

Sample file

CITYBOOK™ III

Deadly Nightside

**a game-master's aid for
all role-playing systems**

18 fully-described business and cultural establishments for use
with any role-playing system, including over 60
completely developed non-player personalities
to interact with your players' characters in City adventures

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Cover & interior art by Liz Danforth

maps in 2nd edition by Randall G Kuipers

Citybook, is one in the Catalyst series of booklets, a line of game master aids for use with any role playing game. Each book in the series provides a "catalyst for your imagination" (tm) - something to give your imagination a boost toward better gaming. Catalyst is Flying Buffalo's trademark name for its entire series of game booklets designed for use with any role-playing game. CityBook is Flying Buffalo's trademark name for those Catalyst game booklets which describe businesses, personalities and scenarios for city-based play.

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Nightside Introduction

Welcome back to the City! I'm sure many of you thought *Citybook II: Port o' Call* was the last time you'd see the city, but we all got our re-entry visas stamped and are very pleased to bring you *Citybook III: Deadly Nightside*. This is the book that contains all the horrid folks you need to make the nasty side of town worthy of its reputation.

As with all *Catalyst* books, everything is described in "generic" terms. That means there are no game-specific numbers and statistics. *CityBooks* are written to provide a variety of people, places and things for your games. It is up to you as the Game Master to add the numbers that will fit these into your particular game system and world. The coding system, explained in the section entitled "GM Guidelines," should make this easy, and you should feel free to modify, edit, expand and otherwise change things to fit your game system.

Our first *Citybook* presented common establishments and *Port o' Call* did its best to flesh out the seaside businesses found in every port in the world. *Deadly Nightside* is a dark and dangerous excursion into the seedier section of fantasy cities. *Nightside* is organized a bit

differently from the other books, but the changes should not surprise or create difficulty for you. In the past we've grouped establishments by function, i.e. listing all the taverns in one section, but here we've listed them by *layers*. Because *Nightside* deals with the more insular and covert side of town we've chosen to present the establishments in the rough order characters would be likely to encounter them. In short, unless you've got a very jaded gaming group, you're not likely to hit an opium den right off the bat. We hope the arrangement will let characters get used to the social structure in *Nightside* before they decide to kill Danny O'Grunion and from the Steel Man for the murder.

This *Citybook* includes a number of "organizations" in addition to straight establishments. Two, the Haansfolk and the beggars' Undercity, really represent sub-cultures. The Sackers and The Steel Man are a vigilante gang and an "Assassins' Guild" respectively, but if you expect to know, from those labels, what they really are and how they work, you'll be pleasantly surprised when you read them. These organizations include a bit of their history to set them up, but that's mutable and they should slip into any city easily. *Nightside* has its beggars, thieves, assassins and crooks, but if you expect them to be the "same old thing" you've seen in every other fantasy campaign, you've come to the wrong place.

In the past, folks have wondered when we'd publish the "whole City" and they've made guesses at what city mentioned in other Blade projects this was. We've always tried to maintain the modular nature of the establishments so they can be used independently of each other, yet you've always picked up on the clues threaded through the descriptions and establishments and made the connections we've only hinted at. In this *Citybook* we've gone ahead and named the names instead of hinting at who might actually have done something. Get used to the names Danny O'Grunion and Garowin "Sheets" Eddrad. Both are crooks, evil and more so, and they've got a hand in almost everything that goes on in *Nightside*. You'll see their names sprinkled around everywhere but you'll only find them described in the Big Fish Gang.

Of course this means those of you who use *Citybook* to fill out cities you've already created are stuck, right? Come on, have we ever done anything like that to you before? No. If you already have an underworld boss and you want him to be the silent partner in the Cock and Bull Gaming Club instead of Danny O'Grunion, fine, change the name. If you don't have a city built upon the ruins of other cities, just have the beggars tunnel their undercity out the same way prairie dogs do. If you never had an empire 2,000 years ago to give rise to the Steel Man and the Shadow Riders, add a story about a sunken continent to your world, or just bring those two establishments more up to date with your world's history. That's even easier than figuring out the numbers for these characters.

