

Sagebrush & Sixshooter 5E

Bolder Gulch: Expedition into Avernus

Session Zero Companion

Two cities built on the Chicopee River couldn't be more different from each other. Crime and opportunity walk hand in hand in Bolder Gulch, a border city bustling with commerce where even hardened adventurers watch their step. Further inland lies the capital city of Etlur Ridge, a beacon of hope which radiates with the divine light of its second sun, the Companion. But all light casts shadows, and it is in the darkness that evil whispers of grim tidings for the Badlands Border.

The Crimson City

The adventure begins in Bolder Gulch in 1892, the Year of Three Horses Prancing, where the Council of Four and the Smoking Gun, a mercenary company tasked with maintaining order, are overwhelmed with a sudden refugee crisis stemming from Etlur Ridge. To make matters worse, the Dead Three Gang —gang members of the gods Bane, Bhaal, and Myrkul — have taken advantage of the chaos, using it to further their murderous agendas. With law enforcement stretched thin, the Guild, a criminal organization based in the the Crimson City, also seizes the opportunity to conduct its crimes outside of the shadows.

Bolder Gulch Gazetteer

Bolder Gulch lies on the Badlands Border south of Dunedeep. The city plays a critical role in commerce by connecting major cities along the Badlands Border— Dunedeep, Nevernoon, Lucksand, and Harvestmoon —with the lands to the south. Exotic goods are shipped in along the Chicopee River from the jungles of Chultxico, while fine silks, rare herbs, and other expensive luxuries arrive from markets in Calimshando.

Government

Bolder Gulch is governed by a council of four Barons and a Boldurian government known as the Government of The People.

The current Council of Four is as follows:

- High Baron Ulrich Richardson, a career officer within the Smoking Gun

- Thelma Vanderbilt, a cunning patriar who built her family's wealth and lifted herself out of poverty
- Dillard Porter, the most senior member and unofficial leader of the Council of Four, who survived the crisis that culminated in the resurrection of Bhaal
- Bethany Stelmane, a shrewd businesswoman and fierce politician with a creative mind for commerce and finance

City Districts

A walled city, Bolder Gulch is organized into districts around three geographic landmarks: the Gray Station, the Chicopee River, and Duskhawk Hill. Nine gates dot the city's inner and outer walls, governing passage into and between districts. They are maintained by the Smoking Gun. There are twenty neighborhoods in all, split between the three districts.

Upper City

Known as ranchers, the elite aristocrats of the city insulate themselves behind the inner gates and the Watch, which disproportionately protects citizens of the Upper City. The Watch Garrison, High Top, and upscale businesses are isolated from the Lower City behind an inner wall.

The Lower City

This crescent of steeply sloping neighborhoods is rife with smuggling, robbery, and murder. The Smoking Gun acts like a rough-and-tumble occupying force here, leaving local crews to settle their own scores when they're done cracking skulls. Everyone is engaged in some sort of trade, and law is but a suggestion rather than an absolute. Hotels and Saloons. Riders can kick their feet up at the iconic Elfsong Saloon, the Low Lantern, the Gun and Stars, and the Blushing Belle.

The Outer City

Sprawling shanties, tanneries, and stockyards extend outward beyond the city gates. Refugees, the poor, and any industry that would offend the high-born ranchers can be found here. The people of the Outer City aren't citizens, but they do band together when necessary, taking care of their own like extended families.

Notable Sights.

Near Duskhawk hill, one can find Dandelion's Dancing Bullet armory and weaponsmith, the Church of Last Hope in Twin Songs, Greyson Stables and Menagerie, and the Wyrms Crossing

bridges that extend over the Chicopee River. The Smoking Gun's fortress, Wyrms' Rock, divides the bridge, preventing passage into or out of the city at night.

BOLDER GULCH QUICK FACTS

Population: 125,000 (predominantly humans)

Government: Plutocracy, helmed by the Council of Four and the Government of The People

Defense: Smoking Gun mercenaries, the Watch

Commerce: Dyes, cattle, imports from Chultxico, mercenaries, desert supplies

Organizations: The Guild, neighborhood crews, trade guilds

Religions: Gond, Tymora, Umberlee, any other law-abiding faith, cults of the Dead Three Gang

The Bolder Gulch flag represents the city's role as a hub for river and desert trade as well as nodding toward its namesake, the explorer Balduran. The symbol originated as a outlaw emblem, though, and its components hold a double meaning today.

