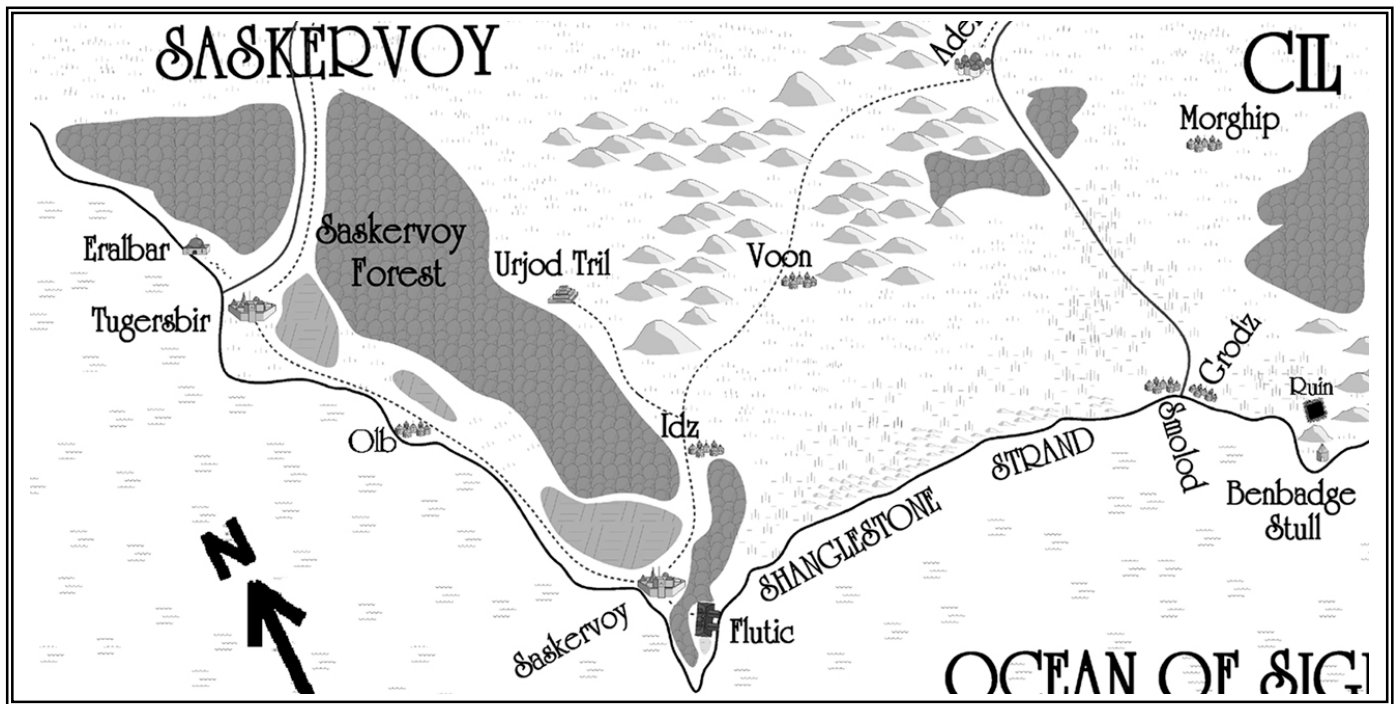


# The Wayfarer's Guide to Saskervoy Town

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Maps by Ian Thomson; Additional Art: Dover Books

Many thanks as always to Jack Vance



## Introduction

Welcome to this most fine of publications, within which I, the noble Lessorix of Perne<sup>1</sup>, shall be your commentator. As you may have heard I returned recently from an unexpected jaunt around various locales of our illustrious ancient Earth. I am certain the nameless Scholasticarum Academic who so 'kindly' gifted me the Amulet of Commodious Transportation was unaware of its random nature. The fact that each time I used it I was catapulted to isolated and dangerous locations many thousands of leagues apart, narrowly escaping death on numerous occasions I shall not dwell upon. In the end, the Law of Equipoise saw fit to grant me with the opportunity to visit a wide number of settlements and experience people and customs that otherwise I would never have encountered. This then is my first publication outlining the findings of my journeyings. Should you ever chance to visit Saskervoy please pass on my regards to Bunderwal at the Inn of the Blue Lamps, and to Elissande, the barmaid at the Star of the North.

<sup>1</sup> A former adventurer who inveigled a junior position at the Scholasticarum. Though generally charming company he still made a number of enemies, one of whom gave him a cursed item of transportation. Fortunately he survived and returned to write his tales, becoming for a time a minor personality in Scholasticarum circles and even at Court. Inevitably he couched the wrong nobleman's mistress and had to leave Kaiin secretly by dead of night. To remember him we here present the first of his series of treatises in more or less the original format, though annotated throughout to adapt it into a role-playing supplement.

