

Item Descriptions

Tabletop RPG and CRPG Writing Samples

Andres Valbuena, Narrative Designer

About These Samples

These are a collection of original Wondrous items, originally intended for D&D, but I have formatted so they can be repurposed for other gameplay as well. Item description writing is a compressed form. Two short paragraphs have to establish voice, embed history, and either reinforce or complicate the mechanical function of the object. These samples treat the inventory screen as narrative real estate. Each item carries lore beyond what its stats require, and rewards players who read carefully.

The skill translates directly to CRPG writing: terminal entries, holotapes, item pickups, readable notes. Same principles. Every word earns its place, the object implies a world, and the player is trusted to draw their own conclusions.

Contents

- [Glasscutter's Maul](#) *Warhammer • Uncommon*
- [The Burned Accord](#) *Document (Wondrous Item) • Rare*
- [Vow, Keeper's Cirlet](#) *Wondrous Item (requires attunement) • Uncommon*
- [Tidewater Logbook](#) *Wondrous Item • Common*
- [The Warden's Token](#) *Wondrous Item • Uncommon*
- [Letters of Transit](#) *Document (Wondrous Item) • Rare*
- [The Silent Commission](#) *Wondrous Item • Very Rare*
- [Last Light Lantern](#) *Wondrous Item • Uncommon*

Glasscutter's Maul

Warhammer • Uncommon

A broad, headed sledge originally forged for splitting mithral seams in the deep tunnels beneath Slag Hollow. The iron head is scored with fifty, three tally marks, one for each shift its previous owner survived before the collapse of Shaft Nine. The wooden haft has been wrapped in boiled leather and refitted for combat, though the balance still favors a downward swing.

Dried ore dust fills the scoring. The miners who carried these called them "paystubs." The foremen who feared them called them something else.

Enchanted +1 warhammer. On a critical hit against a construct or object, deals an additional 1d6 bludgeoning damage.

Designer note: *The fifty-three tally marks are the item's biography. The two names for it, one from workers, one from management, are the conflict.*

The Burned Accord

Document (Wondrous Item) • Rare

A roll of vellum sealed with wax from two separate sigils, one belonging to a merchant consortium, the other to a bandit company that dissolved three winters ago. The text inside is a mutual nonaggression pact, complete with trade route allocations and profit, sharing terms written in a clerk's careful hand.

Someone attempted to destroy it. The edges are charred black and the final signatures are illegible. The document has no magical properties. Its value is entirely in what it proves: that the people who called themselves victims were, for a time, willing partners.

No mechanical bonus. Can be presented as evidence during social encounters to shift NPC dispositions or unlock hidden dialogue options. The DM determines which NPCs recognize the sigils and what consequences follow.

Designer note: *An item with no stats whose entire function is narrative. It changes conversations, not combat. The moral weight is the mechanic.*

Vow, Keeper's Circlet

Wondrous Item (requires attunement) • Uncommon

A thin band of tarnished silver set with a single cracked opal. The interior is engraved with a name that has been scratched out, not once, but twice, each attempt deeper than the last, as though the wearer changed their mind about forgetting.

The circlet was recovered from a battlefield shrine near the Dalelands, left among offerings that no one came back to collect. While attuned, the wearer cannot willingly break a promise spoken aloud. Whether this is a blessing or a curse depends entirely on what you have promised.

While attuned, the wearer has advantage on Persuasion checks when making or honoring a sworn commitment. Breaking a spoken promise while wearing the circlet imposes disadvantage on all Charisma checks for 7 days, and the circlet cannot be removed during this period.

Designer note: *The name scratched out twice is doing more work than the opal, and the mechanic enforces the theme without explaining it.*

Tidewater Logbook

Wondrous Item • Common

A salt-warped journal bound in oilcloth, its pages filled with cargo manifests, tide charts, and a running tally of debts owed to a harbor syndicate. The final twelve entries are written in a different hand, each of them increasingly preoccupied with a passenger who paid triple fare for passage south and never left her cabin.

The last entry reads as: "She sang again. The crew won't go below deck. I've bolted the hatch." The remaining pages are blank.

A character who spends 1 hour reading the logbook gains advantage on their next Intelligence (Investigation) or Wisdom (Survival) check related to coastal navigation, smuggling routes, or maritime trade. The final entries may serve as a quest hook at the DM's discretion.