Today, some optimistic souls try to recast the seal, claiming its calmsands represent the city's desire to remain a peaceful power and the clear skies symbolize a prosperous future. But those who know the city's history see the cunning and violence underpinning the emblem. For many, the contradictory interpretations make the city's flag all the more fitting.

Bolder Gulch Backgrounds

- This section provides an overview of new background options available to you in this campaign. Whether you're a native Boldurian, a visitor from the neighboring lands of Elturwatch, or you just ended a long voyage from the jungles of Chultxico, you can tie your character to the Crimson City with these new and altered character backgrounds.
- You may be an acolyte tightly connected with the religious community of Bolder Gulch. Prominent religious communities are dedicated to Gond, god of innovation and invention; Helm, god of vigilance and protection; Ilmater, a god of compassion, sacrifice, suffering; Siamorphe, a goddess of nobility and divine right; Tymora, a goddess of good fortune; and Umberlee, the bitch queen.
- You may be a charlatan with a purported long-lost heir in the ranchers, conning the Watch and bluffing your way among the aristocracy.
- You may be a criminal who's part of the Guild or a local Lower or Outer City crew. You have underworld connections. Even some of the most high-ranking Boldurians have criminal ties.

- You may be an entertainer at the Low Lantern or the Blushing Belle, able to make a measure of the audience and interact with your fans.
- You may be the last person ever expected to be the hero. But here you are, a faceless vigilante in a costume fighting for those that can't fend for themselves.
- Your persona could take many forms, but the real mystery is which personality is truly the mask.
- You may be a folk hero able to rouse the residents of the Lower or Outer City on your behalf to inconvenience the Watch, the Smoking Gun, or a double dealing ranchers.
- You may be a guild artisan from Little Calimshando, able to navigate crew territories and businesses in the Outer City or another district.
- You may be an urban hermit, anonymous among the crowds, navigating the growing slums and encampments without drawing attention.
- You may be a rancher (noble), attuned to commercial interests half a world away but blind to the poverty and violence rampant throughout your city.
- You may be an outlander, an immigrant to Bolder Gulch familiar with the communities of the Outer City and able to obtain information on foreign lands, peoples, and traditions.
- You may be a sage, studying at the High Top, conversing with scholars preparing for a pilgrimage to Wick Light Monastery or cozied in the nook of a occultist's study, all the while discerning the truth in the gossip and rumors spread by your arcane peers and the local papers.
- You may be an engineer with a smuggler's sense for moving cargo and coin under the noses of inspectors, tax collectors, and the Smoking Gun station guards.
- You might be a soldier or a Smoking Gun (see appendix A), spending your time protecting others for a day's wages
- You may be an urchin, perhaps an orphan or runaway pressed into the service of the Guild. You've learned the torch-based code of the Gateguides Crew.

BALDUR'S GATE BACKGROUNDS

These backgrounds differ from those in the Player's Handbook. Each background contains new features and roll tables. Ask the Man of Many Faces for more information.

Elturwatch

Elturwatch, the City of Two Suns, was a petty power until half a century ago, when the High Rider of Eltur Ridge was revealed to be a vampire who painted the lands with an undead plague. The Hellriders, who were caught by surprise, won some daily gains, but the vampire inflicted cruel losses under the cover of night. Each night the good people of Eltur Ridge prayed to the gods that dawn might come more quickly. Then, on one particularly disastrous night when all seemed lost, dawn did come. A second sun appeared above Eltur Ridge, suffusing the city and its surrounding lands with bright, golden light. Having no reason to expect daylight would arrive so suddenly, the High Rider and his vampire spawn were burned to dust, and the other undead quailed in its illumination.

The Companion

The light above Eltur Ridge persisted when the true dawn came. Some called it Amaunator's Gift, but none knew where this radiant mercy came from. Most saw the glowing light as a companion to the sun and to themselves, and so it became known as the Companion. This holy wonder brought people of all kinds to Eltur Ridge to bathe in its warmth and wonder at its divine light. Marchal, preachers, and occultists made pilgrimages to see the blessed Companion light shimmer in the dead of night. The best among the lawmen, Thadius Kreed, was named Governor to govern in the High Rider's place and restore order to the Land of Two Suns.

