

Toolibrie

Toolibrie is a port city located on the southwest shore of E'atara, due east of the southernmost island of the Shandon Archipelago. Located in a natural harbor shaped like an oval, 2 miles N-S by 1/2 mile wide. From the northern edge, a spit curves out and south, 2/3 closing the oval. Some 300 years ago a breakwater was built on the southern end of the harbor, providing a sheltered bay for shipping but effectively ending the wave action that kept replacing the sandspit. At the present time, it has eroded by half its original width. Farsighted citizens of Toolibrie are beginning to speak of rebuilding the North spit much the same way their ancestors created the breakwater, but so far, this is only talk.

Climate

The warm currents that sweep up the coast give Toolibrie a milder climate than its latitude would normally allow, and its weather is characterized by warm wet winters and cool wet summers. There will be snow perhaps once a year, and only the oldest human inhabitants can remember the last time the harbor iced over (63 years ago).

Surrounding Landscape

The Plain of Maranth sweeps back from Toolibrie some 20 miles inland to a low mountain chain with many passes eastward. This, plus the fact that there is no really decent harbor for over 500 miles to the south has made Toolibrie the natural site for a port city, and it has been continuously inhabited for at least 700 years and probably a lot longer. The plain provides grains, vegetables and grazing. The sea provides fish (the main foodstuff), shellfish, ocean plants and herbs, and much of the income for the city. The few forested areas left are guarded by the Druids who allow limited harvesting of the trees, mainly for ship repair and some new construction. Most buildings are of stone or half-timbered, with thatched roofs, although some have slate roofs.

The City

The city itself is walled, with many sections in poor repair. Within and without there are many abandoned sections, notably to the north. Many of the ruins have been used as building material for repairs in the still-inhabited portion, the land now being used for farming, grazing, etc.

South and outside the walls is Fishgut Row, the home of the fishermen and their families. There are rows and rows of nets and drying fish, many small slate-roofed cottages, and dozens of fishing boats, large and small.

The main harbor is guarded by two small forts, both in halfway decent repair and manned by the Harbor Guard, the Hammerheads. They are poorly trained and corrupt. There is a large chain looping from fort to fort, but it hasn't been raised in over 20 years and chances are the mechanism is hopelessly rusted shut.

The city is laid out roughly in concentric semicircles from the seashore inland. At the shores is the dock area, with 7 working piers and about 30 in disrepair. Each pier can hold up to 4 average-sized merchant ships. The water depth is 35' dockside at low tide and well over 100' further out. Ships with a larger draft can anchor in the middle of the harbor with cargo; passengers and crew will be ferried ashore by the many small boats there. These also serve as tugs for ships without a pilot who is familiar with the harbor. Every entering ship must pay a pilot's fee, more if it needs tugs. At the north end of the harbor there are three shipyards, the largest owned by Jomton. He has room for 3 or 4 ships at a time and there is usually at least one empty dry-dock in his yard.

The dockside street is called Mercantile Way, but the locals often refer to it as Thieves' Row. The Way is mainly warehouses, chandler's shops, ropemakers and sail maker establishments, three banks, factors, etc. The largest building is the Harbor Control, which contains the Harbormaster's offices, Harbor Guard offices, and the Import and Customs Excise offices. Taxes are levied on all incoming and outgoing cargoes and passengers. The basic tax is 1/10 of 1% of the value of the cargo, a head tax on passengers, docking fees, and piloting fees. Between captains falsifying their bills of lading and the tax officials being easily bribed, perhaps 10 to 20% of the true tax is ever collected.

After the port officials skim off their share, there isn't much left for paying the Harbor Guards or repairing the facilities, which accounts for their poor condition. The only cargoes actually forbidden are slaves and narcotics, but since the Captain of the Harbor Guard owns the largest brewery in town, somehow most imported beer is confiscated on one pretext or another (if it is found, of course).

Running inland from The Way are half a dozen smaller streets which wind and twist into the city with many small alleys in between. Here are found the inns and taverns, dance halls and theaters, temples and bawdyhouses, restaurants and mapmakers, and all the other establishments which cater to the crews of the ships in port, along with the homes of the natives who work there. Some homes are large and imposing, surrounded by high walls and patrolled by private guards, while around the corner may be shacks and hovels of the desperately poor. There is no night patrol dockside, and those who can afford it (businesses and homes) hire private guards. There is a small but active thieves' guild in operation. Some of the establishments have guards who will escort late-night customers "safely" home. The only market Wayside is at the southern gate, near Fishgut Row.

