning fog that rises off the river, most people consider it a nod to the dubious origin of the market's staggering array of offered goods. A number of Zimar

Corsairs are known to favor the Gray Market as a place to unload stolen Qadiran cargo; the captains claim Oppara pays better prices than Zimar, as the Opparan marketplace has yet to be saturated with plunder from Qadira. More skeptical citizens suspect the corsairs have an ulterior motive choosing Oppara as a port: namely, moving supplies to certain political factions under the lax scrutiny of those who monitor the Gray Market's ever-shifting merchandise. Suspicion falls in particular on one of the most frequent visitors, Captain **Seferi** (CN female human magus^{UM} 7), who makes no secret of her admiration of the grand prince's daughter, Princess Eutropia.

House of Dawn's Redemption: Standing in the heart of Oppara's Grandbridge district, the House of Dawn's Redemption is a soaring monument to Sarenrae's faith. Built in the Qadiran style and topped with gleaming rose-gold domes, this church is a center for healing and forgiveness, as well as a celebration of the Dawnflower's century-long presence in Taldor. The cathedral stands on the site of Sarenrae's original temple within Oppara, the land having been returned by the city as reparation for the slaughter and exile of Sarenite priests and worshippers under Stavian I. The House of Dawn's Redemption now serves as proof that faith cannot be so easily extinguished, and the church plays host to a great

number of once-lost relics that have been returned to the care of the attendant Sarenites after being scattered by the Great Purge.

The current high priest of the temple, Dawnmother **Zenaida Tandleos** (NG female middle-aged human cleric of Sarenrae 9), has devoted herself to healing and welcomes anyone who wishes to join the church into her flock. Old prejudices die hard, however, and some Taldans still consider Sarenrae's faith untrustworthy due to its strong connection with the rival nation of Qadira. The temple's willingness to accept reformed villains among its members adds further fuel to this fire; rumors abound that Sarenites provide sanctuary to fugitives and enemies of the state. While the congregants of the House of Dawn's Redemption are patriotic Taldans and hand over foreign spies and unrepentant criminals to the constabulary, they have on many occasions harbored nonviolent political opponents of the grand prince.

House of the Immortal Son: Formerly the second-oldest temple to Aroden in the Inner Sea, the House of the Immortal Son has been converted into Taldor's most opulent and expensive opera house. Situated to the north of Imperial Square, this marble-and-granite building is constructed in the shape of a cylinder, and the sleek Azlanti-inspired architecture is surrounded by finely carved pillars. Aroden's holy symbol still adorns the roof—a complex work of stone that gazes into the heavens. Tickets to the performances here are one of the

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city's most precious commodities, at least for those of the wealthiest classes who are desperate to see and be seen, and there is no shortage of nobles who would go to great lengths to secure an evening's entertainment at the opulent theater.

Imperial Palace: This is the home of Grand Prince Stavian III, as it has been to every grand prince of Taldor since the empire's founding. From the exterior, the palace is a simple granite building, surrounded on all sides by the Imperial Square district (see page 66). The interior of the palace is extravagantly decorated with ornate arches of patterned stone and shining panels of gold. Stavian III is an indulgent, disinterested ruler, and his court consists mostly of sycophants with no real value to the state. The grand prince's daughter, Princess Eutropia, sometimes holds court in his absence, encouraging more robust debate. The exterior of the palace is often heavily guarded by regiments of the Taldan Phalanx and Taldan Horse, who march across the square daily and watch the palace entrances. Stavian III also employs a permanent detachment of Ulfen Guards to keep the palace secure.

Kitharodian Academy: The larger of Oppara's famed bardic colleges, Kitharodian Academy—also known as the Kith—is located along the northern edge of Canal Row. The school is a hallmark of Taldan culture, and people of all social classes regularly attend its student and alumni performances. Even the grand prince himself has been known to attend these events, providing one of the few opportunities for untitled citizens to see him in person. The Kitharodian Academy is less known for its other function: it is the primary recruiting ground for Taldor's enigmatic secret police and spies, the Lion Blades. The organization seeks out bards in particular due to their versatile skills and creative minds, scouting the most promising students for potential training in one of the many shadow schools hidden throughout Taldor. Nearly all of the school's teachers are former Lion Blades, including the school's administrator, Lord **Merriweather Stokes** (N male human bard 4/rogue 3/LION Blade 3; *Pathfinder Player Companion: Taldor, Echoes of Glory* 22), who handles most matters of enlistment.