The Order of the Companion

To maintain order among the many creeds of the marshals who arrived in Elturwatch, a special branch of lawmen was created, named after the Companion sun. These marshals swore to unyieldingly uphold the Creed Resolute, an oath of service to Elturwatch and all good people. These roughriders and marshals defend the Land of Two Suns alongside the grizzled Hellriders.

ELTURGARD QUICK FACTS

Population: 30,000 (predominantly human, with several small communities of gnomes)

Government: Theocracy, helmed by Governor Thadius Kreed

Defense: Hellriders, cREED of the Companion

Commerce:

Organizations: The Iron Calvary, Creed of the Companion

Religions: Amaunator, Helm, Torm, Tyr

The crest of the City of Two Suns is a sun with a smaller, blazing companion sun before it in the upper left. This well-known symbol adorns the badges and flags of the Companions and the Hellriders.

The Hellriders

The Hellriders are an elite company of mounted warriors that protects Elturwatch, the land of Two Suns. The Hellriders get their name from the brave cavalry that rode into the Nine Hells alongside the angel Zariel long ago. The survivors were celebrated and took on the title, passing the title of Hellriders to worthy recipients for generations.

Backgrounds of Elturwatch

In addition to the backgrounds presented in the Bolder Gulch section, you have two new background options available to you related to Elturwatch. You may be a respected hellrider (see appendix A), charged with defending Eltur Ridge and its surrounding lands atop your warhorse. You could belong to the Iron Calvary (see appendix A) or Creed of the Companion, composed of faithful and vigilant seekers of justice who protect others from the depredations of evildoers.

Appendix A: Character Backgrounds

During character creation, players can select the following backgrounds for their characters with the Desert Master's approval. These backgrounds are appropriate for any character in Bolder Gulch: Expedition into Avernus, due to their strong associations with the cities of Bolder Gulch and Eltur Ridge.

Hellrider

You are one of the Hellriders, an elite company of mounted warriors that protects Elturwatch, the Land of Two Suns. These honorable riders fiercely defend Eltur Ridge atop mighty destriers and dutifully give ten percent of all earnings to the city's coffers. Hellriders are easily recognizable due to their crimson and white uniforms and banners bearing the crest of Elturwatch: the sun and the smaller, blazing Companion.

Skill Proficiencies: Animal Handling, Persuasion

Languages: Any one of your choice

Tool Proficiencies: Your choice of gaming set or musical instrument

Equipment: One set of traveler's clothes, a signet, a badge with the crest of Elturwatch, and a pouch containing 9 gp

Feature: Respected Rider

As a Hellrider, you are well-respected within Elturwatch, and your heraldry is recognized throughout Faerûn. While in the Land of Two Suns - encompassing Eltur Ridge, Triel, Scornubel, Soubar, and Berdusk - you can commandeer fresh mounts for you and your party. Typically, this occurs at outposts such as Windstream Lodge, but Hellriders and their companions are held in high regard and can resupply in any Elturwatch settlement. Use the warhorse statistics for your mount and the riding horse statistics for those of your comrades. Hellriders traditionally operate within Elturwatch, but on occasion the High Watcher or High Rider has sent Hellriders to other lands. Outside of the Elturwatch, you can purchase non-exotic mounts from merchants sympathetic to the Hellriders at half price.

Advancement

Once they have completed their training, a warrior is inducted into the Hellriders through a special ceremony held by the High Rider and an elected preacher of Helm known as the High Watcher. Once initiated, a Hellrider can continue to prove themselves by advancing in rank.

Hellrider Ranks

Rank	Name	Role
1	Hoof	Sworn In
2	Tail	Deputy
3	Mane	Sheriff
4	Mouth	Marshal
5	Stallion	Commander

Suggested Characteristics

A Hellrider's rigorous training produces an equestrian with a reputation for discipline, vigilance, and fury. Though each rider may seem identical when galloping across the plains of Elturwatch, these high expectations can have profound effects on an individual Hellrider's outlook.

Personality Traits

d8	Personality Trait
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1	I tell other Hellriders' stories as if they were my own.
2	My uniform must remain spotless so that it may reflect the light of the Companion.
3	My horse goes wherever I do.
4	Only death frees a Hellrider from their post. Some say I welcome it.
5	I was a hellion growing up. I often take the time to educate (or chastise) children I meet in my adventures.
6	When I'm on the job, I never crack a smile.
7	I reserve eye contact for those I respect.
8	I haven't cut my hair since I joined the Hellriders.

