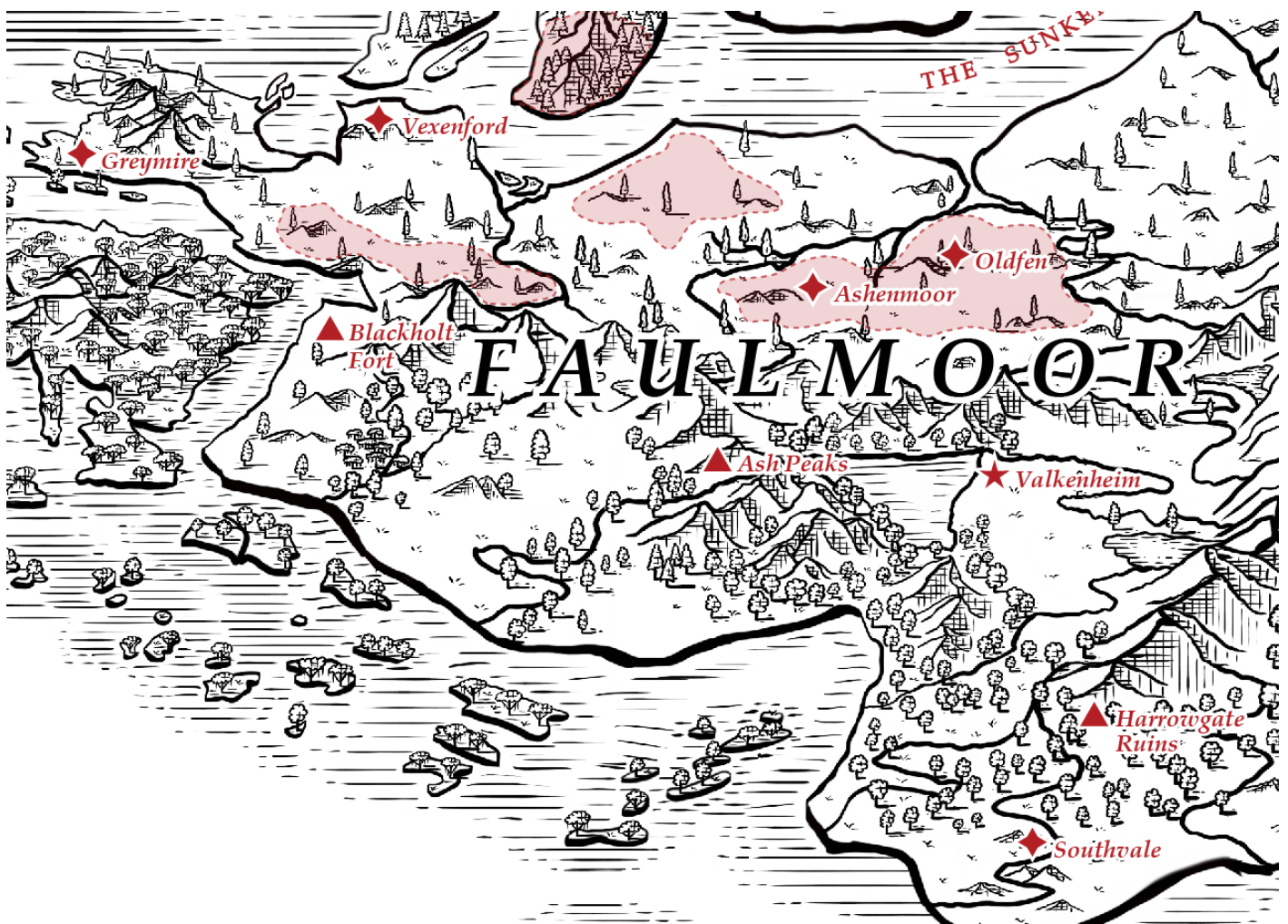


# Vexenford

## Steel and Suffering

*“I came here hoping for safety, but all I found was more death. The enforcers don't see us as people—just a burden. They say Ebonmoor is safe, but none of us will ever get past that cursed gate. I've seen mothers beg to be let through, only to watch their children cut down for fear of the Blight. If this is survival, I don't want it.”*

