

The Undercity of Kol Taram

The Undercity? Yeah, it's dangerous! You've got the redcap goblins, they aren't much a danger by themselves, but they'll give ya a hell of a time if a group gets you alone don't you know? The Coldwrought clan moved down there some decades ago of course, and then... well, I don't believe it myself of course, but they say stone giants still wander around down there. Gives me the shivers!

-Elsta Barrlow

The Undercity of Kol Taram is a city that was never meant to be: it exists in a massive drainage system built to protect Kol Taram above from spring melts from the nearby River of Colors. Across the Fallen Bridge on the other side of the cavernous drain channel, stone giants live a secluded life. The Coldwrought Crime Clan rules the Undercity with an iron fist, based out of their hotel/dungeon "The Dark Hive."

Woven between these dangers (and so many more) there are, of course, wonderous things, too: Yawmbo, the bugbear keeper of The Dark Hive, can acquire near anything you need; Cadence Clearwater, the skinny, high-strung tiefling can craft a specialized tattoo that allows anyone to summon a familiar; within the simple lean-to that Kev the Kenku has an assortment of interesting items plucked from the streets, amongst them the odd thing of interest.

The Undercity Always Flows

Many have tried to map The Undercity, but nobody has yet succeeded. Due to the violent, and untrusting nature of many of the denizens, The Undercity is constantly

tearing areas down, and building anew. A night doesn't pass without at least two incidents of arson, and any especially loud squabbles that border on riots result in the stone giants across the Broken Bridge lobbing boulders amongst the city which also result in frequent "re-zonings."

The best way to orient yourself to The Undercity are to look for the towering, 10-story high pillars that serve as both buildings and anchors to a fluid city.

- The Glowing Pillar
- A Pillar of the People
- The Goblin Gables
- The Statuary
- The Dark Hive Pillar
- The Pillar of Stairs

While there are many other structures outside of these super-structures built to support the weight of a mountain, most major buildings congregate around them.

The Ring of Rejects

The Undercity was not meant to be inhabited, but once The Squall began to rage, and a permanent winter has set in, there is no chance that the River of Colors will flood. Those not of dwarven descent often found that Kol Taram was a place they could never thrive, and many found their ways, by exile or by choice, to this so-called sixth ring, the Ring of Rejects.

The Broken Bridge

The only support structure to have ever fallen within the drainage system has left a massive, 100' wide bridge of uneven and broken stones across the 120' deep drainage ditch. Across it lives, hidden by

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piled boulders, a small hermitage of stone giants... or so the legend goes. The Broken Bridge is said to be their method of assault, should the violence in The Undercity ever spill over.

Refugees of Kol Taram

After Kienscale was awoken, and Kol Taram sacked, many of the citizens who knew of the Undercity and the methods to reach it, left the city through this dangerous route. Some lost their lives, most their possessions, and few chose to stay. Those few form around The Glowing Pillar, the mages of The Bearded Consortium dispelling whatever errant arcana had caused the faint light to radiate out from it, allowing the displaced dwarves to fashion out a makeshift fortress. There, elements of The Stoneguard gather, training the remaining citizens and gathering allies to eventually take back their city.

Controlled Anarchy

There are no set laws in The Undercity, save the unspoken, universal threat of the stone giants that might again assault the city should it grow too riotous. The Stoneguard keep order around the areas of The Glowing Pillar, and The Coldwrought Clan has enforcers keeping the money flowing and outside influences in check. The Goblin Gabbles is thoroughly ridden with goblins, who obey their own laws, a strange and violent pecking order that keeps their infighting at a steady level, and their threat to the city as a whole limited.

A Dark City

The Undercity features prominently races with darkvision, so aside from The Glowing Pillar and the Pillar of Stairs, there are not frequent sources of light. Those that do dot

the inns, streets, and doorways of homes tend to be gas lamps turned to their lowest setting, or sweet, earthy Smolderwart, a pale white moss that burns for hours with a faint light and fragrant smoke.

