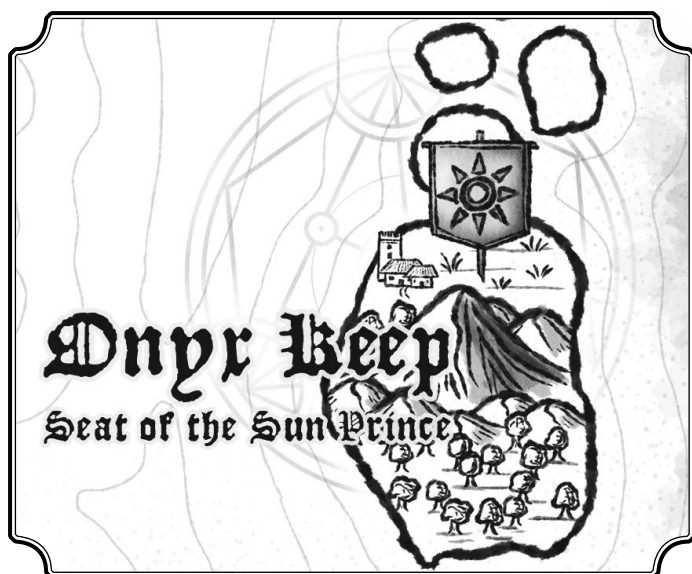


ONYX KEEP DOCKS



ituated on the rugged coast beneath the imposing shadow of Onyx Keep, is a bustling hub of commerce, intrigue, and illicit activities. The docks are a lifeline for the city, serving as the primary point for trade and travel, but they are also a hotbed of criminal operations and political maneuvering. Prince Daelin understands this is part of the complex atmosphere of a city by the sea.

Life at the docks is a chaotic blend of opportunity and danger. Merchants, sailors, and laborers throng the piers, their days filled with the loading and unloading goods, haggling over prices, and the constant vigilance required to avoid falling victim to theft or swindling. The air is thick with the scent of saltwater, fish, and the occasional waft of exotic spices. Taverns and inns are packed with rough-and-tumble seafarers and shady figures, all seeking respite or plotting their next venture. For many, life here is harsh but full of potential, where fortunes can be made or lost in a single tide. Lately, the danger of sudden sahuagin raiders was added to the already stressful mixture of the people's maritime lifestyle.



Level 2 Location

► **Events.** Check for a **Random Event** in every other area the characters visit (4-in-6 chance).

► **Atmosphere.** A blend of bustling energy and underlying tension. The air hums with the clamor of merchants and sailors, while shadows conceal whispered deals and lurking danger. One must be aware of their surroundings (DC 10 WIS). Failing to do so usually ends in an ambush within a dark alley (five **pirates** attack the heroes).

