



FROG GOD GAMES ADVENTURES

# WAYPOINTS

## Bazaar



SYSTEM  
NEUTRAL

by Mike Stewart

# WAYPOINTS: BAZAAR

## CREDITS

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|                                |                                            |                                   |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| AUTHOR<br>Mike Stewart         | EDITOR<br>Jeff Harkness                    | COVER DESIGN<br>Jim Wampler       |
| PROJECT MANAGER<br>Zach Glazar | SUBSTANTIAL EDITOR<br>G. Scott Swift       | INTERIOR ART<br>Santa Norvaisaite |
| PRODUCER<br>Bill Webb          | LAYOUT AND PRODUCTION<br>Elizabeth Stewart | CARTOGRAPHY<br>Robert Altbauer    |

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## THE BAZAAR IN ROLEPLAYING:

The bazaar assails the senses. Elaborate signs and richly colored fabrics juxtapose against the earthen tones of beggars' clothes and the muddy street. Spices, cooked meats, and perfumes radiate from stands and waft upon the breeze, offering brief repotes from the sweat and filth of the unbathed. The din of hundreds of shoppers chatting and bargaining with merchants is eclipsed only by hawkers making robust attempts to gain attention. The jostling and brushing of the crowd put shoppers on guard, their hands tightly gripping their valuables. What a wonderful place to start an adventure.

Did that stumbling child steal the mage's purse when she fell into him? Was she a halfling in disguise? That scratch the warrior got from the profusely apologetic street urchin, was it a poisoned needle, the only cure to be found from an herbalist in the bazaar? Is the vendor who is asking for a hefty sum for a treasure map actually selling a fake, or is it a setup for an ambush? The unexpected abounds at any bazaar, and many an adventure awaits the unwary... whether they were looking for one or not!

The bazaar is a marketplace for caravans and traveling peddlers to sell their wares to the locals and is the lifeblood of a region or kingdom. Villages on trade routes benefit greatly from the traveling merchants as, all too often, local merchants are specialized in the needs of the community that they live in and do not carry many items from

other lands (and certainly not in any significant quantity). Roving traders, on the other hand, transfer goods from one place to another via caravan routes as a way to eke out a living, making them welcomed guests to communities of any size that can support them. The goods offered in a bazaar will vary greatly and one can never predict what will be found within, even from day to day.

Besides trade goods, the traveling traders bring news and rumors from their homelands and the places they have been. They'll share stories of their hardships experienced on the road from the dangers of weather, highwaymen, and roaming monsters. This makes a bazaar an excellent location for Game Masters to set interesting gossip, rumors of wars, merchants needing to hire caravan guards, and unique items to be bought or sold by the player characters.

## THE ALTHEIM BAZAAR GROUNDS:

There is usually no real organization to the layout of tents and wagons in the average bazaar, and even less direction, with meandering walkways spiraling at random and many dead ending with little or no notice. Foodstuffs, leatherwork, and others goods abound in this place, with prices varying depending on the Game Master's whims and local economic situations.

There are usually anywhere from 5–16 (1d12+4) stalls with wares on any given day. The Game Master can use the below table to determine the type of merchants if none are prepared or if time demands a quickly rolled random merchant.

| D12 Score | Merchant                                                                            |
|-----------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1         | Brewer/Winemaker                                                                    |
| 2         | Astrology/Soothsayer (d6= 1–4 Fake, 5–6 True Medium)                                |
| 3         | Purveyor of armors and weapons                                                      |
| 4         | Bowyer & Fletcher                                                                   |
| 5–6       | Grocer selling fruits and vegetables, usually in season for the area                |
| 7         | Livestock                                                                           |
| 8         | Fine Arts (d10 = 1–2 Sculptor, 3–4 Painter, 5–7 Glassmaker, 8–9 Pottery, 0 Special) |
| 9         | Furrier                                                                             |
| 10        | Books & Scrolls (nonmagical)                                                        |
| 11        | Jeweler                                                                             |
| 12        | Surgeon                                                                             |



There can be several of the same type of merchants selling in the square, and the choices may change from day to day at the Game Master's discretion as traders enter and leave along the caravan route.

