The night market

An Undead market of dubious otherworldly origins , randomly accessible

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Overview

OVERVIEW

The Night Market is a recurring metaphysical location tied to the Shadowfell.

It appears unpredictably wherever reality is "thin," including:

• Graveyards
• Mausoleums
• Crypts
• Battlefields
• Ruined Castles
• Abandoned Roads
• Ship Holds
• Cellar Doors

Entrances may appear as:

• A black door in a wall
• A doorway where none should exist
• Lantern light beneath stone
• A passage far too small to physically fit

The Market:

• Cannot be intentionally summoned.
• Cannot be reliably found.
• Is not evil.
• Is neutral ground.

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THE CITY

The Night Market exists within an enormous silent city.

Characteristics

• Every road eventually loops back to the Market Square.
• Players cannot reach the edge of the city.
• The city appears abandoned to the living.

Despite this...

Vendors and undead behave as though the city is alive.

Visitors may hear:

• Music
• Festivals
• Laughter
• Tavern chatter
• Church bells
• Wagons on stone

Buildings may show:

• Lit windows
• Moving curtains
• Passing shadows
• Warm meals

Yet the streets remain completely empty.

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THE CROWNED FIGURE

At the center of the Market sits the Crowned Figure upon a throne.

Only its crown remains consistently visible above an impossible shifting form.

Appearance

Anyone who looks upon it sees a face they almost recognize.

The instant they look away...

They forget it completely.

No one remembers its face.

Communication

The Crown never speaks aloud.

Instead, creatures simply know its intentions.

Its will is understood as instinctively as knowing:

• Fire burns.
• Water is wet.

• Falling hurts.

Nature

The Crowned Figure is a Primordial—not a god.

It:

• Requires no worship.
• Seeks no followers.
• Has no visible ambitions.
• Represents endings and inevitability.
• Exists outside the divine hierarchy.

Even gods are temporary to it.

It only intervenes when reality itself is threatened.

It is never intended to be fought.

Any attempt to challenge it simply fails.

Reality rejects the attempt.

PRIMORDIALS

Primordials are not gods.

Gods rule domains within reality.

Primordials embody the fundamental truths that reality is built upon.

Examples include:

• Endings
• Time
• Memory
• Hunger
• Dreams

Primordials:

• Require no belief.
• Require no worship.
• Exist regardless of mortal awareness.
• Rarely interfere.

They act only when the foundations of reality are threatened.

RULES OF THE NIGHT MARKET

Every creature entering the Market instinctively knows these rules.

No one explains them.

Everyone simply knows.

Core Rules

- The Living Shall Not Spill Blood.
- The Dead Shall Not Spill Blood.
- Theft Is Invitation.
- No Bargain May Be Unmade.
- Names Given Freely Become Property.
- The Crown Sees All Debts.

BREAKING THE RULES

When a rule is broken:

- The Market falls silent.
- Lanterns dim.
- Everyone feels something has gone terribly wrong.
- The offender instinctively knows they violated a cosmic law.

First Violation

Wisdom Saving Throw

Success:

- Immediate expulsion from the Market.

Second Violation

Another Wisdom Saving Throw.

Failure results in reality taking something forever.

Possible punishments:

• An arm never existed.
• A shadow disappears.
• A voice is removed.
• A name is forgotten.
• Eyes vanish.
• Memories are erased.

No blood.

No violence.

Reality simply changes.

DIVINE & MAGICAL EFFECTS

Within the Night Market:

• Divine communication becomes distant.
• Curses may temporarily cease.
• Aggressive magic feels weaker.
• Gods feel impossibly far away.
• Detection magic becomes distorted.
• Undead become calmer.
• Reality feels older and heavier.

The Market does not suppress divinity.

It simply exists closer to the foundations of existence than the gods themselves.

FAVOR OF THE CROWN

The Crown has no interest in worship.

It notices:

• Respect
• Calmness
• Honoring bargains
• Mercy
• Acceptance of death
• Courtesy toward the dead
• Restraint

It dislikes:

• Arrogance
• Disruption
• Needless violence
• Attempts to dominate reality

Signs of Favor

• Lower prices
• Rare items appearing
• Safer travel
• Acknowledgment from the King's Guards
• Unexpected gifts
• Market doors appearing more frequently nearby

The Crown never confirms its favor.

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THE KING'S GUARDS

Silent guardians of the Market.

They:

• Rarely move.
• Never speak.
• Are neither clearly undead nor mortal.

Their presence alone implies overwhelming power.

If one approaches someone:

• Vendors become quiet.
• Conversations stop.
• Even the dead grow uneasy.

Occasionally, a Guard delivers a gift from the Crown.

No explanation is ever given.

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TONE & THEMES

The Night Market should always feel:

• Ancient
• Calm
• Unsettling
• Inevitable
• Civilized
• Melancholic
• Mythic
• Dreamlike

The Market should never completely explain itself.

