

## MERCANTYLER

Location: Tashal, Kingdom of Kaldor  
 Holder: Master Berlan of Baël  
 Size: 15 (+/-)

## INTRODUCTION

The eldest son of the bailiff of Jutose manor (Allence Hundred, Kaldor), Berlan of Baël was six years old when his mother died giving birth to his younger brother Tagaril, & aged 11 he lost his father who fell in battle against a gargun swarm in TR 686. With the new bailiff having no use for two young boys, Berlan & Tagaril were sent to live with their uncle Ranal of Baël, a mercantylar in Kiban & head of clan Baël.

Ranal was not unkind to his nephews, putting them to work as apprentices in his shop however, the next three years however, did not see the fortunes of clan Baël prosper & the prospect of imminent financial ruin drove Ranal to drink. He became a vicious drunk with a violent temper & it was not long before Berlan & Tagaril hatched a plan to run away, though before they could put the plan into action, Ranal wagered & lost the boys in a game of dice to Master Jelwin of Indamë, a mercantylar from Thay, with whom Berlan & Tagaril left along the Genin Trail for Melderyn in the Autumn of TR 689.

Childless, Jelwin proved to be a kind & just master, adopting the boys & raising them as his own. Berlan was apprenticed in the master's wool business & taught his letters by Jelwin personally. Tagaril, who became mesmerised by the sea the first time he saw it - the largest body of water he had seen in his life up to this point being the River Kald, begged to go to sea & was put aboard one of the master's niviks, *Wave Dancer*, where he began training as an apprentice pilot. Berlan soon attained the rank of journeyman & became the master's right-hand man, travelling throughout Hårn & the mainland on his master's business while Tagaril served as apprentice pilot on all three of the master's ships.

When Master Jelwin died suddenly during the winter of TR 697, Berlan & Tagaril were surprised to discover they had been amply provided for in his will, Tagaril with a half share in the *Wave Dancer* & three letters of recommendation from his master's pilots, Berlan with a letter of recommendation from Master Jelwin himself & a modest amount of capital to set himself up in business. While Tagaril was content to remain in Thay as Master Pilot of the *Wave Dancer*, Berlan desired to return to Kaldor & so, with a small stock of Emelrene

linen, he bade farewell to his brother & hired onto the Genin Trail caravan to Tashal in the Spring of TR 698.

During the journey Berlan met the woman he would ultimately marry. Saryn of Lysal was the 3<sup>rd</sup> daughter (of 5) of Sir Torsis of Lysal, a knight of the Royal High Guard in Burzyn on his way to the Royal Chelebin Tournament of Chivalry at Olokand. Sir Torsis was unimpressed by the penniless young mercantylar & initially dismissed him, though after some astute dealing at the Tashal fair left Berlan with enough silver to rent a room in a tenement above the Coin & Broom [E6<sup>+</sup>] in Upper East Side & to buy more stock, Sir Torsis was inclined to reconsider & grudgingly gave his permission for Berlan to court his daughter, though he would not give his permission for them to marry until Berlan became master.

The next few years were tough, although Berlan managed to scrape a living as a journeyman by travelling widely, buying & selling on his own account anything his masters were uninterested in & quickly gained a reputation for discretion & as someone who could always sniff out a bargain. It was the former trait that brought Berlan to hire on as journeyman to Artir of Deylea, master mercantylar, usurer, second-hand cart salesman & small-time fence. Working with Artir & his bodyguard Terense of Mykan was certainly an education for Berlan, & whilst the contents of his strongbox increased dramatically, it was not long before Artir's questionable business practices brought Berlan into the company of the Lia-Kavair.

The deal in question was a petty little swindle involving Artir & a Tashalian wool agent who wanted to put "a little something by" for his retirement, but Artir was unaware the wool agent had also made a similar offer to **Joular of Falesh** [C5] implying exclusivity, & Artir's deal was soon brought to the attention of the Lia-Kavair.