## Town Overview

Despite its position in the distant north, those rare travellers from the south that visit this town find it to be larger than they might have expected and possessed of a distinguished air of ancient respectability. As with many settlements across the world, it has clearly been in existence for a very long time, and certainly appears to have once been larger, by the evidence of low ruins across the farmland and forest outside the town limits. Inside the town tall narrow houses stand side by side along the streets, the stone of their structure weathered by ages of lichen, smoke and sea-fog. Windows glisten, and brass-work twinkles in the red sunlight, all creating an air of quiet cheerfulness.

Saskervoy is a busy place. At certain times of the year various ships of good proportion lie alongside the dock of the splendid old harbour, and on any weekday the town is bustling with carters, ostlers, street vendors and the sound of the craft workshops. People from the surrounding hamlets and more distant inland towns come here regularly (hence the large number of inns), for Saskervoy is the centre of trade in this region. Along with Tugersbir to the north it is one of the last bastions of civilisation in a crumbling world. As with the area around Kaiin, and along the adjacent Scaum Valley, travel across water is easier than portering any quantity of goods overland. Therefore goods are exchanged regularly by sea with the settlements of Old, Tugersbir and Eralbar in Saskervoy's north.

Saskervoy is the main shipping centre for two reasons. Firstly this is traditional. It has a good natural harbour, fed by the sluggish Urjod River that runs in a deep cutting along the eastern edge of the town. This cutting incidentally provides a fine natural barrier to protect the town from wandering half-men. The rest of the settlement is protected by a stake and bank fence on the landward side, and by the high stone dock wall on the bay. The second reason for Saskervoy dominating the sea-trade is its location. It is centred between the northern settlements, the various occupied islands – such as Lausicaa – in the Ocean of Sighs, and the few settlements to the east, such as Cil.

Despite its connections with foreign parts, the majority of outsiders who come regularly to Saskervoy are farmers, foresters and hunters bringing their produce from the lands in the immediate vicinity. That is to say that actual strangers (people from truly distant lands who wear unusual hats and other unfamiliar and unfashionable attire) are a novelty for the local folk. Such people will receive stare stares of surprise and even perhaps invoke a little alarm, for the folk of Saskervoy are as deeply ingrained with fear of outsiders as any settlement on the Dying Earth.

On the street most people are smartly but conservatively dressed. Nonetheless, those who can afford to, do break this mould and wear ostentatious suits and dresses of felt and silk. The three-tiered hat is considered outré by the citizens of Saskervoy, and even those who wear the double-tiered headpiece are often regarded as sartorially daring. A hat's tiers do not denote any level of social standing in Saskervoy.

The town is not divided into discrete districts. Most commerce is carried out around the harbour plaza and surrounding streets, but this is by accepted custom, not through any kind of decree or formalisation. North Street travels from the North Gate to the Harbour; the Esplanade travels adjacently to the harbour all the way from the West Gate to the East Gate (and its associated bridge). The curving roadway that runs across the width of the town is Ship Street. The weekly market is held in the harbourside plaza, and almost half of its provender consists of fish and other products of the oceans.

The final landmarks of note in the town are its two ancient statues. The one in the centre of the plaza is Bampath in his representation as protector of travellers. He stands broodingly staring out to sea, as if waiting for the bold explorers of aeons past to return. The most notable thing about this statue is that it remains enchanted to repel seagulls and other birds. Once in a while those in the marketplace are amused and/or discomfited when a bird that is not aware of its dangers tries to alight, and is vaporised with a loud report and pathetic scattering of feathers. The second statue is in the middle of the town's cross-streets. It is presumably a goddess or famous historical female, but the truth is that nobody remembers. This noble, smiling woman is said by some to be the goddess Sask, but since nobody from outside of this town has ever reported knowing of such a goddess this is probably just a local rumour.

## Climate

The region around Saskervoy is somewhat colder than Ascolais and Almerly, as one would expect because of its more northerly situation. Saskervoy also draws more rainfall because of its proximity to the ocean, as do the other coastal settlements. Nonetheless, it has long and warm summers, and is still comparatively mild throughout the year except for the winter. The residents of these parts must struggle through two or three months of biting weather, and the pretty gabled roofs of Saskervoy are from time to time decorated with artistic white coatings of thick snow.

## Surrounding Region

### Geography

Directly to the north of Saskervoy are the Storlak Woods. These are several miles wide and well-stocked with natural orchards, pollarded trees, and game. They are also comparatively safe due to an ancient protection that discourages the presence of anthropophages (though unfortunately not wild beasts). Beyond this large woodland is the Saskervoy Forest proper, which does not have such an ancient enchantment protecting it, and is therefore as dark and dangerous a place as one might expect.

