



# Bits of the Boulevard

## **Writers:**

Christopher A. Field  
K. H. Keeler  
Randy Eliason  
Daniel Brakhage  
Martin Ralya  
Rodney Lucas  
John Walsh  
Derek Kupper  
Deborah Balsam  
Christopher Welsh  
Nicholas Brakhage  
Mark Potter  
Michael Kessler  
Vicki Potter  
Elizabeth Brakhage  
Tyler Sherman

## **Artists:**

**Cover Artwork by**  
Gillian Pearce

**Original Interior Artwork by**  
Jesus and Javier Carmona  
Christine Griffin

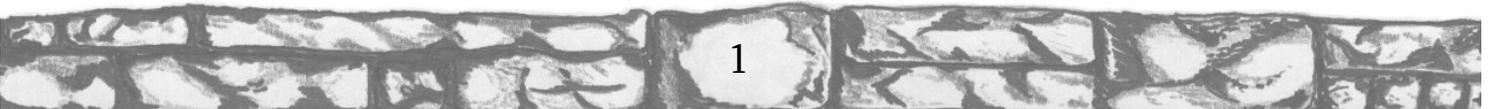
**Border Artwork by**  
Daniel Brakhage

**Cover Layout by**  
Edward Wedig

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# Introduction

## Welcome!

Welcome to Bits of the Boulevard™, Tabletop Adventures' first city product. Cities can be a lot of work to develop and we hope to make your job easier. For Bits of the Boulevard we have found writers with a broad range of medieval and fantasy writing experience so that we can represent a diverse range of settings. Each of us have some ideas of what to put in a medieval fantasy city but all of us together are able to cover things that, individually, we might not have considered. We have taken care to provide descriptions that can be used in virtually any game that takes place in a quasi-European medieval fantasy setting without "clashing" with the feel or setting of your existing campaign. However, in those rare cases that something seems out of place, either discard the description or change it as you have need. These descriptions are for your use in your game and you are free to modify them to keep your game fun and exciting for you and your players. I hope that you can find plenty of material here to augment your players' imaginations and to stimulate your own ideas for adventures.

## Harried Game Masters, or How We Came to Write This Book

So, I hear you ask, "Why write a book like this?" Well, I'm glad you asked. We wrote it for all those Game Masters who have ever lamented not having the time that they wanted to spend on their game because those unforgiving intrusions to gaming (life, work, family, school) interfered. We wrote it for all those gamemasters who have come home from a hard day of work or just finished a grueling finals week and had friends call up and say, "Hey, let's play tonight. I had a rough day and I want to kill something." For all of you who need more than 24 hours in a day, welcome to Tabletop Adventures' line of products for the Harried Game Master.

We here at TTA believe that description is a very important part of game-mastering and that vivid descriptions can make a world or an adventure come alive. However, we have noticed that the more rushed or frazzled a GM becomes, the more mechanical the game tends to be. So we have written a book that we've always wished to have, one that would have made our lives easier over the years. Tabletop Adventures' "Harried Game Master" products are designed to be products that you can buy today and play tonight. We have taken care to make them flexible so they can be used in virtually any campaign without changing its feel or details. They are to help you, the Game Master, make the maximum use of the limited time you have available.

This tool provides the GM with a way to stimulate the characters' senses and the players' imaginations without having to use game-changing information. The descriptions can give players a "feel" for a situation, a better image of what is happening or what their characters are experiencing without all of those experiences leading directly to combat or treasure. They are intended to enhance role-playing by encouraging character building, reaction, and interaction. These Bits of the Boulevard, and all the accompanying material, are made for you, to ease the life of the Harried Game Master.

Check out our other products at [www.tabletopadventures.com](http://www.tabletopadventures.com), and if you have any comments or suggestions please send them to me at [overlord@tabletopadventures.com](mailto:overlord@tabletopadventures.com)

Enjoy, have fun, and create fun for others!

The Evil Overlord and his minions...er...I mean, the good people at Tabletop Adventures





# How to Use *This* Resource

## **Or, What in the World are Shards and Bits?**

Shards and Bits should be viewed as small pieces of an adventure. Think of the archeologist, collecting little pieces of pottery and then fitting them together into a fascinating whole. Bits are tiny pieces of description that can be thrown in anywhere to provide “color” or add a little excitement to what might otherwise be a dull spot. Shards are longer and more elaborate, meant to be selected rather than added randomly. They may describe a certain area or specific thing, or particular facets that do not fit well in a random table such as times or seasons.

One thing to remember in using this is that we try to provide you products that will add a bit of drama to your game. Therefore, delivery is important. The way you choose to deliver the descriptions that are provided can have a tremendous effect on the subsequent playability of the situation involved.

As with our previous products in the Bits of Darkness™ series, these Bits of the Boulevard™ have been numbered so that a GM can roll percentile dice or pick a card to randomly generate a dash of description for an adventure. An Index is provided in case a Bit is needed to fit a particular situation, and we have included many Shards for specific situations, conditions, or locations within the city. These all can help you flesh out areas of a favorite city or give you an "instant" description for those occasions when your players go "where no-one has gone before" and you don't yet have a clue what is there because you didn't expect them to go that way.

