

STRIELUND

A LAND DIVIDED

Once a great partnership between two walled cities, **Saltbride** and **Lastfort**, the land is in a painful transition. South-western Strielund is steadily turning to swamp, reclaiming the fertile lands around **Saltbride**.

The eastern lands around **Lastfort** are enjoying a boon; though it has a long dry season, plentiful rains have made it prosperous and growing.

SALTBAY

A centry ago, Saltbay was a deep-water port. The rising water levels and heavily silt coming down the **Learin river** have turned it into a muddy shallows, now practically a lagoon. In the winter, when the water levels are highest, the northern mouth of Saltbay closes completely, cut off from the Haver Soont by a muddy bar.

SALTBRIDE

From the water, Saltbride is an impressive city. Slate-rock towers rise high over the walls, decked with colourful pennants. Up close, it is less grand. The pennants are torn; the harbor is clogged with rotting ships now too large for Saltbay's muddy shallows.

The narrow streets of the lower city are flooded three paces deep, and have been replaced with floating rafts of swamp willow logs over streets of rank water and algae. Mildew attacks everything, and tiny flies are everywhere.

REBELLION

For a century, the quarter-lords of Gruel continued to levy the people as if the land was still prosperous—desperate to fuel the lavish dowries and bequests needed to buy their way into **Lastfort** as their households shifted eastwards.

As extracting money became harder, the lords turned to bandits and mercenaries for collection. Peasant revolts flared up in response to this betrayal, until a decade ago, a flotilla of riverboats sailed down the Learin to attack Saltbride in open rebellion.

Aided from within the city by the **Embalmer's Guild**, the few quarter-lords in residence were hanged or

d8 What's on the table?	
Poor/rich tables use worst/best of 2d8	
1	thin, river cabbage soup
2	boiled water chestnuts
3	leech turnovers, heavily salted and baked rock hard
4	stewed pond-apple
5	speckled eels, spit-roasted
6	marsh heron, boiled in wine and cloves
7	honey-filled pastries
8	smoked turtle, served on skewers and crusted with mustard seeds

d8 Saltbride Encounters	
1	High-born beggars, with mausoleum secrets to sell
2	Fishers, looking to spend some of their coin
3	Undew mercenaries, here to broker a trade with Birevia
4	Guild household, surreptitiously packing for escape to Lastfort
5	Farmer-citizens on watch, dragging off a thief for drowning
6	Lye guildfolk, collecting laundry in a pull-boat
7	Pressers from the Unmended Way (see XXX) looking for marks
8	Spies for Lastfort, re-roll for cover



drowned. Now an alliance of low households governs a violent, unstable city.

In an attempt to impose stability, the citizens' council bans guild or tradefolk from leaving Saltbride (many would leave for **Lastfort**).

A **bi-weekly fair** in a burned-out upper city courtyard brings together marshland farmers and city tradefolk.

MAUSOLEUM TOWERS

The tallest structures in Saltbride are the mausoleums, flat-topped and precipitously high. Each was owned by a separate noble family, sprouting out of the tops of their palatial town homes like gray, windowless cylinders. New layers were added as necessary, or to show off wealth and the seniority of their family—once per generation, when possible.

The towers began to grow when the flooding first began, borne out of a belief that the wet earth was a pauper's

grave. Each new layer would be inaugurated with a lavish ceremony and feast, and then sealed forever behind sturdy locked doors and layers of deadly traps.

Though tempting to raid for revenue, the council hasn't managed to devote the necessary resources to raid them. The first clumsy attempts ended in disaster: one freed a hostile cave squid, and another unleashed a plague of clockwork scarabs that troubled the city for months.

EMBALMER'S GUILD

Over time, the specialists hired to fill them with traps to protect them became known as the embalmer's guild, though they knew more of locks and snares than of the dead.

They were badly abused by a nobility keen to preserve the secrets of the mausoleums, and many were locked away or murdered after their tasks were complete.

When the rebellion laid siege, the guild opened secret ways to let them in. Though promised a place of honor, there is no legitimate work for them now, and the lavish lifestyle of master artisans is unpopular in the new regime.

Many have turned to crime, smuggling out people and stashed riches out, or working to plunder the mausoleums in secret for their own benefit.

TRADE WITH BIREVIA

With command of the Haver Soont, Birevia supplies much-needed essentials to Saltbride: salt, tin, and small metal items, as well as salted meat and oil no longer available directly from Lastfort. They buy inland delicacies—smoked heron, turtle,

Unfortunately, the Biarchy fears legitimizing the peasant collective by trading directly, and uses mercenaries based in Undew as intermediaries. By edict, goods to or from Birevia cannot be sold in Saltbride, and so transactions must be conducted in the haunted coves of Gruel's Shore.