The coast road heads north-west from Saskervoy, eventually reaching Olb and Tugersbir. It continues in a relict form even through the Saskervoy Forest itself and to other isolated small settlements beyond, but this way is rarely travelled, and only the once mighty nature of the road keeps it from being completely devoured by the encroaching woodlands. The Old North Road indeed heads north along the Urjod river, which – as one would expect – has its source in the hills between Urjod Tril and Voon. This thoroughfare was once a major artery of commerce through the ancient realm of Saskervoy, and in many places still evidences feats of outstanding architecture, such as the great bridge beyond Idz, which one must cross to reach the Urjod Tril road.

East of Saskervoy are forest-covered hills that stretch all the way out onto the headland. Sightings of anthropophages are more common here. Master Twango has his residence out near the promontory, but nobody else chooses to live so far from the protection of the town. Beyond these hills is only the desolate expanse of the Shanglestone Strand and its landward marshes. This grim and dangerous region stretches all the way to the adjacent ancient land of Cil.

### Flora & Fauna

The dank and ancient woodlands of this region contain thamber oak, yew, memache and goblin tree, and during the spring evidence beautiful white and pink blossoms high in the trees. The forests tend more towards pine trees the further north one travels and different variegations of bracken are common in the east. No vegetation of particular hazard exists apart from rare patches of whipweed around the fringes of the Saskervoy Forest itself. The domestic beast of choice is the percher, a creature clearly made up from the plasms of horse and griffin. It does not have wings, but does have feathers around its forelocks and neck, and retains the haughty beak (but fortunately not savage inclinations) of its more mythic progenitor. The people of Saskervoy are blessed with the fact that it does not speak. A few other domestic beasts are present in the region, but all except for the ubiquitous mermelant are the last few survivors of the menageries once supported in ancient and noble Saskervoy. One local delicacy is the sphigale, which can be caught on coastal pools to the north-west of the town; but beware not to let them hide in your boots as they have a debilitating sting and sharp pincers. Anthropophages are not common in the district, except on the headland on which old Twango built his fine manse. Both deodands and ghouls haunt those woods. However, one would be foolish to walk unprepared in any other region outside the town, because half-men following their baser urges do sometimes sneak up to the town, and some unfortunate is taken by a deodand around once a year.

#### **The Marine Worm or Nardryke**

Nardrykes are widely used to propel shipping about the northern oceans, and are generally grey or dark brown in colouring. These massive marine worms are attached to the front and sides of small cogs and larger vessels by means of heavy leather harnesses. Their tenders, the 'wormingers', are a proud breed who believe themselves set apart from other seafarers by the hard work and special skills essential to their profession. They also pride themselves in the austerity of their roles. The first mention of the marine worm comes from the seventeenth aeon, when several were recorded as curiosities by an observer from the old Kang Kingdom. Since they had never been seen before, it seems likely they were magically created – perhaps from a much smaller specimen known as the 'chiffer', which is no larger than your little finger. Since soon after this they were seen drawing vessels of the Crimson Sail line, it is likely that they were 'purpose built' for this task. 'Worming' is a respectable profession in the northern oceans, and can be one way in which impoverished travellers manage to see something of the world. Worming is a craft that takes experience and aptitude to make a good go of.

*Game Notes: Ideally, Seamanship is the ability one uses to tend a worm. It is nonetheless effectively useless (penalty of 2), since regular ocean-going processes have absolutely nothing to do with giant helminthes, unless one has purchased the Tweak 'Oh, for the life of the Worminger'. Failing this, a character may use Riding or Athletics as a base, but at a levy of 2 – though they may also call upon their Seamanship pool to back this up if the Seamanship rating is 6 or greater.*

## Tweak - Seamanship

### "Oh, for the life of a Worminger"

**Situation:** You are required to evidence knowledge of, or utilitarian aptitude for, the profession of Worminger.

**Description:** You have served at least once as an under-worminger aboard ship on a journey that lasted at least three weeks. Thus you have basic knowledge of both theoretical and practical aspects of the art of 'Worming'.

**Benefit:** You can use your Seamanship or Athletics ability at a levy of 1 to attempt mental and physical tasks related to 'Worming'. You are also immune to GM applied levies or penalties during the course of your professional activities. (Those without this tweak suffer such penalties due to unfamiliarity with clambering about worm and sponson – especially whilst the vessel is underway.)