Guide to the Undercity

I lived in the Ring of Copper once, you know? Me, a fat greenskinned goblin! No matter how good I became as a smith, it became obvious I'd never be more than skilled labor.

So I moved, moved to the Undercity. Every day, death lurks, maybe not nearby, but around every corner you smell him: a feral, red cap's knife or maybe one of the Lumare's creepy hands around your neck; but when nobody pretends to like you, it's a lot easier down here to know who to trust.

-Miggblin, owner of Miggblin's Custom Bladework.

The danger of The Undercity, especially to humans and the aarakocra, cannot be understated. That said, outside the Coldwrought Clan, deception is not often practiced: this is a place where the sword will often prevail over the pen.

The Natives

The Ring of Stone is already within the realm of The Underdark, and The Undercity serves as a place for its citizens and those from the service to mingle. These places were not always occupied by sentient races: before Kol Taram came to be, the cavernous dark was occupied by hideous creatures dreamed into existence by a beholder in the Second Age. Thriving amongst the dark and deadly hellscape of this underdark were the Lumare,

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grey-skinned humanoids, more spindly than graceful, with unnaturally flexible joints which cause them to have a strange, exaggerated gait, and the ability to easily scale the stony walls of the underdark. Nearly wiped out by dragons, and again when The Undercity boomed into existence after the defeat of the Parroa Rebellion, they hold a place of awe and respect, even amongst the rabble of The Undercity. They are said to be able to read minds, and know your actions before you do.

The rest of the creatures that belong to The Old Ones are less beloved, and wandering too far into the dark nooks of the city may find you face to face with them:

Wandering Old Ones

| d4 | Result |
|----|---|
| 1 | Dreamcrawler: Crawling along the walls, ceilings, and under bridges, these hands with bony, exposed, skeletal tips for scratching. (CR ½) |
| 2 | Fearwalker: Eyeless, bipedal humanoids with long, hooked ears, exaggerated mouths, and a taste for fear. They stalk the frightened, lost souls that wander into their domains. (CR 3) |
| 3 | Shadowstare: A flat creature of shadow that clings to a wall or under a shelf, though when it's one massive eye opens it can be as dangerous as any beholder's gaze. (CR: 5) |
| 4 | Zombie Beholder: (CR: 5) |

Spellcasting Services

There are not many spellcasters in The Undercity, as the red cap goblins have a superstitious fear of magic, and they tend to target magic-users with more murderous

intent than others. As such, there are no established spellcrafting services. The Bearded Consortium has powerful mages, but they are geared toward returning Kol Taram to its former standing; the Purple Terror who lurks in the city above keeps them wary.

Living and Lifestyles in The Undercity

'Poverty' is an easy term to toss around within the Undercity: many of the abodes are squalid, temporary structures of pitiful design. This can be deceiving, however, as The Undercities denizens are loath to show off anything of value. These items, beautiful or rare or expensive, are carried on one's person, or hidden carefully away. As such, it is hard to determine a person's real wealth.

Education and Learning

Due to the transient nature of The Undercities populace, traditional schools aren't common. The Undercity is no place for children. Within the Kol Taram garrison, safe in the halls of the Glowing Pillar, dwarvish children resume lessons under the direction of Headmaster Heurd Rocknose. There are rumors of a Lumare training ground somewhere deeper within The Underdark called The Alabaster Terrace, where the Lumare hone their unique abilities, though none have seen it. Most who call themselves "lifers" who were born and raised in The Undercity take on apprenticeships.

Shopping

There are no markets or centers of commerce, though what stores do exist tend to cluster close to, or within, the massive pillars that support the cavernous roof of the space The Undercity occupies. The Washed Market outside of The Dark Hive may be the only exception: under careful watch of

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Coldwrought enforcers, an open-air black market, a warren of tables, takes place on every Wednesday. Nothing living is to be sold but narcotics, stolen jewelry, historical artifacts, unsavory meats, and dark secrets can be found. While outright violence is not tolerated, the Coldwrought Clan does not concern itself with petty theft, and will take no action against thievery.