GOVERNANCE AND CONTROL

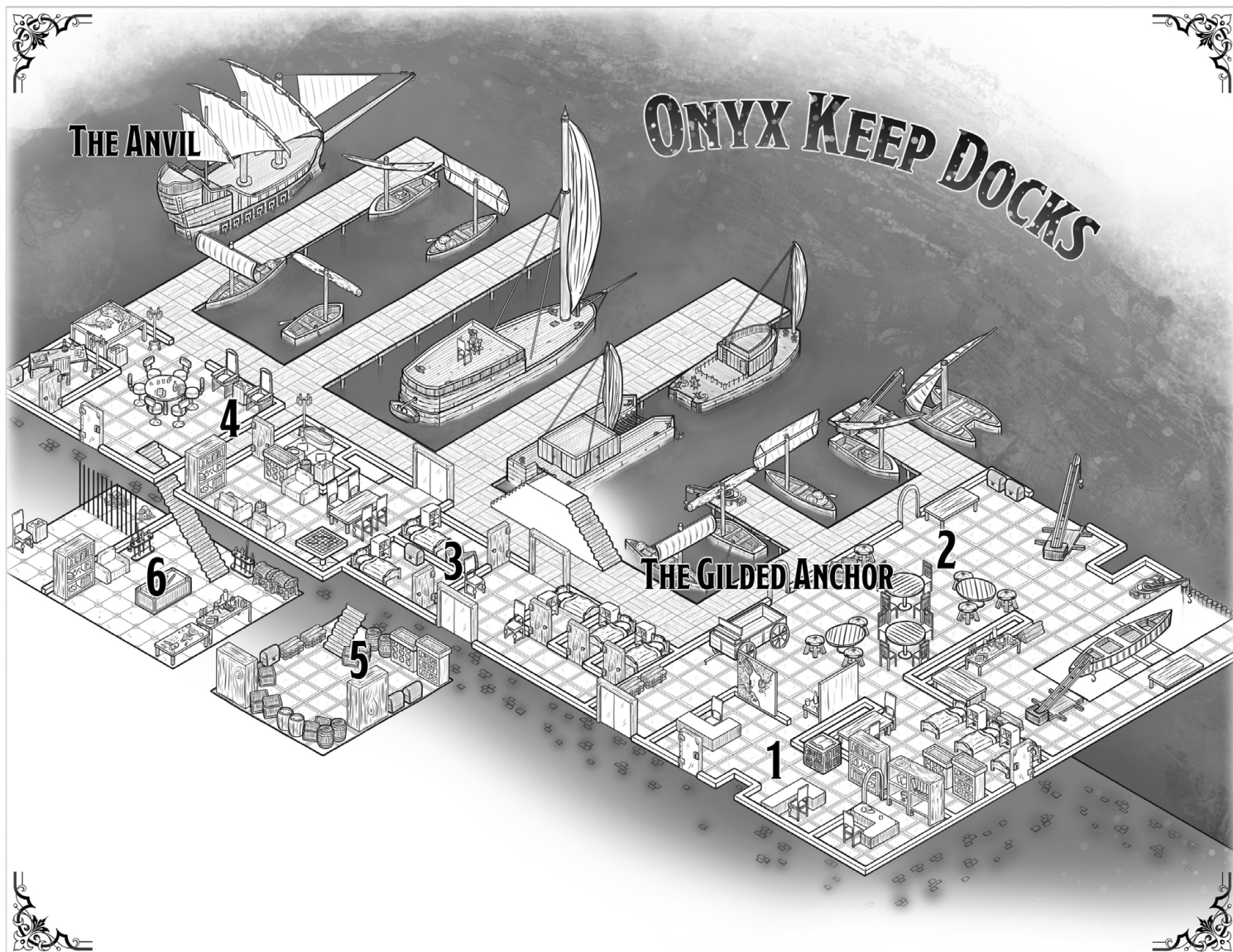
THE DOCKS ARE nominally under the jurisdiction of the Harbor Master, a position held by Alaric Windrider, a figurehead appointed by the ruling council of Onyx Keep. However, true control lies in the hands of Prince Daelin, a shrewd and ambitious noble with a personal interest in the docks. Prince Daelin sees the docks as both a financial asset and a strategic foothold, ensuring that he keeps a tight grip on its operations. His agents and spies are omnipresent, maintaining order and ensuring that a substantial cut of all profits flows into his coffers.

PRINCE DAELIN'S INVOLVEMENT

ONYX KEEP'S RULER is deeply entwined with the docks' affairs. He uses his influence to facilitate smuggling operations, bringing in rare and forbidden goods that bolster his wealth and power beyond the eyes of the law. His involvement is not merely financial; Daelin often employs the docks as a meeting ground for clandestine dealings with foreign dignitaries and mercenaries, leveraging these interactions to strengthen his political alliances and gather intelligence. Prominent individuals within the docks, including captains of key ships and influential merchants, owe their loyalty to Daelin, either through fear or lucrative patronage. The ruler of Onyx Keep is the master of puppets of this great ecosystem.

RANDOM EVENTS

d6	Details
1	The heroes stumble upon a thug and three bandits at night. The robbers flee if reduced to half their Hit Points or surrender if the leader (thug) falls. The heroes recover a nice locket. It belongs to Sanna, from Sanna's Ale Tavern in Onyx Keep.
2	Two figures conduct a furtive exchange, with one dropping a cryptic map as they flee. In it, an X reads " <i>Abode of the Forlorn</i> ".
3	A sudden brawl erupts in a nearby tavern, spilling out onto the docks and drawing a curious crowd. The heroes are free to join if they wish. Unless the heroes act differently, this event is not deadly and all those involved keep their weapons sheathed.
4	A mysterious fog rolls in, obscuring vision and heightening tensions as whispers of ghost ships fill the air. The fog lasts 2 days.
5	A merchant from distant lands arrives in town. The heroes may purchase 1 random magical item for 500 gp.
6	A group of eight sahuagin raiders attack. Two city soldiers are the first line of defense. The heroes are called to help!



PROMINENT FIGURES

THE CHARACTERS CAN interact with these four NPCs while they explore the docks. It is a universe of its own.

CAPTAIN RURIK “IRONCLAD” STONEBEARD

A grizzled dwarf and leader of the Iron Fleet, a group of privateers who dominate the coastal waters. Rurik is fiercely loyal to Prince Daelin, acting as both enforcer and protector of his interests at sea. His ship, *‘The Anvil’*, is the largest, and the one with the best weaponry. Still, Rurik respects his lord’s wish to avoid war.