Players should leave with theories rather than answers.

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Roll Table

Night Market Vendor Roll Table (d100)

01–10 — The Lantern Widow

- Wraith-like woman carrying floating soul lanterns
- Soft-spoken funeral tone
- Likes sincere stories about the dead
- Hidden Item:
  - The Last Lantern
  - Speak with Dead or stabilize allies

11–20 — Grinn, Collector of Teeth

- Bloated ghoul jeweler
- Organizes polished teeth like gemstones
- Constantly smiling
- Likes stories of violence and battle
- Hidden Item:
  - The Laughing Fang
  - Psychic dagger tied to fear and survival

21–30 — Sister Pallid

- Vampire nun in white funeral robes
- Sells preserved hearts and healing relics
- Gentle bedside manner
- Likes mercy and spared enemies
- Hidden Item:
  - The Heart That Refused Death
  - One-use Revivify artifact

31–40 — The Velvet Puppeteer

- Six-armed mummy theater master
- Marionettes whisper before he speaks

- Loves performances and dramatic lies
- Hidden Item:
  - Strings of the Final Act
  - Force movement/actions like a puppet

41–50 — Old Vey, the Drowned Astrologer

- Floating drowned corpse in royal robes
- Speaks in prophecy constantly
- Likes forbidden questions and curiosity
- Hidden Item:
  - The Tideglass Eye
  - Ask future danger questions

51–60 — The Ash Merchant

- Burning skeleton untouched by flames
- Calm merchant of destructive tools
- Respects ambition openly admitted
- Hidden Item:
  - Coal of the Phoenix Pyre
  - Temporary fiery resurrection

61–70 — Mother Mire

- Swamp hag with flowers growing through ribs
- Mud around stall moves subtly
- Likes memory trades
- Hidden Item:
  - Seed of Forgotten Summer
  - Creates dreamlike safe refuge

71–80 — Xalith the Starved

- Aristocratic mind flayer
- Consumes emotions instead of brains
- Extremely polite
- Likes intense emotions

- Hidden Item:
  - Goblet of Hollow Thought
  - Mental protection at memory cost

81–90 — The Knight of No Banner

- Headless armored death knight
- Immaculate weapon displays
- Values honor and directness
- Hidden Item:
  - Oathbreaker’s Nail
  - Magical oath-binding spike

91–100 — The Empty Stall

- No visible vendor initially
- Stallkeeper eventually appears among crowd or party
- Reality around stall feels wrong
- Hidden Item:
  - Coin With Two Shadows
  - Truth-answering coin attracting Shadowfell attention

Night Market DND Ref

- **The Lantern Widow — quiet, maternal, melancholy.** Speaks softly and never rushes anyone. Treats death as ordinary rather than horrifying. She remembers every story customers tell her about someone they've lost and becomes noticeably warmer toward people who speak sincerely. She doesn't tolerate jokes made *at the expense of the dead*, but enjoys fond or funny stories about them. Very much: *“Tell me their name. Someone should remember it.”*
- **Grinn, Collector of Teeth — cheerful, gross, and incredibly sociable.** He's the guy who laughs too loudly at every good fight story while polishing somebody's molar. Loves scars and immediately asks where you got yours. He isn't especially bloodthirsty; he just thinks surviving violence makes for fantastic storytelling. Will absolutely offer somebody money for an interesting tooth. Probably has horrifyingly good dental hygiene himself.
- **Sister Pallid — genuinely compassionate, but unsettlingly clinical.** Has the manner of an excellent hospice nurse who happens to be a vampire. Calls adventurers “dear” and calmly examines wounds while talking. She's fascinated by people who *could* have killed someone and chose not to. Doesn't preach pacifism—she understands sometimes people need killing—but believes mercy has tremendous value precisely because it costs something.
- **The Velvet Puppeteer — enormous fucking theater kid.** Everything is dramatic. Everything. Buying a potion can somehow become a three-act performance. Loves lies when they're **good lies**, and may knowingly play along with obvious deception if the player commits to the bit. His marionettes heckle customers, whisper commentary, applaud good performances, and occasionally contradict him. He might give discounts for entertaining him.
- **Old Vey, the Drowned Astrologer — cryptic because he genuinely cannot stop seeing possibilities.** He'll answer “How much is this?” with *“Less than you shall someday pay for ignorance.”* Then, after an awkward silence: *“…twelve gold.”* He's actually fairly friendly underneath all the prophecy bullshit. Absolutely delighted by questions he's never been asked before. Sometimes says something ominous that turns out to mean absolutely nothing important.
- **The Ash Merchant — calm, professional, almost brutally straightforward.** He looks like the most dangerous merchant there and is probably one of the easiest to deal with. No theatrics. No judgment. He respects people who admit what they want: power, revenge, wealth, fame, whatever. What annoys him is pretending your ambition is nobler than it actually is. *“You want the sword because you want to be stronger. Good. We understand one another.”*
- **Mother Mire — affectionate, mischievous, and deeply nostalgic.** Treats memories like other merchants treat coins. She'll ask seemingly random things like what your childhood bedroom smelled like or the first meal you remember loving. She's not necessarily stealing those memories—sometimes she simply **likes hearing them**. Has grandma energy until you remember flowers are growing out through her rib cage. Probably gives people bizarre little gifts because “you'll need that eventually.”