Hidden beneath the Kitharodian Academy is the Lion Blades' most prestigious shadow school, as well as a secret archive known as the Library of the Lion—a priceless collection of unmodified histories, contentious first-person accounts of famous events, and espionage dossiers. The head of the Lion Blades, Dominicus Rell,

is often found here training new recruits or improving the archive's considerable resources.

Memorial Arch of Grand Prince Jalrune: Spanning the width of the central canal, crossing from Memorial Park into Canal Row, this arch serves as a memorial to an assassinated grand prince of Taldor. The monument depicts a half-dozen famous scenes from Grand Prince Jalrune's life, beginning at the base of Memorial Park with his birth, ascending to his crowning at the center of the arch, and ending at the base of the monument in Canal Row with his assassination. His assassins are portrayed as plain and faceless, which curiously goes against the common view that Qadiran agents murdered Jalrune. Even so, his arch has become a meeting place and a covert symbol to those nobles and military officials who still press for war with Qadira. These like-minded thinkers draw inspiration from a doomed secret society that



CARINA IGNATUS

attempted to start a war with Qadira and whose members were exiled after being stripped of all titles. For obvious reasons, present-day conspirators rarely announce these sentiments, instead using Prince Jalrune as a secret signal to others who share their beliefs. Several high-ranking military officials meet here surreptitiously, as well as Senator **Karthis** (N male middle-aged human aristocrat 5/bard 4), a thin-skinned demagogue who vocally advocates for the destruction of Qadira in both public orations and speeches to the Taldan senate.

Oppara Arena: Located in Grandbridge, Oppara's arena is among the oldest in the Inner Sea, and its massive stone stands hold up to 20,000 spectators. Both gladiator matches and battles between other less intelligent creatures are held frequently—the arena offers a handsome price for wild animals or more monstrous creatures that can be used as entertainment. On special occasions, the stadium can even be flooded to simulate naval engagements in miniature. Skilled (or foolhardy) warriors from abroad are frequently invited to compete for wealth and glory. Admission is a single copper piece, and it is not uncommon for nobles to provide food and drinks for the entire audience, though it is painfully obvious to all that they do so only in service of an ulterior motive.

The blood of generations of combatants has soaked the arena's sands, granting the stadium itself a malevolent, magical bloodlust. Spectators can remain caught up in the crowd's supernaturally enhanced frenzy for days afterward, with those most affected becoming more likely to torment animals or attack someone in

a maddened fervor. Uncanny accidents are known to happen whenever blood has not been spilled in the arena for more than a few days, though the degenerate tastes of regular attendees mean that the coliseum rarely goes unfed for long.

Porthmos Club: Formerly a temple to Shelyn and still holding many books and artworks of the faithful, the Porthmos Club was converted into a high-class teahouse almost a century ago. The resplendent stone building looks over the city from Aroden’s View, and only the highest strata of Opparan clientele are admitted. Membership is a highly pursued commodity, as it offers promises of wealthy contacts and the potential for social climbing. The Porthmos Club also contains a hidden basement chamber, which secret societies or conspirators can discreetly book with the teahouse’s proprietor, **Trelorick Anstarza** (LN male human aristocrat 5). This private meeting room attracts everything from political dissidents to nobles with delusions of more influence than they actually have; it is also both used and carefully monitored by the Lion Blade agent **Lenorilia Callatarro** (N female human bard 3/ROGUE 3/LION Blade 3; *Pathfinder Player Companion: Taldor, Echoes of Glory* 22).

Rhapsodic College: Hidden within the clutter of Westport, Rhapsodic College is easily overlooked

by tourists, consisting of only a few small buildings around a performance and practice hall. While a smaller and lesser-known bardic school than the Kitharodian Academy, Rhapsodic College makes up for its size with quality. Many of the finest bards in Taldor have come from this school, so graduates are frequently in demand across the Inner Sea region and beyond. The Taldan nobility also regularly taps such bards to write histories of the empire—often with a heavy political spin. Many bards make a fine living in Taldor publishing accounts of past events that paint their employers in a favorable light. Politics can be a dangerous business, however, and these propagandists sometimes suffer ignominious ends to their careers or lives for supporting the wrong person.

One of the college’s more successful history professors, **Carina Ignatus** (N female middle-aged human bard 6), has accumulated a small fortune—and no small degree of infamy—by secretly writing unflattering biographies of her patrons and their allies and releasing them quickly when one of them falls from grace. This recently backfired when her scathing biography of a well-loved noble was lost (or worse, stolen), leaving her scrambling to find it before she too falls victim to the axe of public opinion that she has so expertly sharpened.