These descriptions need not be followed verbatim. As GM, you should feel free to adapt them however you need in order to use them to greatest effect. In some instances they may even give you ideas for additional adventures for your players. These Bits are for whatever you want! If a piece sparks your imagination (or those of your players) and you want to build on it, then go for it.

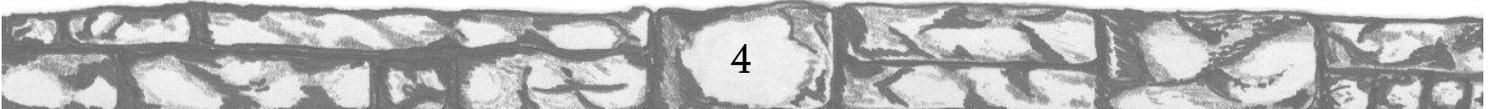
Another consideration is that, while most Bits do not add encounters, in some situations a minor encounter is possible. In those cases, (if you are using the D20 System™,) you may well find it handy to use the resource "Everyone Else" by E.N. Publishing. This is an excellent and handy resource for providing the GM stats for "everyone else".

## **Printing This Product**

These pages can be printed out on regular paper. However, the final pages are formatted to be printed on card stock. As cards, they can be shuffled and drawn randomly during play or sorted ahead of time, with the GM selecting certain bits for use and placing them with the appropriate map or other materials. If you don't want to work with cards, you can roll randomly and read the description to the players, or write the appropriate number on the GM's map and refer to it when the characters arrive there.

## **Upcoming Products from TTA**

Be watching for the next product from Tabletop Adventures™: “Bits of Wilderness: Into the Wildwood,” which will bring you descriptions for drama and suspense as your adventurers venture into the darkness and mystery of the untamed woods. Check our web site at [www.tabletopadventures.com](http://www.tabletopadventures.com) for more information. As always, if you have any comments or suggestions please send them to the Overlord at [overlord@tabletopadventures.com](mailto:overlord@tabletopadventures.com)





## Bits of the Boulevard

01. A dozen merchants call out prices and wares in practiced, sing-song chants. Some exuberant businessmen juggle their wares as they call out, and over the heads of the crowd you catch sight of tumbling fruits, baguettes, even hunks of smoked meat.

02. A weary peddler walks his heavily-laden donkey through the narrow streets. With each step the ragged beast of burden takes, you hear the clink of metal on metal, as copper mugs and pans clink together. As he walks, the donkey contentedly munches grain from an ornately stitched leather feedbag.

03. The dusky smell of good coffee [spicy tea] drifts out of an otherwise non-descript market stall. Looking inside, you see a plump old woman brewing herself a cup, while dozens of colorful finches hop across rows of carrots and melons, squawking. [Note: The publishers know that coffee was not available in medieval Europe, however it is something many players are familiar with, and it or its equivalent might be available in a fantasy world.]

04. In the shade of a push cart, a young girl is busily scraping the seeds out of a fat, pinkish-yellow pumpkin. She dumps the entrails into the dirt beside her, and occasionally a spectacularly bold grey squirrel will dart in to snatch a seed or three. The pudgy pushcart owner busies herself selling similar gourds, while the child dutifully prepares one for dinner.

05. There is a jolly red-faced man with a white hat and tunic and a huge smile offering his pastries to the crowd. "Sweet pastries! Fruit and honey!" His smile is sincere and he seems genuinely enthused about his fruit pies. "Tickle your taste and tease your tummy! Get your sweet treats here!" In his left arm he carries a large basket lined with a red and white woven fabric and many pastries. He smiles at [pick one of the characters]. "You look

like someone who could use a special treat today! How about a pie of fruit and honey as you go on your way?" [He is named Rocco but his friends call him "Sweets." He loves the pies which he and his wife make at their home and then sell on the street each day. The little pies cost as much as a loaf of bread.]



06. A wagon load of fired clay pots clatters down the narrow street, pulled by a drab grey donkey. The cart's driver is an equally drab grandmother; the only spark of color on the wagon is the brightly colored scarf the old woman has wrapped around her mouth to keep out the road's dirt. Even the pots are drab; simple unadorned grey clay splotched with brown. The woman lowers her scarf and spits a glob of inky black tobacco into the road.



side of you, and a few dried leaves scuttling across the rooftops above. One by one the dead leaves fall, cascading slowly down in the gloomy light. If you squint you can make out something sparkling from farther down the alley, glinting in a slender shaft of sunlight.

The alley seems to go on forever, not getting any wider or narrower. Someone tosses their chamber pot refuse and it lands with a splash just a few feet ahead. “Want t’watch where the heck yer walking when you walk back there, ye do!” a voice calls from above. Suddenly the sparkling object can be seen again, hanging from a string, being held by unseen hands from a fourth-story window just two buildings down. As you approach, it is slowly pulled up, but then the string snags against the building’s timbers. The unseen owner yanks harder to pull the string but it breaks, sending the sparkling object plummeting into the mud below. A child’s [or woman’s] voice hisses, “Drat it!”