- **Xalith the Starved — impeccably polite aristocrat with an addiction problem he's handling remarkably responsibly.** Never enters someone's mind without permission because he considers it appallingly rude. Talks about emotions the way a wine snob discusses vintages. *“Oh. Genuine humiliation followed immediately by righteous anger. Remarkable.”* He may ask permission to taste particularly powerful emotions. Strong emotions make him briefly lose his polished composure, which embarrasses him tremendously.
- **The Knight of No Banner — stoic, formal, but not humorless.** Communicates partly through gestures because of the whole **no head** complication; perhaps his voice emanates faintly from the armor when necessary. Respects direct questions and direct answers. Doesn't care whether you're good or evil nearly as much as whether you keep your word. He'll happily sell a murderous rogue a sword but may refuse service to someone he watched casually break a promise five minutes earlier.
- **The Empty Stall / its unnamed keeper — unnervingly ordinary.** I'd make this one the complete opposite of what players expect. When the vendor finally appears, they're friendly, conversational, and seemingly normal. No theatrical creepiness whatsoever. **That's what makes them terrifying.** They somehow know everyone's names. They remember conversations that haven't happened. Occasionally they'll respond to something a character *almost* said. If asked who they are, maybe: *“I'm the shopkeeper.”* Asked their name: *“I don't believe I've needed one yet.”*

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- **The Lantern Widow:** Warm but melancholy. Loves hearing stories about people who are gone because remembrance matters to her. She might ask, *“Were they loved?”* without prying further. She doesn't treat living people as outsiders—just temporary visitors.
- **Grinn:** Genuinely jovial. The tooth thing isn't meant as intimidation; **he's a jeweler and teeth happen to be his preferred material.** He'll excitedly identify species, age, damage, etc. He probably thinks living adventurers are fantastic because they always have battle stories. *“That scar! Oh, that's a good one. Sit, sit. Tell Grinn.”*
- **Sister Pallid:** Basically the Night Market's physician/apothecary. Gentle, professional, compassionate. She has spent centuries around death, so saving someone's life still matters precisely because she understands that death eventually wins anyway. **There's no reason to hurry it.**
- **Velvet Puppeteer:** Flamboyant entertainer and salesman. He probably actually performs for the city's invisible population. When living people arrive, he's thrilled because **new audience!** He appreciates bullshit when it's *artful bullshit*. A bard could become his favorite customer within five minutes.
- **Old Vey:** An eccentric old scholar who happens to be drowned and floating. His prophecies aren't threats; that's just how his brain works now. He might interrupt himself: *“Three moons hence, beneath a red sky, you shall—ah. Forgive me. You asked about the compass. Twenty gold.”*
- **Ash Merchant:** Extremely businesslike and relaxed. Being permanently on fire isn't noteworthy to him. He sells weapons because weapons are useful things. He respects ambition because he'll happily admit his own. Probably one of the easiest vendors to negotiate with because he hates euphemisms.

- **Mother Mire:** Very grandmotherly hag energy. Trades stories, memories, odd ingredients and comforts. She might feed the PCs while negotiating because **they look thin**, even if they're absolutely not. The disturbing part is how casually she treats things like memories as commodities: *“Oh, don't sell me your mother's face, dear. You'll regret that one. Give me your third birthday instead; nobody needs all of them.”*
- **Xalith:** I'd make him almost absurdly ethical about consuming emotions. He **buys them**. He's a merchant. If he wants to experience your terror, rage, embarrassment, love, whatever, he tells you exactly what he's purchasing and what taking it means. He may be horrified by ordinary mind flayers: *“They simply take people's thoughts? Without negotiating? How barbaric.”*
- **Knight of No Banner:** The quintessential regular. Formal, quiet and extremely trustworthy. His merchandise is immaculate. A bargain with him means exactly what was said—nothing more and nothing less. He's probably one of those merchants where experienced Market visitors tell newcomers, *“If the Knight tells you something is worth the price, it is.”*
- **The Empty Stall:** This is where I'd change my earlier idea most. I wouldn't necessarily make its keeper sinister. **Make them incomprehensible.** They aren't trying to scare anyone. Cause and effect just seem slightly wrong around them. They might hand you your change before you've decided to purchase something. Then you eventually decide to purchase it. Nobody else reacts because apparently this is just that fucking vendor.