## CREDITS

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Seeing an opportunity to rid themselves of Artir, Berlan was “invited” to deal with Artir in exchange for a legitimate letter of recommendation to the mercantyle's guild from one of the Lia-Kavair's contacts. Instead of murder, Berlan arranged for Artir, his wife & Terense to slip out of Tashal in a caravan bound for Thay, carrying a letter requesting Tagaril give Artir passage to the mainland. Berlan's price from Artir was a letter of recommendation to the guild & a sworn statement from about the deal with the wool agent. It would not be until later that Berlan discovered evidence in Artir's ledger implicating the Lia-Kavair. Berlan returned to the Lia-Kavair with a dagger smeared with (animal) blood & an assurance that Artir would no longer be a problem & the bodies would never be found. He now had the required letters of recommendation & could pursue advancement in the Mercantyle's Guild.

A month or so later, Berlan's study of Artir's ledgers revealed the identity of the third party in the original scam – the Earl of Balim's wool agent. Slipping out of Tashal on a borrowed horse, Berlan made for Kiban where good fortune & silver soon found him in the Earl's presence. Earl Dariune was sceptical until Berlan produced the evidence Artir had given him - explaining that Artir had vanished, presumed dead & that Berlan was under instructions to bring the ledger to the Earl if this happened.

Some weeks later Berlan was summoned once more to Caer Kiban where Earl Dariune offered him a reward for the information that had turned out to be accurate – this, plus Berlan's savings would be enough to secure the rank of Master in the Mercantyle's Guild.

The Earl of Balim is always in need of reliable agents, especially those in Tashal who are able to move in similar social circles as the sheriff, so Berlan was offered a trial as wool factor & intelligence-gatherer, but it was agreed that the factorship would not be made public & in return Berlan agreed to keep the Earl informed of anything useful he heard. The interview ended with the earl remarking that Berlan, “ought to get on & marry that knight's daughter from Burzyn.” Berlan was impressed – he knew the Earl was well informed, but he did not realise he was that well informed.

By TR 702 Berlan had become Master Mercantyle with a contract to handle the sale of some of the Earl of Balim's wool business & had married Saryn. He also began to pay dues to the Innkeepers' guild to allow him to sell wines & spirits. With the Earl's patronage came more noble clients & Berlan soon expanded his operation to include luxuries such as fine wines, exotic foods, spices, & anything else hard to get hold of which he shipped in from the mainland by Tagaril.

TR 703 heralded the birth of Berlan's first son Haes followed a year later by Olwet, & by the time Eranë & Keriël were born in TR 705 the house of Baël was in dire need of roomier accommodation – Berlan attempted to buy a run-down building on Haldan Square a number of times during the following three years, each time the owner refused to sell until finally in TR 708 the building suffered a massive collapse which killed the owner & his family, allowing Berlan to buy the lot & re-build; he also purchased the adjacent house which had been badly damaged when the stone gable wall of the collapsing building had fallen through its roof. During the renovations, Berlan discovered the secret room in the cellar that is now used as accommodation for agents of the Earl when in Tashal on covert business.

Two years ago, Tagaril sent word that he had been offered the chance to buy a full share in *Wave Dancer* & Berlan gave him the money in return for a half-share in the ship. Last winter Tagaril visited his brother in Tashal & during his visit, suggested that if Berlan were to purchase a talbar or two, he would be able to move goods from Kiban to Tashal much more quickly than by mule cart. Berlan, who understood little of the practicalities of ship ownership, took his brother's advice, & with Tagaril's guidance bought a 30' talbar, renamed the *Lady Alagra* after his Mother-in-Law. He is currently in negotiation with **Irian of Kephis** [G3], about purchasing or building another.

## CURRENT SITUATION

Their position in the Tashalian merchant community often sees Berlan & Saryn dining out at the Hall of the Mangai & Caer Elend, or with one of their noble patrons or merchant friends, & this developing network of acquaintances means the Earl of Balim has come to value the information Berlan can provide. They also maintain a close relationship with Saryn's clan in Chybisa.

Berlan has become bonded master mercantyle to the Earl of Balim, though this is strictly confidential, enquirers being informed Master Berlan is only handling some of the Earl's wool trade until he decides whether to appoint a new agent. Berlan has let it be known that his wealth comes from contracts with mercantyles in Thay & on the Lythian mainland.