Tax Day

There is not a tradition of open celebration of holidays within The Undercity. The only “special” day is Tax Day, which can happen at strange intervals but usually once or twice a month. On this day, Coldwrought enforcers spread across the Undercity in groups, beating up locals who cannot pay for their “taxes.”

Sports and Games

The Undercity does attract its fair share of gamblers and unsavory types that are happy to make a quick copper at another’s expense. The Dark Hive features poker tables, Bluffer’s Cup, and for those with the pieces, a private Grogram room.

Grogram

An ancient dwarvish game that requires pieces scattered across the northern parts of Dominion, lost with the falls of two of the original citadels. Those who can find pieces will bet on fighting them with others; the pieces are enchanted, and can do harm only to each other; the pieces rebuild themselves after one day.

Bluffer’s Cup

Each player has three tiles: the shield, the sword, and the hand. It is a rocks, paper, scissors with betting and deception involved.

The Square of Might

Operated by The Coldwrought Clan, The Square of Might is a small fighting arena with two tiers of seatings. Fights may be arranged, with the loser being paid, the winner being paid more, and the house taking most. Fights are not typically to the death, but True Boughts are fought to the death.

People of Prominence

There is no recognized government, or set of laws outside of the unspoken ones that seem universal within the Undercity. Instead, there are people of prominence whose spheres of influence have shaped the behaviors of those around them.

| d6 | Person |
|----|---|
| 1 | <i>Yawmbo</i> - A bugbear with oiled and styled hair brushed back across the fine black vest he wears over a brown-furred torso, Yawmbo speaks little, but is surprisingly intelligent. He works as a broker, and can obtain most things for players, in return for them completing tasks for the Coldwrought Clan, though this is never explicitly stated. |
| 2 | <i>Chief Schneek</i> - At 24, Schneek is ancient by goblin standards. He is blind now, but could once read the fortune of the Undercity using rat bones. He despises magic users, such as The Hidden Hag, who he blames for taking his site. His eyes are made of stone. |
| 3 | <i>High Mage Wucrut Coalbeard</i> - 322, Wucrut is a chauvinist, old-guard High Mage who resents the introduction of women to the Bearded Consortium. He is a |

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| | powerful evocation mage, and proved himself in the Battle of Skaar against the Fire Giant Legion. |
| 4 | <i>The Hidden Hag</i> - Deep within The Statuary Pillar, amongst its hallways of petrified humanoids, shifting living statues, resides a pale, veiled woman known as The Hidden Hag. None have seen her face, though rumors speak of looking upon her resulting in the many statues around her abode. She keeps to herself, but hers is the only pillar with a good radius of emptiness around it. |
| 5 | <i>The Stalker</i> - The lone Lumare who makes permanent residence behind The Stalker's Perch. He is quiet, speaks few words, but communicates mostly through his eyes. His insight is unparalleled, and he hunts down those who would cause particular trouble in the streets of The Undercity. |
| 6 | <i>Dorgram Coldwrought, Patriarch of the Coldwrought Clan</i> - The most dangerous man in The Undercity, Dorgram Coldwrought is 121, and has been groomed from birth to run the Coldwrought Clan. He is merciless, speaks slowly, but his words have great gravity. He always wears dull navy gloves with gold cappings around the knuckles, and around one eye is heavily tattooed to make it appear as if the flesh is peeling away to reveal bone. |

Holy Places

The Undercity is a place that slows for freedom of worship, and nowhere is that more obvious than the *Madruuc Lambus*, undercommon for "Market of Gods." Dug into the ground itself, a cave-like series of

shafts and small caverns dedicated to the many gods that others worship. Less crime happens here, as those who defile a chamber of a deity are likely to find trouble with their followers.

Within the boundaries of The Glowing Pillar and Fort Taram that has risen up to house the dwarven refugees of Kol Taram, there is a simple stone church known as "Last Hearth," a simple place to keep the flame of the Dawnfather's Horizon Cathedral burning while the city is under siege.