The people and places in this book are yours to play with, change, warp, reform, deform, defame, and kill. You can do anything you desire with them, and no one will scream that you've ruined a piece of "art". This *CityBook* is yours to enjoy and get lots of play from.

If you like this book, please take a look at the other *Catalyst* books: the *Grimtooth's Traps* series, the *Elves of Lejentia* books, *Treasure Vault* and the other *Citybooks*. If you have any questions, comments, or suggestions, feel free to write. If your local store doesn't carry all these books, ask for our "Blade" catalog. An SASE is always appreciated. BLADE, c/o Flying Buffalo Inc, PO BOX 1467, Scottsdale, AZ 85252.

All of us sincerely hope you enjoy *Deadly Nightside*. May the gods be with your characters, the ale cold and the wounds clean. This is quite probably the place you will be caught dead.

GM Guidelines

Since *CityBook III* is a generic role-playing aid, no game-specific statistics for NPC's or monsters have been given. However, as an aid to the GM who must convert our descriptions into game mechanics, we have provided the following guidelines to help you in adapting *CityBook III* to your favorite game system. Keep in mind, however, that this is now *your* book; if you wish to change anything, go ahead!

GENERAL ATTRIBUTES

It isn't necessary to give each non-player character in *CityBook III* complete attributes such as Power, Luck, Wisdom and so forth. However, should you choose to do so, you will note in the character descriptions such phrases as "very strong," "quick," "stupid," "beautiful," etc. By noting these phrases and reflecting them in the NPC's attributes, you should come out with a fairly accurate set of statistics for the person in question.

FIGHTING PROWESS

At times, player adventurers will probably get into fights with non-player characters. We have provided a six-level coding system to describe how well a particular *CityBook III* NPC can fight. In some cases, the combat ability of an NPC is given in terms of a specific weapon or weapons (e.g. Ningal Arawaza is Very Good with a Broadsword, and Good with a self-bow, but Average otherwise). In other cases, the fighting prowess is overall (e.g. Kother Lansend is poor overall).

There are two ways to randomize for the fighting prowess of an NPC. You can roll 1d6 for the attribute (6 means the character is an Excellent fighter) or you can roll 1d100 and use the percentages given after the ratings to determine the NPC's skill level. Remember, the percentages refer to how well the NPC stacks up in relation to all other fighters in your average world. Therefore, a "poor" fighting prowess would account for about 40% of all fighters met, and an "excellent" prowess would only fit about 4% of the fighters. If you put a "poor" fighter into your campaign, we expect that 60% of the rest of the fighters in your world can soundly thrash him.

These are the codes for prowess:

- ◊ **Poor.** Unfamiliar with combat arts; can be easily wounded or killed. (01 - 40%)
- ◊ **Average.** A run-of-the-mill type, but certainly no mistaking him for a hero. (41 - 59%)
- ◊ **Fair.** Better than average and will acquit himself adequately. (60 - 74%)
- ◊ **Good.** Can go one-on-one with seasoned veteran fighters. (75 - 84%)
- ◊ **Very Good.** This person can cause a lot of trouble in combat. (85 - 95%)
- ◊ **Excellent.** If blood is spilled, it's not likely to come from this character... (96 - 100%)

MAGIC ABILITY

To determine the expertise with which an NPC uses magic power, *CityBook III* employs a six-level system similar to the one for fighting prowess. This is listed in the NPC descriptions as "Magic Ability," and will be followed by a listing of the particular areas the magic-user might be

competent in (see "The Eight C's of Magic" below). If an NPC has no Magic Ability listed, then none exists. The codes for Magic Ability are:

- ◊ **Poor.** A hedge wizard or apprentice. Might very well turn himself into a frog. (01 - 40%)
- ◊ **Average.** Competent, but hardly a world-shaker. Only a few spells at his command. (41 - 59%)
- ◊ **Fair.** A wider range of spells. Effective, but not powerful. (60 - 74%)
- ◊ **Good.** Knows numerous spells in many categories, and is versatile in their use. (75 - 84%)
- ◊ **Very Good.** Knows powerful spells in most of the Eight C's. Formidable. (85 - 95%)
- ◊ **Excellent.** Not a person to cross. Can easily command almost all the known spells, and might be able to turn the party into anchovy paste with a single gesture. (96 - 100%)

Given the diversity of magic systems in fantasy gaming, it is impossible to assign specific spells or powers to any magic-using NPC in *CityBook*. However, spells or powers can be broken down into categories of magic, regardless of what game system you use. Thanks to Mike Stackpole, *CityBook* has the "8C's System" to give some idea of what type of magic a particular NPC might wield.