Their eldest son Haes has recently left home for the life of an Asesha at Abriel abbey, though Berlan's second son Olwet has proven himself quite capable despite his disability & is his father's book-keeper & a journeyman of the guild.

## GENERAL DESCRIPTION

## FIRST FLOOR

1. **Shop/Office** – The shop doubles as Berlan's office for routine transactions & many samples are kept here, though customers are often invited through to the warehouse to view the goods. Saryn runs the retail side of the business, selling bolts of cloth, fine woollen blankets & embroidered clothing.

2. **Kitchen** – The large kitchen is the domain of **Marsanë of Varlis**, the cook, & her eight-year old son **Faelin**. Marsanë used to live with her husband, Arn of Varlis & son in a tenement in East Side. Arn was one of Berlan's caravan guards until he was killed by outlaws on the Salt Route last year. This meant his widow could no longer pay the rent on their room & was evicted. Remembering what it was like to lose a father so young, Berlan brought Marsanë & her son to live in his home - for the boy's sake. They sleep on the floor of the kitchen while Berlan considers alternative sleeping arrangements. Faelin often sleeps with the mastiffs (see location 3) as he believes the kitchen to be haunted & often has nightmares. There is a drainage vent in the floor next to the oven. Kerean & the apprentices take their meals in the kitchen while Marsanë clucks round them like a mother hen.

3. **Warehouse** – The fine stone-floored warehouse is usually brimming with woolsacks, crates of exotic spices & foods, barrels of imported wine & bottles of fine spirits from the mainland. This is the domain of Berlan's journeyman, **Keraen of Twehyn**. Of Jarin descent from Orbaal, Keraen arrived in Tashal in TR 710 & has worked for Berlan ever since. He drinks in The Seven Stars [G11] & is good friends with Dafydd of Ewan, the only person who knows Keraen is a member of the *Aenghysa*. At the back of the warehouse are stalls that usually house two of Berlan's Sorkin Blue mules & the fine dapple-grey palfrey he bought from Brod of Heriel [Jedes 29] at last years' Jedes horse fair. The attached cart house has just enough space for two of Berlan's three carts & he is considering having the wall to the storage room removed to provide space for the third & an extra mule stall.

Berlan keeps two huge Azeryani mastiffs in the warehouse – they sleep in the area under the office. They are both completely vicious & respond only to Berlan, Faelin the cook's son, Clana & Berlan's daughter Keriell. Olwet is terrified of them & it is not unknown for the apprentices, Ketta & Ranal to lean under the office & bark loudly to frighten him, but only if Kerean & Berlan are absent. The mastiffs are known colloquially as “Master Berlan's Locks.”

## SECOND FLOOR

4. **Master's Office** – This is the hub of Berlan's operation where his stock records & customer orders are kept & is presided over by his youngest son Olwet. A sickly child from birth, Olwet seems a little slow & was never expected to amount to much, but following the departure of his older brother to Abriel, Olwet has proved to have an eye for detail, a keen wit & a phenomenal ability with figures that surprised his father. He walks poorly with a limp, so is content to supervise his father's business from here. Olwet is great friends with Irvis of Nerien, the apprentice from Melderyn, & dreams of one day travelling to that far off kingdom.

5. **Sleeping Quarters** - Berlan's two permanent guards, **Clana of Roalbrian**, a retired Thardic legionnaire & **Haeri of Alara**, a mercenary from Chybisa previously in the service of clan Lysal, sleep in this room. The window shutters are never closed even at night, because Clana suffers terrible flatulence caused, he claims, by a lifetime of food in the legions; Haeri sleeps in the bed nearest the window. Haeri snores loudly enough to be heard on occasion by residents across the street. Clana is a light sleeper because of his military past & often resorts to stuffing his ears with wool before retiring. The pair maintains a constant, good-natured bickering – Clana maintains Haeri must be taking some arcane potion to make him snore *that* loudly, while Haeri protests that the air in his bedchamber is not fit to breathe so it is no wonder he snores. The two men are very good friends & would fight to the death for each other.