### Fermin

The fermin are a species of large nocturnal rodent (with some degree of primate plasm in its original make-up), the tallest reaching approximately two foot in height. Nonetheless they seem shorter because they scamper and squat upon their haunches and rarely stretch fully upright. Intelligent and possessed of manipulative digits they are a pest to many settlements because they travel in small groups at night across roofs and through cellars, seeking access into buildings where they eat what they can and steal any portable foodstuffs and occasionally other things that take their fancy. Although individually unthreatening to any alert and armed individual, the crafty fermin travel in groups of between 3-7 individuals and operate as a team. They do not use tools because they do not have opposable thumbs, and so well-secured properties are not often endangered. Those most likely to be bothered by them are roof-runners<sup>2</sup>, because fermin will follow them, hoping to either follow them into a building, or to steal their food or spoils when the thief's back is turn. Fermin are rude and abusive, and often will threaten such a person with the possibility of their attracting the attention of the local officers of law-enforcement.

*Obfuscatory 3, Contrary 12, Speed 6, Sure-Footedness 11, Health 4, Concealment 12, Perception 3, Stealth 12, Tracking 5*

(NB: Fermin use Sure-Footedness rather than Athletics when running over roofs, squeezing through small gaps, or otherwise performing feats of agility.)



### Shree

Shree are semi-corporeal and have been described as resembling some kind of homunculoid wefkin. Nonetheless, they do not seem to be demonic in essence, but rather some kind of manifestation of wild natural energy. They are rarely met in large settlements, but from time to time make an appearance in smaller communities that exist on the edge (or in the midst) of untamed lands. A typical shree encounter comes by surprise, when someone who is abroad at night rounds a corner and disturbs the creature sitting minding its own business. Its response to such an intrusion is uniform, consisting of a raucous high-pitched shrieking, sufficient to rouse anyone in the vicinity, although it inevitably vanishes before anyone else sees it. In some regions the shree is thought of as a spirit that comes to announce an impending death. However, this myth may have come about due to the fact that elderly persons who encounter one can literally be startled to death. Shree do not suffer damage from non-magical weapons, and indeed resist even magical weapons with their Magic rating. Spells such as Calactus' Instant Dispulsion (IT, p86) and the Second Retrotropic (DERPG, p112) will dispel them if overcoming their: *Magic (Resistance only) 15.*

## Law and Order

The nominal head of the town is the High Steward of Saskervoy, who maintains a fine manse on a riverbank property. He is elected from the town's council of merchants once every three years, but is their chairperson rather than their leader per se. Nonetheless, it is a hotly contested position, does have some real influence, and is invested

<sup>2</sup> Thieves who use rooftops as thoroughfares and as a means of accessing buildings without disturbing their owners.

with a huge amount of prestige. The council of merchants is interested in little more than sea-trade, but this is now so well established and formulised that there really is very little to do. Crime is low in Saskervoy, and serious crime is almost unknown in this close-knit community. Nonetheless, petty crime, drunkenness (and associated lewd and inopportune behaviour), and the activities of those attempting to dodge appropriate taxation on shipped goods do sometimes require attention. For this purpose Saskervoy has an office of Stewards (as the name suggests nominally under the control of the High Steward). These officers are arranged in two branches: the Town Watch, and the Taxation Department - though neither branch is as formidable or as worrying as it sounds. The 'Taxation' Department consists of clerks that process standard civic paperwork and a few investigators (known as Inspectors) that randomly check shipped goods. The Town Watch runs patrols at night. Their main duty is to walk the insides of the palisade at irregular intervals. This is not so much to check for possible half-man incursion (which happens only very rarely) but more in an attempt to dissuade lesser nuisances, such as fermin, from entering the settlement. They do, however, also run a patrol along the mainstreets, each man equipped with a whistle for those infrequent times when he is in need of urgent assistance. This subgroup also has a few its own investigators (known as Constables) that examine any significant crimes when necessary. (Although as explained previously serious crime is so rare that these are hardly a well-trained body of men able and equipped to solve any real conundrums of malfeasance.) Still, were foreigners to come to town and begin unrefined confidence games, or were a series of thefts to begin, these would be the men called upon to sort things out. Their only major duty in recent years was tracking down, identifying and hanging Larkin the notorious baby-stealer. This man, a foreigner, took infants from their cribs in the dead of night in order to extract a ransom from wealthy families. When one of the children died from illness before it could be returned he became a murderer, and so was the first man hung in Saskervoy for nearly a decade.

## Religions and Philosophies

The local folk maintain the tradition of revering Bampath as the Deity of Wisdom, but this is an archaic custom not something to which they adhere with odd rights, and no frightening prerequisites are hoisted upon foreigners. Bampath-worship supports the local custom of treating all things with precision and formality, but this custom is often let slide when nobody is looking or when something worthwhile can be gained through acting purely from self-interest. Of course many exist within Saskervoy society who would never knowingly put a foot outside the realms of absolute propriety, and are constantly scandalised by the casual actions and words of the more libertarian youth.