- ◊ **C1. Combat Magic.** Any spell used primarily in an offensive/defensive manner in combat.
- ◊ **C2. Curative Magic.** Any spell used to heal wounds, cure diseases, stop poison damage, etc.
- ◊ **C3. Clairvoyant Magic.** Any spell used to detect things: secret doors, magic, hidden or trapped items, etc.
- ◊ **C4. Conveyance Magic.** Teleportation, levitation, flying, telekinesis spells, etc.
- ◊ **C5. Communication Magic.** Any spell used to communicate: telepathy, translation, hypnosis, magic reading spells, etc.
- ◊ **C6. Construction Magic.** Any spell which uses matter or energy to "build," e. g. wall spells, protective fields, stone-shaping spells, etc.
- ◊ **C7. Concealment Magic.** Any spell which serves to hide or misdirect, e. g. invisibility, illusion, shape-shifting spells, etc.
- ◊ **C8. Conjuration Magic.** Any spell which produces a condition or entity, e. g. light spells, weather control, demon-summoning spells, etc.

Keep in mind that a character with Magic Ability need not always be a sorcerer. An NPC could possess certain magic abilities as a result of owning some device or from some form of supernatural intervention. You can also use the Magic Ability Chart randomly by rolling either 1d6 or 1d100 (as was suggested for the fighting prowess chart) to judge the level of a magic-using character, and 1d8 to determine what areas on the "Eight C's" list the character is competent in.

LOCKS

Light-fingered thieves and pilfering rogues are ever-present in the world of fantasy, and run rather thick in this *CityBook*. To help the GM deal with these types, *CityBook* uses a system to code the difficulty of any locks encountered. These codes appear in the text when a reference is made to a chest,

door or similar locked item (e. g., "locked³," which means the lock is "fair"), and usually on the maps themselves in reference to doors. The codes for locks are as follows:

- ◊ 1. **Poor.** An orphan with a hatpin could open this lock. (01 - 40%)
- ◊ 2. **Average.** A little tougher to jimmy this open; just adequate. (41 - 59%)
- ◊ 3. **Fair.** Takes some effort to open. (60 - 74%)
- ◊ 4. **Good.** Particularly tough. Probably will require special tools to open. (75 - 84%)
- ◊ 5. **Very Good.** Will take even a master thief a long time to open. (85 - 95%)
- ◊ 6. **Excellent.** Could require magic or a howitzer to open easily — unless you have the key. (96 - 100%)

Again, the percentages here refer to what percentage of such locks exist in an average cross-section. Many locks fall into the "poor" category, and there are only a few truly "excellent" locks. Indeed, most doors are not locked at all.

You could also use the percentages to indicate how many thieves could jimmy the lock. For example, at least 60% of all thieves could jimmy a "poor" lock, while 4% or less could undo an "excellent" lock. The GM will have to determine how well a particular thief character does when confronted with a certain level of lock (i. e. a very poor thief would have lots of trouble with even a "fair" lock). Once again, a GM can randomize on this lock system to learn the nature of any lock.

MONETARY GUIDELINES

Prices in this *CityBook* are usually given in overall terms (i. e., "low," "reasonable," and "expensive"). You should use common sense regarding these terms; a reasonable price for a broadsword would be outrageous when applied to a single arrow. Where prices are actually listed, *CityBook* assumes this standard: 10 copper pieces = 1 silver piece; 10 silver pieces = 1 gold piece; a gold piece represents approximately \$1 in U.S. Currency. This currency system obviously must be altered to fit your own economic system.

TIME FRAME

CityBook uses a standard 24-hour day as its time frame. If your world operates under a different system, alter the times given to fit it.