[The door to the building is bolted from the inside and can’t be opened. If the characters try to search for the item, it can be anything from a shard of glass to a worthless trinket to a valuable or magical item.]



## *Markets and Shops*

**4. SIGHTS AND SOUNDS OF THE MARKET**—You walk along the market square, beholding the sights, sounds, and smells of a living city. Any type of food, clothing, or other sundry items can be had here for a price. Some of the shops are open-air booths, including the ones selling food. Others are closed-in shops, most of these being fine clothiers, equipment shops, and miscellaneous stores such as jewelers and herbalists. You can see that it would be easy to spend too much gold here on tasty treats and unique items that you’ve seen nowhere else. Thinking of gold makes you instinctively

reach down for your money pouch as you remember that a place like this is the prime vicinity for thieves and cutpurses.

The more time you spend walking along the market square, the more the facade fades away in your eyes. At first this place was exciting and seemed almost beautiful in its diversity, but as you look deeper you notice the reality of a spot such as this. Surely there are great things to be had here, but there are also dangers. Your earlier thought of protecting your purse comes back as you see a poorly-dressed young man bump into a well-dressed old woman. She doesn’t notice it, but you see that the teenager has walked away with her money-purse, a grin of satisfaction on his lips. Further along you see a small boy standing among a group of soldiers. They are eating hard bread and jerky just bought from a nearby market stand. The boy, obviously hungry and poor, moves about like a small mouse grabbing bit of bread that the soldiers drop as they eat. It’s hard to feel sorry for the boy however, because you can see a fierce determination in his green eyes as he pilfers the fallen morsels.

The sounds of the place are almost deafening. Hawkers yelling at potential customers, children running and laughing, and groups of people all talking at once; all of these sounds assault your ears as you make your way through the square. As much as this city’s market place has to offer, you are still anxious to buy what you need and make your way back to a quieter part of town.

**5. PAINTER IN THE MARKET**—A painter of middling talent has spread some of her best canvasses out on a carpet in an unclaimed area between a sausage vendor and sword smith. Most of the woman’s paintings are competent, if unimaginative, still lifes and portraits of various people. [These people are her family, friends and local merchants who agreed to pose. The painter will introduce herself as Amiis, and tell customers she’ll sell any of the pieces for a few silvers, and she also accepts commissions. However, from the paltry copper coins in the cup in front of her, customers might conclude that she would sell most of the paintings for far less.]





**11. STRONG DRAWBRIDGE** – The city’s drawbridge crosses a moat filled with slow-flowing water that reeks with a fetid smell. Logs and unidentifiable objects can be seen floating in it. The drawbridge is iron-reinforced wood. It is so solid that your steps barely make a sound as you cross. A massive chain on each side connects to the top of the wall. You cannot see them, but there must be huge winches inside the gate to raise the chain.



**12. THE GATES AT DAWN** – The sun is still nothing more than a vague presence in the sky. The guards are white-faced and bleary-eyed as they begin their duties for the day. They hawk and spit into the fire. Somewhere, a pot of bitter herbs is boiling – no doubt someone is thinking of making a few coins by offering to cure baldness or impotence or boredom.

**13. OPEN FOR THE DAY** – The gates themselves are large and heavy. It takes several of the guards and a solid effort to drag them open – these are gates that cannot be slammed shut in a hurry. The loud squeaking sound they make raises the hairs at the back of the neck and alerts traders and vendors several streets away.

**14. PREPARING TO ENTER THE CITY** – The animals have been lining up all night waiting for their chance of admittance. Their owners are fastening straps and harnesses and checking trade goods. Up and down the line, the dung collectors are collecting their own particular goods, which will later be transformed into a low-cost but ill-smelling fuel for those who can afford no more.

**15. APPROACHING THE CITY** – The unpaved road that has been underfoot finally leads somewhere, as all roads do. The city appears on the horizon, slowly growing as you near it. The sun constantly beats down on you, heating your armor to a virtual sauna. Sweat drips from your forehead, stinging your eyes as you gaze ahead. The road is quiet but for the creak of armor and the rhythmic step that takes you back to taverns and merchants, politics and intrigue.

The dryness of your mouth is ignored for the moment as you approach the towering gates. The city’s stone walls provide a strong defense against any who would unlawfully enter. Craning your neck you see the reflection of light from the men at arm’s armor as they walk their posts on the walls, crossbows gripped firmly in hand as they watch the horizon. With a word from the guard that fighting within city walls will not be tolerated you pay the toll and pass into the shade of the gate. The city lies before you, a labyrinth of streets and shops. In the distance you can see a palace, probably the residence of one of the wealthier merchants, its gold roofed towers pronouncing the prosperity of its owner. As you step onto the cobbled street you think back to the guards at their posts on the walls. They will try to protect you from monsters, but who will protect you from the evils within the hearts of men?



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