Just outside of the city, in a cave that requires spider climb to access, there is a large altar designated for Loth, and many drow slip away in secret to worship here.

A City of Factions

The huge, 100' wide pillars that support the weight of Mount Taram above this system of gargantuan drains generally form the center points for factions, though not always. To call any of these groups outside of The Coldwrought Clan and the Red Cap Goblins organized is a stretch, but each of these groups has the resources, manpower, or prestige to lay claim to at least a small slice of The Undercity.

The Shadow Scavs

The Undercity was born of need; those who could never find a place amongst the elitist dwarves above, moved to a place where they could rise up as high as any other. Many did not wish to move below, however, bought south the help of those in dark places to get materials restricted to them. These people came to be known as The Shadow Scavengers, or Shadowscavs for short.

They are a motley group of thieves, smugglers, and fences with the occasional use of Autis, a warforged enforcer usually

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hidden beneath a large jacket and hat, to protect magical items. Their symbol is a pair of crossed, upside down pickaxes.

Ally Benefits:

- Material costs for smithing-related projects are reduced by 15%
- You may purchase the Rat Tunnels map from any Shadowscav leader for 10gp

Stoneguard

A small contingent of Stoneguard, the law keeping force and military of Kol Taram above, escorted refugees down to the Undercity. They currently man Fort Taram, the Gateway Garrison, and a small defensive position outside of The Pillar of Stairs to safeguard against any scouts from the invasion above.

They are hardy warriors, with stone-coated half-plate and either two-handed mauls or one-handed war-hammers and shields. Their leader is The Stonewarden, Vaddarus, a younger male dwarf who always plays it safe.

Ally Benefits:

- You may be accompanied by a Stoneguard about the boundaries of the Undercity if you wish. They will provide you with some protection from the Red Cap goblins and various other entities.
- Access to the Stoneguard Armory, which sells basic armor and weapons at 10% off the base market price.

The Coldwrought Clan

Of all the factions in the Undercity, The Coldwrought Clan is the most powerful and the most dangerous. The actual family members of the Coldwrought Clan number maybe two dozen, but they employ countless other dwarves, goblins, kenku, drow, and anyone else willing to back their clan up for the price of a little gold.

Led by Dorgram Coldwrought, the family patriarch, they grow wealth with hidden desires to take back the citadel above that cast them down.

Ally Benefits:

- You can hire a Coldwrought Enforcer at the price of 5gp a day.
- You may stay at The Dark Hive free of charge, with one fine meal per day included.

The Bearded Consortium

Once one of the two primary powers within Kol Taram, The Bearded Consortium has stood for 500 years as a men-only convocation of powerful magic users, primarily wizards. They are powerful evocation magic users, but have flaunted more political power than actual magic in recent centuries.

In a large upset of tradition, with the fall of Kol Taram, Zelga Stonestaf, a female dwarf, has been made a full member. In this time of desperation, many welcome to powerful, blunt woman who wears a porcelain mask.

Ally Benefits:

- -10% to all components needed for a spell tagged as evocation.
- Access to the Consortium Militia armory, where scrolls of spell levels 1-3 can be purchased, at the DMs discretion.

The Six Great Pillars

As said before, the easiest way to break up the ever-shifting mass of humanoids that make up The Undercity is by the most proximate Great Pillar to their location. The pillars themselves have been carved and built into over time, with the Goblin Gabbles being the most haphazardly worked and porous-looking, and the Pillar of Stairs being the most well-kept. It's difficult

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to break down the pillar neighborhoods in terms of economic lines, but those who live within The Dark Hive tend to be very wealthy; those who live around the People's Pillar count themselves as the most squalid in an already poor town.