## Fashions and Fripperies

Old-fashioned habits remain well-respected in Saskervoy, and conservatism is the norm. Men typically wear black swallow-tail coats with voluminous trousers and black buckled shoes, while the women sport shapeless gowns and round punch-bowl hats pulled low. However, as is typical of many settlements across the Dying Earth, those with wealth may defy local customs if they so wish. In town are various tailors that also cater for the more well-off and those bold and audacious enough to break the mould. They produce such items as black or blue velvet suits with silver epaulettes, large hats with curling plumes, tall crowned toppers made of fine felt, orange gowns cut to emphasise the female form, and of course fancy boots of all styles.

## Various Inhabitants

### **Bunderwal**

*"But let us use my cards, which are newer and easier for the eyes."*

Typically dressed in a rumpled blue velvet suit and tall-crowned brown hat, Bunderwal is a round-faced slightly portly man-about-town. That is to say he thinks much of himself, is quick with cards and quips, and has no regular employment – though he has talked or bribed his way into a number of well-paid positions over the years including ship's supercargo (cargomaster), pastry cook, chief drover, astronomer and overland wagoner. Though his home is Saskervoy he travels regularly between this town and Tugersbir, and the various villages between.

*Glib 11, Lamyerly 11, Strength 8, Vexation 12, Health 9, Appraisal 5, Athletics 6, Driving 4, Gambling 12, Imposture 7, Pedantry 5, Perception 6, Quick-Fingers 8, Seamanship 3, Stewardship 3.*

## Captain Baunt

*"My collection of water-moth shells is irreplaceable and I do not wish my antique books to be disturbed."*

A tall and gaunt man with the long sallow face of a tragic poet, Baunt is an ex-adventurer who has lived in this region for more than a decade. He has a collection of many curios collected on his travels, and often considers relocating back to his old lands in the south. However he would never achieve the success there that he has done here, and so he stays, having adopted the taut and immaculate persona of a professional ship's captain. Far from a fool, he has nonetheless become used to the trusting and formal ways of the locals, and so is not as sharp as he once was. Nonetheless, do not trifle with him, as he is neither as restrained nor as courteous as most other Saskervoy folk. *Intimidating 12, Penetrating 14, Ferocity 12, Intuition 13, Health 10, Athletics 10, Gambling 7, Living Rough 5, Pedantry (coastal settlements) 6, Riding 8, Seamanship 8.*

## Drofo

*"There is your problem. You have over-baited, which is an act of folly."*

Drofo is one of few fully-qualified wormingers, having learned the trade from his father, who learned it from his father before him. (Although where he learned it from is a mystery not too closely examined.) A man full of rhetoric and hyperbole about his own business he has virtually no knowledge about any other subject, except perhaps some of the broader details of the shipping trade. He lives for his worms and the prestige that gives him. When not at sea he works tending the worming pens or drinks at the 'Road to Voon' where he is a respected elder patron. *Obfuscatory 12, Pure-Hearted 8, Ferocity 6, Sure-Footedness 11, Health 8, Athletics 9, Craftsmanship 7, Pedantry (worms) 8, Perception 6, Riding 11, Seamanship 7.*

## Lankwiler

*"From the peculiar style of your hat I deduce that you derive from a far and exotic region."*

A tall fleshy young man with a thick cluster of black curls and small close-set black eyes. Originally from Tugersbir he moved to Saskervoy to try and 'get rich quick'. Unfortunately (for him) he was caught during the planning stages of a series of swindles along with several other would-be roof-runners and sentenced to two years' duty as a trainee worminger. Though begrudging at first, he has taken to the profession and now has a reasonable knowledge of worms and their treatments. When not at sea he still maintains connections with some of his old cronies and might be a useful contact if and when tasks of dubious repute need to be undertaken. *Glib 9, Contrary 12, Speed 10, Sure-Footedness 11, Health 9, Appraisal 3, Athletics 5, Concealment 7, Gambling 6, Perception 4, Riding 9, Scuttlebutt 3, Seamanship 6, Stealth 8.*

## Master Chernitz

*"What? I am a man of substance!"*

Another example of the town's conservative elders; one might expect Chernitz to be a little more cosmopolitan since he is the owner of the Tatterblass Brewery. However, this is a hereditary ownership and he has little to do with the business except to live off its profits and invest said profits in the shipping agency of his friend Mercantides.

*Eloquent 7, Wary 6, Caution 4, Dodge 5, Health 5, Appraisal 4, Stewardship 5.*



## Master Koyman

*"Fewer boasts and more money! I await your terces!"*

A tall and thin man with a cadaverous complexion, a long jaw, lank black hair and drooping eyelids. He is the town's embalmer, rumoured to routinely steal the ornamental gold sphincter-clasps of the deceased in order to support his poor gambling. However, despite any such tales, his respected position and abstemious manner make sure that he is another of the well-respected elder inhabitants of the town.