Ideals

d6	Ideal
1	Kindness. The light of the Companion burns bright within my soul. (Good)
2	Justice. By upholding the law, we defend the rights of all. (Lawful)
3	Fury. I am relentless in the pursuit and destruction of my enemies. (Evil)
4	Freedom. Everyone should be free to pursue their livelihood. (Chaotic)
5	Loyalty. When I make an ally, it's for life. (Any)
6	Nation. My city, land, and its people are all that matter. (Any)

Bond

d6	Bond
1	So long as the Companion burns over Eltur Ridge, there is still hope for Fey Run.
2	My name and deeds will be immortalized in the songs of the Hellriders.
3	I idolize the High Rider and dutifully follow their commands.
4	I have a mighty steed that I prize above all others.

5	I'm not the first Hellrider in my family, and I won't be the last.
6	I have sworn the strict oaths of the Creed Resolute. I vow to uphold the laws of Elturwatch, protect its citizens, and serve the greater good.

Flaw

d6	Flaw
1	I am always honest with those of higher authority.
2	When I'm off duty, I am somewhat inattentive.
3	Though I have sworn to vanquish evil, I secretly fear it.
4	I trained for years to be a Hellrider. I have little patience for those who are privileged by birth.
5	I am suspicious of those who extend offers to me.
6	I was never supposed to be a Hellrider. I worry that one day I'll be discovered as a fraud.

Smoking Gun

You have joined the Smoking Gun, a powerful mercenary company headquartered in Bolder Gulch, where it serves as the city's primary law enforcement and military. Lower-ranking guns patrol the Lower City or are assigned to missions elsewhere, while senior officers may act as commanders in battle or intimidating bodyguards for high-profile negotiations. If you've relinquished your ties to the Smoking Gun, you can reenlist at any time. However, so long as you collect wages, you must serve the Smoking Gun dutifully or be held accountable to the Barons of Bolder Gulch.

Skill Proficiencies: Athletics, Intimidation

Languages: None

Tool Proficiencies: One type of gaming set, Vehicles (land)

Equipment: A Smoking Gun uniform, an badge of your rank, a gaming set of your choice, and a pouch containing the remainder of your last wages (10 gp).

Feature: Tighten the Grip

As a member of the Smoking Gun, you can enact justice on behalf of the organization or the city of Bolder Gulch. If you compel a creature to surrender or knock it unconscious (see chapter 9,

“Combat,” of the Player’s Handbook) you may choose to place it under arrest. Additionally, you may confiscate any of an arrested creature’s possessions or contraband on behalf of the Smoking Gun. At your DM’s discretion, your commanding officer may allow you to keep a portion of these items as payment.

Advancement

The Smoking Gun maintains a military hierarchy with six ranks, not including the Barons of Bolder Gulch. As your character furthers the goals of the Smoking Gun, they may gain renown (see chapter 1, “A World of Your Own,” of the Dungeon Master’s Guide for more information on renown) and advance in rank.

Smoking Gun Ranks

Rank	Name	Role
1	Bullet	Private
2	Barrell	Corporal
3	Grip	Sergeant
4	Pin	Lieutenant
5	Chamber	Major
6	Hammer	General

Suggested Characteristics

As a mercenary company, the Smoking Gun enlists a multitude of individuals throughout Fey Run. While the majority of Smoking Gun agents are based in Bolder Gulch, the organization - and by extension, the city - has extensive reach, with active forces as far south as Chultxico. As an agent of the Smoking Gun, your identity may have been shaped by other members, the area in which you operate, or a particularly treacherous mission.

Personality Traits

d8	Personality Trait
1	I like to make an example of those who step out of line.

2	As long as I'm compensated fairly, I'll carry out any task without question.
3	I love a good hanging.
4	I use my ties to the Smoking Gun to influence others and get what I want.
5	I have a hot temper and a short fuse. I'm working on it.
6	I go out of my way to prove I'm not like the other members of the Smoking Gun.
7	The fists are underpaid, and I'm trying to start a union.
8	Actions speak louder than words.