The Senate: Immediately adjacent to Imperial Square on Senate’s Hill, this striking hall of governance is carved from marble and surrounded by lavish columns.

Each evening, dozens of lanterns set the structure aglow. One hundred steps lead up to the main entrance; theoretically these remind senators of their duty to the people they serve, though most senators use the back entrance.

Older and canner members of the senate are becoming increasingly troubled by the apparent succession crisis looming in Oppara, though their concerns have yet to spread throughout Taldor’s halls of power. These lawmakers have instead begun making their own private preparations. One of Taldor’s more unusual senators—a former wrestler named **Gengethlia** (CG female old dwarf skald^{ACG 8}) who was appointed by Stavian I on the sole basis of her popularity—has even begun mustering a private army in case of trouble.

Oppara’s senate building is built on top of the city’s previous senate buildings, from the ruins of the chamber that was destroyed by the Tarrasque to the foundations of the structure destroyed in a massive earthquake in 2920 AR. As a result, the earth beneath the building is riddled with forgotten chambers, hallways, and tunnels that have been closed off and forgotten for centuries.

Serpent Column: Located in the heart of Memorial Park, the Serpent Column is actually two columns, apparently built side by side and twisted together. The structure rests on a base of green-hued stone, and

its surface is perfectly smooth to the touch, bearing neither scratches nor deliberate carvings. Most assume the column is magical in some way, as it is harder than steel and untouched by age, but scholars have been unable to detect any magical auras or effects emanating from the pillars. The Serpent Column is a vestige of the ancient settlement that predated Oppara, and it is likely related to the ruins buried beneath the city in the Seven Towers district, leading some to wonder whether those ruins are far more extensive than historians admit. Residents and visitors alike find it curious that the column holds a position of pride within Oppara while the rest of the city’s most ancient ruins remain buried and sealed off.

White Hall: A four-story marble structure in Grandbridge, White Hall is the headquarters of Oppara’s constabulary. Residents who are familiar with the structure and its tenants are decidedly ambivalent about its existence. On the one hand, the city’s constables have a long and proud tradition of serving and protecting Taldan citizens, and they treat their main station as an extension of that illustrious history. On the other hand, the White Hall has been quietly nicknamed the Screaming Pillars, as rumors abound of torture and political dissidents vanishing into the building forever after being hauled there on trumped-up charges. If an independent group of investigators were ever to confirm such rumors, the entire city could be thrown into chaos.

CROWNFALL

Foreword

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All the King’s
Men

Part 2:
Lost in
History

Part 3:
The Silent
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Outline

STAVIAN I

Born 5 Lamashtan 4497 ar;
Coronated 28 Rova 4526 ar;
Perished 1 aBadius 4588 ar

Grand Prince Stavian I, Firstborn of Micheaux, First of His Name, was born during the harvest season, and for many years he was called the Bounty Prince by citizens of Taldor, who understandably took great joy in the birth of Micheaux the Magnificent's son and heir. Stavian inherited his father's intense eyes, and between his comely features and his



life of vigorous exercise, he is remembered as a handsome young man who was very popular in Opparan social circles.

Following Micheaux the Magnificent's sudden death in 4526, Stavian I and his five younger brothers fell into bitter squabbling. A Sarenite soothsayer had declared one of the six brothers a bastard, not descended of imperial blood—a bold claim given Grand Prince Micheaux's own adoption into the line of succession rather than blood descent. After a summer of unprecedented violence, Stavian calmed his brothers, demonstrating the nobility and leadership that mandated his princely blood, and ascended to the throne at the end of Rova, once again demonstrating his bountiful relationship with Taldor's fortunes and harvests.

Grand Prince Stavian I revitalized the Grand Campaign. Recognizing the soothsayer who instigated his family's infighting for the traitor he was, he declared all who proselytize on behalf of Sarenrae to be enemies of the state, invested only in lies and sedition. The Great Burning of Witches—now known as the Great Purge—saw treasonous foreign agents driven from Taldor's borders; despite its sobriquet, the Purge involved few pyres, ultimately burning fewer than 100 Sarenites.

Despite his marriage to the Countess Sutepa Mavrosenus in 4528, Grand Prince Stavian I remained a popular fixture in noble circles, and maintained 18 concubines of various genders to appease the sudden shifts of humor to which he grew prone in later years. He fathered a total of 12 CHILDREN, and he was succeeded by his oft-overlooked third son, Dominus II, after the death of his eldest son, Gosse, and exile of his second son, Manderval.