MADAM LYNN “THE SIREN” VALEN

The owner of The Gilded Anchor, the prominent tavern at the docks, is known for its luxurious offerings and discrete private rooms. Lynn is a key informant for Daelin, her establishment a hot spot for gathering secrets and whispers from all who pass through. No one knows, but she has clever ways to eavesdrop on all conversations and interactions in her establishment. She has spies everywhere. She has no boss, she obeys only herself.

PATRICK “SHADE” MALLISTER

The head of the Shadowed Serpents, the criminal faction that controls the black market within the docks. Garrick and his network operate with Daelin’s tacit approval, their relationship is symbiotic and mutually beneficial.

HARBOR MASTER ALARIC WINDRIDER

The Harbor Master in name, Alaric is a puppet installed by Daelin to maintain the appearance of legitimate control. Despite his title, Alaric’s true role is to ensure that Daelin’s will is followed without question. He is known for employing the Shadowed Serpents to do his bidding.

THE GILDED ANCHOR

THIS ESTABLISHMENT MERGES luxury with the secretive operations of the Shadowed Serpents. The public enjoys fine ale and entertainment, while secretly and beneath, illicit activities thrive. Madam Lynn Valen ensures this seamless fusion of luxury and crime. The entire docks are bathed in her influence and hidden spies.

ADVENTURE HOOK

► **Allies and Answers.** The heroes hear all kinds of tales and rumors in Onyx Keep about the docks. Additionally, they are told that powerful figures live at the docks. People with enough influence to help them in their quests. They come to see with their own eyes what everyone talks about and perhaps make a friend (0 XP).

1. THE GILDED ANCHOR'S LOBBY

The characters are free to walk in. They are treated as customers; drinks are served and the tavern's staff chit-chat and interact with the drinking characters.

► **Standing Out.** The hostess notices the heroes' gear and informs her superiors about their presence. Someone shall pay them a visit at their table (see below).

2. THE TAVERN

During their time at the table, Madam Lynn sends a round of drinks and a platter of sea delicacies. She sits down as if she were invited and starts talking:

"You are new here. And you are no common sailors. Let me explain your situation. You have two options now. First, the wisest, work for me. Then you may enjoy your drinks and stay, free of charge..."

While Madam Lynn speaks, the heroes may notice the men in the background positioning themselves in different corners of the tavern (DC 15 WIS check).

"... the second option would be to refuse. In that case, the men aiming their crossbows at you shall escort you outside. Outsiders either leave without causing trouble or learn that Madam Lynn rules here".

► **Acceptance.** Madam Lynn wants them to beat the teeth out of Captain Rurik. She is tired of Prince Daelin's peaceful attitude; the fact that Rurik won't use his military vessels to put an end to the sahuagin makes her blood boil. This is not easy; Rurik (**gladiator**) is usually in his flagship, surrounded by a dozen **pirates**.

► **Refusal.** The heroes are escorted outside. They may leave unscathed. If they try anything foolish, four **pirates** use their crossbows to stop them. Six **bandits** join next, defending Madam Lynn at all costs. Even the patrons (eight **peasants**) stand up to confront them.

3. SHADOW SERPENTS QUARTERS

The members of the criminal faction make use of these bedrooms when needed; so whenever she can, Madam Lynn rents them out. If the heroes agree to work for her, they may stay here at no cost, though. Lower members of the organization bring them food and do small errands for them as they will be considered to be Madam Lynn's direct agents, showcasing the hierarchy in the docks.

4. DOCK'S OFFICES

Patrick and Aleric work in these two rooms, meticulously documenting activities to ensure Prince Daelin's directives are executed. Patrick is sided with Madam Lynn and protects her interests. They hesitate to act against Rurik because of the repercussions of the prince.

5. STORAGE

The heroes cannot enter this storage facility unless they sneak inside without raising an alarm (DC 15 DEX).

► **Sensitive Documentation.** Searching the area for 1 **crawling round** reveals letters, logs, and documents that prove how Prince Daelin profits from the illicit activities at the docks. He would lose all credibility if this were made public and the principalities would go to war. Madam Lynn wants to do so but Rurik won't let her.

6. WORKSHOP

The criminal guild crafts simple weaponry, artifacts, and other items here. They also have a small cell with a secret entrance behind a shelf. The heroes are thrown in there if they antagonize Madam Lynn or if they are caught stealing from the storage (area 5).

CHAOS AND DIVISION

The people at the docks are divided. The heroes may choose to get involved, choose a side, or stay at the periphery of this kerfuffle. High risks may yield high rewards, though. And the only way they shall make a new friend is by diving into these turbulent waters.