NON-HUMAN RACES

For color, we've included some non-humans and a few halfbreeds. If it doesn't fit into your campaign to have a hobbit wizard, simply make him a small human. Several of the characters in this *CityBook* have unusual looks because of magic but, as with anything else in here, you can adjust it to make it fit your world.

WORLD HISTORY

Several of the establishments in this *CityBook* mention events that took place long ago, far away or some combination thereof. While most of the details are hazy enough to slip them into any campaign as rumors, some of the events might conflict with established campaign history. In this case the GM should change the historical events to something parallel in his own world or slowly let the players "discover" these new facts as needed.

Explanation of Maps

The multitude of symbols on the opposite page shouldn't panic you. You should find most to be self-explanatory in conjunction with the text.

The maps are intended to both show what the room would look like, and what the room contains. The views are taken as though you were looking down on the building with the roof removed; if there is more than one floor, each is provided on a separate map.

The key will provide you with the meanings for the various symbols used to indicate a room's contents and furnishings. Most objects are shown by a reasonable facsimile of their actual shape. However, certain items have been stylized for easy recognition. For instance, a bed in a fantasy world does not necessarily look like the symbol used to represent a bed on the map — but when you look at the symbol, you *know* it's a bed.

In simplest terms: read the text and look at the map which accompanies it. You should find it reasonably clear and easy to understand. If you still have trouble figuring out part of it, check back here for the key.

Note that most of the maps in this book are oriented so that, when read normally, North is at the top of the page (exceptions to this are noted on the maps). An explanation of symbols unique to a particular establishment is provided with each map. Different scales have been used, and each map has its scale noted on it for easy reference.

OTHER IDEAS FOR THE GAME MASTER

Binding this and other *CityBook* or *Catalyst* projects together into a full-fledged city is not as difficult as it might seem. The most daunting task is to lay out the city, and staring at a 36" x 36" sheet of blank graph paper is a good way to decide the whole thing isn't worth it.

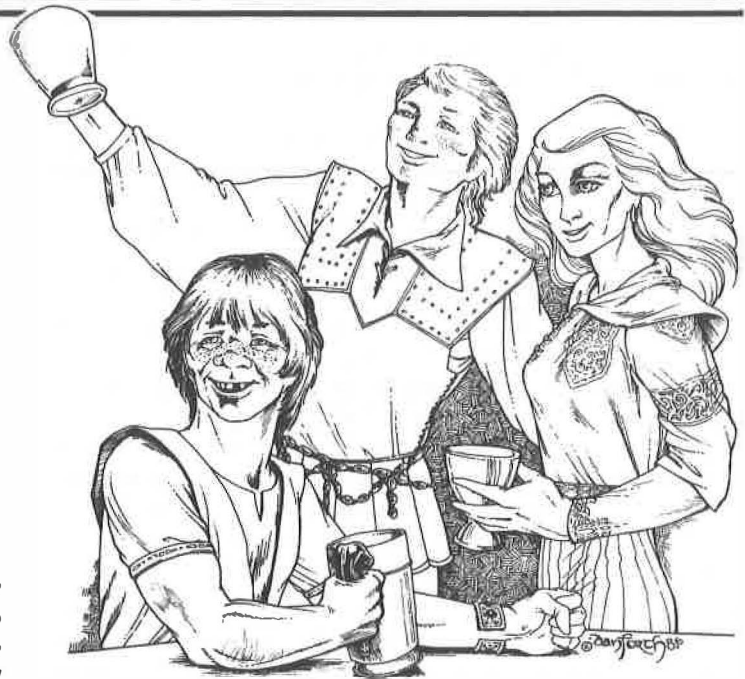
Luckily, your local libraries should be able to help you out. Most have books known as Pictorial Archives. These are massive tomes full of illustrations that used to grace the pages of magazines a century or more ago. All of them are copyright free, so you may use them as you wish, and they often include small city maps that are perfect for your city's model.

Make a copy of a map and start renovating it by deciding where the rich and poor sections of the town are. Remember that Nightside is probably in an older quarter, and the rich folks are in the newest area. If you have an open market it probably should be centrally located, and the area around it might well be home to lots of other shops.

