

WYRM'S CROSSING AND WYRM'S ROCK

The first sign of civilization that a traveler boating on the Chionthar or coming overland from the south or east is likely to see is Wyrms Rock, an impressive fort rising high above the surface of the water. Wyrms Crossing, the bridge that arches over the river's slowly flowing water, connects the fort's islet to the Outer City districts of Twin Songs to the north and Rivington to the south.



Wyrms Crossing

Buildings and merchant stalls, ranging from ramshackle to elaborate, pile atop each other along the entire length of Wyrms Crossing, making it impossible to see the water from the narrow, congested roadway that cuts between the structures. Precariously perched establishments that hang over the bridge's

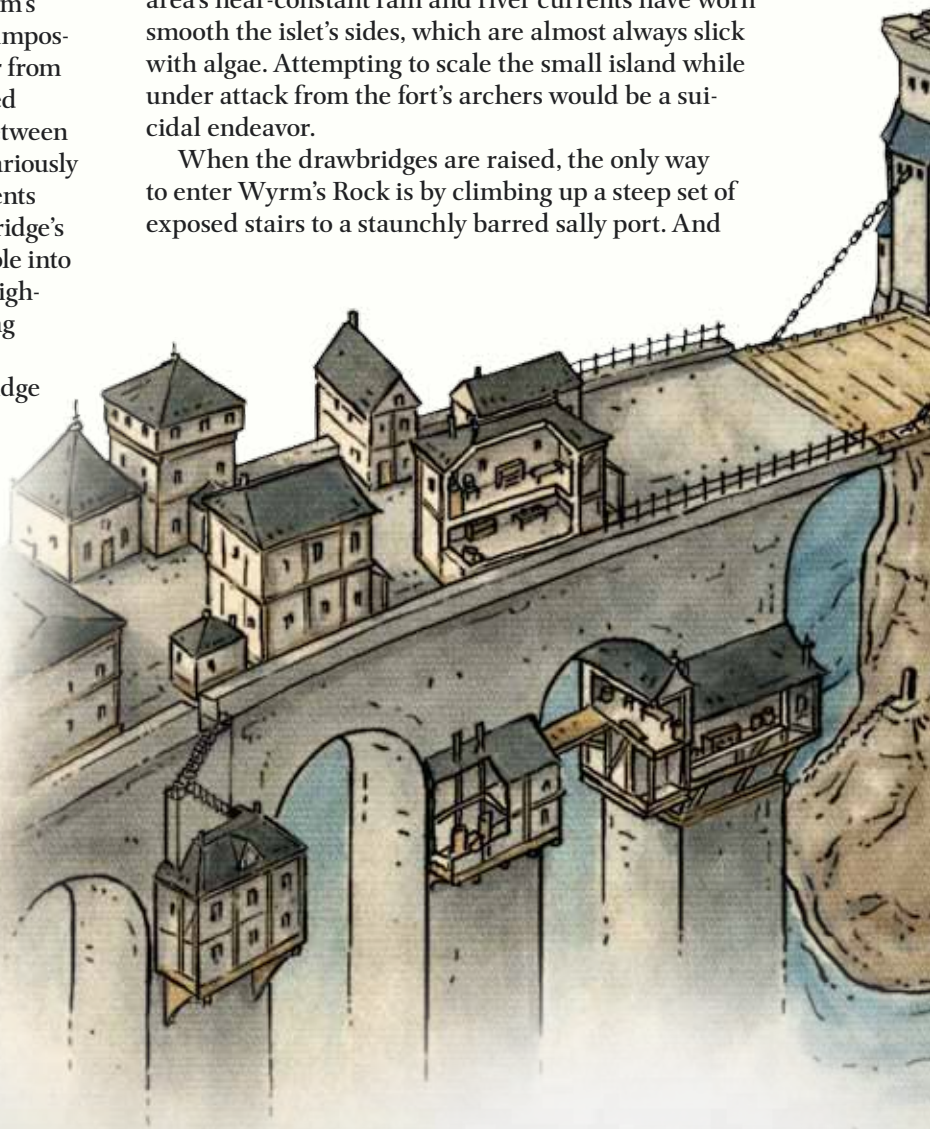
sides occasionally become unbalanced and tumble into the river. Such a structure sometimes pulls its neighbors down with it. Anyone trapped inside a falling building cannot expect any aid.

The Fist requires that all buildings on the bridge be constructed from light timber or wattle and daub, lest one of the spans collapses under the weight of the structures it holds. However, the trade-off is that fire is a constant concern.

The bridge's two spans extend from shore directly to Wyrms Rock. The river's depth and the bridge's high arches allow most ships to pass unhindered. However, the largest sailing vessels must pass on the northern side of Wyrms Rock, where the water is at its deepest. The best time to make this passage is at night, when both drawbridges are raised, but ship captains in a hurry can request daytime passage. This special service requires paying a fee to the Flaming Fist, which the mercenary company splits with the city. For captains seeking to meet a deadline for a high-capacity trade mission, the inconvenience is often worth it.

Wyrms Rock is a formidable fortress. Arrow-slits dot its foot-thick granite walls, promising a stiff challenge to anyone foolhardy enough to assault the structure from the water. The fortress occupies most of the islet, leaving only the narrowest shelf between its sheer walls and a plunge into the river below. The area's near-constant rain and river currents have worn smooth the islet's sides, which are almost always slick with algae. Attempting to scale the small island while under attack from the fort's archers would be a suicidal endeavor.

When the drawbridges are raised, the only way to enter Wyrms Rock is by climbing up a steep set of exposed stairs to a staunchly barred sally port. And



spotting its tiny jetty, which is set below a long, steep, and exposed set of stairs, is a challenge at a distance.