Vexenford, once a prosperous trade hub in [Faulmoor](#), now stands as a grim stronghold of [House Valkenmar](#). Straddling the banks of the Blackflow River, it serves as the last fortified checkpoint before reaching the bridge to [Ebonmoor](#). Before the [Rotmire Blight](#), its streets were filled with merchants, artisans, and travelers who brought wealth and vibrancy to the city. Now, it is a place of suspicion, suffering, and iron-fisted rule, where the ever-present banners of [House Valkenmar](#) hang from its battlements, a constant reminder of the unyielding authority that governs within.



A thick stone wall, reinforced with iron-plated gates and sharpened wooden spikes, surrounds Vexenford, ensuring that only those permitted by the enforcers may enter or leave. The city's once-thriving population has dwindled, many having fled or succumbed to the Blight, leaving behind a broken remnant of what was once a bustling center of commerce. Now, the people live under the watchful eyes of Valkenmar's enforcers, who patrol in squads, searching for signs of infection and executing those who show even the faintest symptoms of the disease. Families are torn apart by paranoia, many too afraid to shelter their own kin for fear of being condemned themselves. The wealthy have retreated into the inner districts, fortified and protected, while the poor and desperate linger in the outer rings, caught between starvation and the ever-present threat of execution.



At the heart of the city stands the **Iron Gate**, the only land route to [Ebonmoor](#), where soldiers scrutinize every cart and traveler before allowing passage. To control the flow of goods and people, the **Blackflow Docks** are under strict military watch, with only approved shipments bound for Valkenheim permitted through. Those who attempt to bypass these restrictions risk a swift and merciless response. The city's gallows square is rarely empty, a place where public executions serve as a warning to all who would defy the law. Nearby, the **Rot Ward** stands as a prison for those suspected of infection, a walled-off district where the condemned await either death or exile. Rumors of inhumane experimentation by the Baron's alchemists persist, but officials vehemently deny such claims, dismissing them as fearmongering and propaganda.

Despite the suffocating grip of [House Valkenmar](#), illicit activity thrives in the shadows. Smugglers and black marketeers operate beneath the city's surface, bribing guards and forging papers to move people and goods past the enforcers. **The Hollow Crown**, a decrepit tavern on the outskirts, serves as a meeting place for mercenaries, refugees, and those willing to take on dangerous jobs. Those with coin and courage might find passage into [Ebonmoor](#), but whether they make it past the watchful eyes of the **Iron Gate** is another matter entirely.

Among the desperate masses huddled at the outskirts of the city are the refugees from quarantined villages, many of whom have traveled great distances in the false hope of finding safety in [Ebonmoor](#). They are met with rejection, or worse, the swords of the enforcers who see them as nothing more than a liability. Within the city, rumors of a secret cult have begun to circulate, whispered in hushed tones by those who claim to have seen evidence of their work. The so-called **Rotmire Cult** is suspected of engaging in dark rituals, believing the Blight to be a divine reckoning. While no direct evidence has surfaced, investigators have discovered grisly remains and signs of sabotage in abandoned quarters of the city, fueling fear and paranoia. The enforcers have launched an inquiry, seeking to uncover the truth behind these unsettling findings, but many

believe that the cult, if real, has already rooted itself deep within Vexenford's underbelly.

At the core of Vexenford's suffering is the **Valkenmar Bastion**, the seat of the city's ruling power. From within its cold stone walls, [House Valkenmar](#)'s appointed commander governs with ruthless efficiency, ensuring that the Baron's orders are carried out to the letter. In this city, mercy is a rare commodity, and those who step out of line rarely get a second chance. "*Steel and Sacrifice*" define the way of life in Vexenford, where the strong rule, the weak perish, and the fearful pray that the [Rotmire Blight](#) does not claim them next.