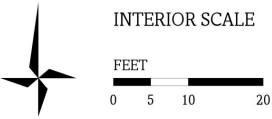
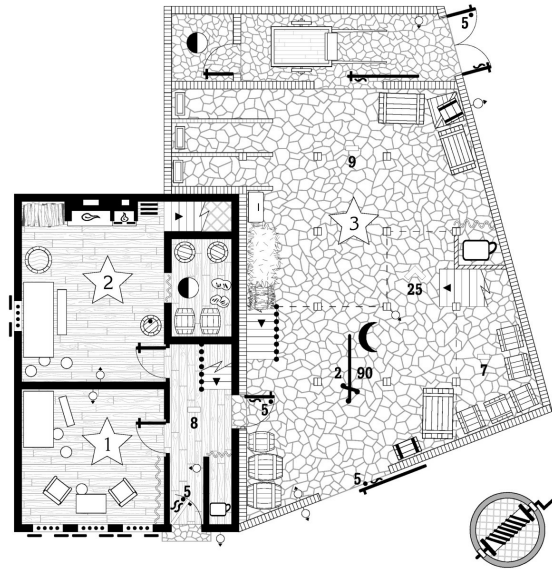
Clana & Haeri usually alternate guard duty in the warehouse at night, assisted by mercenaries hired from Rathbar of Marby [G12]. Members of Rathbar's Raiders are also often hired if Berlan needs to send large shipments down the Genin Trail.

6. **Solar** – Luxurious private quarters for Berlan's family & used for sensitive negotiations or to receive noble clients, this room boasts a fine polished oak floor & the walls are hung with high-quality tapestries. Two years ago Berlan had this room re-built at Saryn's suggestion to include a larger fireplace, glazed windows & added a balcony to the front of the house. Berlan likes the balcony in the early mornings, before the temperature rises enough to release the usual stink of the city. Saryn spends her afternoons here sewing & embroidering, but only after the livestock market in Haldan Square has finished for the day; she conveniently overlooked the market when pressing Berlan to have the fashionable balcony built & with hindsight, regrets it. The solar is also the domain of Saryn's pet cat, a pure-bred female Melderyni Blue<sup>1</sup>

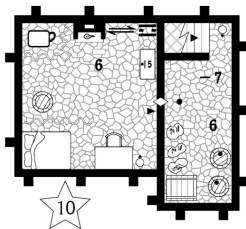
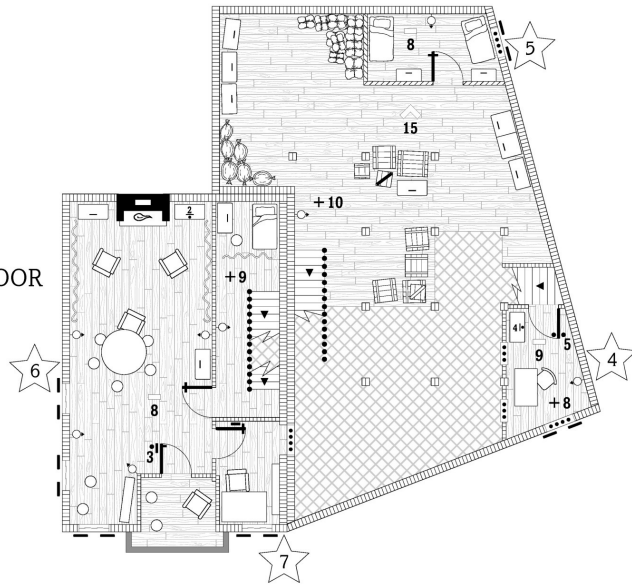