The next inward section is middle-class housing and stores, with 2 market areas and City Hall. Running east from City Hall is the main street, named Victory Boulevard in a wild fit of optimism when the war started. Once again, the locals have their own name for it: Liar's Lane. It runs due east to the main landward gate, which is named just that: Maingate. Maingate and the other two gates all close at sundown and reopen at dawn, but with all the broken sections of the wall this is more symbolic than anything else. There is no entry fee to use the gates, but there are guards to keep the peace. It is here in Burgherville that we find the 2 main temples in Toolibrie, the Sacred Ship of Lir, God of the Sea, and the Temple of Bhirgetta, Goddess of Merchants (and thieves). There are many small shrines scattered around the city, and one can usually find an altar to any god one might want to pray to. The few mages residing in Toolibrie have their homes, shops and workrooms here too. Mother Mable's House of Pleasure is on the edge of Wayside and Burgherville, since it

caters to both crowds. Most of her wayside clients are ship's captains or officers; crew couldn't afford her prices and wouldn't be welcome anyway.

Uptown is the home of the few rich people in the town. They include the Mayor, the Harbormaster, the Captain of the Harbor guard, several bankers and merchants, etc. It is rumored that one of the warehouse owners is the secret head of the thieves' guild, but no one knows for sure.

Population

At present, Toolibrie has about 15,000 inhabitants, but it has had over three times that many in the past. A disastrous war 100 years or so ago decimated the city and destroyed trade on the Westron Sea, and it is still slowly recovering.

The population of Toolibrie is mainly human with about 200 elves and 20 or so half-elves. Most are sea-elves with under a dozen desert elves. Most of the last are ne'er-do-wells or fugitives from the desert. The sea elves are workers for the shipyards or the harbor authorities and their families. There is also a small community of 25-30 dwarven families, either masons or smiths, with one jeweler. The dwarves and elves tend to live in their own areas, the dwarves to the north of the town and the elves near Fishgut Row, where the waters are less polluted. Most other non-humans are not welcome in Toolibrie, and tend to give it a wide berth. The only exceptions would be crew and passengers who are passing through and they are tolerated only for their money.

Government

Toolibrie is ruled by the Mayor and the Council of Eight, who are all from the upper class. The Holy Admiral of the Sacred Ship and the High Accountant of Bhirgetta are both on the Council. New Council members are selected by the rest of the Council when a member dies or is removed (2/3 vote) and they also select one of their own to be Mayor. The Mayor only votes to break a tie. Toolibrie is nominally under the protection of Duke Gaspard and pays an annual head-tax (1 silver per person) to him, but it has local self-government and enforces its rule over all territory within a day's ride of its gates. The Duke's castle and keep are on a small rise outside of town, to the Northeast. They are kept in excellent repair.

Mother Mable's

Brother Bartholomew has been a frequent visitor to Toolibrie for many years. He usually stays at Mother Mable's House of Pleasure, although he does not avail himself of its services. Rather, he is Father Confessor to the girls, listening to their tales of heartbreak and betrayal by their boyfriends and clients who promise them the world and never deliver, and offering them counsel and advice. They tend to fawn over him like a favorite old uncle, calling him "big old teddy bear", and other pet names. Behind the scenes, he has been working with Mable to help them get started in other occupations when they are ready to leave "the life". Brother Bart has also been a house guest at Jomton the Shipwright's home too, and will on occasion deal with

and stay with the town council, the high priests, or Duke Gaspard. It is rumored that he also frequents some of the lower taverns, but it must be in disguise, for he hasn't been seen in any of them in years.

Brother Bart and Mable were childhood friends. He rescued her from a life of slavery 30 years ago, the tale of which has been told in the Daoine Sidhe. He gave her the cash to start a new life, and she used it to set herself up as a high-priced concubine in Toolibrie. When she tired of being an active participant in "the life", she opened her House of Pleasure. Jomton knew Bart from his old days on the sea (he was ship's carpenter on Black Bart's last vessel), and again Bart was instrumental in helping him attain his current position. They both act as Bart's conduit to the underworld of Toolibrie, as they know everybody and everything, and either would do whatever they could to assist Bart when asked.