Some examples of hawkers are given below.

## 1. SOOTHSAYER

Ravenna Stareye is an older human woman covered with a shawl that dangles various trinkets and occult symbols. She speaks obscurely and gives only the vaguest answers to any questions until a reading is paid for. If a reading is purchased she will put on a good show, with colored lights blinking within a crystal ball (real dweomercraft or light spells) and will make several obscure sounding predictions. However, her last prediction for each customer will always be true; though the adventurer might not believe it. After all, the others were obviously fake, weren't they? She carries a dagger underneath her coin belt — people have struck out at her in anger over their fortunes — and a *Potion of Clairvoyance* nearby for emergency predictions. Her coinage and baubles are kept in a red painted skull in the back of her wagon.

## 2. THE EMPORIUM OF KALHALED

Kalhaled is a foreign-looking merchant who has his tent set up in the local bazaar. The odd colors of his tent and wares make him stand out from all the others. He ostensibly sells spices and exotic statuary but also has an assortment of odds and ends from faraway lands. Any adventurers investigating will find him to be a cultured fellow with an odd accent to his speech, but friendly enough. He offers them a special item that he feels would be of use to discriminating adventurers such as the player characters: a blue-tinted crystal ball with a human skull inside. The skull is set within the solid glass, not loose in the orb, and there are no seams or holes to give a clue as to how the skull was placed within. He has a long-winded story of how it was taken from a lich's tomb and how it has unknown powers, but other than the curiosity of the seamless glass orb, it is nonmagical.

He carries an enchanted dagger in his robes and wears a *Scarab of Riposte*; this scarab's magic ensures that the first blow aimed against its wearer will always miss. This applies to each attacker in turn, but subsequent attacks behave as normal. He keeps his coins and gems in his cashbox.

## 3. BLACK BREWS AND LIQUORS

Morian Matthews is a slovenly fellow with a patched and fraying tent. Several kegs and bottles, some with various pungent liquids leaking out of corks and seams, can be spied within. Despite his aberrant appearance, his

products are very fine, with quality being among the best an imbibor has ever tasted. Morian will refuse to give any recipes, but, if offered a bribe, will gladly take the money and give the solicitor a false recipe. This recipe will be complex, with the idea that by the time the briber attempts to make a batch, Matthews will be on his way. This shop can purvey any drinks or foodstuffs that the Game Master wishes. For defense, he carries nothing in his pouches but keeps a rusty dagger in his boot when he remembers to: 50% chance per day. He keeps his coinage in an unclean keg in the rear of the tent. The keg is full of brewing scum, and the coins can't be seen at the bottom, only felt.

## 4. JEWELER

Padraig the Peg Leg is a dwarf who uses, as the name implies, a peg leg to compensate for a leg lost during a mining tunnel collapse in his youth. He is quiet but not crass, and will show his work to those interested. Unlike the other merchants, he doesn't stand outside his tent to encourage business; his shyness is too strong for that.

Those willing to make the effort to look in his tent will be well rewarded. His work is fine, and he only asks for half the normal rate on such items. His quiet demeanor and reluctance to speak of his past might lead persons to believe he is selling stolen goods, but all his work is his own. He was banished from his fellows due to the cave-in that cost Padraig his leg. His fellows thought he couldn't mine and was therefore useless. His skilled hand with fine jewelry belies this hasty decision by his kin. It will only be a matter of time before he is invited to stay in a town or castle, but his handicap makes him certain of disdain no matter where he resides.

Padraig carries a belt with many pockets holding various jewelers tools as well as a *Ring of Protection*. His cashbox has a large percentage of gems as he prefers those for payment and will cut prices if necessary to get them. His intention is to fashion those gems into jewelry, thus making a better return on his investment.

## FURTHER ADVENTURES:

The following are a few ideas on how to get a party involved with a local bazaar and the various merchants within.