Getting Around

While The Undercity is not massive in terms of its horizontal footprint, many of the pillars have carved stairs, and ascend stories into the dark with warrens, housing, and even small shops for those who know where to look. While it takes no more than two hours to walk from end-to-end, climbing to the top of The People's Pillar may take nearly a day for those unfamiliar. As a general rule of thumb:

- It takes approximately 30 minutes to walk from one pillar's neighborhood to the next.
- Climbing a Pillar takes approximately 15 minutes a story once it's familiar to a traveler.

Statuary Pillar Locations

| Place | Description |
|-------------------|--|
| The Stoneyard | A church-like building of old casketwood, and fenced in areas of earth where the dead are interred. The Stoneyard is a gravesite that is backset by the Statuary, and even features statues scavenged from within the Statuary pillar itself. Part of the trio of reputedly haunted buildings that make up Quarry Row. |
| The Gentle Repose | At one time, The Repose was a beautiful structure, built to house the noble Clan Grandcrest who all succumbed to madness. The one beautiful, Victorian-style home has now been transformed into a hotel, of sorts, though ghosts can frequently be seen walking through walls to different rooms. |

Goblin Gables Locations

| Place | Description |
|-------------|---|
| Deek's Cart | Every Wednesday, Deek, a meek, skittish goblin, will bring a wheelbarrow-sized cart of belongings stolen by the Red Cap goblins to the Dark Market, but those in the know will tell you that Deek lives under the Goblin Gables. He even deals directly with the Shadowscavs. |

Pillar of the People Locations

| Place | Description |
|----------------------|---|
| Bloodworm Farm | One of the few edible things deep underground that grow readily are blood worms, each about four inches long and the width of a middle finger. They are protein rich and taste very iron-heavy. They are grown in troughs, and eat both dead organic matter and rust. |
| Commoner's Infirmary | A large tent, similar to a circus tent, though its slowly become a more permanent fixture in The People's Pillar neighborhood. It is a field hospital, with a limited supply of medicine and an even more limited number of people trained in the healing arts. |
| Mudbath House | The earthy, deep pits of thermally heated mud. For an added fee, they can even properly wash after. |

The Glowing Pillar Locations

| Place | Description |
|----------|--|
| Ireworks | The single forge now operates on behalf of the Taram Resistance. |

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| | It expands slowly but surely, all the wire pumping out armor and weapons night and day. |
| Kevin | Kevin is a kenku who has set up a tent on the outskirts of The Glowing Pillar neighborhood. Most of what he has is junk, but now and then, he seems to come by a treasure or two. |
| Undercut | A general store that sells damaged and broken goods well below market price. |
| Rois Quarry | A large, three layer deep quarry for mining grey granite for bricks. |
| The Bleedin' Stout | Named for its signature drink, The Bleedin' Stout is a traditional dwarvish drinking hall, with a large chandelier, and features a sort of bloodworm pasta with a red pepper sauce that burns the iron flavor right out. |
| The Training Yard | Amidst the buildings of Fort Taram, there is a large stone courtyard dedicated to 24-hour combat exercises. |

The Dark Hive Locations

| Place | Description |
|-----------------|---|
| The Dark Hive | The Dark Hive itself is one party casino, one part sprawling hotel/dungeon that houses The Coldwrought Clan's interests. On the fifth story of the tower is the Coldwrought Apartments, where the crime family lives, and deals with their top clients. |
| The Dark Market | Under careful watch from the Coldwrought enforcers, every Wednesday sees a large |
| Square of Might | To the west of the pillar proper, perhaps ten minutes walk, is a large, iron cube. There are vents on the top, which allow steam |

| | |
|------------------------|--|
| | from the gathered crowd to escape. Within, there are seats for roughly 60 people, and a raised marble square where organized fights take place. |
| The Gourmand's Kitchen | This small, eight-seat establishment operates within Coldwrought territory, and provides one meal a week, every Friday Night. It is highly exclusive, and few know what occurs within these walls... there are rumors that many of the items on the menu are harvested from the streets of The Undercity and beyond... |

Further, due to the nature of The Undercity (violent and volatile) many shops rise and fall quickly, or change locations. The following merchants may be located anywhere within The Undercity, or not at all, at the DM's discretion.