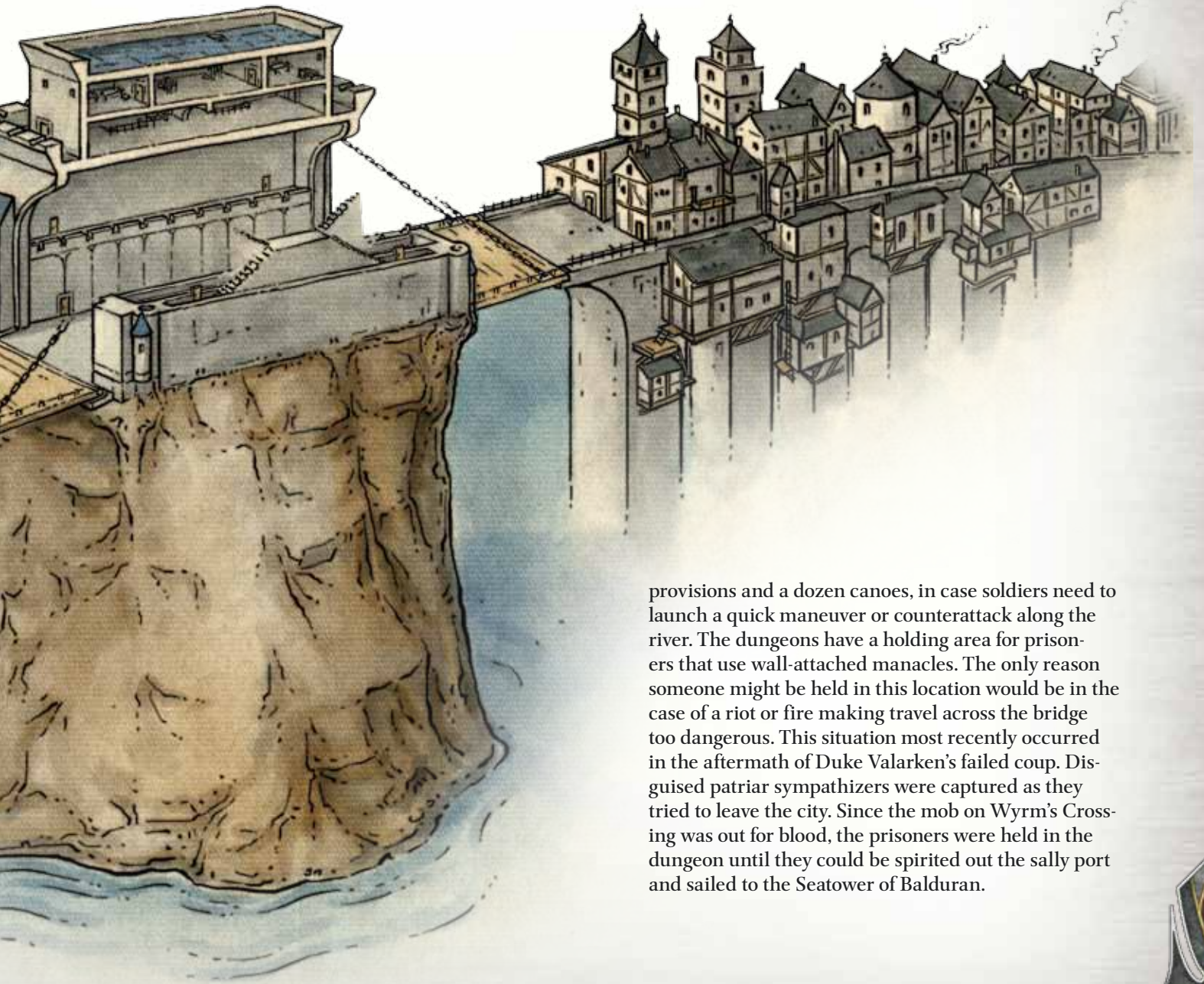
No roadway around the fort exists; all traffic looking to cross to the other side of the bridge must pass through the fortress's guarded tunnel. A painted board featuring the emblem of the Flaming Fist hangs above the tunnel's entrance. The tunnel dominates the fort's first floor and is one long gauntlet of murder holes and arrow-slits. Several offices and chambers that support toll collecting and provide some comfort to the guards complete the tower's first floor.

The second floor of Wyrms Rock is an armory well stocked with oil, rocks, javelins, arrows, and other implements designed to kill invaders. Guests on their

way to the second floor are warned to watch their step, lest they break an ankle stepping into a murder hole. (This warning is just entertainment for bored guards; all the murder holes are kept covered under normal circumstances to prevent such accidents and to keep travelers from dropping trash through them.)

Above the armory are the officers' and enlisted mercenaries' quarters. A shooting gallery encircles each level of barracks. In a pinch, Wyrms Rock could uncomfortably garrison about a hundred soldiers. Typically, between twenty-five and fifty mercenaries are present here.

Below bridge level in Wyrms Rock, a high-ceilinged dungeon is used as a storeroom. It holds



provisions and a dozen canoes, in case soldiers need to launch a quick maneuver or counterattack along the river. The dungeons have a holding area for prisoners that use wall-attached manacles. The only reason someone might be held in this location would be in the case of a riot or fire making travel across the bridge too dangerous. This situation most recently occurred in the aftermath of Duke Valarken's failed coup. Disguised patriar sympathizers were captured as they tried to leave the city. Since the mob on Wyrms Crossing was out for blood, the prisoners were held in the dungeon until they could be spirited out the sally port and sailed to the Seatower of Balduran.