- An item the PCs purchased from a merchant in the bazaar is later commandeered from them by the local constabulary. It was stolen from the carriage of a local or neighboring noble. The player character who bought the item in question is then asked to bear witness to the merchant's selling of stolen items in the Lord's Court. This can be all it seems, with it simply delaying (and annoying) the party members,



or it could be a patently false court with the noble obviously making up the evidence in order to take the merchant's goods and have him flogged — a conundrum for goodly folk in the party. If the PC refuses to give witness, he or she might be arrested as an accomplice and get to visit the local gaol, from the inside. The other party members will be faced with either breaking their friend out of jail or initiating legal proceedings to free him.

- A merchant sells one of the PCs an expensive appearing item, but the next day, the dweomer cast upon the item fails, revealing a shoddy piece of junk in its place. The merchant might have fled the bazaar or might, instead, still be there in disguise. As merchant tents in the bazaar can change from day to day, the 'new' merchant will claim no knowledge of the transaction or of the other peddler. Another possibility is the trader might run a racket with the agreement of the local village reeve, with the latter pocketing a cut of the profits and the merchant warned only to sell such junk to visitors and not locals.
- An odd tent has set up in the local bazaar in the village the party is traveling through. It is called Ariadne's Delight and seems to only sell small brass trinkets of butterflies, spiders, and other insects. They are cheap, most only costing one or two coppers. The proprietor, Ariadne, seems a pleasant-enough

middle-aged woman running a small boutique-style business. However, people seem to be fascinated with the pieces, and some queries will reveal that people in the village who bought these items are disappearing. Ariadne will be apparently surprised and insist that the brass and copper jewelries are harmless and come from a faraway land.

This could be pure coincidence, the bugs could be enchanted with a *Charm Person* spell so the merchant can sell these people later for slaves, or even bewitched with a simple fascination effect that causes the wearers to wander off in a random direction. A more sinister effect could be that the trinkets polymorph their victims into real insects, either normal sized or giant sized.

- One of the traveling tents has a declawed and defanged ogre in an iron cage. The barker running this 'monster display' offers 100 gold pieces to any person who can stay 10 minutes in the cage with the creature without being pinned and, subsequently, needing rescue. The fee is 5 silver pieces to enter the cage, with the trader counting the time in front of the audience. Participants entering the cage must be unarmed and unarmored, and no magic use is allowed. This can be what it seems, a good-natured wrestling match, or something more nefarious. In the latter case, this might be a secret slaver who specializes in gathering

fighting slaves for gladiatorial games, and so the ogre wrestling is a “test” to find those capable of either defeating the brute or even giving it a hard time before victory. Those who win or just give the ogre a good fight will gain the acclaim of the public and, later that evening, will find themselves toasted at the local tavern and given several drinks ‘on the house.’

Unbeknownst to the player character receiving this bounty, the barker will slip a slow-acting sleep drug into his drink. As part of its properties, it imitates the effects of alcohol drunkenness and so might escape detection until the morning. In the night, the barker’s flunkies will attempt to kidnap the adventurer and take the comatose winner with them as they slip away before dawn. This works well for the slaver option but could also be a rough way of finding a sufficiently heroic figure to aid the barker’s own village in its hour of need. The Game Master can make the results as malicious or generous as the scenario (and player character) permits.

- **Drazuk’s Exotic Dry Goods:** This merchant hails from a far away country, of which only far-fetched stories are told. These stories tell of thick, wet forests where strong, fragrant woods bloom thrice a year for potent ingredients for alchemists and wizards. The rumor, which locals will eagerly regale, is the right cocktail of Drazuk’s will cure everything from bowel blockage to hideous venoms. This would be a total surprise to him, as he sells spices, stain removers, polishes and specialty make-up. Why his patrons think he sells arcane cures and spell components is a total mystery. As his culture is xenophobic and treats the use of foreign language as a grievous sin, this limits his communication to gestures and expressions.

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