| d6 | Merchant |
|----|--|
| 1 | <i>The Shoddy Scholar</i> - A small shop filled with second-hand books piled on every available surface. Run by the deep gnome Gildroby Middleweasle who knows exactly where every title is, and exactly what's in stock. Specializes in fiction. |
| 2 | <i>Feathered Lands</i> - A tiny store, with a single drafting table, a desk, and a few shelves of rolled up, large, scrolls. Mi-Zhan, a middle-aged drow woman shaved bald, though constantly fussing with her head, can create and provide maps of Underdark locations. |
| 3 | <i>Hchvat Marganum</i> - Infernal for "Blown Glass", Hchvat Marganum is just that: a glass blower. Owned by the tiefling Partillin, proud and sarcastic, it can produce glass of master quality. |
| 4 | <i>Liquid Courage</i> - A medium-sized Inn of a poor quality. Ownership frequently changes |

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| | (at least once a week), resulting in odd, mis-matched decor. |
| 5 | <i>The All Sleeper's Domain</i> - A medium-sized tent with comfortable pillows piled throughout. 10gp will get you a pleasant dose of Dreamer's Stick, a minty, chewy reed that can induce a hallucinatory dream state. Many can't quite remember where they've left all their things when they leave. |
| 6 | <i>Cadence's Tattoo Parlor</i> - Always moving, the rapid-speaking, stream-of-consciousness speaking tiefling, Cadence Clearwater runs a tattoo parlor wherever somebody can track her down. She specializes in a tattoo that can summon a semi-spectral familiar (1,000gp, plus the ashes of 10gp worth of incense, herbs, and charcoal.) once per day. |

Dungeons of The Undercity

The Undercity, by its very nature, might be considered a dungeon, depending on your disposition and willingness to overlook rampant violence. However, there are areas in both the developed pillar communities and the surrounding caverns that present particularly perilous settings.

The Statuary

Though the hag who is rumored to wander the halls of the pillar known as The Statuary has expressed nothing more than a desire to be left alone, the statues that dot the hallways, rooftop, and even surrounding The Statuary itself, were all adventurers, criminals, or sight-seekers who ignored her wishes and sought the various treasures said to remain from the Drow military outfit that used to inhabit the tower. The pillar itself was designed to be defended, with a pair of staircases twisting around each other through the center, visible to each level that passes. Not all statues remain still, either;

gargoyles, mimics, and ropers all take residence here.

Stone Giant Settlement

Behind large piles of stones that obscure the settlement proper from the other side of the Broken Bridge, are massive steps that lead to a sunken-in portion of earth, hiding the true height of the giant's large community-structure: similar to a pyramid, though each brick features fine linework to give the entire thing the appearance of being made my miniature stones. Within lives a small community of stone giants, who call themselves Draj-Larc, "The Dark Dwellers" in giantese. They live a quiet, secluded life, and seek to elevate their home to even finer heights, the leader chosen every 500 days by who has provided the most improvement to their lair.

The Dark Hive

An appropriate name for a complex, five-story-high maze of apartments, functional rooms, workshops, and storage areas. The Coldwrought Clan runs the entire structure, though as it expands ever-upward, even they don't know the true extent of the pillar's workings anymore. Many of those missing from the uneven streets of The Undercity still live (in the better scenarios) within The Dark Hive. Past the first level, which is largely a dark, smokey casino, intruders will be met with fierce resistance from the Coldwrought Clan and those in their employ. The complex nature of The Dark Hive does carry with it one advantage: There are no means to sound an effective alarm outside of a very localized area.

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A Final Note

Howdy folks! My name is Joe Treff, and I'm the Dungeon Master for Adventures in Alberon, the home campaign that I run for my friends! It can be seen live every Friday at 8:30pm EST on <https://www.twitch.tv/alberonrpg>! The Undercity of Kol Taram is Alberon Homebrew Content, and is free, for everyone, forever. Questions? Comments? Email me at jtreff@alberonrpg.com!

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