*Forthright 8, Wary 9, Caution 4, Dodge 6, Health 7, Gambling 5, Pedantry (Funerary Rites) 6, Scuttlebutt 7, Stewardship 5.*

## Master Mercantides

*"We residents of Saskervoy are noted for our reluctance to talk with strangers in outlandish costumes."*

Co-owner of the town's only large shipping agent, Mercantides is a somewhat elderly man with the thin nose and the pursy mouth. He is notoriously conservative with money, fashion, and attitude.

*Forthright 10, Wary 9, Caution 3, Dodge 4, Health 4, Appraisal 7, Pedantry (commerce) 10, Seamanship 5, Stewardship 8.*

## Master Soldinck

*"Conceivably this brew might be painted upon the ship's bottom, to discourage the growth of marine pests."*

A man of sturdy middle age who follows typical Saskervoy styles except for the addition of a brown travelling cloak. He is the more active partner in the firm of Soldinck and Mercantides, and oversees collections and packing, and sometimes even travels on shipping voyages with his family in order to experience more exotic locales. Though a fine and upstanding citizen he is not entirely happy in this marriage with his rather shrewish wife and occasionally seeks solace in the arms of other discreet and inexpensive ladies of the town. He also likes to sample the finer things of life in other areas.

*Forthright 14, Penetrating 8, Finesse 7, Parry 10, Health 8, Appraisal 9, Athletics 3, Pedantry (commerce) 9, Perception 4, Seamanship 6, Stewardship 7.*

## Waymund

*"My feet are warm and my boots are dry; it is time I departed."*

Waymund is a professional seaman, an underworminger by trade who regularly puts out to sea in one of Soldinck and Mercantides vessels. He is possessed of powerful physique, a heavy nose and jaw, a top-knot of red hair and a fine glinting red beard. He also possesses the gruff and boisterous personality one would expect to go along with them. When not at sea he is often to be found at the Inn of Blue Lamps, where he fancies himself to be a sharp hand at the game of Skax.

*Intimidating 9, Contrary 10, Strength 9, Parry 10, Health 11, Athletics 9, Gambling 7, Perception 3, Riding 9, Seamanship 6, Wherewithal 3.*

## Events

### Market Day

The last day of each week is always market day. Fishmongers, local farmers and crafters from around the region congregate at the harbourside plaza to sell their wares. Although Saskervoy is a relatively austere place, it is not unknown for a few adventurous souls to attempt to amuse the crowds with juggling and fire-twirling in exchange for pennies. Likewise a handful of seers and prognosticators are tolerated as long as they set up their booths away from the main thoroughfares.

### The Return of an Ocean-Going Vessel

Not exactly a major civic event, but nonetheless something that draws small crowds. As conversant as the merchants of Saskervoy are with sea-trade, the ocean is a harsh mistress, and storms or pirates can occasionally claim an entire ship. Thus the friends and relatives of those on board wait anxiously for a vessel's return, and run to the harbour when one of the larger ships is sighted. Currently only the Galante and the SeaHawk are capable of deep-ocean travel, since the Saskervoy Queen failed to return from Lausicaa last year. Also foreign goods are sought after by those who can afford them, and those first to the quay will likely gain the best bargains. (Since prices of such things are at premium, the word 'bargain' is a comparative.)



### Half-Man Hunt

Someone has been taken by a half-man, or (much more likely) an anthropophage has been sighted (or its tracks found) on the town's west side. Since the river is an excellent boundary sightings of half-men in the woods to the east by travellers do not evoke great outcry unless someone is seriously threatened. But since these creatures are few and far between even there, such rarely happens. However, any half-men so bold as to bypass the Storlak Woods is deemed to be a threat worthy of eradication. Constables and Hunters will dragoon any foreigners with apparent low social standing and any skill at arms into joining the hunt.



## Places of Interest

### 1) The 'Road to Voon' Inn

Relatively inexpensive, but also relatively low class. Its primary clientele are local farmers and low-quality traders from the north who bring farm produce for sale. Local woodsmen also come here for the ambience and the inn's own variant on Tatterblass beer. Despite its having the cheapest prices in Saskervoy, effete foreigners are not advised to come here, no matter how down on their luck they are. In the past such folk have often experienced the quaintly aggressive Voonish custom of a 'feeycefoliarhede', and on waking have found their valuables mysteriously vanished.

### 2) The Lord of Cil' Inn

Almost the direct opposite of the 'Road to Voon'. The Lord of Cil boasts the highest prices, most elaborate meals, and finest quality surroundings of any such establishment in Saskervoy. It is also the only such place with a dress code, and ill-mannered vagabonds will not be permitted entry. Despite all of this its main claim to fame is that its proprietors own and run the Tatterblass Brewery directly to its rear. Although it is immensely popular up and down the settlements of the Saskervoy Reach, not everyone who comes here appreciates this pungent liquid which is brewed from acorns, bittermoss and black sausage. Tatterblass has been described by foreigners as 'pallid' and the most scathing have been heard to comment that they "have swallowed rain-water of greater force".