Change the street names to reflect people and events out of your world's history. Circle or color little buildings and make a note of what establishment in which *Citybook* they represent. In no time you'll have a working city you can later transfer to that sheet of graph paper. Even better, you can copy and alter your small map to hand out to your players so they can find their way around town.

You can also use other pictures from the archive to illustrate your adventures. Most of the books include animal and monster pictures, so visual aids to your games are easy to get your hand on. Good luck!

The Singing Frog Sanctuary



Adventurers seem to spend the half of their lives outside dungeons in any tavern available. As long as the ale is cheap and the food tastes better than trail rations, they pay little attention to their surroundings because they know nothing odd can go on in such a safe and ordinary place. Those adventurers, while appreciating the Singing Frog Sanctuary for its food and drink, will dismiss the tavern's most important offering.

The sign on the thick stone archway above the door has a circular emblem depicting a croaking frog sitting on a dark rock surrounded by a glistening pool of gently rippling water. Below the emblem is written:

The Singing Frog Sanctuary

You may come in to talk or listen, or simply sit. We would appreciate it if you would also sample our fare.

Ask Kother about our specialties.

All weapons must be checked at the door.

The Singing Frog Sanctuary is open from sunset until dawn.

SPECIALTIES OF THE HOUSE

The Singing Frog features four special drinks: Whitewater Rush (5 gold pieces), Nightstorm (3 gold pieces), Deep Pool (3 gold pieces) and Frog Grog (2 gold pieces). Whitewater Rush is a drink which creates a sensation of high spirited well-being; the after effects are vision which blurs three hours after imbibing and remains that way for a period of 2-12 hours. Nightstorm makes the drinker alert for the next 24 hours. Sleep will be impossible during this period. Once the 24 hours is up, the character will collapse for a full eight hours sleep, and will feel nauseated for 24 hours upon waking. Deep Pool is a dark blue drink, one which brings calm to the mind and relief from pain of the body. People who drink a Deep Pool will not care much about anything which happens around them until the drink wears off 4 hours later.

The final, and most popular, special drink is Frog Grog. It is a powerful mixture of rum and herbal waters which in no

Greg Gorden is a highly talented game designer from Chicago. Best known for The Q Manual and The DC Superhero Game, Greg is one of only a few repeat offenders: he had another great establishment in CBII. Greg is currently the game reviewer for American Fantasy.

way lessens the potency of the alcohol, though they do reduce the severity of the hangover. Frog Grog has the additional — but known only to the host — property of enabling Kother Lansend (host, see below) to easily read the mind of the drinker. If Kother senses that the drinker is an adventurer in trouble — most folks drinking these things are doing so to forget something! — he will take the character aside and offer help or even the use of the hiding room (E). Other telepathic characters will find reading the mind of Frog Grogged characters easier than normal for the 1-6 hours after a drink is downed.

Other drinks; beer, ale and wine; are available at prices ranging from 1 to 3 silver pieces. The basic meal offered here is a loaf of bread and a bowl of soup, which costs 3 silver pieces. Meat may be added to the meal: 1 gold piece for half a chicken, 2 gold pieces for a leg of lamb or portion of pork, and 15 gold pieces for a whole joint of beef.

The people who frequent the Singing Frog Sanctuary are, if not generally respectable, at least on good behavior while in the tavern. Kother Lansend has fostered an image of the Singing Frog Sanctuary as being a place of refuge from the considerable perils of Nightside. The regulars gratefully help Kother maintain that image.

ACTIVITIES AND DIVERSIONS

Debates. The debates are an important form of amusement in the tavern. The topic for the debate is always a question which can be answered yes or no. The questions range from the silly, "Should all seas and oceans be converted into beer?", to the serious, "Will organized militia companies help reduce crime?", and those which could be either, "Is tar and feathering a sufficient punishment for a tax collector caught in the act?"

Kother Lansend or Ningal Arawaza determines the question. A purse of 300 silver pieces goes to the victorious team, and the losers have to buy everyone in the house two rounds of