Ideals

d6	Ideal
1	Redemption. Everyone deserves a second chance. (Good)
2	Order. Respect the badge, or you'll respect the club. (Lawful)
3	Punishment. Violence is the solution to preventing recidivism and copycats. (Evil)
4	Greed. My services are for sale to the highest bidder. When there's treasure involved, that bidder is me. (Chaotic)
5	People. I'm committed to the people of Bolder Gulch, not the Barons who pay my wages. (Neutral)
6	Aspiration. Only by climbing the ladder can I bring about lasting change. (Any)

Bond

d6	Bond
1	I joined the Smoking Gun to find a criminal who wronged me long ago. Every mission is a potential new lead.
2	I signed a contract stamped by the Council of Four to accomplish a special task. They own me until my deed is done.
3	I have a friend or family member within the organization. I joined to make sure they don't get in over their head.

4	I have a different vision for the Smoking Gun. Rising in rank is the only way I'll ever make a difference.
5	I've seen my share of problems in Bolder Gulch. It's my job to make the city a better place.
6	My reputation is spotless, and I intend to keep it that way.

Flaw

d6	Flaw
1	I always have to have the last word.
2	I sometimes get carried away when administering punishment to those who violate the law.
3	I got where I am by backstabbing someone else. I'm paranoid that I'll meet the same fate.
4	On occasion, I'll turn a blind eye in exchange for a bribe.
5	I go easy on those I deem weak.
6	I judge anyone with a criminal record.

The Iron Calvary

You are a member of the Iron Calvary, an organization devoted to crushing evil when it rears its ugly head.

The order is composed of righteous warriors - marshals and preachers of Tyr, Helm, Torm, and Hoar - united by faith, ideals, and a Powerful camaraderie. Unlike the Watchers, the Iron Calvary conducts its operations in the open and refuses to strike preemptively.

Skill Proficiencies: Insight, Religion

Languages: Two of your choice

Equipment: A heraldic badge, a bill containing the laws of your enlistment, and a pouch containing 15 gp

Feature: Constant Vigilance

The Iron Calvary must be poised to retaliate should evil misbehave. To stay prepared, the organization works openly with local groups to identify and monitor evil threats such as cults, gangs, or inherently evil creatures. When you enter a new town, you can request an audience on behalf of the calvary with faction agents, law enforcement, or clergy sympathetic to your cause.

Advancement

Every member of the Iron Calvary begins as a Squire. As they complete missions and additional training, members of the order may serve as mentors or take on influential leadership positions within the faction.

The Iron Calvary Ranks

Rank	Name	Role
1	Page	Initiate
2	Squire	Agent
3	Bachelor	Stalwart
4	Banneret	Mentor
5	Knight of the Gun	Leader

Suggested Characteristics

The Iron Calvary is typically composed of good-natured individuals united under tenets of honor, duty, and justice. These virtues and the tight-knit bond between members mold these holy warriors for their never-ending battle against the forces of evil.

Personality Traits

d8	Personality Trait
1	I clutch my pendant for strength when threatened with fear or temptation.
2	I see omens in every event and action. The gods are speaking to us, we just need to listen.

3	I don't like to go into situations unprepared.
4	I impart my earnings and possessions to those in need during my travels.
5	I never throw the first punch, but I always throw the last.
6	I am always honest in my intentions. Only evil works in the shadows.
7	There's never a bad time to teach someone a lesson through a religious fable.
8	I'm a reformed criminal. Sometimes I slip into old habits.

Ideals

d6	Ideal
1	Integrity. To stand against evil, I must be righteous. (Good)
2	Mercy. Repentance begets forgiveness. Forgiveness begets righteousness. (Good)
3	Retribution. When evil strikes, I administer a swift and just penalty. (Lawful)
4	Honor. Punishing an evil act is just. Punishing an evil thought is not. (Lawful)
5	Bravery. I face my fears head-on. (Any)
6	Faith. The greatest weapon against adversity is devotion to my god. (Any)

Bond

d6	Bond
1	My town was razed by a vicious cult. I won't rest until they pay for their crimes.
2	An evil prophecy has begun, and I will do everything in my power to stop it.
3	I protect those who cannot protect themselves.
4	My mentor's approval means everything to me.
5	I never leave a comrade behind.
6	The The Iron Calvary saved me when I was a child. I owe them my life.

Flaw

d6	Flaw
1	I am always willing to grant someone a second chance.
2	I never strike a creature when it's down.
3	My ancestors committed horrible atrocities. My name carries their shame.
4	On occasion, I'll turn a blind eye in exchange for a bribe.
5	I am trusting of clerics and other overtly religious figures.
6	I'm still grieving the loss of one of my comrades. Reminders of their death shake me to my core.