## Detailed Overview

Attribute	Details
Region	Faulmoor
Ruling House	House Valkenmar
Population (Before Blight)	12,000 (Estimated)
Population (After Blight)	4,500 (Estimated) (Under strict quarantine)
Major Industries	Trade, Military Supply, Smuggling
Primary Exports	Silver (when available), Weapons, Rations, Contraband
Current Ruler	Appointed Governor
Government Type	Military Governor under House Valkenmar
Defenses	Heavily fortified bridge, reinforced gates, stationed soldiers
Notable Features	Only land route to Ebonmoor, key smuggling hub, strong military presence
Status	Under military rule, restricted movement, heavily monitored

## Notable Establishments

### The Hollow Crown

A decrepit tavern on the outskirts, The Hollow Crown is a gathering place for mercenaries, smugglers, and those looking for a way out of Vexenford. The owner, Olric Fenn, a grizzled veteran with a knack for knowing more than he lets on, runs the establishment with a firm hand. While the

ale is watered down and the rooms damp, it remains one of the few places where desperate souls can make the connections they need to survive.

## Blackflow Market

Once a bustling center of trade, Blackflow Market has decayed into a black-market haven. Stalls once filled with exotic spices and fine wares now deal in contraband—medicine, weapons, stolen goods, and forged passage papers to Ebonmoor. While technically illegal, many enforcers turn a blind eye in exchange for coin, making it a thriving, albeit dangerous, hub for those willing to take risks.

## The Gallows Square

The Gallows Square is more than just a site for executions; it is a grim social space where public punishments serve as a warning to all. The scent of death lingers in the air, and condemned criminals—whether smugglers, dissenters, or suspected plague-bearers—are often left hanging for days. The whispers of the desperate merge with the howling wind, carrying stories of betrayals and failed attempts to escape the iron rule of Valkenmar.

## The Rusted Chain

Beneath a nondescript smithy lies The Rusted Chain, an underground fighting pit where the desperate and the cruel wager lives and coin. Blood spills nightly in brutal contests, and whispers suggest that some who fight here too often either disappear or are later found among the doomed in the Rot Ward. The enforcers tolerate its existence, perhaps even partake in the bloodsport themselves, so long as the pit masters know their place.

## The Rot Ward

The Rot Ward is a grim and walled-off district, its towering barricades cutting it off from the rest of the city like a festering wound. It serves as both a prison and a quarantine zone for those suspected of carrying the Blight, though many believe its true purpose is far darker. Officially, it is described as a necessary precaution to contain the infected, yet countless whispers claim to have seen healthy men and women dragged through its gates, never to return. The air reeks of decay, and at night, distant screams echo through the streets, only to be silenced moments later. Those who peer too closely into the Ward's dealings risk vanishing themselves, making it a place of dread even among the hardened souls of Vexenford.

## The Iron Gate Checkpoint

The Iron Gate Checkpoint stands as the last lawful passage into Ebonmoor, an unyielding bastion of stone and steel, reinforced with layered defenses and vigilant enforcers. Every traveler is subjected to intense scrutiny, their belongings rifled through, their bodies inspected for the telltale signs of the Blight. A single blemish, a moment's hesitation, can mean immediate execution or exile. The air is thick with tension, as even the most innocent fear that a wrong word could condemn them. Bribes are almost unheard of here; the guards are chosen for their unwavering loyalty, their

training strict and their discipline absolute. Those who dream of fleeing into Ebonmoor must either risk the treacherous waters of the Greymere or find another way past this impenetrable fortress, for the Iron Gate is not merely a checkpoint—it is a final judgment.

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Revision #14

Created 2025-02-17 18:38:22 UTC by Sean Green

Updated 2025-02-28 13:48:30 UTC by Sean Green