The mercenaries are known to suddenly insist on extortionate prices, and resort to armed robbery when they feel lucky. Only the sternest Saltbridgers row out to meet them.

GRUEL'S SHORE

Once an area thick with prosperous manorial holdings is now a broad, salt water swamp. For centuries, the trees were farmed as pollards (pruned to sprout slender poles). Abandoned, they have grown huge, and now the flooded forests look like rows upon rows of massive hands reaching up out of slimy waters.

The manorial houses and the surrounding stone cottages have fallen to ruin, but remain useful hiding spots for bandits and other travellers.

WICKER TRADING POSTS

A few watery crossroads are permanently inhabited. New, wicker storeys squat atop flooded stone ruins. These are dire places, home to exiles and outlaws, but few folk who don't make themselves useful are welcome long.

d8 River/Wetlands Encounters	
1	Dredging crew (d6 locals in a skiff), stirring up silt or cutting weeds to clear a waterway
2	Local eel-gatherers with baskets; wading or boating.
3	d4 ² +1 mercenaries in 4-person skiff(s). Roll d6. On 1-2 they're 'tax collecting' for Lastfort; 3-4 unemployed and turned to banditry; 5-6 carrying trade goods to/from Birevia.
4	Tinker, with a pull-boat of tinwares, rope, and leather.
5	Emperor herons, 1 here, d8 near
6	Desheveled artisan family (d8 of various ages), fleeing Saltbride on foot
7	Wvyvern eel
8	Great snapping turtle

HAUNTED SWAMPS

The dense swamps are said to be haunted by ghosts that call out in human voices. These tales arose from the **emperor herons**, practically invisible in their algae-streaked plumage, despite their gigantic size. They are natural mimics with excellent hearing, and repeat animal or human cries for hours. Voices or phrases can sometimes be repeated for great distances across the forest, from heron to heron, bringing strange, garbled news.

Adding to the tales are **wyvern eels**, descendants of old Half-Lord Gaven's two captive wyverns. Left behind when

the flood waters came, they mated with eels and produced a brood of aquatic hybrids, each as long as a skiff. They ambush from the water like alligators, but bury themselves in the mud over winter, sometimes not waking for dozens of years. The fishers blame sightings on strong, pond-apple cider.

LASTFORT AREA

For centuries, Lastfort was a stagnant, dour town, a last bastion for Borderlands herders to retreat to. Squat, tin-roofed buildings huddled behind its parapets.

The shifting land has blessed it. The once marshy peninsula is drying out, leaving rich soil and meandering plains dotted with old bridges that span dry, grassy ruts.

New farmsteads are built every year, and the land is thick with wheat and sunflowers in high summer.

The impassable **Hullknives Bay** protects from the bandits of Undew, and Lastfort's patrols are mounted, deterring land raids.

WITHIN THE WALLS

Food is plentiful, but the influx of families from Saltbride has seen every last scrap of land built upon. A new, 'outer city' has sprung up—wooden homes enclosed by a double palisade. Skills are in demand, and tinkers that once served the farmlands have settled down as petty artisans.

The lords and half-lords of Lastfort have seen their coffers swell; they crave luxuries from afar. Established families jealously guard their power—only those with land or family connections into the inner city may join (or even address) the council.

Displaced quarter-lord families from Saltbride have not fared as well; some who had dual holdings are established. The First Lord of Saltbride (in exile)

maintains an opulent wooden palace in the new quarter, but most have seen their fortunes fall. Several historical, high-profile marriages that had joined families of the two cities were annulled posthumously, disenfranchising hundreds.

Some have become little better than bandits themselves, making punitive mounted raids into central Strielund, claiming goods and "hostages". Others abandon noble pretensions for mercenary work. Those who still cling to fortune lobby for war to retake Saltbride.

d10 NE Strielund Encounters	
1	Travelling wizard
2	Mounted patrol from Lastfort (d8+1)
3	Noble/bandit raiding party, d10, mounted, excellent equipment
4	Mounted drovers from High Kellan, bringing a herd of d6x10 cattle to Lastfort, or returning with trade goods (spirits, oil, lye, salt)
3	Ruins of a burned-out Seree tribute wagon (see page XXX), its vexed timber still grinding
4	Farmers (d6) heading to Lastfort, secretly armed and aiming to rescue relatives
5	Tinker pulling a small cart of goods, topped by a large birdhouse full of chirping pipits.
6	Lost, sunblind dradkin heretic from Incerat (see page XXX)
7	White velvet hunting spiders (d6) from the abandoned shrine (see page XXX)
8	Behemoths (d3) (see page XXX) from the Borderlands