### 3) Inn of the Blue Lamps

This inn is the most cosmopolitan in all of Saskervoy. There is no particular reason for this, it is merely so. Sailors from the north-west coast, middling and prosperous merchants from the north east, and townsfolk from all walks of life congregate here. On market days, the Inn of the Blue Lamps is the 'place to be'. Actually, I told a lie, there is a particular reason although it is a simple one – the staff are polite, the food and beer are good, and the prices are the lowest in the town (apart from those of the 'Road to Voon'). I can heartily recommend the platter of roasted blowfish, with side dishes of carbade, yams and sluteberry mash. In short anyone with fiscal sense and a discerning palate comes here. Whilst the social atmosphere outside of market day is not the most exciting, you will regularly find locals playing out a hand of Skax.

### 4) Iron Cockatrice Tavern

This ancient tavern is the place to go for those who are truly seasoned travellers. Sailors and rare overland merchants and adventurers congregate here with those who listen in awe to their high-blown tales of danger on the high seas, encounters with mythical beasts, and liaisons with arrogant and passionate princesses of forgotten kingdoms.

#### The Cockatrice

The fortunately highly rare cockatrice resembles a large reptilian fowl. Males can grow to up to the mass of a human adolescent, and on rearing to their full length they can stretch to seven or even eight feet tall. Each creature is capable of freezing a human in terror, using only the power of its glance. Should one resist this influence, the beast attacks in more regular ways – utilizing its formidable claws and savage beak. Its single redeeming quality is its extreme rarity, and the fact that except at breeding time (once every three years) individuals cannot tolerate to be in the proximity of another of their kind. During any round it is not engaged in furious combat, the cockatrice may gaze at a single person. This gaze is effective up to 20 yards.

*Each attempt costs the cockatrice 1 from its Magic pool. The victim must make a single defending roll. If their Magic rating is three or more points greater than that of the cockatrice they do so at a bonus of 1; if their Magic rating is six or more better, then the bonus is 2. (The converse also applies with regard to penalties.) IS – target is immune to the gaze of the creature during this encounter; PS – the target merely deflects the gaze this round; HBS – the person is frozen in shock for one round; EF – the target is frozen in fear for three rounds; QF – frozen for ten rounds; DF – the target cannot move again until the creature is dead or has departed the vicinity.*

**Adult Male Cockatrice:** Ferocity 13, Misdirection 12, Health 10, Magic (innate) 8, Athletics 10, Concealment 7, Perception 6, Tracking 5, Wherewithal 11.





### **5) Soldinck and Mercantides - Shipping Agents**

The sign on their door, reads not only this name but also the sub-heading "Exporters and Importers of Quality Products". And that is indeed what they do. It is not so unusual for shipping forms to still exist in this Dying Earth, but what is unusual is that such things are only usually supported in large settlements such as Kaiin or Cansapara. Inside the building the premises are heavy with dignity and tradition; along with the odours of varnish and old wood. Should one wish to converse with Masters Soldinck or Mercantides one must first approach a polished brown marble counter behind which sits an old clerk, typically frowning into a ledger. He is brusque in manner, and you are best advised to visit early and arrange an appointment by offering a small gratuity, after which he will advise you of the appropriate time to return. Soldinck's office is an octagonal chamber furnished in austere luxury. Within is an octagonal table and a couch upholstered in maroon plush. Crimson sunlight, enters through high windows, illuminating a pair of barbaric wall-hangings, woven in the backlands of Far Cutz. A heavy black iron chandelier hangs by an iron chain from the ceiling.

### **6) The Worm Pens**

Several long pens where typically a number of enormous tubular creatures, seven to nine feet in diameter and almost as long as a sea-going vessel, lie placidly afloat. The pens are made from tree-trunks reinforced with iron and driven into the harbour floor, with crossbeams nailed securely into place. All wood is of course treated to prevent its casual rotting due to constant immersion in seawater. At night harbour watchmen look over these valuable creatures to be certain that they cannot be purloined. The sea-gate is opened by means of turning an iron wheel attached to a chain, which pulls the mechanism across to one side.

### **7) Saskervoy Library and Shrine to Bampath the Wise**

If you wish to elucidate yourself on the ways of the ocean, aspects of marine mercantilism, historic flora and fauna of the Saskervoy Reach, or the traditional techniques of farming and hunting, this is your place. Likewise, if you wish to peruse long-winded and largely speculative treatises on historical politics and events, hereto is the place for you. One large chamber is put aside for religious services to Bampath, which are held regularly once a month. These services have for many years merely been a kind of gentlemen's club, where the towns leading merchants meet to debate policy and prices.