Designer note: *A Common item built around a horror premise. The mechanical benefit is mundane, and the story is not. Rarity does not set the ceiling on narrative weight.*

The Warden's Token

Wondrous Item • Uncommon

A flat iron disc the size of a large coin, stamped on one face with a closed eye and on the other with a surface so worn it holds nothing legible, carried by former prisoners of the Greywall Compact as proof of lawful release and recognized by every gate officer in the territories the Compact once governed, though the Compact itself dissolved thirty years past and the last officer who knew the seals by sight retired a decade ago.

The tokens in circulation now were not issued through any official channel, for there is no official channel left, and those who carry them have generally found it wiser not to explain how the item came into their possession.

While you hold the token, no magical effect can compel you to reveal the location of a creature you are actively protecting, so long as that protection remains your sincere intention. Should you betray the creature you have sworn to shield, the token grows cold, turns to inert iron, and no magic known can restore it.

Designer note: *The mechanic fails permanently on betrayal, with no restoration possible. The condition of sincerity is unverifiable by the rules — it belongs to the player.*

Letters of Transit

Document (Wondrous Item) • Rare

Three folded sheets of parchment, each bearing a wax seal from a different institution: a trade federation whose caravans still move through the eastern roads, a border garrison that answers to a lord who has not technically acknowledged their continued operation, and a courier guild dissolved four years ago under circumstances the surviving members decline to discuss, their seal nonetheless pressed into the wax with the same clean authority it carried when the guild was solvent.

The handwriting across all three documents is consistent, the ink of roughly similar age, and the parchment cut from what appears to be the same stock. Whether this indicates an impressive forgery or a single clerk with unusually broad institutional access is a question the documents themselves are carefully designed not to answer.

When presented to a non-hostile official, guard, or bureaucrat, the bearer may make a Deception or Persuasion check, choosing which, with advantage to pass a checkpoint, gain access to a restricted area, or establish a false identity for the duration of the encounter. On a failure, the official grows suspicious but does not automatically recognize the documents as fraudulent. The letters may be used three times before the seals begin to show wear that even a distracted clerk will notice.

Designer note: *The item does not tell the player whether the documents are genuine, and neither does the flavor text. The moral position belongs to whoever is carrying them.*

The Silent Commission

Wondrous Item • Very Rare

A letter folded once and sealed with plain wax bearing no impression, written in a hand so controlled and deliberate that the words read almost like typeset, each character formed with a precision that suggests long practice or a profound distrust of ambiguity. The instructions are economical: a name, a location, a time, and a sum. Four words at the bottom of the page have been crossed out with a force that scored the vellum, whatever they said now unreadable by any mundane means.

The paper does not yellow. The ink does not fade. Someone who wrote a letter with no signature and no return address nonetheless expected it to survive indefinitely, which implies either extraordinary confidence or long experience with how these arrangements tend to end.

The bearer knows, without being told, whether the named target is currently within one mile, and this awareness persists through mundane concealment, though it cannot penetrate magical suppression. Fulfilling the terms earns 500 gold pieces, delivered in a plain envelope that appears in the bearer's pack within twenty, four hours of completion. Destroying the letter imposes one level of exhaustion, and the letter reappears in the bearer's possession at the next dawn, showing no sign of damage.

Designer note: Abandonment is possible but costs something. The player keeps their agency; the design simply ensures they cannot pretend the choice carries no weight.

Last Light Lantern

Wondrous Item • Uncommon

A tin lantern painted black on three sides, the fourth panel fitted with clear glass behind which a flame burns pale blue and gives off no warmth whatsoever, a quality that made it standard issue for the Nightwatch of Dreveth, whose patrols through the lower districts required a light that would not betray their position by the heat it shed, and which proved equally useful, in the final weeks before the evacuation order, for work the surviving Nightwatch members have since declined to describe in detail.

The flame has been burning without interruption for eleven years. No one has added fuel in that time, as there is no mechanism by which fuel could be added, and the lantern's previous owners either never noticed this or chose not to raise the subject.

The lantern sheds dim blue light in a thirty-foot radius, within which undead that are not actively hostile become indifferent and will not attack unless first provoked. Undead that were already hostile when they entered the radius are unaffected. The lantern requires no fuel and will burn indefinitely, but extinguishing it intentionally renders it unresponsive for the following twenty-four hours.

Designer note: The eleven-year detail is not in the stat block. The implication, that something in Dreveth has kept this burning through an evacuation and everything after, is left for the player to sit with.