GM MAP

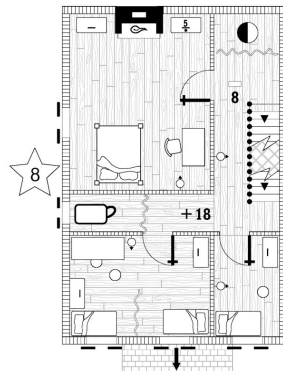
1st FLOOR



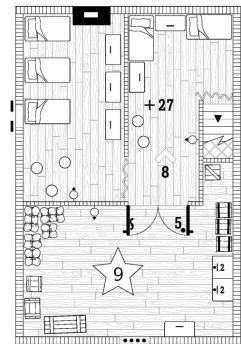
2nd FLOOR



CELLAR



3rd FLOOR



ATTIC

named Aoifë, bought for her as a present last birthday by Berlan from **Lady Bela Ademesen** [Gh8<sup>3</sup>], clanhead of Clan Ademesen who has a townhouse in the alley round the corner; curiously, Aoifë is the only member of the household the mastiffs are frightened of. Lady Ademesen is a reclusive widow who breeds fine domestic cats & has recently asked Berlan to locate for her a rare, male Nuthelian Wildcat<sup>2</sup> for her breeding programme.

Berlan's Steward, **Lendin of Dysten** sleeps in the curtained-off area adjacent to the solar. He suffers from insomnia & has recently discovered he is allergic to cats. Lendin runs a network of informants among the servant classes & street beggars of the city for his master.

7. **Master's Study** – When Master Berlan is in need of peace from his family or business, it is to this room he retires. Decorated to reflect the Master's simple tastes, it contains a serviceable desk, a soft armchair, & a bookshelf that holds Berlan's collection of two books & mementoes of his travels. The desk drawer contains a fine meerschaum pipe & oiled leather bag of pipeweed as Saryn actively discourages smoking elsewhere in the house. There is a barred window through to the warehouse so Berlan can oversee his operation from the study.

## THIRD FLOOR

8. **Master's Bedroom** – The fine four-poster bed, which Berlan shares with Saryn, dominates this room. Berlan wonders whether he is making best use of the space on this floor of the house, though his wife maintains she cannot sleep if she is too hot & so their bed needs to be this far from the fireplace. In winter Berlan feels the cold & often has to use a bed warmer. With the recent addition to the household of Marsanë of Varlis, Berlan is considering moving his wife's maid into the alcove on the landing & giving Marsanë & her son the maid's space in the Attic; he has yet to broach this subject with Saryn.

The double room at the front of the house is shared by Berlan's twin daughters **Eranë & Keriël** who moved here after their brother Haes left home, they had previously slept in the smaller room next door, now Olwet's chamber.

## ATTIC

9. This room provides a safe storage area for Master Berlan's most expensive stock - linen from Emelrene, Makjin silk, rare dyes & spices, & the wines & spirits from throughout the mainland. During the Spring Fair this room is usually filled from floor to ceiling with the

best wares Tagaril has been able to find & ship from Thay.

The room with the chimney is home to Berlan's three apprentices: **Ketta of Barion, Ranal of Kostorien, & Irvis of Nerien** who hails from Nurisel in Melderyn. Berlan is thinking of asking Keraen to move in here from his place at the top of the stairs to make room for Marsanë, & wonders whether this may be a good idea anyway as the older man will provide a much-needed guiding hand to the young apprentices who sometimes keep him awake at night playing dice. Saryn's maid, **Evelna of Kainalin** from Burzyn currently occupies the other bed on the landing.

## CELLAR

10. Accessed via the secret door from the main cellar, Berlan discovered this room during the re-building of his house in TR 709. While checking repairs to the cellar wall Berlan found the peep-hole - he initially thought it was a small area of poor craftsmanship where mortar had not been replaced, but while examining the wall closely for evidence of more shoddy work he accidentally tripped the hidden door latch to discover the room beyond. Only Berlan & his wife know of the room's existence, though with Marsanë & Faelin sleeping in the kitchen Berlan is worried they may become suspicious.

GM's NOTE: Faelin's nightmares are actually overheard conversations between people in the hidden cellar room who have forgotten to close the vent in the ceiling which is operated by the lever next to it.

## FOOTNOTES:

- 1: domestic cats article will be forthcoming soon (when I get round to it!).
- 2: the original Hâmic cat, similar in size to the Terran Scottish Wildcat.
- 3: 'Gh' refers to Nichola's building designation system on the HârnWiki. Lady Bela Ademesen [Gh8] will be the subject of a separate publication.
- 4: Capitals in square parenthesis indicate canon references to the Tashal module produced by CGI.