### **8) Dorkenjanny's Stables**

The sole large-scale dealer in beasts of burden and transportation, the main saleable creatures are perchers and mermelants. However, from time to time his procurers do come across one of the few remaining outré beasts from the previous aeon, and manage to domesticate it and put it up for sale as a prestige item of appropriate price.



### **9) Manse of the High Steward of Saskervoy**

The current high steward is Master Fegnor, an ageing merchant who owns several farming interests to the north-west of town. He was chosen for his lack of interest in involving himself with politics or policies of any kind, and lives here in affluence along with his wife and last remaining unmarried adult daughter. The manse is also fully-equipped with a household staff.

### **10) 'Sea Breezes' - the Home of Master Soldinck**

This large and well-proportioned old building is in exceptional repair. As well as a number of servants, Master Soldinck, Madame Soldinck and their three daughters: Meadhre, Salasser and Tabazinth dwell here. Though well-trained in the correct social niceties (Stewardship in all its appropriate aspects) the three young women are also adventurous and passionate, and are not adverse to exploring amorous liaisons with comely young men of the town. They are unfortunately somewhat parochial and whilst one of them might dally with an attractive foreigner, this would just be for their own amusement. They all roll to Resist Rakishness, Seduction and Persuasion at a bonus of 1 if to succumb would result in them losing control of the situation.

### **11) Saskervoy Observatory and Weather Station**

This ancient maritime building is the home of one of the few real magicians of the region. Old Magthrimble maintains and operates the old telescope, oversees the star-charts, and reads the complex reports of the weather machine. In his spare time he attempts repairs on the cloud-busting device and performs experiments in his underground laboratory. Of all the people in Saskervoy he is likely to be the most honestly well-disposed to foreigners, since he is a man of adventurous spirit and travelled widely in his youth.

### **12) The Office Building of the Saskervoy Stewards**

A den of bureaucracy, we need say little more. Should you have recourse to discuss taxation, the need for new laws, or possess a requirement for a building permit, this is the place for you.

### **13) The Butchers' Building**

What this peculiarly ornate structure once was remains a mystery. But these days it is the home of the town's butchers and furriers, who process the remains of hunted creatures into products fit for human consumption. The fact that they operate their various noisome processes amidst the housings of long-dismantled ancient machines, and hang their meats upon hooks clearly intended for suspending cables and mechanical joists interests them not in the slightest. I hear that in one subterranean room they have managed to reactivate a large machine that now acts as a huge mincing and slicing device.

### **14) The Saskervoy Civic Warehouse**

A well-guarded and virtually impregnable building that stores all valuables awaiting transport, whether they have just entered the town or are awaiting shipment from it.

### **15) Saskervoy Hospice**

The sick and infirm of Saskervoy are housed here. Its operators know something of herbal lore and are quite capable of restoring health through a variety of poultices and internal cleansings. Sometimes this regimen has been described as taxing, but nonetheless is apparently highly effective.

### **16) 'River Meadow' - the Home of Master Chernitz**

Master Chernitz lives here with his two adult sons and their wives and families. All have personalities that reflect his own, except for the youngest daughter Merille. Her mischievous and exploratory actions have resulted in many an amorous man receiving a 'fair thumping' from the menfolk of the house. (Merille herself is never held to blame.)

### **17) Master Tingott's Educational Facility**

A number of academics of lesser and higher quality are employed here to teach all the youngsters of Saskervoy the basic educational rudiments, between the ages of 4 and 12. Those who wish to learn beyond this point must pay the appropriate fees and put their wisdom in the hands of persons of indifferent capacity. In all fairness, should you wish to study aspects of ocean-borne trade I have heard that this single subject is properly covered.

### **18) The Council Building and Office of the Harbourmaster**

Another den of bureaucracy that to a large extent replicates the duties of the Office of Stewards, though it has a language (and associated paperwork system) all of its own. Its one redemption is that it lies in proximity to the Star of the North, to where one may retire in order to drown one's disappointments at the cruel dashing of one's hopes.

### **19) Star of the North Tavern**

A typical harbour-side tavern, which exclusively serves fish dishes, and still tries to maintain its ambience as a lively sailor's retreat. The days have long past when Saskervoy was the hub of a vibrant sea-borne commercial empire. Nonetheless, the claims that the Star of the North was the primary inn during those days may well be correct.

### **20) 'Three Willows' - the Home of Master Mercantides**

Mercantides' family consists entirely of his single unmarried daughter, Yaswend, who even at the height of charitability could best be described as a screeching harpy. Her methods of communication make Mercantides himself resemble the soul of joviality. Apparently she has become the true motive power behind his shipping interests since he has begun to enter his dotage. Of course a large household staff is present, including Dabner the butler, with whom Yaswend is allegedly on more than familiar terms.



# Saskervoy

## Town

